

# REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

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### NEW TRENDS IN LOBBYING

In spite of the many things that are said (good and bad) during and between election campaigns, the people who run our government are rather normal Americans. They have ideals and moral convictions. Many have spiritual insights and a high personal commitment. They also have limitations in time, energy, knowledge, and wisdom, limitations which are closely akin to those experienced by the rest of us. They wish to serve America well, some of them want to serve the Lord, and they want to do it by keeping their own position and by extending the influence of their party.

This kind of sympathetic understanding and confidence is basic to the effective working of democracy. The idea that you cannot trust people in government has, unfortunately, become the chief stock in trade for a number of persons and interests who thus serve their own advantage. This general attitude has been further fomented by the pressure devices which some groups and some business interests have developed for influencing legislation directly at the congressional level. Disapproval of such pressure devices does not, of course, exclude the need for making as much factual material easily available as is possible, to the people and to the legislators.

In a Congressional Quarterly survey of lobbying published last week, there is some evidence that the above situation is improving. The emphasis seems to be shifting from the "personal contacts" approach to the "grassroots information" method. Even many of the economic interests are exerting themselves to inform the voters "back home" and so let the normal democratic pressure work up to Congress. As part of this shift many lobbying organizations are reporting lower expenditures for lobbying, the Supreme Court having defined lobbying as consisting of direct contacts. Obviously this does not mean that Washington activity has subsided.

However, many of the most effective "lobbies" work predominantly through their local units. "Know your Congressman," "get your Congressman to meet with your group," "explain your needs and viewpoints," "let him know that you are politically active" are sample gems of advice that go out through many trade channels from Washington offices. Some religious groups also have effective grasp and organization along these lines.

If the ethics of a group were to permit the use of such organizations for vituperation or irrational mass action, democracy would, of course, be endangered at the "grassroots" level, also. Once again we are forced to the observation that the strength of our nation lies in her people—a thinking, informed, solid population that has high principles and high self-respect. Toward such civic competence in the total population all churches should feel obligated to contribute.

#### EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLES ARE WORLD ISSUES

The recent disturbances in Belgium indicate that the educational issues so familiar to the American public are really world issues. The stories of the riots were quite adequately carried in print and pictures by the public press in many communities. The Roman Catholic journal America put it this way editorially:

"As in countless other countries, including our own, the school question is crucial for Catholics in several Western European countries at the present hour. Up to a fortnight ago, however, feelings have not taken the extreme form that Brussels witnessed on March 28. On that date the Belgian capital was the scene of a mass Catholic protest against the Government's proposed educational reform law. Despite the mayor's ban and despite deliberate curtailment of transportation, an estimated 60,000 demonstrators thronged into the city. The protests were the culmination of a four-weeks' series organized by the Catholic Committee for Freedom and Democracy. The Brussels climax was led by the President of the Christian Social party and by the head of the Confederation of Christian Trade Unions. Though punctuated by arrests and relatively minor violence, the demonstration was termed a success by its organizers."

Later in the same editorial it is recognized that, "Their own particular way of protesting by mass demonstrations may seem strange and perhaps even reprehensible to many Americans."

Some Background. In Belgium, Roman Catholics had been in political control for decades up until last year. During that time Catholic schools were expanded systematically, but State schools were not given an equal chance, with the result that about 934,000 of Belgium's 1,600,000 school children are in Roman Catholic schools. In the words of one leader in the present government, "The coffers of the State were at the disposal of the religious schools without end and often without control."

When the new government announced plans last November to cut state subsidies for church schools in 1955, the Minister of Education, Leo Collard, said the move was being made to "safeguard the economic and social possibilities of the future." He criticized the Christian Social (Catholic) Party, predecessor of the present government, for allegedly having raised subsidies to too high a level. "Catholic schooling has become a fact in Belgium," he said. "It is my belief that both forms of education (Catholic and State) can live side by side. But all is a question of measure of limit."

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Despite vigorous protests, which included a one-day strike on November 24 by Catholic schools, with Catholic teachers in State schools joining the walkout, and demonstrations staged in eight cities by Christian Social Party members, the Belgian Parliament voted on December 22 to reduce subsidies for the payment of salaries to teachers in religious schools.

Several other bills are pending which would reorganize the country's educational set-up. Some would increase State control over the "free" schools, operated by various religious organizations, most of them Roman Catholic. Under one provision, the Church schools would have to follow curricula and programs set up by the government for public schools, including the use of officially-approved textbooks, if they wanted to benefit by State subsidies.

Others of the proposed measures favor expansion of the State schools and would reduce Church influence in them. Among the measures that have been most strongly opposed by Roman Catholic leaders are those that would affect teacher-training and recruitment. Directors and head-teachers of State schools are appointed locally by the municipal councils; where a council has a Catholic majority, these posts are usually given to graduates of Catholic teachers' training colleges. A pending bill would require that directors of State schools be graduates of State teachers' colleges. Since most Catholics planning to be teachers go to Catholic teachers' colleges, the proposed change would affect an important area of Church influence in the State schools.

In a joint statement the Roman Catholic bishops of Belgium charged that the government program was "nothing else but a means to fight the Roman Catholic schools." They said, "On the one side it is apparently inspired by a spirit of malevolence and of mistrust toward the Roman Catholic educational institutions which one wants to hinder and paralyze; on the other side it shows the unvoiced intention to assure not only the strengthening of neutral education but even an unacceptable domination thereof." The bishops also declared that the proposals were inspired by "narrow-minded sectarianism" and put "freedom of conscience in danger."

The government, in reply, denied any attempt to force religious schooling into the background, but said it was seeking to expand the system of State schools for the vast number of Belgians who, for reasons of conscience, did not desire religious education for their children. In a large number of cases they have no choice at present for many localities have only Roman Catholic schools.

What Happened. Despite government precautions to prevent Catholics from massing in Brussels, the demonstrators turned out as scheduled; estimates of the total number varied from 60,000 to 150,000. The downtown area was virtually paralyzed from noon until about 4:00 P.M.

Reports of those injured ranged from 40 to more than 100; it was thought some did not seek treatment because they feared arrest. Officials reported 614 persons arrested, but most of them were released during the evening.

Most of the violence was confined to the fringes of the crowd, where marchers, many of them students, scuffled with police. At some points police used truncheons and the flat sides of their sabers to drive the

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demonstrators back. Fire hoses were turned on the crowd at least twice, but police relied mainly on mounted militia and armored trucks to hold their lines.

In mid-afternoon Theodore Lefevre, president of the Christian Social (Catholic) Party, went to the various concentration points and told the marchers the demonstration was over. He said their efforts had been successful and asked them to disperse quietly and go home. He promised the battle against the government's school policy would be continued in Parliament.

Significance. Obviously these incidents have a world wide significance. They demonstrate that the American political scene is not insulated from the rest of the world, but that we deal in the same issues. America is no longer a world unto herself, and, of course, she never was.

A Christian Science Monitor editorial looked upon these events as an "object lesson" for the American public, concluding:

"If this is the kind of pressure encountered when a people's elected representatives conclude subsidies have gone too far, can it be wondered at that American non-Catholics balk at opening the door at all to a breakdown of the constitutional separation of church and state?"

#### THE NEEDS OF ASIA

On April 6, 1955 Religious News Service carried a noteworthy statement by Dr. J. Winston Crawley, Secretary for the Orient of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, who has just returned from a tour of mission fields in that area.

According to him, America's concern over Communism in Asia rather than for the people involved is not helping the West's position in the Far East. "Above all, they would want the other people of the world to be concerned for them as people and not just as possible allies against an enemy."

"Most Asians feel America is concerned with the Communist angle," he said, "and not really concerned with helping the people of Asia to have a better life. What is happening in Asia is basically like what happened in the United States during the Revolution."

"They want everything in the four freedoms, spiritual freedom as well as material. They want medical service, a better diet, clothing, shelter and education. I think our nation ought to do everything possible to make it clear we sympathize with the people of Asia. We should make it absolutely clear that we are on the side of those people who want a better life."

Dr. Crawley said his main concern "is that the freedom they have gained requires moral and spiritual maturity and integrity. I feel moral and spiritual values are more important than economic and material resources."