

Convention News

SOCIAL MISSION OF THE CHURCH

IN spite of the hoisting of No. 3 signal at the threatened approach of typhoon Iris, 40 people attended the last meeting of Group 7 (October 6). The discussion centred on public transport, one of the sections dealt with in chapter V of the draft, entitled Living Environment.

The first speaker pleaded for understanding with the shortcoming of the bus companies; he pointed out that last year they made a profit of 9%, which, in the financial context of Hong Kong, does not represent a very satisfactory return on an investment: if the money had been invested elsewhere, a greater return could have been expected. Another speaker disagreed, saying that the very first duty of a company, and especially of a monopoly company, is to provide a reasonable service to the public and to fulfil its obligations in justice to its workers; perhaps, he said, the modest return was due to bad management, and added that we should not shirk facing the possibility of a rise

in fares as the price of an improved service.

A delegate stated that although the term "public transport" is used constantly in the section, in fact only the bus service is considered. Does the draft intend, he asked, to refer also to trams, ferries, 14-seater buses and taxis when it speaks of "the indignities to which our people are subjected and the time they are compelled to waste when using public transport?" Another delegate proposed that the draft recommend that the question of a rise in fares should not be treated as emotionally as it was in 1966.

To relieve the congestion on our streets a delegate proposed inviting car owners to fill up those empty seats in their cars with people going in the same direction; in view of our traffic problems, he maintained, to drive to town in solitary splendour is unchristian. Other speakers also took up the problem of congestion. For one, the remedy lies in greater decentralisation, both of homes and businesses; for another, improvement of the situation depends on better town planning, greater cooperation between the PWD and the utility companies (some roads are hardly repaired when they are dug up again, others are under repair with little visible effect for months on end) and on a better system of assigning students to schools within walking distance of their homes.

Regarding the question of air pollution, one delegate pointed out that there are too many diesel-run vehicles on the roads (diesel, of course, being cheaper, its use helps keep down bus fares); why, he went on to ask, should Kai Tak, with its noise and fumes, be so close to the centre of the city? Other speakers stated that some cities are experimenting with traffic-free zones (at least on certain days) with dramatic effects on the

level of air-contamination. It was pointed out by another delegate that in Hong Kong we have legislation, which, if it were properly enforced, could make a notable contribution towards lessening the amount of noxious fumes in the atmosphere.

Among several other points made at the meeting were: the draft should say something about public spiritedness, e.g. cleanliness as an exercise in consideration for others, and more considerate driving habits; we should not be too hard on bus conductors: a short journey in an overcrowded bus is enough for most; imagine if we had to spend our whole day in those conditions; could better use be made of our railway system by putting on more trains to bring people to and from their work?; in Japan some of the highways have been built by private companies as a public service: when they have got their money back through a system of tolls, these public spirited companies hand the roads over to the government.

COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA

FATHER Vincent Lau, a member of the Radio Hong Kong Advisory Chinese Committee for Religious Broadcasts, was invited to attend the last meeting of Group 8 (October 7) to give the delegates background information to help them in their discussions on the section of the draft dealing with the radio.

Father Lau described the history of this advisory board and the difficulties it has encountered of late. He told how the time allotted to Chinese language religious broadcasts on Radio Hong Kong was suddenly reduced by two-thirds recently and the Sunday evening programme changed from the AM service to the FM service.

Programme of Working Group Meetings during coming week

Religious	(No Meeting)
Evangelisation	Monday, October 19
Social Mission of the Church	Tuesday, October 20
Communications Media	Wednesday, October 21
Ecumenism	Thursday, October 22
Government of Diocese	Friday, October 23

Place: Caritas Centre, Boundary Street, Kowloon.

Time: 8 p.m. — 10 p.m.

Representations to the broadcasting authority have met with no results. He also pointed out that there are only two people in the diocese assigned to the preparation of these programmes, which is utterly inadequate, especially in view of the importance of this work. There is a shortage of funds, he added, as well as a lack of facilities. He expressed his appreciation of the cooperation of the Hong Kong Christian Council's Audio-Visual Evangelism Committee, whose recording studio at Peking Road is placed at our disposal free of charge.

In reply to queries by the delegates, Father Lau stated that the reduction in time allotted by the station to religious programmes was due to their lack of popularity, as evidenced by the results of surveys carried out. A delegate suggested that the low audience rating might be because the programmes are not the type of religious public wants. Perhaps the diocese should undertake to find out exactly what is wanted and prepare programmes accordingly. The possibility of getting ready-made programmes from elsewhere (e.g. those prepared by the Kuangchi station in Taiwan) was mentioned.

A delegate who stated that she often listened to religious broadcasts on the Chinese channel complained of the poor quality of some of these; the sermons or news items, she said, are not always made attractive, the delivery is often flat and monotonous. She proposed recommending that the programmes be better prepared and that a more lively manner be adopted by those taking part.

The tribulations of the English Language religious broadcasts were also gone into. Most of them have been changed from the AM service to the FM service. A speaker asked those present how many listen regularly to religious broadcasts or had ever written to the broadcasting authority or the newspapers to voice their approval or disapproval of the service provided. The draft should have bite, this speaker added, and should say something important about radio broadcasting. He suggested pointing out that a Government station, as distinct from a commercial one, should aim at providing a public service catering for all sectors of the community; and he reminded the delegates that the simple right to information can only be safeguarded at the cost of constant vigilance.

The possibility of buying time on Commercial Radio for religious programmes was brought up. It was pointed out that the sponsoring of directly religious broadcasts is prohibi-

ted by law in Hong Kong. However, if we were to offer a series of general cultural programmes—a weekly programme for about six months—and they were up to standard, the station might take them and look for an advertiser to sponsor them.

ECUMENISM

AT the last meeting of Group 9 the delegates considered the newly revised version of the Introduction and Section I of the draft document. The Group approved of the work done by the redrafting committee, and the suggestions made at the meeting concerned chiefly improvements in the way the ideas contained are expressed. At the present rate of progress it is confidently hoped that this document will be ready before Christmas.

GOVERNMENT OF THE DIOCESE

TWO points were discussed at the meeting of Group 10 held on October 9: the chairman of the Senate of Priests and the qualifications for membership of this body. As regards the first issue, it was pointed out that the practice here has been for someone other than the Bishop to act as chairman, as the draft document hints at. Should then this suggestion be omitted as superfluous? If not, how should it be worded? Is there a difference between presiding over a body and acting as chairman of the meetings of its members?

The draft recommends that only those priests "with at least five years of pastoral experience (either in this diocese or elsewhere)" should be eligible for election by their peers for membership of the Senate. The advisability of keeping this restriction was discussed. In favour of the restriction a delegate mentioned the risk of younger priests banding together to elect someone with the spirit of contradiction, which would not contribute notably to the deliberations of the Senate. Against the restriction it was pointed out that here it is a question of candidates for an election: surely the priest-electors should be trusted with enough sense to choose those most suitable for membership of the Senate, no matter how recently ordained. Moreover, the intended restriction would mean that the group of priests without the stated years of pastoral experience would be without a representative on the Senate.