

Convention News

EDUCATION

"PHEW and Deo Gratias!"

This was how one of the delegates expressed his emotions on completing the last — and longest—of the sets of Convention recommendations. His sense of being slightly overwhelmed by the large number of proposals presented to him on the subject of education as well as his feelings of relief at the thought of not being called upon again to come to a decision on weighty matters on a wide variety of topics, were shared by many other delegates.

Of the 390 voting papers sent to delegates, only 128 were returned, in spite of the fact that the Education Redrafting Committee went to untold trouble to have the Chinese version of the recommendations beautifully typed. The education document therefore can lay claim to the rather mixed distinction of containing the greatest number of proposals as well of meeting with the poorest response. There must be a moral here somewhere for those who will be preparing future Conventions to reflect on!

As in the case of other rather long lists of recommendations, few delegates had the energy to write down reservations. They presumably preferred to abstain when a simple *yes* or *no* would not represent adequately their reaction to a certain proposal. It might therefore be of greater interest to reproduce here some of the general comments that delegates added at the end of their voting papers.

● These recommendations are in general acceptable. There are so many of them that it does not seem practicable to make reservations. As in the recommendations of other Groups we are advised to set up committees and to take part in associations. One's experience of the Convention suggests that such recommendations will not find an enthusiastic response in practice. Moreover, if the diocese does in fact set up all the committees and subcommittees that have been recommended and they function, it seems that the People of God in Hong Kong will spend most of their time attending meetings.

● When I was younger I was told that it was useless to make more than two or three resolutions during the time of retreat, otherwise there would

be no action. So I feel 133 recommendations are a bit much for the Bishop even to read. Could we not have each section of the document say what its most important recommendation is?

● It seems to me that many of the proposals are too idealistic to be practicable.

● Take a good look at all the recommendations of the various Groups and see how many hundreds of commissions are suggested and even more hundreds of jobs are wished on the diocese.

● It is a pity that there are no recommendations on certain real and well known problems, for example: (a) the pyramid system much used in some Catholic schools; (b) money-minded Catholic schools; (c) social-class-conscious Catholic schools; (d) the moral pressure, direct or indirect, on parents to contribute to school extension funds, etc. Sometimes even bribery is resorted to in order to get a place.

● I am greatly disappointed that no mention is made of the Catholic school's aim to help students to believe in God and love Him. What is the use of our schools if we do not do this? And where can true character formation be found if we do not put God as the foundation?

● Although I voted for many of the proposals I believe that this is a very tame document. I wonder if it does justice to the subject. More careful consideration should be given to examine the causes of the failure of the Catholic Education Council to be a genuine voice of Catholic education in Hong Kong. It is not the fault of the officers or members of the Council as such. There is a much deeper problem which is, in the final analysis, that each school is its own master. With such a vast number of schools in the Association, no positive statements on matters of educational policy have emerged from the CEC; for example, what about the new scheme of post-primary education? What is our view? Are Catholic schools more *schools* than *Catholic*? Are we more concerned about our image and academic achievements than about many other aspects of a student's life? The diocese should make a decision that each Catholic school should have the benefit of a spiritual director to take care of the

pastoral formation of the students. Students spend a lot of time travelling to school every day. Why do Catholic schools not get together and make a decision to cooperate in making it clear that if there is a Catholic school near a student's home, he should be told to go there?

● It's a pity there are far too many statements of fact or opinion in this paper (as well in previous ones) rather than definite recommendations or proposals one could vote *yes/no* to. Nevertheless here (as in others too) there are some very good recommendations which one hopes will be agreed to and acted on. Has anyone counted the number of committees, subcommittees, advisory groups, bodies, boards, authorities, etc. which have been recommended throughout all these papers? Or the number of full-time personnel recommended for this, that and the other work (highly important as it may often be)? Even with ten

times the number of priests and religious, one has nightmare visions of most of the diocese's personnel sitting around in endless committees and the work they could be doing fulltime going undone (a few grains of salt here, please!) More seriously, in this education paper, among all the advice and recommendations made to the Church, the diocese, schools, parents, teachers, advisers, etc., there seem to be no recommendations at all made to post-secondary students, even in the long section 10 on the Apostolate of Higher Education, beyond a few innocuous generalisations. These students are the future hope of the Church here, at one very important level of society at least. It is disappointing that the Convention has so little to suggest or recommend to them positively and concretely. They themselves have made many and some very good recommendations for others. They surely would be open also to hear what others would wish them to do in their own sphere.