

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF PRIESTS OF ENGLAND & WALES

Meeting with members of the Bishops' Conference Hinsley Hall, Leeds, 10.00 am Wednesday 13th November 2002

Members attending from NCP:

Father Anthony Wilcox (Birmingham)	Chairman
Father Kevin Pelham (Southwark)	Executive Secretary
Father John Paul Leonard (Middlesbrough)	Hon Treasurer
Father James Caufield (RAF – East Anglia)	Standing Committee

Members attending from CBCEW

Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor	Chairman
Archbishop Patrick Kelly	Vice Chairman
Mgr Andrew Summersgill	Secretary

Items for discussion

1. National Study Day on Nolan Review and its working, pastoral implications (Tony Wilcox)
2. The employment status of clergy (James Caufield)
3. One Priest, two parishes, (Kevin Pelham)
4. Clergy Pensions (Tony Wilcox)
5. The role and function of NCP at grass roots (John Paul Leonard)
6. Other matters to be noted:
 - Boundaries Committee (with NBCW)
 - ICEL
 - Financing of NCP

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National Study Day on Nolan Review and its working, pastoral implications

Background Information

- Standing Committee resolved that to prevent Conference 2002 being hi-jacked by discussion on Child Protection (as had the US Conference earlier in the year) a special Study Day should be set up.
- This is due to take place on Wednesday 29th January at Oscott.
- Morning Session - Key Speaker – Eileen Shearer, assisted by Archbishop Vincent Nichols and Archbishop Peter Smith.
- Afternoon Session – Key Speaker – Kristian Pave, (Judicial Vicar, Plymouth) assisted by Gordon Read (Judicial Vicar, Brentwood) and Andrew Clark (Senior Prison Chaplain).
- Details follow this page

Standing Committee requests

- **That the Bishops' Conference welcome this Study Day as part of the ongoing process of priests concerns for the Protection of Children**
- **That individual bishops promote support this Study Day by advertising same in their ad clerum, and encouraging their priests to attend.**

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The Employment Status of Secular Clergy

From Conference 2002

- Noting the consultation document issued by the Department for Trade and Industry on the employment rights of “atypical workers”, which includes clergy;
- Noting that responses must be made to this by December
- Noting that the Secretary of State has power to extend to these atypical categories various rights already possessed by employed persons.

Conference resolves

To press the Hierarchy to keep the clergy of the country fully informed on the issues involved

For 95%, Against 0%; Abstentions 5%

Further background

- Tony Wilcox was invited to by CBCEW to attend a initial meeting at DTI with John Gibbs
- Sean Middleton has subsequently been invited as representing NCP to sit on a Committee of the CBCEW (Charles Wookey) to respond to this.
- Position papers are existing.

The **Standing Committee of NCP** sees its role to keep members of Conference and the priests of the country informed. It is happy with the developments so far, and welcomes the invitation from CBCEW to take part as a positive way of keeping priests informed.

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One Priest, Two Parishes

From Conference 2002

- In the hope of sharing good practice and learning from experience Conference **mandates the Standing Committee To organised Study Days in 2004 to study the issues that arise when one priest serves two or more parishes.**
For 87%, against 2%, abstentions 11%.

Further Information

This subject was much talked about informally, as becoming part of the pattern of priestly ministry. There were differing approaches in different dioceses, but there was a considerable amount of perceived “good practice” that was felt should be shared. There were also many fears of work load fatigue etc. After much discussion it was felt that the best way to tackle the challenge of shortage of priests was to have a specific series of Study Days in 2004.

The date of 2004 gave time to plan.

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Clergy Pensions

Background Information

- Three years ago, at the request of the NCP, the Bishops Conference set up a joint working party of NCP/Diocesan Treasurers to look into this matter
- This committee comprised Tony O'Brien (Liverpool), John Gibbs (Westminster) Jim Whiston (Middlesbrough) from the Diocesan Treasurers, Tony Wilcox (Birmingham), John Patrick Thomas (Menevia) and (latterly) John Nelson (Portsmouth) from NCP.
- The committee sought information from all dioceses on 1) Pension Provision, 2) Housing Provision, 3) Health Care Provision.
- These have been collated, and a report generated.
- This was viewed by Conference in 2003 by means of a power pack presentation given by Tony O'Brien.

From Conference 2002

- Conference welcomes and accepts the presentation-report of the joint NCP/Financial Secretaries Committee (established by the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales) and
 - § **Urges the hierarchy as a whole view the presentation so as to inform themselves of the overall picture**
- Notes that most disbursement to help retired priests are *ex caritate* and not *ex justitia*
- Notes that individual **priests also must take responsibility** for some of the financial provision for their old age, and **in their wills should be urged to remember** those still labouring in the vineyard;
- Notes that constraints of "critical mass" mean excessive fees are paid to Fund Managers;
 - § **Resolves that to assist the retirement years of younger clergy, a National Stakeholder Pension Fund (or similar) be set up,**
 - **using tax benefits from government**
 - **contributions from the diocese**
 - **contributions from the parish**
 - **contributions from the individual priest,**
 - § **and that this should be a "stand alone" provision for the individual**

Finally.

- **Resolves that the Bishops Conference be requested to further mandate the same joint committee to day a survey of salaries of clergy and report to conference next year.**

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Further Information

- In 1974 NCP and the Bishops Conference concluded that a sum of c£780 should be the amount of “cash in hand” a priest should have from OAP and diocesan sources (as well as accommodation)
- 28 years on practice shows that figure is now **ten times** that on average
- Since 1982 the OAP has NOT kept in touch with wages inflation, only General Inflation.
- Inflation costs in old age (nursing care, OAP homes etc) is much higher
- Priests are living much longer into retirement
- Because of non-payment of National Insurance Contributions, not all priests received a full state pension (this is often due to the fact that no “cards were stamped” while in the seminary)
- Much care is subsidised by the religious orders, whose numbers are dwindling.
- Provision for such things as Alzheimer’s’ Care is currently circa £30,000 per year
- This proposal is for **younger priests**, older ones will continue to be covered as now
- **Capital Provision is inadequate in most dioceses.**
- **Many spin-offs would and could happen:**
 - the smaller, and very small diocese, with no funds could be helped
 - the “standard” could be set jointly by CBC and NCP to help the priests as a body “own” the pension provision
 - individual priests by directly contributing would “own” the provision
 - diocesan charity funds (emanating from its Trust Deed) could be properly then used for sick (ie nursing care) of elderly priests
 - priests leaving active ministry would be provided for – their pension provision goes with them
 - in the case of a married (former Anglican) priest, the pension would devolve to the spouse in case of death
- The NCP has also co-ordinated a meeting of the Trustees of the various Secular Clergy Funds with a few to joint help. This has proved invaluable.

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The role and function of NCP at grass roots

Background Information

- NCP is conscious of its image and how in the last few years it has cooperated greatly with the Bishops' Conference
- By the presence of 14 bishops at Conference this year, it experienced the genuine support of the bishops of England and Wales
- In conjunction with individual bishops and with the support of the Bishops' Conference, it seeks to highlight and develop its relationships with the priests in the parishes.
- It is to this end that the following resolution was made

From Conference 2002

- To overcome a perceived irrelevance of NCP to many priests, this Conference resolves:
 - § **That the Bishops be asked to make the theme of the Conference the matter for one Deanery Meeting each year**
 - § **That at this Deanery Meeting possible matter for discussion by NCP at its Conference be suggested**
 - § **That the decisions of the Deaneries be communicated to the bishops and the NCP representatives of that diocese.**

For 99%, against 0%, abstention 1%

Further Information

- § NCP would produce a short (one sided) paper for discussion in the deaneries.
- § Standing Committee is preparing such a paper at the moment for next year's Conference
- § Next year's Conference (at Trinity and All Saints, Leeds) is on the **Formation of Priests** (both in seminary and afterwards)
- § Dates of the Conference Monday to Friday 8th to 12th September
- § Archbishop Vincent Nichols will be giving two keynote speeches
- § It is hoped that this paper would be useful for dioceses.
- § Standing Committee urges Bishops to facilitate the election of representatives to the National Conference.

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Other matters to be noted

Re ICEL

Conference resolved to ask the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

- **To ensure that the new translations of liturgical prayers will reflect pastoral usage and modern linguistic styles and developments, as well as academic purity.**

For 85%, against 2%, abstentions 11%.

The passing of this resolution, it is felt, might strengthen the Bishops in their discussions with ICEL

Re Boundaries

To be noted

Conference commends the work of the lint working party of NCP and NBCW and asks Standing Committee to advance the project to produce a set of *GENERAL PASTORAL GUIDELINES* for those who undertake ministerial roles in the Church (whether lay or ordained) by co-opting suitable members to the working group and by inviting submissions from both laity and clergy concerning good practice.

Re Finances

To be noted

The Standing Committee thanks the NCF for its continued support over the years. Two years ago, the Conference was in great financial difficulties, but thanks to a loan from NCF and the diligence of our Treasurer, John Paul Leonard, the Standing Committee is able to report that we are financially viable.

It reports that it is now in a position to pay off the last part of its loan, and advises that its accounts are now properly audited each year.