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Incidentally

by James Koldenhoven

Proportional Representation for All: Political Justice Through Pluralism

The political, social, cultural, and economic rights of minority groups were the focus of "Justice for All: The Right of Political Participation." Sponsored by the Association for Public Justice Education Fund, the Third International Christian Political Conference, held at Dordt College, offered a variety of perspectives on justice for minorities. Proportional representation, based on the recognition of multiculturalism within a nation, was proposed as a means to political, social, cultural, and economic equity.

A look at the roster of conference speakers indicates the variety of viewpoints to which conferees were exposed. Calvin College Professor of Philosophy Evan Runner reminded the conference that Jesus' "Render unto Caesar" calls the state back to its place in creation as an authority for taking care of the creation in God's name. "Render unto Caesar" rejects the American notion of the separation of church and state. A Christian's life is first rendered to God, and in that context he offers obedience to his government. Because all men stand before God and because religion *is* our situation, no "purely political" group could exist. A political organization confesses either true or false religion. Therefore, APJ's task is to critique, by the norms of divine revelation, a society

characterized by systemic violence and injustice and committed to an anti-biblical norm of "survival of the fittest."

Spokesman for over two hundred tribal groups of native Americans was Robert Martin, descendant of a family that has ruled the Makah Indian Nation for centuries. He challenged America's ready acceptance of the "melting pot" myth and redefined *E Pluribus Unum* ("Out of Many, One"). In America people whose forbears were European, Asian, and African immigrants all speak the same language, dress alike, and use the same technology. But this is only a semblance of uniformity. Immigrants and minorities, he asserted, have *not* lost what makes them unique, have *not* melted into the pot. *E Pluribus Unum*, through the adoption of cultural pluralism, must be redefined to mean that America is a unified nation in which cultural diversity is sustained.

Prophetic voices for biblical justice for the South's poor blacks and for urban blacks (sometimes crammed thousands to a city block) were John Perkins of Jackson, Mississippi's Voice of Calvary and Rev. Tom Skinner, the founder of Tom Skinner Associates of Newark, New Jersey. The conference was also honored to hear Chief Minister Gatsha Buthelezi of Kwazulu, South Africa. He is a Christian statesman and leader of South Africa's Zulu population

of five million who, although their tribe alone out-numbers the country's white population, are denied constitutional rights, cannot vote, and are in the process of being denied South African citizenship. Buthelezi's Zulu cultural group *Inkatha* is a non-violent organization dedicated to helping other tribes resist the evils of *apartheid* and oppose the government's homeland policy.

Another international guest was Assistant Director of the Abraham Kuyper Foundation in the Hague, Mr. Hans Borstlap. Commenting on the mortal illness of America's two-party system, he noted that neither party has an ideology or a political philosophy, and that both parties seek only to win elections. He observed that the Netherlands' hundred-year-old Anti-Revolutionary Party and the fledgling Association for Public Justice are both minority positions and both strive to implement biblical justice. The task of Christian democracy, he said, is to unify people who want to integrate the practice of the Gospel with the politics of conviction.

Washington Star columnist Michael Novak made a last-minute switch of topics. His invitation requested a discussion of "unmeltable ethnics" as a major contemporary political force. He addressed the conference on the "new elite." The development of a Christian political mind and political organization on the basis of commonly held convictions is essential if America is to avoid a collapse of national will. Americans demonstrated their apathy when only thirty-four percent of eligible voters exercised that right in the 1978 election. Even Christians have believed the secular myth that politics is a neutral, rather than a confessional, science. With its emphasis on soul matters, evangelicalism has traditionally neglected the formation of a spiritually

political mindset.

Dr. Rockne McCarthy outlined the official APJ position in the conference's concluding address. To insure viability, a political organization must have: 1) a goal; 2) a set of foundational principles; 3) a practical platform; and 4) the execution of that practical platform. Motivated by American political pragmatism, even evangelical politicians have skipped the formation of principles and the practical platform.

APJ's goal is to begin to assess political issues. McCarthy warned that the formation of Christian political principles requires radical heart changes. APJ is committed to a change from district representation to proportional representation as a solution to political apathy, unjust or non-existent representation, and the growing paralysis in the electoral process. McCarthy explained the historical roots of America's current political principle of "winner take all." Its genesis was in the Enlightenment definition of all men as rational and therefore equal beings. Government was by the "nation-state," erroneously identified as one homogeneous people. A proper view of the state, said McCarthy, is that it is composed of multi-national groups, each of which has a fundamentally different understanding of its identity. Structural pluralism is the recognition of this multi-culturalism. Because American elected officials try to represent everyone in a district (virtual representation), actually no one is represented, and enormous numbers of people are denied representation. The pluralistic state with proportional representation would lead to a de-emphasis of majority rule and would lead away from the erroneous concept of the nation-state as homogeneous.

Dordt College will be the site for the fourth annual conference of APJ in August, 1980. Sandra Langley