

Convention News

PROGRESS REPORT

WITH just a few weeks left before the Easter deadline the position of the different Working Groups is as follows:

Group 1 (Liturgy): two short chapters remain to be discussed. Five of the thirteen chapters of which the final document will be composed have already been rewritten by the Redrafting Committee.

Group 2 (Religious Instruction): the group is discussing the fifth and final chapter. The Redrafting Committee have revised the first three chapters and are now working on the revision of chapter four.

Group 3 (Education): a little more than half of this long document has been discussed. The Redrafting Committee are engaged in preparing the revised version of the earlier chapters.

Group 4 (Lay): this Group has finished discussing its draft document. The Redrafting Committee are hard at work revising the document. They hope to finish within the next couple of weeks. The new version will then be sent to Group members for their comments.

Group 5 (Priestly Life): the revised document on priestly life has been completed. The English version has already been sent to the members of Group 5; the Chinese translation has not yet been finished.

Group 6 (Religious): After many vicissitudes, Group 6 finally got to grips with its newly written draft last November. Since then the discussions have been progressing at a brisk rate. Only the last section now remains to be debated. The Redrafting Committee meanwhile have been working on the revised version.

Group 7 (Social Dimension): this Group is at present discussing the final section of the draft document (Medical Care). However the controversial first 16 pages have not yet been debated. These pages are being rewritten and will be discussed by the Working Group (which now meets every Tuesday) in a couple of weeks time. Meanwhile the Redrafters are hard at work. It is hoped that a revised version of each of the sections of the document that have already been discussed will be ready by the end of March.

Group 8 (Communications Media): the English version of the revised document was completed quite a few weeks ago. The Chinese version is almost finished. As soon as it is ready, both versions will be sent to the delegates of the Group.

Group 9 (Ecumenism): discussion on the original draft was completed many months ago. Since then the delegates of this Group have been having a full-dress discussion of the revised document. From these discussions a third version of the document has emerged; this now only requires final approval by the members of the Group.

Group 10 (Government of Diocese): discussion is taking place on the final pages of the draft. This should be finished in one or two more meetings. The Redrafting Committee have

been very energetic and have prepared a revised version of all the chapters preceding the one now being discussed. It will not be easy to get all this translated into Chinese, as many technical terms are used. However, in spite of the difficulty the Chinese version has made a good deal of progress.

Group 11 (Evangelization): the whole draft has been discussed and the revised version of the first two sections of the document has already been approved by the Group. At present the revised version of the third and last section is being studied and is expected to be approved of at the Group's next (and final) meeting.

GOVERNMENT OF DIOCESE

AT a meeting of Group 10 on Friday, March 5, debate was resumed on the controverted question of a diocesan arbitration and conciliation board. At the previous meeting it was resolved to recommend the establishment of such a board, to which disputes involving the clergy might be referred, with the exception of those to which the bishop is a party. This exception was insisted on by the many speakers who thought that the authority of the bishop would otherwise be improperly diminished.

At the March 5 meeting some delegates felt that it was necessary to determine rather accurately the powers, scope and way of proceeding of such a board: to them it seemed unsatisfactory to recommend the setting up of a board whose structure and functions were left wholly undetermined. Others however thought that readers of the document would have a fairly clear notion of what an arbitration board is; that it would be very difficult—indeed impossible — for the Group, given the short amount of time left before Easter, to make sensible recommendations about the working of an arbitration board: this task could well be left to the Senate or Pastoral Council; a totally new board must be left with a good deal of elbow room to find its own way, and by trial and error to discover how best it can function. These speakers felt it would be quite adequate to say we recommend the setting up of the board and leave it at that.

At this point a lay delegate, greatly daring, re-opened the question of disputes between the bishop and one of his priests. This delegate thought that the Group, by excluding these disputes from the competence of the proposed arbitration board, was only dodging an important issue: the problem of how such disputes should be handled was still with us: could we recommend any other way of dealing with them? His own view was that the Group had excluded disputes in which the bishop is one of the parties involved on the grounds that no diocesan board could possibly bind the bishop; but this is only a technical point; the bishop might easily wish on occasion

to bind himself to accepting the decision of an arbitration board. Hence it seems quite in order to suggest that the bishop should feel free to make use of the proposed board if he so wished and the other party to the dispute agreed.

Some delegates still questioned the utility of a board to arbitrate between the bishop and his priests. They argued: if the board has no authority to intervene and can only do so if both parties to the dispute agree to accepting its good offices, then it serves little purpose. On the other hand, if it does have authority to intervene it will seem to be little more than "a puppet of the bishop."

As the discussion went on, various formulae were proposed to try and bridge the diversity of opinion within the Group. Finally a motion was framed that, when put to the vote, won unanimous support. It recommends the setting up of an Arbitration Board to which disputes involving the clergy in the diocese may, by mutual consent of the parties, be referred: cases involving the bishop are excepted: however the bishop, without being in

any way bound, may wish to use the good offices of this board in disputes in which he is one of the parties involved, or he may prefer to seek advice elsewhere, for example, from the Senate or Pastoral Council.

A few other points were brought up. A delegate requested that explicit mention be made of including lay people on the arbitration board since the draft, envisaging a board to deal only with disputes between the bishop and his priests, says that "the persons to be appointed to such a board must necessarily and exclusively be priests." The name should be a Conciliation and Arbitration Board, another delegate suggested. Conciliation should always be tried first; only when this fails and as a last resort, should a case be subject to arbitration. Finally, it was proposed that a fee should be charged to keep the number of cases within bounds.

Programme of Working Group Meetings during Coming Week

Religious	Monday, March 15
Social Mission of Church	Tuesday, March 16
Evangelisation	Wednesday, March 17
Ecumenism	Thursday, March 18
Government of Diocese	Friday, March 19

Place: Catholic Centre, Hong Kong.

Time: 8 p.m. — 10 p.m.