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Report on Jim Polet's Visit

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which he plans to take to New York.

Here are some of Tom Key's observations for Christians, both actors and audience:

1. He says that what we need is a total commitment from the actor-artists who are Christians. He says this does not mean that the Christian has to do what he calls "witness art." "Witness art is neither witness nor art." He calls witness art "a hybrid — it tries to entertain as well as teach a lesson." It does neither successfully.

2. "The more control I have in the business, the better off I am," Key says. He means that actors too often place themselves at the mercy of the producer who "wants to turn a fast buck," and who will require actors to do things that are not within their principles. Without the support of the Christian community, however, it is virtually impossible to control the art of theatre. Without the Christian community in support, the Christian actor is, in Key's words, "forced to compromise himself."

3. Key feels that it is important to test his C.S. Lewis show in a New York theatre. "For good or bad, New York is still the place where the art of theatre is finally tested. That's where the critics

are, and that's where the serious theatre artists come to find jobs and to display their talent." He adds: "I feel that it will do more good to have a Christian play on Broadway than to have 1000 Christian plays which, for reasons of quality, mismanagement, or lack of vision, never make it into the mainstream of dramatic literature."

Tom Key, gifted artist and challenging Christian, is out there now somewhere, carrying out the will of God for his life and for the life of the kingdom. His high standards were an inspiration to many who heard him talk.

James Koldenhoven

Note: Some of the quotations are from *Christian Theatre Artists Guild Newsletter*, Vol. 1, No. 7, Sept., 1978.



Report on Jim Polet's Visit

On the afternoon of Friday, March 1, the Special Events Committee and the Business Administration and Economics Departments, in conjunction with the Future Business Executives Club, sponsored a lecture by

Jim Polet on the topic "Stewardship on Human Resources Within the Firm." The public was invited to attend.

Mr. Polet is a lathe operator with the Transmatic firm, of Holland, Michigan. Polet has served as an employee representative in a unique form of management called "participatory management." He was involved in the restructuring of the organization under this plan, which allows much greater employee input to management than traditionally has been the case. Under this type of work-place organization, management provides labor with information regarding almost all aspects of the firm's operation, including purpose, objectives, and performance. Employees submit suggestions which they believe would enhance performance. The suggestions are screened by a committee of management and workers. Suggestions which appear to have merit are recommended to management for implementation.

According to Mr. Polet, there are several gains from participatory management. First, workers develop a sense of work community. Production becomes a group function rather than the sum of isolated individual efforts. Each worker feels a part of the whole and, therefore, senses his own responsibility to the whole group. As a result, there have been remarkable increases in productivity which, in turn, have interested other firms in the plan. Increased profits have been shared equitably among the employees. The production workers have had remuneration increases averaging 21% per year over the three years during which the plan has been in operation. Polet repeats that in similar cases elsewhere productivity has increased as much as 40% because of the reorganization.

In his presentation, Mr. Polet contrasted this type of result with the

results he saw in unionized shops while he was a member of the United Auto Workers and the International Association of Machinists. Under a union organization, management and labor interact in a setting of confrontation rather than cooperation. Polet is not as a matter of principle opposed to unions; he states that under certain conditions unions are necessary to prevent injustices to employees. But he does think that participatory management is preferable.

The model of workplace organization which Mr. Polet presented has important implications for Christians. Participatory management enables the worker to exercise stewardship of his labor resource through a more active participation in decision-making. Therefore, he can respond more adequately in his service to God. In his book, *Aid to the Overdeveloped West*, Bob Goudzwaard points out that the responsibility to exercise stewardship over creation and our resources is an inalienable responsibility. That is, receipt of remuneration does not relieve the worker of these responsibilities. Participatory management permits a fuller, more complete exercise of responsibility. The results realized by Transmatic indicate that worker participation in decision-making makes work more meaningful. In that way it instills a "healing" element to the workplace.

Mr. Polet's presentation has made us aware of how, in a practical way, we can seek justice in the Kingdom. It also serves as a call to each of us, as academicians, teachers, janitors and lathe operators, to work communally as Christians to develop an idea of meaningful work as a response to our mandate to use and develop our talents and all of creation.