

CATHOLIC COMMENT

from around the globe

cardinal . . .

Suggests Over-Secrecy In Pre-Council Meets

NIJMEGEN, The Netherlands — (NC) — Bernard Cardinal Alfrink said here that greater lay participation by lay people in the preparations for the coming ecumenical council would not have made any essential difference in the work of the council.

The emphasis of the council might vary somewhat if the laity had a more active role in the preparatory work, the Archbishop of Utrecht acknowledged. But he said, "I do not think there is any

wish of the lay people which has not been laid before the council commissions in one way or another."

Cardinal Alfrink, a member of the council's Central Preparatory Commission, spoke at the opening session of the annual theological study week at the Cardinal University of Nijmegen. This year's week centered on topics up for discussion at the general council, especially the question of the relationship between papal primacy and the role of diocesan bishops.

None of the 20 previous ecumenical councils has had such a thorough and intensive preparation as the one opening next October 11, Cardinal Alfrink said.

The preparations have been the work of men, he said, and therefore there can be differences of opinion about them. But this is no reason "to withdraw our confidence in the council," according to the Cardinal.

As head of the Hierarchy of the Netherlands, Cardinal Alfrink said there would be a major information campaign for the clergy and laity concerning the council. He said he is holding a long series of conferences with the diocesan and religious priests of the country's seven dioceses, and that they will be concluded with an informative but confidential meeting between himself and leading Catholic journalists.

The Cardinal said he is glad the meetings of the council's preparatory commissions and secretariats have been conducted in closed sessions. There is no doubt he said, that without such secrecy "our discussions would not have been so frank."

Calvinists Feel Catholics Too Optimistic

THE HAGUE — (NC) — The Dutch Reformed Church issued a pamphlet calling on the Calvinists of the Netherlands to "pray for the Catholic brothers and sisters in Christ."

But it said also: "Risking the danger of being considered doctrinal spoilsports, we must insist that the abyss dividing the belief of the Dutch Reformed Church and Roman Catholic dogma is deeper than many Catholic theologians think when they state that the Reformation can be integrated into the whole of Catholic truth."

The 34-page pamphlet, entitled "The Attitude of the Reformed Church towards the Roman Catholic Church and Its Members," was issued by the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, the country's major Protestant denomination.

P. R. Christian Party Seeks Status

SAN JUAN, P.R. — (NC) — The Supreme Court of Puerto Rico referred to a lower court the writ of mandamus filed by the Catholic-oriented Christian Action party which demanded full recognition as a major political group.

Chief Justice Luis Negrón Fernández and Associate Justice Luis Blanco Lugo filed dissenting opinions. The dissenters said the CAP's petition was of utmost importance since it deals with the existence of a political party in a democratic form of government and that the island's highest court should take original jurisdiction in such a matter.

"I firmly believe that we can hardly deal with a case of greater importance than this one," Justice Blanco Lugo said.

Jose L. Felio Pesquera, the CAP leader, resorted to the Supreme Court action after Gov. Luis Muñoz-Marín rejected an appeal to him by the party that it be given full recognition as a major political group, given representation on the Board of Elections, financial subsidy and other rights.

The party claimed it is entitled to such a status since it polled 52,275 votes in the 1960 general elections, which amount to 6.5 per cent of the total vote and was 1.5 more than the law-required 5 per cent of the total vote for recognition of a major political party.

Alaska Refuses Bus Transport

JUNEAU, Alaska — (NC) — The State Commissioner of Education has ordered all children attending parochial and other private schools in Alaska to be put off public school buses.

Theo J. Norby's directive is the result of an April, 1961, ruling of the Alaska Supreme Court that such transportation violates the state constitution. The U.S. Supreme Court refused to review this decision on February 19, 1962.

Norby sent telegrams to all superintendents of public school districts directing that the tax-paid buses carry only children attending public schools.

A.J.C. Holds For Secular Schools

NEW YORK — (NC) — The American Jewish Congress has opposed Federal aid for parochial schools, religious observances in public schools and compulsory Sunday-closing laws.

The biennial convention of the organization charged (April 15) in a resolution that U.S. assistance to parochial schools would violate the Federal constitution and "would bring in its train all the evils the constitutional provision was designed to prevent."

The 500 delegates expressed "vigorous opposition" to Bible-reading, prayer recitation and religious holiday celebrations, such as Christmas, in public schools. It said these practices are unconstitutional and interfere with the educational function of schools.

The congress hailed a recent decision in Oregon against lending tax-paid textbooks to children in private schools; a ruling in Florida against religious practices in public schools and an opinion of a Federal court in Pennsylvania against a school Bible-reading law.

Church Tax Exemption Holds

WASHINGTON — (NC) — The U.S. Supreme Court has dismissed, "for want of a substantial Federal question," a challenge to tax exemptions granted church property in Rhode Island under a state law.

The court declined (April 16) to review a decision of the Rhode Island Supreme Court upholding the constitutionality of exemptions for church property, and for veterans, veterans' organizations, gold star parents, Brown University professors, and cemeteries.

Six justices were in favor of dismissing the challenge. Associate Justice Hugo L. Black said he thought the court should hear the case. Associate Justices Felix Frankfurter and Byron R. White took no part in the decision.

Frankfurter has been ill and White was sworn in as a justice on the same day the court's action was announced.

The case was brought to the high court by the General Finance Corporation, which in 1959 was assessed a tax of \$842 on property it owns in Cranston, R.I.

The firm took legal action in an effort to have its tax reduced by \$30.42. It estimated that its tax

would have been that much lower if exemptions had not been granted under Rhode Island law to church property used for religious purposes and to other individuals and organizations.

Grade School Great Books Program

POLAND, Ohio — (NC) — Sixteen youngsters in the upper grades of Holy Family elementary school here are reading the classics in an experiment which may spread next year to all Youngstown diocesan schools.

The handpicked students are reading classics in the Junior Great Books Program and meeting once a week after school to discuss their readings.

With the children already immersed in Charles Dickens' "Tale of Two Cities," Edgar Allan Poe's "Pit and the Pendulum" and Plato's "Apology," their teacher Eileen Kane says they want to read more.

"Some are resentful that they cannot get adult cards from the public library," she said. "They don't like to be seen with the readers they use in regular classes."

Lack of Preparation Stalls Integration

NEW YORK — (NC) — Father John LaFarge, S.J., said here that the Church in New Orleans is appearing as the Church Universal because of its school desegregation campaign.

The widely known Jesuit author, a pioneer in Catholic Interracial Council movement, said, however, that action by the U.S. Church to end racial injustice has been hampered by lack of preparation among the people and absence of a "clear-cut plan of action."

Father LaFarge saw two major obstacles in the way of integration moves.

"One is lack of preparation among the people themselves," he said. "For fear of broaching an unwelcome and controversial topic, our adequate duties of justice and charity to our neighbors have not received from the pulpit, from our educational programs, from our classes in Christian Doctrine, the treatment they deserved."

"On the other hand, we have all too often lacked any clear-cut plan of action to serve as a guide for the great body of our well-meaning and apostolically minded Catholic laity."

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