

# Wiscom

Wisconsin Province Commission for the Better Choice of Ministries  
2120 West Clybourn Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53233

To be Posted

MINUTES OF WISCOM #14  
March 12-14, 1971  
Marquette University, Milwaukee

WISCOM #14 was called to order at 7:15 P.M. Friday, March 12, 1971. In accordance with the plan to make recommendations to the provincial on the basis of a deeper understanding of the culture this province tries to deal with, this meeting focused on Lonergan's paper (STUDIES, Vol 2, #3) The Response of the Jesuit, as Priest and Apostle, In the Modern World.

Fr. Lonergan took the first evening to help the Commission understand how his work might help us. He began with a short prepared speech around the theme "Pastoral Theology in Concretis." This speech was a general answer to the questions about his monograph members of the Commission had sent to him. He then spoke to each of these questions individually. (Cf. Appendix A)

Some of the more significant points are attached to the last page of these minutes as Appendix A. The two points that came across initially from Lonergan's talk can be dealt with under the headings of Classical Mentality and Creative Minorities.

CLASSICAL MENTALITY: The Church has been a captive of the classical mentality for three centuries. In the meantime modern culture developed based on a historical mindedness. This modern culture demands a transformed theology and a transformed ministry.

Classical norms and a-priori's have to be replaced by those of the transcendental imperatives of the human spirit itself - be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible.

The Church had formerly been seen as a perfect society, but any society is a matter of concern with the human good, and the human good is arrived at only by a process of development and cooperation. The Church, then is a matter of common meaning realizing itself in a community of persons. The Church is the process of the Christian message realizing itself.

CREATIVE MINORITIES: Creative minorities are small groups of people who will know how to deal creatively with already established situations as well as how to begin new responses to specific problems. A creative minority sees something that needs to be done, something that others do not see, and it goes ahead to do what needs to be done drawing others with it. Creative minorities are the links between the impetus and direction of the past and tradition and the new directions demanded by today's world.

Saturday, 9:00 A.M.

Fr. Quesnell explained further the themes Fr. Lonergan had presented the night before. The most notable points that drew immediate response from the Commission were:

1. That as long as one persists in the "classical mentality" he is part of the basic problem of the modern world. A classical mentality sees man as essentially the same from age to age differing only in the accidental areas of his local circumstances. Modern man's historical consciousness sees man as constituted by his consciousness and his consciousness develops, evolves, as man continually comes to understand himself, and his situation better. The former mentality is unintelligible to the latter (no matter how articulate) so that Jesuits in their attempts to lead the world they live in to Christ only succeed in making unintelligible signs to those who would be followers.
2. People clinging to security is a larger problem today than people going on to new frontiers. Allowing creativity will not close everything down but will probably be the occasion for each community to use the creativity that comes to its attention.

Saturday, 3:15 P.M.

Father Pat Burns gave a short explication of his outline on PROBLEMS IN RENEWAL OF MINISTRIES. Some of the key thoughts in outline were:

The problem of educating ourselves is a problem of developing new competencies for new challenges. We are challenged to preach the gospel in the context of American culture. This challenge calls us to more reflective contact with our Biblical and post Biblical Christian tradition, more reflective contact with the contemporary American cultural context, and to develop more diversified skills in communicating Christian tradition within this context.

To meet the problem of establishing a common program to meet the challenge of preaching the gospel to an American cultural context, one primary requirement is for us to come to a corporate conviction that Christian tradition offers something that contemporary American culture really needs.

The problem of effective implementation of a common program designed to meet the challenge of preaching the gospel in an American context, is rooted in the problem of seeing unity as important enough to invest talent and energy to develop it thus learning how to differ among ourselves without rupturing our basic unity.

Discussion began with a question on priorities for renewal. Fr. Burns said the items in his presentation were not ranked; a basis for disagreement is the most necessary task of renewal at this time.

Saturday, 7:30 P.M.

Mark Voss presented the highlights of his reaction paper to Fr. Lonergan's "The Response of the Jesuit, as Priest and Apostle, in the Modern World." He emphasized the need to overcome the prevailing destructive individualism. To overcome destructive individualism, we must enlist the aid of (a) Theology - to develop theologies of community and to give us a clearer understanding of the priest as leader in the Christian community; (b) Leadership - from WISCOM to take on the burden of making the province more authentic, of standing over against the province to see that the present crises in the Society is communicated to the rank and file; and (c) set as a proximate goal Revitalizing the Faith - to live faith as a mandate as well as a commitment.

The second part of Mark's presentation went into Forms of Renewal under three headings. 1. Mass renewal has to be supplemented by special efforts at renewal for the groups of influential men in the province. He suggested directed retreats for administrators, high school religion teachers, and superiors in the summer of 1972.

2. Renewal of Formation: Scholastics should receive the best training possible to feed into the fields that are most important today. Priests have to be trained in group work since it is their job to bring men together in groups.

3. Retooling: of the men 35-50 is most important for the future of the Society.

Policy Statement: Discussion took off from Mark's "WISCOM should's" resulting in a resolution proposed by Hart, seconded by Labaj, reworded by Biever, and passed unanimously.

That WISCOM urge the provincial to promulgate the policy statement along with a manpower assignment policy and a call for new ideas for ministerial effectiveness both within our present institutions and outside of existing structures.

Communication: Tom Hart began this discussion by noting we have two important schemes to communicate - the idea of creative approaches to ministries but we have very poor communication machinery between the houses and between WISCOM and the houses.

Sunday, 9:00 A.M.

Tom Hart opened the meeting with a Proposal for Continuing Renewal. The introduction said we need education, to change from a classical to an historically conscious (modern) mentality; and proposals, for renewing ministries and starting new ones. These needs could be met in 10 projects.

1. A letter from the Provincial pointing to the call for new proposals in the Policy Statement.
2. Fr. Quesnell could give his talk to the houses and accompany it with a plea for proposals.

3. A workshop bringing hand-picked people from different disciplines together under Fr. Quesnell.
4. Continue the MBW retreats since they
  - continue spiritual renewal
  - open men to new ideas
  - begin communication between alienated men in the province.
5. Initiate directed retreats for key men in the province according to work and include discussion of Lonergan's work on the Jesuit as Apostle in the Modern World.
6. Revise the Haas and Voss-Caffrey proposals.
7. Set up workshops for major superiors to enable them to realize the dual objectives of their communities: apostolic effectiveness and a lively peaceful community life.
8. Strong encouragement by the Provincial to participate in theology institutes and to support the Better World retreats.
9. To actively assist the work of the Formation Commission to produce men with the mentality necessary to be effective in today's world.
10. To issue the Burns proposal for "developmental action."

The proposal resulted in the following Recommendations set in motion by Biever, seconded by Voss and passed unanimously by the Commission voting one part at a time.

1. That WISCOM ask the Provincial to set in motion a program of directed retreats of key people with responsibility in the province and in key areas of the province's ministries by the summer of 1972.
2. That the Voss-Caffrey proposal be revised by the original authors in light of the possibilities at Gesu Parish, and be reviewed by the Commission at its august meeting with a view to presenting it to the Provincial for implementation.
3. That the Provincial urge the board of provincials to speed up a national program of education and training of superiors.  
(Copies of this recommendation are to be sent to the National Office of Pastoral Research, other commissions on ministries, and Fr. J. V. O'Connor, Executive Secretary, Conference of Major Superiors of Jesuits.)
4. That the Provincial circulate Pat Burns' paper "Choice of Ministries are More Practical Criteria Possible?" endorsed by WISCOM with the Policy Statement, the Statement on Manpower assignment, and a call for creative ideas to the province by May 1, 1971.

CLARIFICATION: Specialized Retreat

A team of five with one general conference in the morning, the team available for one-on-one discussion during the day, and coming together as a group at night.

CLARIFICATION: Key Men

- a. People with political clout in province works. Presidents, deans, principals control the apostolic effectiveness of three-fourths of the men in the province.
- b. People receiving large number of votes for the Province Congress are unofficial leaders in the province. Their peers see them as men with trustworthy judgment who should be there when decisions are being made.

MINORITY POSITION: Activities for Key Men

So far I have not come to a clear idea of the goals of all this activity proposed for presidents and deans. What is the content of the Classical and Modern mentality? It may be more important for this group, WISCOM, to set up procedures to help the Provincial set up procedures to train superiors and administrators. If I do not see Lonergan's work as essential yet, others probably will not.

RESOLUTION: MBW Retreats

Tom Hart Proposed: Resolve that the Provincial keep the Better World Movement continuing as an initial step in a renewal program. Passed, unanimous.

Campion Institute: Hart, Resolution, that the provincial be asked to write a letter to superiors asking them to urge members of the community to attend the Campion Institute. Passed, unanimous.

Traveling Salesman: Hart, Resolution, that Quentin Quesnell be invited to visit the major communities of the province and explain the significance of Lonergan's paper in a community meeting. Other names were added and Resolution #3 passed, unanimous.

Personnel for WISCOM: The Provincial's agreement was that if any of the three men on the January Terna turned down the offer to work with WISCOM, the seat would remain open for the time being. Two turned down the offer. After several votes, Mike Flecky and Greg Lucey were suggested to the Provincial as possible replacements for outgoing members.

With a show of gratitude to Fathers Finn, Hart, and Larkin, who are retiring from the Commission, the meeting was closed at 1:15 P.M. Sunday, March 14, 1971.

The next meeting will be in Milwaukee June 11-13, 1971. The main topic will be John Thomas' paper. Biever and Ginsterblum will be reactors and hopefully, from the minutes of WISCOM #13, a sociologist of religion. Vol. 5 of the General Survey is background reading. The European report is especially important.

RECOMMENDATIONS SENT:

#2 That Mike Flecky and Greg Lucey be appointed to WISCOM.

RESULTS: Appointed

#3 That the Provincial urge the board of Provincials to promote and establish a national commission on ministries at their May meeting.

RESULTS: The provincials have been urged by letter to put this matter on the agenda for their May meeting. (April 13, 1971)

#4 That the Provincial urge the board of provincials at their May meeting to speed up the national program of educating and training superiors.

RESULTS: WISCOM's recommendation has been filed with the American provincials. In the meantime, Rev. Edward McGrath is sponsoring a program at Fairfield University this summer. Each Wisconsin Province superior has been notified of this workshop and urged by the Provincial to participate in it.

#5 That the Provincial take the practical steps necessary to begin a program of special retreats for key people with responsibility in the province and for people in key areas of province ministries for the summer of 1972.

RESULTS: Fr. Sheehan is holding this recommendation in abeyance until his return from Korea. WISCOM will receive a second report on this recommendation by June 5, 1971.

#6 That Father Provincial release to the province the promulgation of the WISCOM Policy Statement and a policy for assigning manpower by May 1, 1971. WISCOM endorses Fr. Pat Burns' paper, Choice of Ministries: Are More Practical Criteria Possible? and ask that it be sent to members of the province with our endorsement in the above package.

RESULTS: The matter of clarifying the WISCOM Policy Statement has been superseded by the action of the Province Congress. Therefore, the policy as ratified and approved by the Provincial and two supplementary documents detailing the operations of the policy statement will be sent to the communities for discussion and brought back to the Congress at their next meeting. Fr. Burns' paper will be sent along as further explication of the policy statement.

#7 That the Provincial write superiors asking them to urge the members of their communities to attend the Campion Institute.

RESULTS: Letter written.

#7a That the MBW retreats be continued as an initial step in a province renewal program.

RESULTS: Fr. Sheehan ratified these retreats as an integral part of the province renewal and assures the members of the commission that each year at least one Better World retreat would be sponsored by the province.

#8 That the Provincial invite Frs. Quesnell, P. Burns, and R. Doran to visit the major communities of the province alone or as a team to explain the significance of Fr. Lonergan's work "The Response of the Jesuit, As Priest and Apostle, in the Modern World," in a community meeting.

RESULTS: Fr. Sheehan would rather that WISCOM clear the matter with the three men concerned and write to the houses indicating their availability and urging the superiors to invite them.

Respectfully submitted,

John Carr, S.J.

Enclosures

APPENDIX A: EXPANDED OUTLINE OF LONERGAN REMARKS

Fr. Lonergan took the first evening of the WISCOM #14 meeting to help the commission understand how his work might help them. He began with a short prepared speech around the theme, pastoral theology "in Concretis." This speech was a general answer to questions about his monograph sent to him by members of the commission. He then spoke to each of these questions individually. Some of the more significant points are taken with varying degrees of accuracy from notes and set down here.

1. The goal of the Society is the Kingdom of God, a human good in which the other world and this world are equally important. The good of the Kingdom is community and efforts toward achieving this good can be set in motion in any situation.
2. He discussed ministry in terms of meaning. Common meaning constitutes community. Common meaning depends on a communality of experience, understanding, judgments, values, goals, plans, and purposes.
3. Christian ministry is a matter of communicating the common meaning of the Christian community, the Christian message. This meaning is communicated through theology - the message as cognitive - as well as living out the Christian message - the message as incarnate.
4. The Church had formerly been seen as a *societas perfecta*, but any society is a matter of concern with the human good, and the human good is arrived at only by a process of development and cooperation. The Church then is a matter of common meaning realizing itself in a community of persons. The Church is the process of the Christian message realizing itself.

Lonergan turned to the members' written questions.

Areas of ineffectiveness on the part of the Society and the Church. The Church has been a captive of the classical mentality for three centuries. In the meantime modern culture developed based on a historical mindedness. This modern culture demands a transformed theology and a transformed notion and practice of ministry.

Classical norms and a-priories have to be replaced by those of the transcendental imperatives of the human spirit itself - be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible.

Besides this basic ineffectiveness of being of being excessively marginal to the secular world, the commission and the Society have to effectively face the problems, many of which are world-wide, which would destroy the world if given a chance, war, revolution, capitalism, democracy, mass communications.



To note another source of ineffectiveness, it is important to think big in going after these problems. This way we will be attracting people to ourselves and starting movements. This might easily take care of the vocation problem.

Replying to a question, what are we as a commission all about, Lonergan said the fundamental task of a commission is to provide leadership. The first act of leadership is to decide your identity as a commission and decide to take responsibility for leadership.

Another question asking for suggestions on Christian ministry brought the twofold response: (a) to communicate the Christian message, Saints are the prime necessity; (b) the service aspect of Christian ministry asks what are the deficiencies in the human good within the geographical area and what can this group bring to bear on these deficiencies?

Asked what parallels exist between our problems and those of the early Society, Lonergan replied to the effect that just as Ignatius had to immerse himself in the problem areas of his time and then decide what parts of the tradition that led to these problems should be affirmed and which worked against, we too have to enter into the problems of today and decide what parts of the tradition that led to them should be affirmed and what worked against.

In dialogue with the commission, Fr. Lonergan made the following points. Common meaning does not exist among the ministers of the Society. In fact it is always an ideal. The best that can be hoped for is a tendency toward common meaning.

Talking about a modern approach to problems Lonergan emphasized the importance of strategies. A modern approach does not bring a solution to a problem but devises a strategy, a series of operations, which make the problem itself part of the solution. Each new question uncovered by an operation forces a revision in the former thought and strategy. The number of revisions will be fewer if you are lucky, more if you are not. The central problem is to advance our understanding of what had not been understood.

In answer to a question asking, how does a group know where to step out of a direction given to it by its past, Lonergan pointed to the importance of creative minorities who will know how to deal creatively with already established situations as well as how to begin new responses to specific problems. A creative minority sees something that needs to be done, something that others don't see, and goes ahead to do what needs to be done drawing others with it.

Fr. Lonergan was asked what in the historical mentality replaces the Norms which direct the activity of one who understands life according to the classicist mode. In general, value responses in the historical mindedness replace the Norms of the classical framework. Distinguishing between various types of values, he emphasized

the importance of asking the question is this truly worthwhile? Is it truly good? or only apparently good? One's answer to that question is true if the decision is made by a virtuous man in good conscience.

Asked if it is true that institutions in principle take responsibility away, Lonergan replied that institutions are essential for collaboration. Collaboration is a true necessity for meeting modern problems, and collective responsibility increases individual responsibility. In answer to another question, dealing with institutional alienation, Lonergan maintained that existing institutions must be criticized. The bias of defending the status quo like any other bias leads to the absurd.