

# Convention News

## ECUMENISM

At a meeting on May 7 of Working Group 9 (attended by 19 delegates and 1 member of the public) discussion continued on sections 16-18 of the draft document (recommendations with regard to contacts between Catholics and other Christians). The following are some of the points that emerged from letters received and from views expressed at the meeting: encouraging Catholics to participate in the worship of other Christians would lead to indifference, i.e. the notion that one religion is as good as another; participation of Catholics in hymn-services and prayer-services of other Christians should be and appear to be the logical outcome of their faith; joint biblical study or biblical services have been very successful where tried; the best form of contact — because the most natural and easiest — is the ordinary, everyday person-to-person contact of good neighbourliness. Attention was called to the recommendation urging that the presence of students of other faiths in Catholic schools should be brought to the attention of their ministers; one delegate wished that this point should be expanded in the draft; another stated that from her personal experience she knew of students in this situation who did not wish to be singled out as they feared that this might bring them unwelcome attention to the detriment of their school studies. Another delegate suggested that similar consideration should be shown by the staff of Catholic hospitals to Christian patients of other denominations.

## GOVERNMENT OF DIOCESE

The first item discussed at the last (May 8) meeting of Working Group 10 was the title of the draft document. It was suggested that the word *administration* or something similar should be used in place of the word *government*. After a short exchange of views, it was decided to leave the choice to the re-drafting committee. The Convener then raised the question whether or not it was time to elect the re-drafting committee. Most of those who spoke favoured postponing the election and a motion to this effect was passed by a large majority of the 22 delegates present.

Discussion on the draft document opened with an examination of the section entitled: The New Image of the Bishop. To a query from the floor as to why the draft restates the accepted norms regarding the Bishop's office and duties, it was replied that the document was intended for the people of the diocese, who may be presumed to be unaware of these norms. The Group decided to discuss the suggestions put forward in this section before dealing with the corresponding explanatory part. Different opinions were then expressed regarding these suggestions, which include: the need for auxiliary bishops in Hong Kong to help the Bishop to discharge his responsibilities; a personal priest-secretary for the Bishop; the need for a Public Relations Office.

## RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

As a result of a secret ballot at the last (May 13) meeting of Group 2, the following were chosen to form the redrafting committee: Sister Jane Ellen, Sister Teresa Fung, Mr. Damien Ku Chi Chung and Father J. McLoughlin.

A recommendation in the draft document suggests that the formation of children and youth should be closely linked with parish life: how is such a formation to be given in Catholic schools? One way proposed by the draft is to get students from the same parishes to form groups within the school. Opinions for and against this proposal were aired in a lively debate. To some the suggestion seemed divisive: why form groups within a group? An answer was suggested by another speaker: in order to make it easier for such students to go and work in their parishes: experience shows that individual students just won't do this. A delegate from Good Hope School stated that the suggestion had been successfully put into practice in that school: students from the same parish got to know one another and were not thereby prevented from joining other associations if they so desired. At the end of the debate it was decided to recommend that students from the same parish should be helped to get to know one another, without any mention of the forming of special groups to achieve this purpose.

The next issue for discussion was the recommendation that "first communion and confirmation liturgies should be held in parish churches, not in school chapels." To one delegate this seemed only to follow logically from the recommendation urging the establishment of close links between parish and school: if the students were not to be put in contact with their parishes on these occasions, when would such contact be established? Other speakers brought up practical difficulties: in a large school a first communion class might have pupils from many different parishes: were the nuns to be running all over the city bringing their pupils to their respective parishes? These students moreover had studied together: why should they be separated for an occasion that should draw them together? To this another delegate replied that it was the parents that should bring the children to the parish for first communion: that communion unites persons to a community and that the parish community is a part of the Church structure, not the school community. Another pointed out, however, that receiving communion once in a parish does not automatically bind one to the parish community. In the end of the debate it was agreed to recommend that first communion and confirmation should *ordinarily* take place in the parish (or other centre of Sunday worship) rather than in the school chapel.

Two other points were raised: a parish priest asked why the recommendations of this section of the Draft urge that the *parishes* should do this, that and the other: why not say *Catholic*

*schools* should do these things? The speaker was, however, reminded that recommendations affecting the schools came later on in the document. Another section of the same recommendation suggests that the parishes should keep in contact with non-Catholic schools in that area: the question was raised as to why schools should be picked out and not factories, big firms, etc. Then, finally a plea was made for Sisters to be sent to help in the parishes. The last word was had by a Sister who pointed out that nuns have rather a full day as it is!

## EDUCATION

Wet weather resulted in low attendance at the May 13 meeting of Group 3 being well below average. Father E. Stassen was in the chair. Discussion continued on the recommendation urging a child-centered rather than a subject-centred education in primary schools. It was pointed out that child-centred in this context means something more than was intended by the drafters. It was agreed that an alternative way of putting the idea should be found and that the actual wording be left to the redrafting committee. It was decided to leave a recommendation concerning the special attention required by retarded children and another about sex education until later. The Group then went on to discuss the use of leisure time and extra-curricular activities for primary pupils. Some thought it impractical to mention extra-curricular activities when most primary schools were bi-sessional: what really should be discussed was whether we were content to continue the bi-sessional system. One delegate pointed out that the bi-sessional system means that the

pupils have half the day free every day: they should be helped to make proper use of this time. Another delegate pointed out that even within the bi-sessional system extra-curricular activities could be encouraged: one or two periods a week are devoted to these in some schools. At the end of the debate the recommendation was amended to read: every effort should be made to promote extra-curricular activities and the proper use of leisure time.

At a meeting on May 18 the members of Working Group 6 voted to suspend meetings for the time being. Early in April a motion was passed adopting a general outline for a new draft document. Implicit in this resolution was the rejection of the original draft. On last Monday a section of the new draft, dealing with the theology of the religious life, which had been prepared by the redrafting committee, was also rejected as containing little else than quotations from the Vatican Council. An alternative to this redrafted section had been circulated at the beginning of the meeting, but those present were unwilling to discuss it either, since no Chinese version had been prepared and because they had been given no time to study it. As a result this version was tabled and a motion was introduced and passed to suspend further meetings of the Working Group until the redrafting committee has presented a complete new draft. A proposal to form several small groups and ask each to prepare one chapter of the agreed general outline was put forward but was not discussed through lack of time.

## Programme of Meetings for Coming Week

Liturgy and Sacraments  
Religious Instruction  
Education  
Lay  
Priestly Life  
Place: Catholic Centre

Monday, May 25  
Tuesday, May 26  
Wednesday, May 27  
Thursday, May 28  
Friday, May 29  
Time: 8-10 p.m.