

# Convention News

**T**HE second set of recommendations sent to the Delegates of the Diocesan Convention for voting were those prepared by the Working Groups on Ecumenism and Government of Diocese. Voting sheets were sent to 398 delegates. At the time of writing a little less than half of these had been returned (Ecumenism: 180; Government of Diocese: 184).

## ECUMENISM

The recommendations on ecumenism were 24 in number. The first ten were proposals for action on the diocesan level; eight others offered suggestions for implementation on the parish level; and the remaining six concerned the conduct of individuals. On the whole the delegates found the recommendations satisfactory and by far the greater majority of the votes cast were yes votes. This has been true of all the sets of recommendations sent out up to this.

The proposal that found least favour with the voters urged that "in the overcrowded areas of our diocese serious consideration be given to the possibility of establishing and sharing places of worship with other Christians." Thirty-eight delegates voted against this proposal, 15 abstained and 10 had reservations.

Some of the reservations urged caution, suggesting that perhaps we are not yet ready for such a step. One delegate felt that if the proposal were acted upon, special care would have to be taken to avoid the danger of indifferentism. Other typical comments were: "Let us share the same building by

all means, but not the same hall within the building"; "actual services should not be held in common"; "the Blessed Sacrament should not be reserved in such a shared place of worship."

Another recommendation that may with some opposition proposed that "the Catholic bookstores arrange a section on outstanding Protestant works of scripture and theology, especially of Chinese translations of good theological publications." Twenty-eight delegates said *no* to this suggestion and 17 others abstained from voting. Again caution was urged in the reservations.

The very first of the recommendations presented to the delegates suggested that the offices of chairman and secretary of the Diocesan Ecumenical Commission should be full-time jobs. Many disagreed. They thought that the work being done at present by the Commission hardly justified such a demand. "What would they do all day?" was the tart comment of one delegate. "Be content to start with one at first," admonished a number of others. But of these, some considered that the one full-time official should be the chairman, others that it should be the secretary!

"The Diocesan Ecumenical Commission should comprise a significant number of enthusiastic young people active in the cause of Christian unity." A number of people felt that a solid knowledge of one's religion was more important than either youth or enthusiasm. One delegate strongly objected to the use of the cant words *significant* and *enthusiastic* in this recommendation.

Twenty-one voters opposed the setting up of a branch of the Diocesan Ecumenical Commission in every parish.

Strange to relate a recommendation appealing to all to "guard against attitudes towards other Christians which spring from personal prejudice" and urging everyone to do his best to "eliminate words, judgments and actions which do not treat of other Christians with truth and fairness" netted one *no* vote and eight abstentions!

## GOVERNMENT OF DIOCESE

Many of the delegates felt somewhat out of their depth when it came to voting on the 43 recommendations proposed by the Government of Diocese Working Group. As a result a rather high proportion of abstentions was recorded in the

case of quite a few of these recommendations.

A few delegates in general comments complained of the large number of new commissions proposed in the recommendations. One counted them up. He found that no fewer than nine new commissions were recommended, not to mention two auxiliary bishops, three episcopal vicars and two other persons to work full time on one or other of these commissions. Another delegates said that if all the recommendations were acted on, the administration of the diocese would soon grind to a dead halt—strangled in the skeins of red tape spawned by these new commissions.

Another priest-delegate was of the opinion that the recommendations should have given more place to the laity in the running of the diocese. He thought that too much stress was put on the need for supervision by priests. He then went on to say: "I should like to see some recommendation added concerning the ecclesiastical tribunal for marriages. Its existence should be made known to the faithful."

Among the more controverted recommendations was one which suggested a five-year tenure of office for parish priests, after which they should be changed to another parish "with or without the same rank." "A stupid idea," was one comment. Less emotionally some delegates in their reservations expressed the view that it is only after five years that the parishioners begin to gain confidence in and ability to communicate with their parish priest. Others felt that to fix once and for all a period in office valid in every case is too rigid; they would prefer a more flexible system in which every case is judged on its merits and action appropriate to the individual situation taken.

"We recommend the setting up of an Arbitration Board to which disputes involving the clergy in the diocese may, by mutual consent, be referred." "Useless," commented one delegate. "I cannot see the point of this," said another. "Its powers are not clearly enough defined," declared a third. "Its purpose might be misunderstood by non-Catholics," warned a fourth. Thirteen delegates were opposed to the establishment of such a board, while twenty declined to commit themselves on the issue.