

Social concerns gain respect in investment marketplace

By Teresa A. Parsons

Churches have traditionally been guilty of a somewhat schizophrenic approach to money.

Pastors who preached eloquently on questions of justice and parishioners who took their words to heart have seldom connected these principles with how they invested the collection money.

But an unexpected crowd of more than 100 people who gathered at the Rochester Hilton Hotel last Thursday for a seminar on socially responsible investment options was living evidence that churches and non-profit organizations are seeking to reconcile their investments with their social consciences.

A coalition of religious, labor and justice groups from Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse organized the seminar, which outlined a burgeoning range of options available to those who no longer consider profit the bottom line in choosing investments.

In past years, churches and individuals that lived according to the Quaker maxim of "doing well by doing good" were few and seldom heard from, according to Tim Smith, the seminar's keynote speaker and director of the New York City-based Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility.

"It used to be that the voice of those churches was a voice in the wilderness, raising social and moral concerns in the world of investments," Smith said. "But we believe that the economy falls under the judgment of the Lord, just like other parts of our lives. That conviction has taken us into

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Tim Smith
Director, Interfaith Center
on Corporate Responsibility

the marketplace of ideas and commerce ... And while our voices were once derided, we are now more often listened to by chief executives and heard at stockholders' meetings."

Founded 15 years ago, the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility now coordinates 17 Protestant denominations and more than 220 Roman Catholic dioceses and religious orders in their efforts to monitor the social performance of the companies in which they invest.

During this spring's round of corporate annual meetings, the center will sponsor more than 150 shareholder resolutions, challenging the policies of 122 companies on issues ranging from disinvestment in South Africa to investment in Strategic Defense Initiative research and nuclear weapons production.

"If you own or operate even a very small portfolio, you are probably going to have an opportunity to vote this spring on divestment,

minority purchasing or some other social-justice issue," Smith told the audience, which comprised pastors, financial officers, and trustees of religious and non-profit institutions and organizations.

Corporate social responsibility is attracting new interest in part because it has become good business, not only for companies concerned about their images, but for investment brokers and money managers as well.

"We need to remind ourselves that most Americans are investors in a variety of ways — through insurance, pension funds, Individual Retirement Accounts," Smith said. "Today, more Americans are recognizing that they are investors, and they are trying to be more responsible."

In response, banks and brokerages often are offering socially sensitive investment packages. They are screening companies based not only on sales, assets and profit margins, but also on their social balance sheets.

Clients can choose from a variety of investment criteria, whether their interests focus on a corporation's record on hiring women and minorities, a manufacturer's concern for environmental impact, or a bank's share in the international debt crisis.

Consumers also have more alternative investment options and financial services from which to choose, including community-based credit unions, worker-owned cooperatives, low- and moderate-income housing programs, minority-owned banks and economic-development organizations.

Individuals are even exercising their purchasing power by using buying guides that rank companies by their social consciences. Several banks actually offer "socially responsible" credit cards that pay a portion of the interest charge into a social-justice fund.

Prudent investors once shunned "socially responsible" investments as those guaranteed to take a bite out of profits and diminish security. Today, Smith pointed out, investments with the highest amount of social benefits still carry the greatest degree of risk. Some churches compromise by titing a portion of their portfolios to such investments, he said.

But alternative investments are no longer limited to high-risk, low-return options. Currently, Smith said, they include federally

insured mutual funds that offer commercially competitive rates of return.

Although the investment climate has grown more comfortable for individuals and organizations seeking to put their money to constructive social uses, Smith cautioned his listeners against making self-righteous decisions.

"You don't want to make money from the company that creates Love Canal for you, but don't make that decision in an effort to be pure and don't make that decision and expect to wash your hands," he said. "You're trying to make a statement with that specific action, and we believe that statement has an impact."

The corporate-responsibility movement has derived some of its impact from the growth of concern over divestment from South Africa. In 1971, Episcopal Church representatives became the first religious group to sponsor a shareholder resolution, when they asked General Motors to withdraw from South Africa.

Since then, Smith noted, major institutions have joined the movement toward divestment. One of the largest private pension funds in the United States — the Teachers' Insurance and Annuity Association and College Retirement Equities Fund — have joined pension-fund investors from the state of New Jersey and the city of New York in withdrawing their assets from South Africa during the past year.

"You'll hear some voices raising questions as to whether you can be a prudent investor and be socially responsible," he said. "Well, the state of California, the city of New York and the state of New Jersey (pension-fund investors) all have that same obligation, and they have convinced themselves that they can be prudent and socially responsible."

Last fall, the United States Catholic Conference also issued a statement urging all dioceses to divest from companies that operate or invest in South Africa. To date, the Diocese of Rochester has not adopted investment guidelines based on social responsibility criteria, according to Jack Trickey, diocesan finance manager.

However, last spring was the first instance in which diocesan representatives participated in a socially motivated stockholder's resolution. Eastman Kodak Company stockholders, including the Diocese of Rochester, voted to ask the company for a report on its involvement in research for the government's Strategic Defense Initiative.

In November, Trickey said, the diocese finance council formally asked the Division of Social Ministry to inform the council's members of other issues they could influence by voting their proxies.

Trickey said he also intended to seek further information on the investment options that were outlined at the seminar.

"I came away thinking that we can make investments that address social issues and still enjoy acceptable returns on our funds," he said.



4TH ANNUAL PARENTS' CONVENTION

MAY 1, 2, 3, 1987 Rochester Plaza Hotel

NEW YORK FEDERATION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOL PARENTS

HOST CHAPTER: ROCHESTER FEDERATION

945 NORTH GREECE ROAD • ROCHESTER, NY 14626 • (716) 227-2577

WORKSHOP REGISTRATION

Pre-registration for the Saturday Workshops is required; admission will be by ticket only. Indicate three (3) choices and one (1) alternate below.

A. Raising PG Kids in an X-rated Society: Mrs. Mary Gore, wife of the Senator from Tennessee, has been in the forefront of lobbying to have record albums rated for parental guidance.

B. Pre-Paid Tuition: Eliminate tuition delinquencies, be assured of cash flow! A proven system explained by Mr. Leonard Fine, of the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

C. Development: The Path to Catholic School Financial Stability: The same Mr. Fine as above will present one or two sessions on practical financial planning and marketing of your school.

D. Drug Recognition and Counseling: A team from the town of Greece Youth Services, will help you to identify different chemical substances being abused by our society, as well as describe intervention techniques. Presenters: Sgt. Deborah Dwyer, Supervisor, Greece Police Dept., Youth Services Div., Frank Ardina, Family & Adolescence Counselor/Coordinator, Greece Youth Services.

E. Grass Roots Lobbying: Do elected officials really respond to your opinions? How can you be most effective in bringing about legislation helpful to our schools? Presenter: Mrs. Mary Quinn, the driving force behind many efforts!

F. Regents Action Plan: What is it? What's its impact on our schools? Of importance to all parents, this is a "must" for school board members. Presenter: Mrs. Joan Arnold Bourgeois, Asst. Commissioner of Education for Non-Public Schools, State Ed. Dept., Albany.

G. State Services to Non-Public School Students: Mrs. Bourgeois (see "F") will discuss state services, such as text books and parents' role/rights, programs for the gifted, etc.

H. To Parents! You are appreciated, needed, valued, and most of all loved by your kids and so we "toast" YOU! A real uplifter with Fr. Joe Sica, of Pocono, PA. Catholic High.

I. How To Get Media Coverage: Practical suggestions to get your school and its programs into the news. Presenter: Mr. Bill Klein, Public Affairs Dir., Station WFOR.

J. Questions You Should Be Asking: Get the most out of parent-teacher conferences! Presenter: Marilyn Parks, Director of Rochester Area E.P.I.C. Program.

K. Motivating Your Children To Learn: Take the hassle out of helping your children to make the most of their abilities. Presenter: Mr. Joseph Fitzgibbons, Guidance Counselor.

L. How To Have Efficient and Effective Meetings: Step by step presentation of agenda development and of how to participate meaningfully in committee meetings. Presenters: Sr. Roberta Tierney, Dir. of Education, Rochester Diocese; Mrs. Gina Ouwelen, Rochester Parents' Federation.

LUNCHEON KEYNOTER: Rev. William O'Malley, S.J.

"What Makes a School Catholic?"

MASS CELEBRANT: Most Rev. Matthew H. Clark, Bishop of Rochester

DINNER ENTERTAINMENT: Georgetown University "CHIMES"

WORKSHOP/HOTEL RESERVATION FORM

Reservations must be received by April 8, 1987 with payment in full. After that date, rooms will be charged at the regular hotel per diem rates: \$69/Day + \$57 Per Person For Plan Three.

Specify name of person with whom the room is to be shared. (Each must register separately.) If not indicated, we will assign someone unless you are reserving a single room.

Rooms may not be available for check-in until 3:00 p.m.

Check-out time is 1:00 p.m.

Make checks payable to and mail to:

FEDERATION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOL PARENTS

69 Keswick Road Rochester, NY 14609

CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING PLANS:

() PLAN ONE: \$130 per person, double occupancy.

- Friday, Saturday night room.
- Friday wine and cheese reception.
- Saturday and Sunday continental breakfast.
- Saturday lunch, coffee break, dinner.
- Workshops.

() \$198 single occupancy.

() PLAN TWO: \$98 per person, double occupancy.

- Saturday night room.
- Saturday and Sunday continental breakfast.
- Saturday lunch, coffee break, dinner.
- Workshops.

() \$132 single occupancy.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/ZIP: _____

DIOCESE: _____

ROOM SHARED WITH: _____

() PLAN THREE: \$57 per person.

- Saturday cont. breakfast, lunch, coffee break, dinner.
- Workshops

() PLAN FOUR: \$37 per person.

- Saturday cont. breakfast, lunch, coffee break.
- Workshops.

() PLAN FIVE: \$20 per person.

- Saturday dinner only.

PHONE: () _____

3 WORKSHOP CHOICES:

(Indicate by letter)

ALTERNATE CHOICE: _____

Diocesan Festival Choir's Sacred Concert will reflect diversity of religious themes

The diocesan festival choir will present its 13th annual Sacred Concert on Sunday, April 5, at the SSJ Motherhouse Chapel, 4095 East Ave., Rochester, at 4 p.m. The choir will present a program of famous master choruses from the works of Mozart, Haydn, Brahms, Handel; Bach, Mendelssohn and Gounod. For the second part of the program, the congregation will be invited to join with the choir for the singing of Sunday Vespers.

Breaking from past performances of single major works, music director Virginia Hogan has selected a variety of sacred compositions. "The works reflect a diversity of religious themes," she said. "The Crucifix, for example, from the famous Bach B Minor Mass is sung in an elaborate polyphonic style, in contrast to Handel's See the Conqu'ring Hero Comes from the oratorio Judas Maccabeus, highlighting an historic event in Judaism."

Other oratorio selections on the program include Brahms' How Lovely Is Thy Dwelling Place, Haydn's The Heavens Are Telling and Mendelssohn's How Lovely Are the Messengers, as well as the famous Mozart Ave Verum.

Founded in 1975, the Diocesan Festival Choir draws its membership from Catholic churches throughout the greater Rochester community, as well as attracting singers from several different religious faiths. Members of the choir come from as far away as Palmyra, Spencerport and Webster to re-

hearse with Sister Hogan. Rehearsal accompanist and organist for the concert is Susan Matteson from the faculty of the College of the Finger Lakes.

Tickets are \$4 and may be purchased at the door or from any choir member. A reception for the choir and congregation will follow the performance.

Spring assembly scheduled

Parishioners and members of church staffs in the northwest region of Rochester are invited to attend the Spring Assembly sponsored by the Northwest Region Executive Committee on Friday, March 20, beginning at 7:30 p.m. at Cardinal Mooney High School, 800 Maiden Lane, Greece.

The theme of the assembly is "Celebrating Sunday." The main speaker will be Father Thomas Mull, diocesan director of liturgy. Following his talk, those in attendance will be able to participate in one of several mini-workshops, which will be selected at the time of registration, upon entering the auditorium.

Refreshments will be served in the school cafeteria before the assembly's conclusion at 10 p.m.

The Northwest Region includes churches located in Rochester and Monroe County west of the river and north of Main Street, with the exception of the village of Brockport. St. Michael's Church on Clinton Avenue North is also in the region.