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Lobbyist: Life ethic covers host of issues

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The U.S. bishops, in a provocative proposal, have called for insurance for the elderly and the unemployed, national health care and federal assistance to families in need.

Is this a new initiative by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops?

No. The bishops issued this call in 1919.

In issuing such proposals then, the bishops were foreshadowing Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, which through such federal programs as Social Security embodied the bishops' post-World War I social vision, according to Sharon Daly, deputy for social policy at the Washington, D.C.-based Catholic Charities USA.

For decades, the U.S. Catholic Church has served as the conscience of a powerful nation, much as the prophets in ancient Israel served as the conscience of God's people, Daly said. A superpower needs such a conscience for its

own good, she stressed.

"When the King of Israel did not protect the poor, that is ultimately what brought down the wrath of God," Daly said in a phone interview with the *Catholic Courier*.

A lobbyist who regularly buttonholes Capitol Hill staffers on behalf of church positions, Daly will be the keynote speaker at the diocese's consistent life ethic dinner at the Harro East Ballroom in Rochester on Friday evening, April 26.

Daly will also speak at a social ministry convening at St. Mary Our Mother Church in Horseheads on Saturday morning, April 27 (see related story).

Daly pointed out that before the phrase "consistent life ethic" was even coined, the U.S. Catholic Church called for a country in which people inside and outside of the womb are afforded equal protection under the law.

"The church is a unique player in Washington," Daly said. "There's nobody else like us."

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