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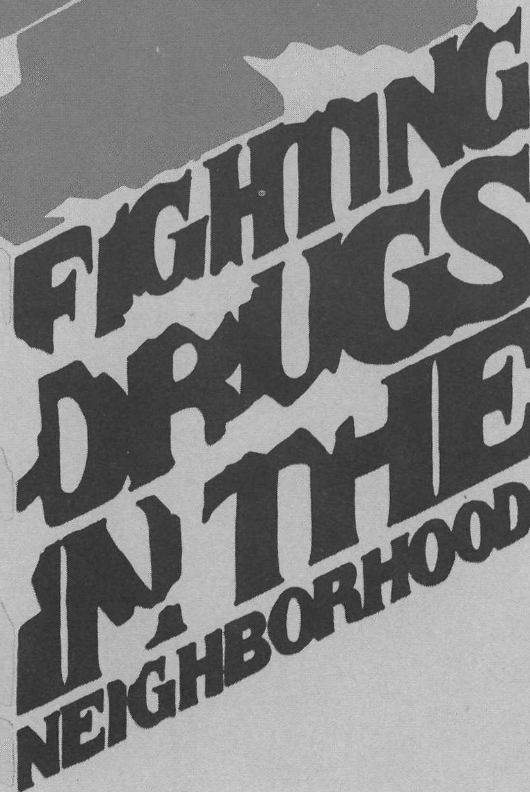
THE WITNESS

Climbing the mountain in Kensington
Susan E. Pierce

Work, economics and religion
Richard W. Gillett

Putting Grandma in jail
Margaret Ellen Traxler



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Letters

Church quiet on AIDS

We at the Resource Center for Learning Ministries, an ecumenical center supported by several denominations including the Episcopal Diocese of Newark, were delighted to see the September WITNESS stories on AIDS by John Fortunato and Domenic Ciannella. This is the first writing of substance which we have seen coming from our major denominations; if there are others I would appreciate knowing about them.

I am giving more than fulltime work, voluntarily, both in education and in service to persons with AIDS. 1) I am preparing a file of resources in the Center and am available for consultation with pastors and representatives of our churches; 2) I have taken the intensive training from General Theological Seminary in New York, sponsored by the Gay Men's Health Crisis Center, and am now on a team of 20 persons providing services to patients; 3) I am a member of an information group for Monmouth and Ocean Counties in New Jersey, co-chairing a support group for families, friends, including children, persons with and without AIDS; 4) I am doing a clipping service for the Lesbian Gay Coalition of New Jersey and have created quite a file of resources, spending hours in the county library covering as many newspapers and magazines as possible. Here I underscore the need for your articles. *The church has had little to say!*

The Rev. M. Earle McCullough
Resource Center
for Learning Ministries
Montclair, N.J.

Re negative Karma

I would like to thank you for THE WITNESS. Even though my views are considerably more conservative than yours, I enjoy the challenges set forth in the articles you publish. I am a bit chagrined, however, by the air of smugness that pervades the magazine's writing.

Perhaps the quintessential example of this is John Fortunato's reply to several letters on his article regarding homosexuality (December WITNESS). It was surprising that he would choose to not deal with these responses. It would appear that the assumption he works under is that those who do not agree with him must be motivated by hate. What ever happened to the free exchange of ideas? "Ingesting negative Karma?" you've got to be kidding. We should all rejoice that Jesus was willing to die for us even though we were yet with "negative karma."

The Rev. James B. Simons
Monroeville, Pa.

Sides with oppressed

Congratulations on a fine publication. It is one of the few I have encountered which does not hesitate to take the side of the oppressed, especially if it means confronting the church in the process.

John Fortunato's article on AIDS in the September issue was well-written and thought-provoking. Ellen Dursi's commentary on hymnody with bad theology in Letters to the Editor was both humorous and poignant. I'm sure it will receive wide circulation.

John P. Bauman, A.H.C.
Wrightwood, Cal.

'Onward' and the grape

Ms. Elsie Dursi is rightly upset in her poem by hymns based on fad theology. (See Letters to Editor, September) However, she is in "the right church but the wrong pew." The golden oldie "Onward Christian Soldiers" addresses, not the warfare of nukes and armies, but that of temperance and white ribbons.

Personally, I find an ironic jest in the hearty singing of this grand old temperance hymn by congregations over-fond of the grape. We Episcopalians condone alcohol abuse to the point where we have the dubious distinction of having the highest incidence of alcoholism of any of the "mainline" denominations. Maybe we ought to sing "Onward," with appropriate commentary, a little more often!

The Rev. Paul C. Hewett
Wilmette, Ill.

Sharings in prison

Thank you for the December WITNESS. When I received the magazine, I thumbed through it, as I always do, and two things jumped out at me — the letter from the Rev. Paul Kabat and the poem by Helen Woodson. I have never met either of them, but I know they are also both in prisons and one of their Plowshares co-defendants, Larry Cloud-Morgan, a Native American, is one of my closest friends here. We spend a lot of time sharing spiritually.

I am the Chapel Clerk and spend my time trying to get men involved with Christ. You don't have to be incarcerated to be in a prison. All of us are in prison without Christ, and none of us are in prison with Christ. I will share the magazine with the men here.

William R. Bailey
Terre Haute, Ind.

Church forgets roots

Recently I attended a conference where Barbara Harris (of the Episcopal Church Publishing Co.) told of the difficulty experienced by Blacks, Hispanics, and women in obtaining favorable clergy positions in the Episcopal Church.

Isn't the basic problem one of historic perspective? We have allowed our anglophilia to eclipse our catholicism. Most U.S. Episcopalians grow up accepting the myth that Jesus was born during the

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reign of Queen Elizabeth and that the Twelve Apostles were bishops of the Church of England. Is it any wonder that we find our role models for clergy in 16th century England: White, male, and Anglo-urbane?

Why not begin teaching our children that our roots are in the church catholic? The best place to start this history lesson is with the post-apostolic age where the church indelibly established and formalized its catholic nature.

Let us note well the "complexion" of the early ecumenical councils. The most famous was held at Nicea (in Bithynia) in 325. Of 300 bishops present *only six were from the west.* No doubt most of the faces were brown or black having come from Alexandria, Jerusalem, Ephesus, Athens, Antioch, etc. (Canterbury, Cambridge, Coventry were *not* represented.)

This is not to suggest that we shouldn't appreciate the contributions made to Christianity by the later branches of the church. The damage occurs when a denomination becomes so enamored with one of the branches that it forgets its roots.

The Rev. Eldred Johnston
Columbus, Ohio

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The New York Times **ran this photo on its front page Jan. 12, the day after the installation of Episcopal Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning, showing Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa congratulating him. We are delighted to identify the two women in the photo, (unreported in the *NYT*) as, from left, the Rev. Barbara Harris, executive director of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company, and Mary Miller, chairperson of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship. THE WITNESS adds its applause for the new Presiding Bishop. UPI/Bettmann Newsphotos.**

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Editorial

Robbing Peter to pay Paul

George Bernard Shaw once said, "A government that robs Peter to pay Paul can always count on the support of Paul." How apropos to today's government-big business alliance, when elected officials favor special interests above the people's welfare. Witness a Justice Department which allows E. F. Hutton and Company to plead guilty to 2,000 counts of fraud in a check-kiting scam without prosecuting a single person.

In this regard, it is instructive to note who Congress actually represents by way of assets. Manning Marable, WITNESS contributing editor, recently revealed the following in his syndicated column:

- The median annual family income for Black Americans is roughly $15,000; for Whites, $28,000.

- According to the *New York Times*, in 1978, the 78 newly elected members of Congress claimed an average of $41,400 in assets. Only one millionaire was elected that year.

- By 1984, the average wealth of the 43 new members of the Senate and House of Representatives had soared to $251,300. Fifteen millionaires had been elected as "public servants."

This prompted Mark Green, head of the Democracy Project, a public policy group, to observe that "the evolution from a House of Representatives to a House of Lords denies the diversity of our democracy. It establishes a de facto property qualification for office that increasingly says, low and middle income need not apply."

Marable noted that the high cost of campaigning for public office is partly the reason that Congress is inaccessible to most Americans. In 1984, the successful candidates for the House of Representatives spent an average of $459,300, which included an average of $50,000 in personal donations from the individual candidates. In the Senate, elected members spent over $2 million each. Moreover, the proliferation of conservative and pro-corporate political action committees buttresses the financial base of an already well-to-do incumbent and aspirants.

In this issue, Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward flag other vital concerns — including screening out the poor from the voting populace — and warn that the risk of *repression* is even greater "when the social base from which movements draw support is substantially underrepresented in the electorate."

Until sweeping campaign law reform is passed and third party candidates are able to gain fairer access to the ballot, we cannot expect to broaden national politics to reflect the economic and social concerns of the majority, including tax reform which benefits the poor.

Put another way, in an old American proverb, those who preach patience never knew pain.

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THE WITNESS

FIGHTING DRUGS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

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Community activists vs. drugs

Climbing the mountain in Kensington

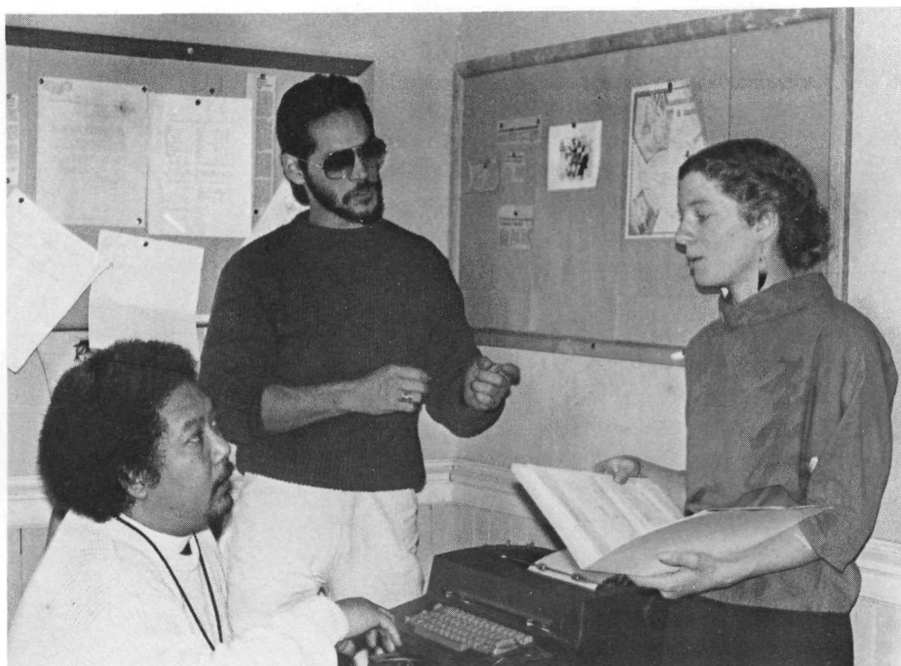
by Susan E. Pierce

Kensington, a deteriorating neighborhood in northeast Philadelphia, appears at first glance to be just another sad example of urban decay. Over the past decades much of its economic lifeblood has been drained away by the flight of industry; public services have declined, and unemployment has risen steadily. Now the poverty of the area has attracted a deadly industry that does a booming business — drug dealing. The drug trade has created an atmosphere of violence, fear and despair.

Near Norris Square Park, in West Kensington, the streets can be very mean. Neatly-kept rowhouses compete with boarded-up shells and garbage-strewn vacant lots, and drug dealers stand on almost every corner.

But not far from Norris Square, a group of Kensington residents gathered recently in St. Barnabas, a century-old Episcopal church, to offer their vision of hope and renewal for their neighborhood and how they are struggling to achieve this vision. Members of a grassroots coalition, the Kensington Joint Action Council (KJAC) described their battles against the community's ills.

Much of the militant, direct action for social change in Kensington has been under the auspices of KJAC (pronounced Kay-Jac), an umbrella organization and resource for neighborhood citizens' groups. KJAC member Mike DiBerardinis, who is legislative aide to State Representative Ralph Acosta, defined Kensington: "For many Whites, Kensington is whatever part is White — so the neighborhood has been shrinking for years. But we choose to define the neighborhood according to its historic geographic boundaries as opposed to its racial boundaries."



From left, community activists the Rev. Floyd "Butch" Naters-Gamarra, pastor of St. Barnabas, Kensington; Ephraim Rios, youth worker, and Pamela Riley, executive director of KJAC discuss the next steps for the United Neighborhood Against Drugs (UNAD). Both Father Butch and Rios have been physically assaulted by drug dealers in the area.

DiBerardinis noted that East Kensington is mostly White and West Kensington is Black and Hispanic, and has in fact the largest Hispanic population in the city — 95% Puerto Rican. Between the two sections there is a small corridor that is integrated.

"One of KJAC's tasks in this traditionally racially divided area of 65,000 people has been to break down racial barriers," said Pamela Riley, executive director of KJAC. "We try to bring people together, and have been really strong about breaking down fears, teaching about different cultures. Unemployment compounds the problem. It is usually

Susan Pierce is a free-lance journalist based in Philadelphia.

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double the national rate — upwards of 7% — in depressed areas, but in certain sections of Kensington, it's 25 to 40%, while in White areas it's 12%."

But thanks to KJAC's efforts, said the Rev. Floyd Naters-Gamarra, rector of St. Barnabas, "This is one of the few organized communities I have ever worked in. All I had to do was plug into what was already happening."

DiBerardinis agreed. "This is the best organized community in Philadelphia. It took 10 or 15 years to make it happen and it's the network that makes it strong, not any one group." He also felt that a viable cross-racial and cultural leadership had emerged in the past three or four years, "which is unique in this city."

KJAC has conducted several successful campaigns in the struggle to revitalize Kensington. A watershed victory came recently when KJAC's organizing prevented St. Christopher's Hospital for Children from leaving the neighborhood and causing a further loss of jobs and services. Also, because of KJAC's efforts, a new high school for the area, on the drawing board of 20 years, will finally be constructed.

At present, KJAC is campaigning against the proposed merger of two local banks until the management promises to negotiate equitable lending and investment practices for Kensington. And KJAC is also fighting a battle on the most dangerous front of all — against the drug trade.

All types of drugs are available in the neighborhood — marijuana, cocaine, heroin — but "coke" is the fastest seller. The area is the center for "crank" production — amphetamines — for the whole Northeast of the country. People come from all over to buy, and Cadillacs frequently pull into the neighborhood.

Teressa Joyner, senior warden at St. Barnabas, mother of five sons and long time community activist, sees first-hand every day what drugs are doing to Kensington: "I have watched these kids grow up in the neighborhood and see them now addicted to drugs, or they have dropped out of school and are selling drugs. It's really hard as a mother to explain to your child when you don't have money and he wants a pair of $65 sneakers and he tells you his friend has a pair — but his friend and his friend's father are dealing drugs. They pay kids $300 to $400 a week to stand on the corner and deal dope."

She added, "It's an easy way out for the kids. Don't go to school anymore. You can just stand on the corner, you can make so much a day. Since almost everybody in this neighborhood is low income, this excess money is glorious.

Clergy play a central role in helping a Philadelphia neighborhood fight deterioration — and the drug trade. A Hispanic priest, twice beaten by drug dealers, persists in the struggle along with his parishioners.

Young women are turning now to prostitution to get drug money. A lot of children have no interest in coming to church because they're high all the time. You see them walking around like zombies, and you think, this is our youth, and this is our future."

Joyner says she talks seriously to her sons about drugs, about their effect on the body. "I say, sure, it's an easy way to make money, but you have to think about the risks. Any day you can be shot down, and if they think we have drugs in the house, they could wipe me and my whole family out."

Drug dealing has its risks, but so does going up against the drug dealers. Naters-Gamarra, known as "Father Butch," and Efraim Rios, who works with youth, are members of KJAC and of a group called United Neighborhood Against Drugs (UNAD). They both have been attacked by unknown assailants. Last April, Rios was beaten and stabbed. Father Butch was attacked twice — worked over with a rubber hose on Halloween of last year and, most recently, beaten into unconsciousness. He was thrown into a vacant lot in pouring rain, to wake up bloody and full of mud. He also lost two teeth, which he refers to as "cheap dentistry."

Rios explained how he earned the drug dealers' enmity: "I help run an urban environmental education center and after school, neighborhood kids come in for different activities. I'm a key resource person because I speak Spanish. I also do draft counselling and a lot of community organizing. In 1982, with another neighborhood agency, we staged a big rally in Norris Square Park, right in front of our office. The drug traffickers were in the square. Since then, the dealers started writing graffiti on the walls in Spanish saying *Odio al chota* — 'Death to the snitch.' That's when I started receiving notes at work and at home.

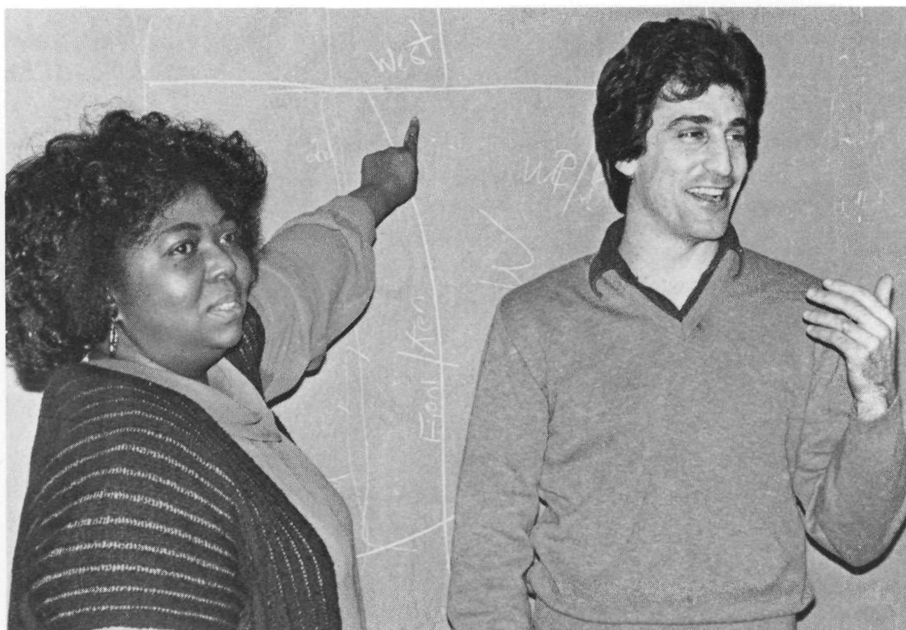
"While I was working at the center one night storing wood under the porch I felt someone pull my legs. At first I thought it was some of the kids. But then they threw a tarpaulin over me and two males started kicking, cutting and slicing me. I was only saved because something scared them away — maybe a car or a passerby."

After being attacked Rios went to the police, but "nothing the police have done has made me feel secure," he said. At first he thought it might have been a random attack, that he may have disturbed a robbery in progress at his place of work. "But about a week later, I received a note that said, 'We're not done with you yet. We'll make you bleed slow.' "

UNAD was formed, all KJAC mem-

bers agreed, because the police effort to combat the drugs and the violence was not sufficient. Naters-Gamarra said, "It's like Dodge City around here," referring to the fact that gunfights can break out in broad daylight, and people feel like hostages. The concensus was, in fact, that the entire city government had turned its back on Kensington.

"I came here when I was 10 years old," said the 33-year-old Rios. "And I saw the change. Companies leaving, buildings just dying — you can see them actually deteriorate before your eyes. It's like a movie of H.G. Well's *Time Machine*, where in fast motion you see the buildings collapse. The city has no response. It's like they're saying, 'The heck with those people. Eventually that whole area of North Philadelphia will be vacant and we can come in after 20 years, bulldoze everything and do what we want.' "



KJAC members Teressa Joyner, senior warden of St. Barnabas, and Mike DiBerardinis, legislative aide to Pennsylvania State Representative Ralph Acosta, describe the racial and ethnic mix of the Kensington area.

The coalition has not let city apathy nor fear of drug dealer retaliation stop their campaign, though the attacks have made them all more cautious and forced some changes in their lives. Rios, a life-long pacifist, has bought a gun and trained himself and his wife to use it.

Panamanian by birth, Father Butch said, "I'm getting a lot of support from the folks around here, but I must confess I'm still very paranoid. I feel like I'm back in Central America, always looking over my shoulder. And if I go anywhere, I sit with my back against the wall."

Joyner acknowledges the danger, but said, "I think as I walk, 'God walks with me, there's a greater power than all these other ugly things happening out here.' Sure, you're afraid, but you have to have a greater fear of what's going to happen to your children and your neighborhood."

The anti-drug coalition's goal, said DiBerardinis, "is to get rid of the pushers and develop long-term programs to create a climate where drugs won't flourish. We have to go after the drug issue because it ranks up there as a major concern; it's one part of the whole picture. If we don't deal with it, we're missing something, just like if we don't deal with housing, we're missing something." He pointed out that the drug problem is one of the hardest to address because neighbors fear violent retaliation and because it's more difficult to get police accountability.

"The police don't want outsiders asking them for accountability. And it's hard to see the effects of your work. There are problems that are special to this kind of organizing. We're trying to bring everyone together to take a systematic and comprehensive approach to the problem, and to see it in context," DiBerardinis said.

"That led us first to develop a public focus, to tell people, 'It's OK to fight drugs, there's leadership in this community that's willing to stand up.' Second, we wanted to create the correct political climate — involve elected officials, get their support, then get a lot of people in the neighborhood out there, get the media to cover it, so when we go in to the city managing director, the mayor, they're predisposed to deal with us because we have community involvement, votes, and political clout. Our first series of events were designed to create that climate."

The coalition's first action was a vigil in Norris Square Park in July, 1985. The vigil got good community response and media coverage, and was followed in the next months by a march and a rally.

"Now the heat is on downtown and they have to do something about it," DiBerardinis said. He and others were encouraged when Philadelphia got a new police commissioner and district attorney recently. The coalition has a list of drug hot spots, said DiBerardinis, and wants to give city officials that list "and work out a process where they're going to be accountable to us on what they do with the information we give them. We want increased resources and a special unit

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that's going to work up here with us on our problem."

The community had success with the special unit approach several years before in dealing with a child pornography and sexual abuse ring that was operating in the neighborhood.

Many area churches besides St. Barnabas are involved in the coalition and Executive Director Riley is working on an idea for a Clergy Day. On a designated Sunday, every church in the area would talk about drug trafficking.

KJAC includes in its membership some 20 service agencies, churches and community organizations and a grassroots membership of 800 families. Its standard committees include housing, crime and safety, and South Africa and Central America. Committees meet monthly and a Steering Committee meets monthly as well. The Steering Committee of some 20 to 30 members is comprised of two elected representatives from each committee, and agency and church representatives.

Joyner, a devoted church member and vice president of KJAC, feels the churches have a crucial role to play in the fight against drugs. She said, "The church has to take a stand against what's happening and it has to be spoken from the pulpit. At St. Barnabas, it has been talked about and we got involved. But other churches are going to have to take a stand too, and let their parishioners know you can't hide behind the pulpit and in the church. You've got to get out there in the community because your church is in this community."

As a priest, Naters-Gamarra feels "It's our responsibility to help people become conduits through which change can come. One thing we try to tell people in this congregation is unless we are willing to practice what we preach, everything is a joke. I have no desire to be a martyr, but I don't have a choice, because if I say to my people, 'You've got to be willing to take risks,' then I've got to put up or shut up. So even after being attacked, I can't turn back now."

The coalition's community activism ranges beyond problems in the neighborhood to seemingly more distant international concerns. KJAC's Committee on Central America and South Africa does outreach in the schools and community. Naters-Gamarra said, "The idea is to help people make the connections. Apartheid is in South Africa but it's also right here; oppression and militarism exist in Central America but they also exist here. While we see jobs, social services and money leave the city, we read that millions in aid is going to the contras, and they're putting up missiles in West Germany. There is a connection and therefore people are affected. And when a war comes up, it's our kids who are going to be fighting someone else's war. We try to create consciousness around those issues."

Edison High School in Kensington lost more students in the Vietnam War than any high school in the United States, coalition members pointed out.

KJAC and the various groups have been so successful in addressing a variety of issues because, DiBerardinis said, "Years of working together have gone into building the trust level, the multiracial unity, the political and organizational sophistication to pull it off."

Rios said, "When we started to open up, to say, wait a minute, I can't do this by myself, it was miraculous that all of a sudden we opened our eyes, saw each other and said, 'Hey, we can help each other. The energy is here. The people are working together.' "

"You have to be united to get results," said Joyner. "It has to be Black people, it has to be White people, it has to be Puerto Rican people — we all have to join together to bring change. If we give up, Kensington is going to die and be barren land. But there are decent, caring people who want to bring change to this neighborhood.

"My hope is that I can keep on working. We might not be able to get up to the top of that mountain right now, but eventually we are going to climb over that mountain. There will be a change. If you keep knocking on the door, somebody's going to listen eventually."

Naters-Gamarra, who is proud to note that "St. Barnabas' congregation has always symbolized hope and change," summed up the basic aim of the organizing in the community:

"We may not see the results right away, but we're building a foundation that's going to enable people to realize that we're in the boat together. All of us might have come over here on different ships — some in chains, some as stewards — but right now we're in the same boat."

The old lady down the block

They brought her to this suburb
like a Guernsey on a rope
with the meadow grass in her nostrils,
woods at dawn at the back of her eyes,
into this groomed and balanced block
where houses politely did not touch.
Soon roses, peonies, blueberries
clustered on the fences and porch rails,
tomato plants, brussel sprouts
and pumpkins up against the house.
Beanrows meandered in the backyard
half dug with schemes
and mounds of plans.
Winter her lights burned old yellow
while she baked as she nursed seedlings,
counting bulbs on every table.
Found she did not bite, they finally
enjoyed the stump of her bent
among the riot at any hour,
set their seasons by her, counted her
a watchdog of the neighborhood.
Within this space she still held memories
of fifty acre fields and thoughts
of barns tottered in her head.
She could taste her father's orchard,
pass on mutely her steady rhythms
to neighbors with a handful of soil.

— Ray Greenblatt

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Short Takes

New Silent Majority

We agree that the yuppie phenomenon has been overblown by the mainstream media, and yes, we're tired of reading about trendy yup lifestyles. But we can't help wondering about the rest of the baby boomers. Leave it to the market researchers to come up with a neat little category for that great silent majority. They're the *yuffies* — young urban failures. According to the Lempert Report, a marketing newsletter, only 8% of Americans born between 1946 and 1965 earn over $30,000 per year and qualify as yuppies. But 74% of working baby boomers make $20,000 or less and 40% earn less than $10,000. No brie for this crowd — let them eat macaroni and cheese!

***Dollars and Sense* 9/85**

Quote of note

Economists think the poor need them to let them know that they are poor.

Peter Drucker

World War III underway

Without being radical or overly bold, I will tell you that the Third World War has already started — a silent war, not for that reason any the less sinister. This war is tearing down Brazil, Latin America, and practically all the Third World. Instead of soldiers dying there are children; instead of millions of wounded there are millions of unemployed; instead of destruction of bridges there is the tearing down of factories, schools, hospitals, and entire economies . . . It is a war by the United States against the Latin American continent and the Third World. It is a war over the foreign debt, one which has as its main weapon *interest*, a weapon more deadly than the atom bomb, more shattering than a laser beam.

Luis Ignacio Silva
Brazilian Labor Leader
Conference on Latin American and Caribbean Debt

Definition

An Irish atheist is a person who believes there is no God but is sure that the Blessed Virgin is God's mother. Anon.

UN 1986 Peace Year Emblem

Reality

It is easier to rape the world
than it is to risk Love,
and the world eagerly awaits
real intercourse.

Jean C. Higgins

Right on cue

In the Roman Mass there is a frequent exchange between priest and people: "The Lord be with you;" . . . "And also with you." I heard of a priest who was about to give the greeting when he tapped the microphone and muttered: "There's something wrong with the mike." Back came the responsive congregation, "And also with you."

The Rev. Joseph Gallagher, Columnist
***The Evening Sun* 12/12/85**

Celibate bishops only

In February, Anglican Archbishop Robert Runcie will be a principal speaker at a week-long Bible convention to mark the 150th anniversary of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church, Kerala, India. The Mar Thoma Church is Protestant in doctrine and Orthodox in liturgy, with *celibate bishops* and *married clergy.*

Diocesan Press Service

Workers in trouble

"The working class of this country is in trouble," says Joseph Romano, president of the United Steelworkers' local at Danly Machine Corp., Cicero, Ill. Romano was referring to hard-line approaches companies are using in current labor negotiations. He could have been just as well referring to the overall decline of U.S. union membership; now 18.8% of the work force, down from 30% in 1950.

The major reason is that organizing has not kept pace with the dramatic shift in the nature of the work force. An AFL-CIO report points out that manufacturing and construction account for 50% of union membership, but these sectors employ only 22% of the civilian work force. In contrast, 90% of all new jobs are being added in service industries. The service sector will employ 75% of the work force by 1990. Yet less than 10% of the service sector is union organized.

National Center for the Laity
***Initiatives,* Fall 1985**

Fate, chance and God

Whatever one's belief about death and God, the events of sickness and accident point to the much forgotten and denied fragility of life. Each of us really is only a heartbeat away from death, or as likely to be crushed by an airplane wheel as to be diagnosed with a terminal illness tomorrow. *The question for me is not*, "Why does this happen?" The real question is "How shall we live, knowing that such events are possible?"

The Rev. Chuck Meyer
St. David's Hospital
Austin, Texas

Mark your calendar

Central America Week, March 16-24. Educational packets available from the Interreligious Task Force on Central America, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, N.Y. 10115. *National March for Women's Lives:* March 9, East Coast, Washington, D.C.; March 16, West Coast, Los Angeles. Sponsored by NOW to mark National Women's History Week, and to coincide with International Women's Day.

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A Luta Continua — the struggle continues

by Barbara C. Harris

EUC: The sleeping giant stirs

At the end of this month, the often maligned, yet tenacious Episcopal Urban Caucus will hold its sixth National Assembly, bringing together persons from around the country who are involved in or share a concern for social ministry. The Assembly theme, "Celebrate the City," appends the appeal to "Stir up the Church to be the Wounded, Loving Hands of Jesus."

Characteristically, the Caucus, which last met 18 months ago in Detroit, will take its gathering to the seat of a pressing urban problem — Pittsburgh, Pa. — which, because of closed steel mills, factories and warehouses, has been described as the heart of the "rust belt."

The Caucus, which got off to a rousing start in the fall of 1980 with a huge and enthusiastic gathering at Indianapolis, has fallen on hard times financially and otherwise in the intervening years. Like many groups that periodically have emerged in the Episcopal Church, it has suffered from the twin ills of traditional Protestant limited attention span and Anglicanism's short-lived love affairs with good causes. No small part of its problem was the early expectation of many that the Caucus could be the repository for the concerns of virtually every disaffected liberal group within the church and corresponding efforts to bite off not only more than it could chew, but a lot more than its supporters could digest. The frustration that ensued was shared by many of us who served on its original governing board.

Fortunately, the Rev. Ed Rodman, Canon Missioner for the Diocese of Massachusetts and a brilliant strategist, was brought on board in 1984 as interim coordinator to help revitalize and refocus the Caucus and hone its agenda to a more manageable set of concerns.

In a report to the September 1984 Assembly, Canon Rodman pointed out that regardless of a desire to be inclusive or its commitment to the broad range of injustices that exist not only in urban areas but throughout society, the Urban Caucus could not be all things to all people. He proposed, and the Assembly wisely agreed, that the Caucus "establish its priority of mission with regard to advocacy for and on behalf of the dispossessed within and without the church as they may be found in our cities and/or rural areas." In turn, EUC would support other groups which are clearly capable of lifting up their specific concerns in the life of the church.

The continued viability of the Caucus, Rodman stated, will be in direct proportion to the degree of commitment, time, energy and money all can give to its agenda, which must be clearly articulated and presented on a "take it or leave it" basis. Groups of a more fundamentalist and conservative nature long have found this to be a strategically sound and tactically effective approach.

A highlight of the 1986 Assembly will be an open forum called a "Vision Quest" where members of the Caucus will have the opportunity, in the presence of Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning, to present their views about how the Episcopal Church could respond to issues on the urban scene and in today's interrelated world. In addition, the Revs. Earl Neil and Peter Golden, Staff Officers for the Church's Coalition for Human Needs (CHN) and Jubilee Ministries, respectively, will report jointly on the status and relationship of those two efforts and how representatives of urban churches can access these vital funding sources.

Offering new opportunities for involvement, the Caucus Board has authorized the setting aside of up to 50% of its available funds for regional and/or local expressions of EUC to organize and apply for grants up to $7,500 to initiate programs designed to "stir up the church to deeper awareness and involvement in urban issues."

With a streamlined agenda, a sharper focus and renewed enthusiasm, it seems this sleeping giant is again stirring. Those who claim an interest in urban mission would do well to lay aside personal agendas and lend a hand to moving the giant forward. As was true in 1984, this is no time to drop out, break away, sulk, pout or denounce. Rather it is a singular opportunity to significantly influence the church's agenda in its transition to new leadership.

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Church role vital for justice in

Our age has its own particular mission — — the creation of a civilization founded upon the spiritual nature of work.
Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots*

A growing call for economic justice in the United States is issuing from the religious community these days. It would be a mistake to over-estimate its significance. But the steadily rising rate of unemployment levels deemed "acceptable," the existence of a permanent underclass of people who have never worked, massive plant closures, and our growing inequality of wealth have all had an effect on the churches. The Roman Catholic bishops have done us the best recent service with their pastoral letter, "Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy," now in its second draft. More books on the subject are beginning to appear, such as the recent commendable title, "Toward a Christian Economic Ethic" by Prentiss L. Pemberton and Daniel Rush Finn.

These are welcome developments, and they signal an awareness within our churches that we cannot in conscience stop at Band-Aid approaches to social pain when the whole body politic is shot through with the cancer of economic injustice. But there is a deeper problem here. "Economic justice," while a sweeping term, nonetheless retains the focus upon *economics* without pushing beyond. Moreover, to speak only of economic justice seems to ignore the inseparability of one's economic life from one's social, cultural and family life.

The real debate must ultimately focus through and beyond our economic life to the issue of *work itself.* That, in these last years of the 20th century, is where profound shifts and upheavals are occurring. Simone Weil is right. We need to strive now for a civilization founded upon the spiritual nature of work.

To talk about the crisis in work as people of faith puts us on firmer ground. We have a spiritual understanding of work in our tradition. It stems from the earliest chapters of the book of Genesis, permeates the parables of Jesus (so frequently cast in the metaphors of work), and is reflected in the commentaries of many of the early church theologians. The emphasis on work also allows the recognition that the economic arrangements of society are not set in concrete, but are consequent upon the more primary understanding of the purpose of work in society. If, for example, the purpose of work is to increase production and profits, as has been Western capitalist society's operating assumption ever since the Industrial Revolution, human beings are subservient to that goal. If, on the other hand, there is a spiritual purpose to work, as Weil has it, other understandings flow.

The Papal Encyclical *On Human Work,* issued in 1981, explores this question in some depth. "Human work is a key, probably the essential key, to the whole social question," the encyclical states. This sentence alone indicates that it is a more radical document than the bishops' economics pastoral. Therefore, addressing the issue of work, instead of economic justice, allows us to consider a gamut of issues related to and derivative from work.

This focus is not merely some academic exercise for theoreticans. Quite the contrary: Within the last decade the convergence of economic, technological and social developments in the workplace is transforming the shape and content of work more fundamentally than at any time since the Industrial Revolution, with pronounced adverse effects upon tens of millions of people and thousands of communities in the United States.

In addition, the militarization of the economy is skewing the nature of work as well as insuring a continuation of the arms race. Three aspects of these developments deserve brief mention.

- First, the shift away from a blue-collar industrial society toward a service-and-information society will have caused massive economic dislocation of 15 to 45 million workers before it runs its course. This shift carries a sharp downward movement of both wages and skill levels, accompanied by the extensive loss of trade union protection. The shift has strongly abetted the creation of a permanent underclass of people. Since this underclass is disproportionately composed of minorities and women, racism and sexism simply get reinforced in a vicious cycle. So while the stock market booms

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Richard W. Gillett, a contributing editor to THE WITNESS, is director of *Work, Economics and Religion,* a new Los Angeles-based ecumenical project. He is the author of *The Human Enterprise: A Christian Perspective on Work.* (See ad back cover.)

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new workplaces

by Richard W. Gillett

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along we become conditioned to accept as "normal" an upwards of 7% unemployment rate, a figure which was politically unacceptable as recently as the Nixon presidency.

- Second, an increasing vulnerability of working people is resulting from the mobility of corporations, the weakening of trade unions, and the new and more demeaning division of work tasks brought on by new technology. When the backbone of the industrial system was the steelworker, the miner and the auto worker, there was an implicit recognition that they had the power and the right ultimately to withhold their labor if they were not getting a fair deal. Now that has changed, because the power equation has changed. In the new service-and-information economy, it is inconceivable that the video display terminal operator, the hospital worker or the McDonald's fast-food server could wield that kind of labor power. They and others are now peripheral to the power equation. To put it bluntly, they are expendable.

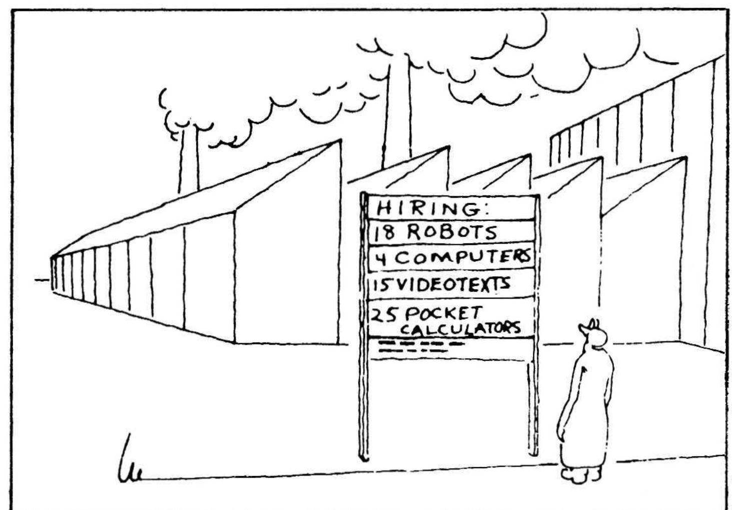
- Third, the large corporations and banks to whom this power has accrued now operate largely beyond the reach of public accountability. Their computers tell them where to invest, what rate of profit they will need, where to shift production, buy or sell companies (or declare bankruptcy!), in order to satisfy their stockholders. This aggressive corporate behavior began back in the 1970s when American business was increasingly encountering world competition. In response, our business schools began to evolve new strategies. One was to emphasize "cash management" over commitment to any specific product line. (A cynical term illustrated this new strategy: "cash cows." A "cash cow" is a company generating large cash flows which can be "milked" for investment needs elsewhere. Later it can be discarded.) A second corporate strategy was to demand massive concessions from labor, frequently accompanied by threat of closure. A third strategy centralized decision-making about investments, rates of profit, location of plants, etc. This dramatically reduced the influence of local management, labor, and the community in decisions affecting jobs and production. These strategies have been highly successful for top management and investors, resulting in massive transfers of capital overseas and huge job losses at home.

In confronting these new developments we must continue to strategize about particular economic justice issues, of course. But the real opportunity lies in pushing the debate onto the ground of work and its purpose in human society.

From this ground we can say from a religious point of view that in the early chapters of Genesis we are urged to tend the earth and be the stewards of the Creator. There is an ethical nature given to work: it has intrinsic meaning for the person who performs it, and also meaning in relation to the world. The papal encyclical on work states that all work has a threefold moral significance: "First, it embodies the distinctive human capacity for self-expression and self-realization. Second, it is the ordinary way for human beings to fulfil their material needs. Finally, work enables people to contribute to the well-being of the larger community."

In their 1982 Labor Day message, the Episcopal Urban Bishops emphasized the importance of work: "Work that does not serve the common good, that does not build towards a peaceful and just community, fails the test of work defined as a metaphor of creation." They went on to outline steps toward such a vision, such as worker ownership, worker cooperatives, and democratic decision-making in the workplace. They also strongly affirmed the right and desirability of workers to organize and form unions, and sharply criticized the new mobility of corporate capital.

There is some concern here and there in our parishes about these issues. But sad to say, the current shape and thrust of



Lierbermann Frankfurter Rundschau

parish ministry almost totally ignores the work life — or the unemployment! — of parishioners. One half of a parishioner's weekday waking hours are spent at work. Yet rare or nonexistent are the parish programs which probe the significance of work and the workplace as subjects integral to a Christian vision of justice and human wholeness.

Lee Schore, director of the Center for Working Life in Oakland, Cal., emphasizes the importance of understanding how a person's work life influences his or her family life and social and cultural outlook. (See box.) Noting that workers who are unhappy or under stress at work typically blame themselves, she deals with working people in groups to assist them in analyzing their work situation as well as their own feelings. Schore, a counsellor, teacher and former auto worker says, "A worker who is oppressed and deprived of her dignity on the job must learn to direct anger where it belongs: at the unjust workplace situation instead of at herself." Schore brings groups of working people together to conduct a "family work life history" which assists them in seeing the connections between their work life and their family life, in assessing their work situation for what it is, and in exploring attitudes and perspectives on work shared by one's parents and grandparents as they are reconstructed in the memory.

Under a grant by the Cathedral Corporation of the Diocese of Los Angeles, Schore will conduct a work life history for 15 lay people in Southern California, who will also be trained to conduct such an exercise with others in their own parishes. This program, coupled with subsequent related projects, thus seeks to broaden the base of awareness among churchgoers about the centrality of work in people's lives, and its relationship to a Christian vision of social justice.

How might the church at national, diocesan and parish levels begin to address more directly the issues of work and economic justice at this particular historical moment? Here are three suggestions:

1. It is time for a new round of regional hearings similar to those on "The City" sponsored by the Episcopal Urban Bishops several years ago which resulted in the publication, *To Hear and to Heed.* But the focus ought now to be upon specific *situations* instead of the problems of cities as a whole. The "situation," to be identified beforehand, ought to focus on an issue or issues involving working people or unemployed whose circumstances are illustrative of the structural injustices of the workplace. The hearing could thus

Guidelines for family work history

The following questions are guides to help you think about the way work has affected your own development.

1. What work did your grandparents and parents do? Was there a big difference between them? How were you aware of that difference? What were your expectations for yourself based on their work?

2. What were the stated and unstated assumptions about work in your family? How was work viewed? Was it ever talked about? As a child, what was your understanding of your parents' work life? Do you know what your parents actually did on their jobs? If not, why not and how did that shape your own attitude about work?

3. What did the parents of your friends do? Did you feel different about their work than your own parents'? What sense of pride or shame did you have about your parents' work? Did it change as you grew older? How and why did it change or remain the same?

4. How did your parents' jobs affect the structure of your family? I.e., when you ate, when you spent time together, their availability for you emotionally and physically, etc. If either of your parents had a different kind of job, would it have affected your childhood in any way?

5. What is your work history? What kinds of jobs have you held? What skills do you have? What jobs did you like best? Why? What jobs did you hate? Why?

6. What are your attitudes about work? If you had an absolute choice, not related to earning money, what would you most want to do? When you think of "workers," what is your image?

— Lee Schore
Center for Working Life, Oakland, Cal.

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encourage both analytical and educational information, and enable local churches and dioceses to construct responses and build alliances.

2. The Protestant and Catholic churches at national levels might undertake a joint exploration of the recent impact of the policies and practices of large corporations upon communities and working people. A decade ago, several denominations conducted such studies. The growing dominance of large corporations over community and workplace requires a new examination. The results of such an exploration, which should be directed by "rank and file" working people and trade unionists fully as much as academicians and business persons, would issue its recommendations for community-church strategies, public policy advocacy, and funding priorities for projects engaging in issues of work and economic justice.

3. At regional and congregational levels, pilot programs on the relationship between work and family life, and on church responsibility for involvement in particular workplace struggles should issue in the design of new Christian Education curricula and techniques relating work, human fulfillment and the Christian gospel.

As more is learned about the workplace, the transformation of work, and their relationship to economic policy, the church should investigate ways to enable its own laypeople *as workers* — and as managers (for they too are affected) to begin a social analysis and to theologize about their experiences. A grassroots theology of work, developed by working people and aiding their actions for justice in the workplace and community, would be a new and vital contribution to a Christian community striving to be relevant to the complexities of modern social and economic life. It would also signal that we were determined not to let an economists' elite hold sway as high priests of our social well-being. ■

Resources

The Human Enterprise: A Christian Perspective on Work by Richard W. Gillett. Sheed and Ward, paperback $7.95. See ad back cover.

Toward a Christian Economic Ethic by Prentiss L. Pemberton and Daniel Rush Finn. Winston Press, paperback $10.95.

Must We Choose Sides: Christian Commitment for the '80s, Vol. I, published by the Interreligious Task Force for Social Analysis for use in parish study groups or for individual readers. Prepaid orders only. $5.00 each, bulk discounts upon request. Make check payable to THE WITNESS, P.O. Box 359, Ambler, PA 19002.

To Hear and to Heed. Published for the Urban Bishops Coalition by Forward Movement. $2.00 Order from THE WITNESS.

Some of Georgia's best

**He had the stuff pioneers are made of.
He drove an old model car,
and called on many folk who had
disabilities.
He was Mr. Sosby of State Rehab,
A program hailed by the blind,
and the lame who wanted to survive
upon their own.**

**Once he drove a distance to help a man
who had no legs,
To build a little sled, to which the man
could hitch a mule,
And plow his fields in the spring, and
grow a garden too.
And among his rows of corn, stood
sunflowers, turning as the sun moved
their way.**

**He and others blessed the day that
Mr. Sosby came.
A pioneer in his time,
A quiet man who had the depths
to know the needs of many,
A man of soul and mind who looked
beneath the outer shell,
And saw where hopes and dreams
begin.**

**And in his path have followed many
others in their time,
Chosen for their gift to see and know a
need, and follow through.**

**To know that sans eyes, sans arms,
sans legs, need not mean that one has
more need to prove
one's self, than another,
Who may feel more fortunate,
And that desire to live and work and
learn, and grow is as natural
as the earth.**

— Ruby Royal Quick

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How protest movements affect electoral politics

by Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward

This is a time when activists seem to have turned away from movements in favor of electoral politics, although for diverse reasons and with diverse strategies. Some, jarred by the election of 1980 and the dramatic changes in national policy that followed, have moved into the Democratic Party fold. Others have been more assertive, attempting to enlarge the possibilities of electoral politics by enlisting under Jesse Jackson's banner, or, as feminists have done, by acting as a pressure group demanding concessions from within the Democratic Party. Still others have joined in voter registration campaigns, hoping to transform the Democratic Party by enlarging its constituency to include substantially more of the poor and minorities.

One way to interpret the renewed emphasis on electoral politics is that it reflects a certain disillusionment on the Left with the movement politics of the 1960s and early 1970s. This interpretation seems credible because movement and electoral strategies have come to be seen as polarized alternatives. Those who reject electoral politics do so on the grounds that movement constituencies and the issues they raise would inevitably be swallowed up in the electoral morass, exhausting their energies in exchange for token responses. In turn, that view receives support and standing from a good deal of the work of the intellectual Left which defines electoral politics, in a nutshell, as a system of ritual legitimation of prevailing structures of power and inequality. Viewed from this perspective, those on the Left who choose electoral politics over movement participation are often judged as having failed a test of conviction.

There is much about this argument that is true. The turn to electoral politics does usually result in the absorption of movement leaders and the dissipation of movement energies with little recompense in policy concessions. The reasons are obvious. On the one side, movement leaders rarely represent blocs of votes sufficiently large to command concessions. And even when the adherents are numerous, movement leaders do not have the resources to organize and hold their votes against the onslaught of propaganda and promises of party leaders.

On the other side, movement leaders striving for electoral influence must contend with the enormous countervailing power of business. By their capacity to marshall and

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Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward are co-authors of *The New Class War* (Panteon). Piven, who teaches political science at Boston University, has appeared frequently on programs of the Urban Bishops' Caucus. Cloward is professor of social work at Columbia University.

communicate "expert" opinion, business leaders ordinarily dominate debates over definitions and solutions to economic crises. They also wield the powerful weapons of capital strike and capital flight, which can destabilize an economy. Few political leaders feel secure enough to weather the economic instabilities that these investor tactics create, or to invoke sanctions to prevent their use, as the experience of the Italian Communists and the French Socialists reveal. Moreover, the influence of business on the political parties by conventional means is also growing. The state and local infrastructure of the old party organizations has been virtually superceded by big money propaganda operations, including the rapidly swelling contributions funnelled directly to candidates through Political Action Committees. Against these formidable resources, voters have only their votes with which to contend for influence in party circles.

All of this notwithstanding, the relationship of movements to electoral politics is not one of simple antithesis. In a large and important sense, electoral strategies from the bottom depend on movement politics. Advocates of the electoral path to reform typically assume that votes are automatically translated into influence, or that at least organized votes are automatically translated into influence. That is a frail assumption. Nevertheless, there are conditions under which voters do matter, under which voters can force responses, and those conditions depend critically on the emergence of movements.

Voters become more important to politicians, and have some influence on the agenda of electoral politics, when their allegiance cannot be taken for granted. Large-scale events like war or rapid economic change may generate the discontents which loosen established party allegiances. When electoral volatility increases, political leaders try to protect or rebuild their coalitions by searching for the symbols, promises, and policy concessions that will hold old voters or win new voters, without at the same time provoking opposition elsewhere among their constituent groups.

At such moments of electoral instability, mass protest movements can play a catalytic role, as the movements of industrial workers and the unemployed did in the '30s or the civil rights and anti-war movements in the '60s. Movements sometimes generate such disruptive effects as to break the grip of ruling groups, so that new definitions and new policies can be advanced from the bottom. The issues generated by masses of defiant people politicize and activate voters; they widen divisions in the electorate; and they sometimes attract new voters to the polls who alter the electoral calculus. When political leaders make policy concessions, it is to cope with these threats of electoral cleavage, or to rebuild coalitions in the aftermath of cleavage. The impact of disruptive mass movements on public policy is thus mediated by the electoral system. Movements win policy concessions when the issues they raise fragment, or threaten to fragment, party coalitions.

If protest movements can thus activate electoral constituencies, and give them political weight, movements in turn depend both for survival and success on the electoral context. For movements to emerge and to grow, their potential followers need to feel some measure of hope, on the one hand, and some sense of safety from severe repression, on the other. Political leaders play a large role in signalling these possibilities. If they risk few repercussions at the polls, they are unlikely to generate the symbolic appeasements which may give movements a sense of strength and courage. They are far more likely to repress the movement at the outset. The risk of repression is even greater when the social base from which movements draw support is substantially underrepresented in the electorate. That is a powerful reason for attempting to ensure that people at the bottom have as large a presence as possible in the electoral system.

Nor are protest movements likely to succeed in pressing new issues onto the political agenda, or to win concessions on these issues, if they cannot mobilize a following among electoral constituencies upon whom political leaders depend. The point is not that policy decisions are in fact simply a reflection of voter preferences rather than economic power. Rather it is that for those who have little economic power, or whose economic power can only be mobilized under extraordinary conditions, votes do provide some protection, and sometimes, in the context of electoral instability and movement mobilization, they even provide some influence.

Taken together, these points of interrelationship reveal the interdependence of disruptive mass movements and electoral institutions. Voter influence is not likely to be realized without the instigating force of protest, and protest movements in turn depend upon the relative size of the electoral constituencies that polarize in their support.

This is not an argument in support of conventional electoral politics. We would be the last to argue that movements should devote their resources to drafting legislative proposals, attending high level conferences, or testifying, or lobbying. Movements do not influence electoral politics

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by the usual means. Still, the electoral context cannot be ignored, and the most crucial feature of that context is the extent to which the movement's social base is included so that, once activated, politicians are forced to contend for its support on more than symbolic terms.

This brings us to what is indisputably the most important feature of American politics: the low level of electoral participation by the bottom half of the population. The United States has the lowest level of voter participation among the Western democracies. Seventy-five to 90% of Canadians and Europeans turn out in national elections. Little more than half of the eligible American electorate voted in 1980. The significance of low voting participation for popular protest movements is that the missing half is concentrated among the people who are in effect their potential source of electoral support.

Although experts offer differing explanations of the persisting low registration rate, there is a growing consensus that the main causes are difficulties associated with the distinctive American system of voter registration. Other Western democracies have some form of universal registration, and the United States does not. When turnout among registered voters in the United States is compared with turnout in Europe, differences disappear. About 80% of Americans who are registered also vote. And they vote in roughly the same proportions no matter their age, education, or minority status. The problem in the United States is that 55 million people — 35% of the eligible electorate — are not registered. The history of how this came to be is instructive.

Ironically, White working men in the United States won the franchise earlier than workers in other nations. The bulk of the states had removed property qualifications by the early 1830s, at least a half century earlier than most of Europe. At the end of the 19th century, however, as class conflict on the farms and in the factories was coming to a boil, state governments curtailed this basic right by erecting obstacles to voting. The 1890s were the crucial years — a time when railroad and steel workers engaged in violent strikes and family farmers joined in the great protests of the Populist movement. Throughout the South and West, usurious interest rates and exorbitant railroad and granary charges goaded farmers into action. In response to Populist pressure, a number of states passed legislation regulating railroad and granary fees.

But the Supreme Court quickly acted to defend the big interests, reversing hardwon legislative victories, and so the Populists sought redress in national politics. In 1896, they made a serious bid for power by entering into a coalition with the Democratic Party and segments of the industrial working class. The nascent formation was so threatening that the business classes — in their first major effort to dominate electoral politics — mobilized one of the most vitriolic, and expensive, campaigns in American history.

The Populists were crushed, and in the flush of victory industrial and financial interests in the North and planter interests in the South solidified their hold, and erected barriers to voting. They "reformed" state election laws so that another challenge from below could not be mounted. They introduced poll taxes, literacy tests, and grandfather clauses throughout the South. These measures not only made it impossible for Blacks to register, but half of Whites as well — the same poor Whites who had been the foot soldiers of southern Populism. Nor was the backlash confined to the South. Across the North, literacy examinations, residency tests, and various cumbersome procedures were built into the registration process. By the onset of the Great Depression, registration restrictions had reduced voter turnout from 75% in national elections in the latter half of the 19th century to little more than 50%. Most of the drop occurred among the ranks of Blacks, poor farmers, and industrial workers. And so a contraction of the American electorate took place which persists to this day.

> *"The risk of repression is even greater when the social base from which movements draw support is substantially underrepresented in the electorate. That is a powerful reason for attempting to ensure that people at the bottom have as large a presence as possible in the electoral system."*

To sum up this history in another way, the reason the United States has the lowest level of voting participation among the Western democracies is that the right to vote in the United States was sharply curtailed by the laws and procedures surrounding voter registration. In other words, the elemental right to the franchise is still in dispute. And that is a serious problem for popular protest movements. It means they are more vulnerable to repression — what better case in point than the violence done participants in the Southern civil rights struggle? — and it means that the demands raised by protest movements lose force because of the weakness of the electoral constituencies to whom they ultimately appeal.

It is for this reason that the turn to electoral politics in the present period is not, in the longer term sense, a shift away from protest politics at all. Most important, there is ample evidence that, despite persisting barriers, large scale voter registration efforts have been spurred by the growing polari-

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zation of electoral politics by class, race and gender. The success of these efforts to enlarge the electorate is integral to the future strength of protest movements from the bottom.

Resource

The above article is excerpted from the foreword by Piven and Cloward to *This Mighty Dream: Social Protest Movements in the United States* by Madeleine Adamson and Seth Borgos. *This Mighty Dream* interprets the development of popular movements for social change in the United States over the last century. Agrarian protest, the labor struggle, the Black freedom movement and community organizing are vividly depicted. Richly illustrated with photographs, drawings, posters, cartoons and songs. Send $9.95 plus $1.50 postage and handling to ACORN, 522 8th St. S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003 (202-547-9292).

If God were process-oriented

The following bit of fluff, author unknown, was sent to us by Abbie Jane Wells of Juneau, Alaska, who received it from W. H. "Ping" Ferry of Scarsdale, N.Y. We pass it on to WITNESS readers, and will be happy to provide attribution in a future issue should anyone out there know its source.

If God were process-oriented, the Book of Genesis would read something like this: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The earth was without form and void, so God created a small committee. God fully balanced the committee by race, sex, ethnic origins and economic status in order to interface pluralism with the holistic concept of self-determination according to the adjudicatory guidelines. Even God was impressed. So ended the first day.

And God said: "Let this committee draw up a mission statement." And behold the committee decided to prioritize and strategize and God called this "process empowerment," and God thought it sounded pretty good. Evening and morning were the second day.

And God said: "Let the committee determine goals and objectives, and engage in long-range planning." Unfortunately, a debate as to the semantic differences between goals and objectives preempted almost all of the third day. Although the question was never satisfactorily resolved, God thought the process was constructive. Evening and morning were the third day.

And God said: "Let there be a retreat in which the committee can envision functional organization and engage in planning, being objective." The committee considered adjustment of priorities and consequential alternatives to program directions. And God said that it was good. And God thought it was worth all the coffee and doughnuts. So ended the fourth day.

God said: "Let this committee be implemented consistent with the long-range planning and strategy and commitments, and consider the guidelines and linkages and structural sensitivities and alternatives and implemental models." And God saw that this was very democratic. So would have ended the fifth day except for the unintentional renewal of the debate about the differences between goals and objectives.

On the sixth day the committee agreed on criteria for adjudicatory assessment and evaluation. This wasn't on the agenda that God had planned. God wasn't able to attend the meeting, having to take the afternoon off to create day and night, heaven and earth, seas, plants, trees, seasons, years, sun, moon, earth, fish, animals and human beings.

On the seventh day God rested and the committee submitted its recommendations. As it turned out, the committee recommended forms for things identical to the way God had already created them. So the committee passed a resolution commending God for God's implementation according to the guidelines. It was expressed (very quietly of course) in some opinions that mankind should have been created in the committee's image.

And God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the committee. ■

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Putting Grandma in jail

by Margaret Ellen Traxler

They called her "Queenie." She was 79-years-old and suffered a dysfunctional hip which made crutches a necessity. She was a lifer and saw for herself no end but death in prison.

"I stabbed my husband," Queenie told me. "He aimed a gun at me and I ran him through with a kitchen knife," she said. Then she asked me, tears running down her furrowed and leathery face, "Should I have let him shoot me, or was I right in defending myself?"

Since 1970, the number of women 60 years and older sentenced to prison has risen 40%. The arrest rate for persons 55 years and older increased 46% between 1970 and 1980. Five percent of the total U.S. population in prison is 60 years or older. According to JERICHO prison studies there are 80,000 elderly men and women in state and federal prisons. Of these, between 30 to 50% are women, incarcerated for the first time when they are at least 60 years of age.

I have seen these women in prisons and jails all over this country. They are the silent ones — in a daze at what seems to be the end of their lives. They have known marriage, family, death of a spouse and now they are in prison.

What offenses bring older women to this sad ending in their declining years? Women commit economic crimes of relatively minor nature such as forgery, shop-lifting, stealing from the U.S. mails or cheating on welfare. The more serious crimes such as murder are usually once-in-a-lifetime offenses. Claudia McCormick, while serving as superintendent of Cook County Jail in Chicago, conducted research showing that out of the women studied who were accused of killing a spouse, all had suffered at least 10 years of physical and sexual abuse. All had used a kitchen instrument for the crime which means that violence was probably not premeditated.

In a Southern prison, our Institute of Women Today teams found Debra, mother of 10 children who killed her husband and the father of all her children. The court would not admit as evidence Debra's 11 years of medical records showing that her deceased husband had broken her clavical, cut off an ear that was sewed back on, cracked her skull and lacerated her back, all documented by X-rays. The court restriction is common in some states where evidence of self-defense is denied. In this instance, however, the state supreme court reviewed Debra's case and released her for return to her rejoicing children.

Another important reason for the rise in elderly women in prison goes back to the middle '50s when states began to release mental patients from hospitals. The rationale was that the ultimate good of the patient called for de-institutionalization and a return to family settings and normal environment. As reasonable as this sounds, many of the mentally ill now end up behind bars. Studies clearly show that the present prison population has one-third more mentally disoriented residents than are represented in the population at large.

A warden at a large state women's correctional center showed me the new mental health prison unit. She said, "Legislators are willing to spend multi-millions on this new facility, but they refuse money for mental hospitals." The staggering additional sums necessary for the guards and prison network support systems seem no problem for the legislatures.

A third factor contributing to the rise of women in prison is an economic crunch that hits women hardest. In 1983, Warden Linda Geissen, at that time head of the Illinois women's prison said, "The State Corrections Department predicts that the number of women in prison will double by 1986." When I asked the reason, she replied, "Women are left as sole support of their children and welfare subsidies are inadequate, so women will commit economic crimes to make-up the difference." Already by the end of 1985, this prediction had been realized. The prison population in Illinois, as well as on national levels, had doubled.

More and more grandmas will be going to jail for additional reasons. Older women are the fastest growing population segment in the United States. Of these, 2.8 million women over 65 live in poverty, compared to less than 1 million men. Sixty percent of women over 65 live alone with social security as their only income. Many such women make up the fiscal dichotomy between income and needs by moving into cheaper housing and eating less. Some are gradually lured by fiscal need into the economic crimes which land them behind bars.

Margaret Ellen Traxler is a Notre Dame nun who directs the Institute of Women Today, which ministers to women in prison. She was co-recipient, with the Rev. Jean Dementi, of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company's Vida Scudder Award in 1985.

These crimes are not the E.F. Hutton-type, check-kiting crimes of magnitude, but repeated petty offenses that certainly do harrass law enforcement people but which could be better corrected by attending to root causes of the pauperization of women. Societal structures, including churches, seem unwilling to examine diminishing resources and the critical choices that must be made by the poor.

Our prisons pay from $30,000 per resident per year (Alaska's expenditure) to $4,500 (which Texas pays). Texas has been under court order for five years to improve its corrections facilities, which the courts have declared inhumane. The average cost per resident in state and federal prisons is $9,000. That amount would send younger prisoners to college and represents double the average annual income of the elderly in our country.

The most compelling drawbacks preventing reform of our prison industry seem to be the billion dollar employment structure which prisons support for administration, guards, etc., and the attitude of citizens who cannot look upon the challenge of corrections as an economic frontier in need of reform.

The needs of elderly incarcerated women are the immediate challenge, however. Older women cannot participate in many of the leisure-time activities in the prison schedule such as sports. Even walking between buildings or down long corridors is hard on the feet of the elderly. Our Institute of Women Today provides for the special needs of older women prisoners such as support hose and foundation garments to which older women have become accustomed and which are not provided by prison apparel supplies. Apart from the leisure-time activities, the work schedule is problematic. Older women who may not have skills for clerical, computer or para-professional positions are assigned to janitorial jobs which have no inherent training potential.

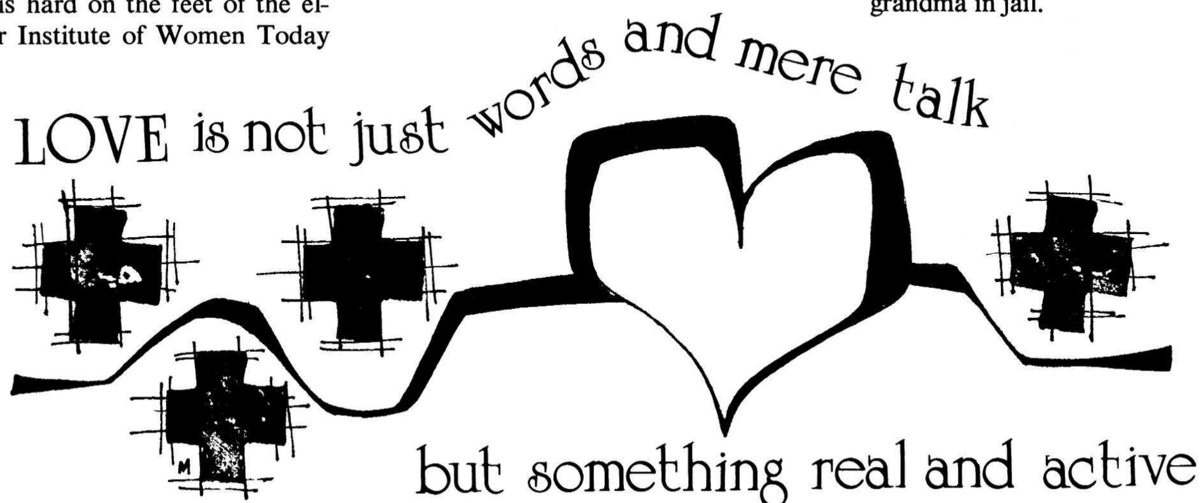
The Institute of Women Today has begun small industries in prisons such as quilting and the making of shoulder bags on contract from Church Women United of New York City and from the women of the Presbyterian Church. These shoulder bags, made out of donated denim, bring 100% profits to prison women who use the money for their own needs and those of their children. The quilting industry was begun by older women in prison who brought this sewing folk art skill with them and then taught the younger women in what is now a flourishing business.

Judge Richard Fitzgerald, chief judge of Cook County Criminal Court, in an interview with *The Chicago Sun Times* was asked about gainful employment of prisoners. Judge Fitzgerald passed off the question with cavalier dispatch. "That was the philosophy 25 years ago," said Fitzgerald, "and it didn't work. It hasn't worked," he repeated. "That's the utopian approach to rehabilitating criminals."

U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren Burger disagrees. Burger recalled his visits to Scandinavia where all prisoners work for wages. Justice Burger hopes that the present 10% of U.S. prisoners who work can be raised to 50% in the next 10 years. Ann Britt Grunewald, warden of Sweden's maximum security prison, said, "Everyone here works for the market wage." When told that U.S. prisoners have a recidivism rate of about one-third, Warden Grunewald replied, "Industry helps rehabilitate. Almost none of ours have to return."

Miami has put into effect a program now called The Miami Plan. When a citizen breaks the law for the first time, the court asks a team of two or three peers to help the offender. Team and offender talk over together reasons why the law was broken and then the team "adopts" the offender. They work out a relationship and a plan for remedial action. The Miami Plan is proof that while citizens do want laws observed and safe streets, they are also willing to cooperate in cost-saving plans and authentic rehabilitation.

The Miami approach, which asks citizens to help resolve the problems of crime and punishment, transcends the courts that ofttimes take on the aura of the Grand Inquisitor. The Miami Plan seems a far better solution than putting grandma in jail. ■



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Toward empowering Black women

by Manning Marable

There is a tendency within the media to classify all of Black America into one single socioeconomic and political package, ignoring its internal diversity. Problems related to gender inequality, the absence of pay equity and full political representation for women, are frequently characterized as relevant to White females alone. The burden of racism affects all Black Americans regardless of gender — with the possible exceptions of Clarence Pendleton and ideologue Thomas Sowell. Yet the structural inequalities of sexism are indeed profoundly felt within the national Black community.

Economically, Black America has become increasingly stratified along gender boundaries. For example, in 1981 the average married Black couple earned $19,600, roughly 77% of the median income of White two-parent households. For Black families with both spouses in the labor force, their median 1981 income was $25,000, or about 84% of the median incomes of similar White families. But for Black women with no spouse, their 1981 median income was only $7,500.

Such disparities can be observed in health care, vocational hiring, and in electoral politics. Black women are four times more likely to die in childbirth than White females, a statistic which reveals in part the inadequacies of public health facilities and medical care available to Black women. In middle-to-upper income professions, Black women are still unrepresented. As of 1981, Black women comprised less than 1% of the legal profession, compared to 2% for Black males and 14% for all females. Twenty-two percent of all physicians are women, but only seven-tenths of one percent of the total are Black females. Clearly, Black women are burdened with the dual oppression of race and gender, struggling in a society which tends to reward White males at the expense of the majority.

In 1985, more than 400 Black women from 29 states caucused in Atlanta to hold the first assembly of the National Political Congress of Black Women. Founded two years ago, the Congress has attracted 2,000 members to date and was active in elections at the grassroots level. Through its financial support, it helped to elect Alyce Griffen Clark to the Mississippi State Senate in 1984.

The National Political Congress of Black Women has targeted several specific goals for the next decade. Through local and national fundraisers, it hopes to raise $10 million to finance the legislative races of Black women. Key organizers plan to give workshops in the technical aspects of media relations, fundraising, and the development of local leaders as potential candidates. The overwhelming majority of Black women in politics are Democrats, but the Congress has attracted bipartisan support. National leaders include liberal Democrat Shirley Chisholm, the national chair of the Congress; C. Delores Tucker, the leader of the Democratic Party's Black Caucus, vice chairman; and conservative Republican businesswoman Gloria Toote, second vice chair. As Philadelphia city councilwoman Augusta Clarke observed: "We're in existence because we are for the political power of Black women — Democrats, Republicans, and independents; our uniqueness is that this group is diverse and independent and we speak for all women."

The rising clout of Black women in the electoral arena is apparent from the 1984 election statistics. Nearly 70% of all Black women were registered, compared to only 62.2% four years before. Their electoral turnout rate of 59.2% was significantly higher than their 52.8% figure of 1980.

The election of more Black women can only promote the political and economic interests of the national Black community as a whole. But specific organizing efforts which target the non-electoral concerns of low income and working class women — from healthcare to public housing — must also be initiated and led by women as well. The battle against racial and gender inequality requires mass mobilization, demonstrations, neighborhood-level formations, as well as electoral reforms. ■

Dr. Manning Marable, a contributing editor to THE WITNESS, teaches political sociology at Colgate University in Hamilton, N.Y. His column, "Along the Color Line" appears in over 140 newspapers internationally.

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Phil Bozarth-Campbell dead at 37

More than 800 friends, colleagues and family members attended memorial services for the Rev. Philip Bozarth-Campbell, rector of St. George's Episcopal Church, in St. Louis Park, Minn. Dec. 14. Bozarth-Campbell died suddenly from cardiac arrest Dec. 9 at the age of 37.

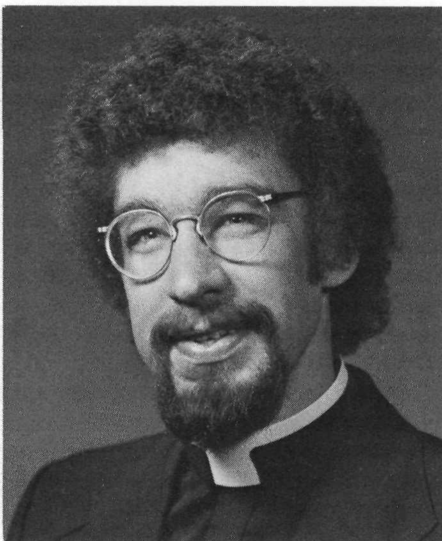
Guitar players and the church choir joined to celebrate his life with music. Alla Bozarth-Campbell, one of the first Episcopal women priests, described her husband as "a music man."

"His priesthood was expressed through his music," she said, "and there wasn't a group he couldn't touch with it. He was the finest guitar player I've heard, and his repertoire included folk music, spirituals, religious, modern and classical works. He knew 1,000 songs by heart, and could play Beatles music with one age group, English traditional folk music with another and old time rousing hymns with yet another. That was the richness of his style."

Philip Bozarth-Campbell became rector of St. George's in February, 1976, having served previously as youth pastor. He also had a prison ministry and an ecumenical ministry with the Lutheran Church of the Reformation, and visited Westwood and Texas Terrace nursing homes every month.

The young rector died three weeks to the day from a conference he had attended where his wife had spoken on the subject, "Dance for Me When I Die: Death as a Relational Rite of Passage." Alla, a poet, had read some of her works as part of her presentation, and her husband recorded the event.

A number of poems were written by Alla Bozarth-Campbell to commemorate her husband's death. The most recent, sent in an Epiphany message to her St. George's "family," appears below. ■



The Rev. Philip Bozarth-Campbell

Christmas Resurrection

Husband, your habit
of opening
doors and drawers
of closets and cupboards
and leaving them open —
so like your mother,
your gift is: To Open.

Priestfriend, don't close
now, the light you left,
or let us close from
the eternal radiance
you burst open and into.

Stay with us yet.
Fulfill in our midst
your childhood wish
from your comforting place
on the Cathedral radiator:
"To be as warm as the sun of God!"

My own Love risen, opened
into Larger Life,
my Christmas Star.

— Alla Bozarth-Campbell

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- **AIDS: The plague that lays waste at noon,** plus articles on the rights of gays and lesbians in church and society. Authors include John Fortunato, Zalmon Sherwood, Anne Gilson, Domenic Ciannella, Madeline Ligammare. September 1985.

- **Capital Punishment:** Articles by Mary Miller, Joe M. Doss, Marie Deans, Thomas Shepherd examining how the death penalty is symptomatic of a violent society; what it means when a prison chaplain loses a friend to the electric chair; the morality of capital punishment; a survivor's view of murder; and a model church ministry to prisoners. April 1985.

- **Bishop Tutu Speaks Out:** Includes quotations from various speeches of the noted Nobel prizewinner, showing his courageous stands against apartheid, his deep biblical faith and his keen wit; backgrounder on South Africa; and letter from U.S. church leaders to Congresspersons refuting claims that U.S. companies in South Africa are a force for change. Also lists resources for those working against apartheid. December 1984.

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THE HUMAN ENTERPRISE: A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON WORK

by Richard W. Gillett, Contributing Editor, THE WITNESS

"Richard Gillett has taken a large step toward reversing theology and pastoral life's ignoring of human work. He has also given us a thoughtful overview of the profound and disruptive transformations of the post-industrial economy."
Joseph Holland
Center of Concern,
Washington, D.C.

"This book is remarkable for its synthesis of theological, humanist, and technical-economic material — even more for the accessibility and wit of its prose. Essential reading for those concerned about the struggle by working people, their churches and their local governments to build a new economic life for themselves in the wake of the de-industrialization of America."
Bennett Harrison, MIT, Co-author:
The De-Industrialization of America

"Human work is a key, probably the essential key to the whole social question," stated Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical On Human Work, issued in 1981. In the industrialized countries, most prominently the United States, this observation comes at the precise moment when a profound transformation in the substance and shape of the workplace is occurring. Characterized most often as a shift from traditional blue collar industry to a service and information-oriented work force, the shift also has other characteristics which qualify it a genuine revolution in the workplace.

Richard W. Gillett's book addresses critical questions, such as the role of transnational corporations in the reshaping of the workplace, the role of technology, the militarization of the economy, the alienation of work and racism and sexism in the workplace. The frame of his reference for his inquiry is the basic significance of work in the Christian tradition.

Sheed and Ward
1985

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