



Community Forum Series

Urbanization violates human rights

by Kristy Beattle

Is not owning a television or the "right" kind of clothes a violation of one's human needs? Many people seem to feel this way, as Mrs. Roberta Spohn pointed out in her discussion of Urbanization: Urban Decay, Human Rights, and the Quality of Life. Mrs. Spohn, who is Commissioner of the New York City Department for the Aging, was the guest speaker at the third session of the Community Forum Series on Human Rights.

All of us, Mrs. Spohn began, share some common feelings. We all struggle with death and loneliness; we still look for heroes; we want ourselves to be unique. All of us also have a need for personal limitations and social government. This personal and social government, though largely unwritten, is the center of our daily interactions. Yet many times this center breaks down. In racial demonstrations for example, shared values disappear. Employing the example she used throughout her discussion, Mrs. Spohn showed how the shared values on private property seemed to die when the lights went out in New York City this fall.

Bushwick and South Bronx in New York City used to be nice places to live. Now they are devastated. Is this urbanization or urban decay, Mrs. Spohn queried. She feels that the destruction is not urban decay and went on to explain that we have reached past our peak in urbanization. The northeast is experiencing a decrease in people she explained. The economic base is moving out of the city, and in many ways the cities will never recover from this spread into suburbanization. The fires, the looting, and the destruction are not then, so much a matter of urban decay as they are of human needs.

What do we mean by human needs? We all have basic universal needs such as the need for adequate food, for love, and for personal safety. Yet, in the United States today, no one really goes hungry; no one need go without clothes. Indeed, were you to look at New York City as an immigrant of fifty years ago, you would have seen nothing atrocious. So why do these conditions suggest

outrage today, questions Mrs. Spohn. What human needs are being met?

For the person in the city, political rights, freedom of speech, of religion and others are rather abstract and removed from them. What is not being met is their standard of living. Someone has what they do not have, and so they feel that their needs are not being met. This attitude reflects a shift in society. Mrs. Spohn said that during the depression, when her father did not work, he thought he was a failure. Her mother thought he was a failure. It was not society's fault but their own. They still believed that they could have richer things by their own merits.

Mrs. Spohn accused the television of creating myths about what humans need to survive in life. Every child, no matter how poor, has been indoctrinated by television, she said. There is an enormous difference between what is shown on television and what these children have. After a while these people start feeling that their needs are not being met because they do not have these things. Thus, when the lights went out in New York City, the people went for, not the necessities, but the "goodies" of society.

Thus, Mrs. Spohn concluded, these human rights are something to which we must give a lot of thought. Human rights at the constitutional level may be important, but for much of the underclass, satisfying human needs is more a question of can they buy a Pinto? Are they getting their share? And will they be able to see their kids make it?

The first discussant for the session was Dr. Doris King of the history department at North Carolina State University. Drawing upon history to make her points, Dr. King raised some questions. Are we willing to pay the price for the perfect society? Dr. King discussed Edward Bellamy's book *Looking Backward*, the major theme of which is equality. Bellamy said that there will never be the perfect society until we get away from personal property myths. Dr. King concluded with the question: Do we really want a perfect society enough to think in terms of that kind of

society?

Mr. William Ross, a lawyer of Raleigh and a member of the State Greenway Commission, was the second discussant. Mr. Ross feels that urbanization is urban decay. He sees urbanization as an expansion in which human rights are disregarded. Mr. Ross cited several reasons for this expansion, such as the American belief in the right to speculate on land and expansion as a goal within itself. Yet people fail to think through the costs involved in this expansion, he explained. Mr. Ross sees the need for a new direction for urban reform so that human needs are better met. We must

all take a part in giving it direction, he concluded.

Discussion and questions from the audience followed.



Students attended a midnight communion service during Religious Emphasis Week.

REW Week

Vannorsdall stresses decision making

by Nancy Newton

Dr. John Vannorsdall, Chaplain of Yale University and former speaker for the Lutheran program of the

protestant hour, was a guest of the campus recently as he addressed the student body during Religious Emphasis Week (REW), sponsored by

the Meredith Christian Association (MCA). Dr. Vannorsdall spoke on the REW theme, "It's a Long and Winding Road ... Who's Going With You?"

In addressing his thoughts to the significance of events which occur in each person's life, Dr. Vannorsdall suggested that one would not be the same person if certain events had not taken place. Therefore, if one looks back at the significant events in his life, it is possible to see God's hand. "God does not take us out of the world by protecting us from hard decisions," Dr. Vannorsdall said, "but gives us faith and allows us to make our decisions even though we possess the ability to fail." He continued to explain that God does this because He loves us, as seen in Exodus 33:12-23 where Moses does not see God but sees where He had been and has faith. God used an event to strengthen the faith of Moses. "God in his love does not dictate events in our lives," continued Dr. Vannorsdall, "but allows us to make decisions and act in events with His support. This helps us grow in our christian faith. Just as a parent lets a child grow into adulthood by making his own crucial life decisions, so God does with the christian."

Nelson recognizes doubt

by Mary Katherine Pittman

Dr. Stanley A. Nelson, guest speaker at the Wednesday and Friday morning convocations during Religious Emphasis Week, offered insight for the Meredith student body in his discussion on "Doubt." Commending the Meredith Christian Association (MCA) for its "facing the subject with honesty and maturity." Dr. Nelson proposed that "we

have been conditioned to live in a just world, yet doubt occurs in the case of injustice." Dr. Nelson commented further on religious presuppositions and their relationship to accidents, that "misfortune does not always happen in direct relation to something we've done." In summary, Dr. Nelson asked the question: "If this is a just world, then why was the cross necessary?"

Pope sings belief

by Janet Surles

British folk singer Dave Pope sang in concert in Jones Auditorium, Thursday, Feb. 2. The Meredith concert was a part of Pope's second tour of the United States.

Pope's songs ranged in style from folk to a rock form. He was accompanied by John Daniels on the piano and guitar, also the composer of several arrangements performed at the concert.

Pope is involved in evangelism and works with children in the schools in England. He hopes to convey his views of christianity through his music.

Pope expressed a concern and hope that his music does not come across as "just entertainment." He sincerely believes in the christian ministry. "I enjoy life now, but it's nothing compared to the life with Him (God) forever," commented Pope.

News News

Room deposits due

Students are requested to remember that room deposits are due Feb. 15, 1978 for the 1978-1979 school year. Any questions regarding the deposit or housing should be directed to Dean of Students' office.

Spring Forum

Coming up:

"Sexual Values in Intimate Relationships"

sponsored by Meredith Christian Association Spring Forum, led by Ted Purcell, campus minister at North Carolina State University.

When: Feb. 21st, 7:30-9 p.m. Where: Continuing Education Auditorium. Please come join us!