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Dordt Hosts International Political Conference

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Incidentally.....

by James Koldenhoven

Dordt Hosts

International Political Conference

“Jubilee for Justice” was the theme for The Second International Political Conference held on Dordt’s campus August 25-28. Nearly 250 conferees came from across the United States and Canada, as well as the Netherlands and South Africa. Sponsored by the Association for Public

Justice, the conference took its theme from the Old Testament celebration of a year of jubilee during which justice was restored. The conference’s purpose was to celebrate the measure of justice which is occurring in North America, and the release which has been promised for those suffering injustice.

Rev. J. B. Hulst, Dean of Students at Dordt College, challenged the conferees with these words in his opening address: "I believe with all my heart that if we are to live according to the Biblical demands for public justice, then you and I are going to have to change not only our attitudes and our thinking, but the way in which we act and live in the society of which we are a part."

At the Friday evening banquet, another challenge to action was issued by Wendell Anderson, then Senator of Minnesota. Commenting that in a recent poll, only 13% of Americans indicated confidence in elected officials and government, he observed that it is easy to see how Christians choose to focus on missionary work, and avoid involvement in politics. But Anderson called for Christian involvement. "If people of faith and commitment do not involve themselves in politics and in government," he said, "then I am convinced that lesser men and women will move into that vacuum. Government is pervasive. It is all around us. It makes no sense for Christians to abandon the public sector to others."

Christians who are active in the public sector in other countries conducted seminars the next morning. Among them were Dr. Johan van der Vyver, Professor of Legal Philosophy, Potchefstroom University of South Africa, and Dr. Jan D. Dengerink, Professor of Calvinistic Philosophy in the Netherlands. Under discussion were such topics as justice in South Africa, the Mid-East, and Europe. Afternoon seminars focused on justice in the United States and Canada.

An important part of the gathering was a mini-conference on agriculture, highlighted by a Saturday evening Farmers' Forum. Speaking at the forum, Jim Visser, Executive Director of the Christian Farmers' Federation of

Canada, acknowledged that it is difficult to farm in harmony with nature, but contended that we must honor creation's potential.

"The devastation of our lives and of creation goes on," he observed, "as we continue to believe that we can exploit and conquer to obtain power in this world. What must really grieve our Father in heaven is that we have allowed this process to take place in His name, by putting our exploitation of nature under the euphemism of cultural mandate."

It was Visser's belief that a food policy should include the jubilee concept that everyone on earth is entitled to a nutritious diet, that nations should have greater self-reliance, that land-use legislation should honor the created purpose of land instead of reducing it to a valuable commodity to serve the whims of speculators or developers.

Dr. Joel Nederhood addressed a Sunday afternoon mass meeting on the subject, "God's Will and America's Destiny." "The vision of a land with a special gift to give to all the nations has been nurtured within the bosom of this great land," he observed. But Nederhood directed Christians not to view the United States as a political Messiah. Although he acknowledged a certain freedom and greatness within our land, he warned, "Within this country there have occurred serious deformations which make it impossible for us simply to equate and identify the destiny of America with the will of God almighty. . . . If America continues in its institutional life to express rebellion over against the Lord Jesus Christ, the judgment will fall. . . ."

What could the Association for Public Justice do to counteract this rebellion against God in American institutional life? Ted Malloch reflected on this question as he addressed a

breakfast meeting on Monday morning. Based on his six months in Washington as a representative for the Association, he called for the following actions: "Organizationally, we need to take our vision, our research, and our message of public justice to legislators and decision makers. We must simultaneously inform our constituency about the issues. . . . As we grow, our staff and research associates should spread the news of our organization and explain its basis, plans and achievements. Finally, we must be directly involved on the Washington

scene. . . . We can research, lobby, educate, cooperate with other groups and promote public justice in our time; this is our mandate. . . ."

Conferees then attended seminars on moving ahead as a Christian community. After a final challenge by Dr. James Skillen, the conference ended. The conference, but not the work. Those attending had been called like the Old Testament Israelites to sound the trumpet of jubilee throughout the land—the trumpet of a jubilee for justice.

Carol Van Klompenburg

Botha Bids Prayerful Support for South African Situation

During her two-day stay on Dordt's campus, Dr. Elaine Botha gave three public lectures and three class lectures, as well as various interviews. Miss Botha is Doctor of Interfaculty Philosophy at Potchefstroom University in South Africa. It is understandable therefore, that one of her talks was entitled "Philosophy and the Special Sciences." In this talk she pointed out that it is the task of philosophy to integrate the whole body of knowledge, a

task for which the cooperation of the special scientists is indispensable. Dr. Botha emphasized that a theoretical articulation of our Christian world and life view is necessary to show the unity of all knowledge.

In her speech, "School and Society," Dr. Botha claimed that the Christian school needs an academic creed, just as the church has a creed. This creed should state the principles which are to determine the norms for