

Point of View

Editorial

Thanksgiving is over, and we are now looking forward to the Christmas holidays. Christmas shopping will take its toll on both our energies and our finances.

"Safety in the streets, in the stores, and in our homes" must become our motto for the season.

Christmas lights either are or soon will be appearing in our homes. A few practical suggestions for a safe holiday season, free from burned persons and/or homes, seem to be in order. They are:

1) Make sure the circuits that supply power to our lights and trees are in good working order. 2) Keep the Christmas tree far enough away from the drapes and any other flammable objects so that the heat from the lights will not cause a fire. 3) Turn off the lights at night when the last person retires to bed. 4) Keep children away from the lights. Many times children like to play with the lights and may cause a short in the wiring system.

A safe Christmas is usually a happy Christmas regardless of the amount of Christmas gifts we receive or give.

Family members must look out for each other, and see that the season is a safe one.

Finally, let us all remember the true meaning of giving and receiving at Christmas time. Whether the 25th of December is actually the birthdate of Jesus Christ is open to debate. However, the facts that He was born, lived, died, and yet still lives are facts that are generally thought of as indisputable. Let us not forget the true meaning of the Christmas season.

To Be Equal

POVERTY MORAL ISSUE

By John E. Jacob

Just days after an election in which the majority of voters appeared to support continuation of policies that ignore the needs of the poor, a powerful institutional voice was raised on behalf of the disadvantaged and the left-out in the form of the draft pastoral letter on economic justice by the U.S. Catholic Bishops.

Their sharp criticisms of the workings of our economic system has led to a defensive reaction. Critics of the letter attacked the specific proposals made by the Bishops and attempted to play down the seriousness of their message.

But the Bishops' document is the start of a

moral crusade on behalf of America's poor, one that should win the support of all Americans of all religious and political persuasions.

The Bishops' call for "a new commitment to economic justice" is necessary to correct the



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malfunctionings of an economic system that provides much for many, but excludes millions from full participation. Americans need to rediscover the sense of caring they have lost in recent years.

Poverty has risen sharply in recent years and the gap between the affluent and the poor is growing. The Bishops ask how much a rich country can justify that situation and their answer is that "gross inequalities are morally unjustifiable."

At a time when poverty is ascribed to shortcomings on the part of those who are poor, the Bishops' message is that "broader social and institutional factors are an integral part of the problem." Those factors include "racial discrimination, the feminization of poverty, and the distribution of income and wealth."

The draft letter favors public job creation, infrastructure and public works programs, welfare reforms, federal policies that bring unemployment down to 3 or 4 percent, and more. It prescribes a shift from

selfishness and suggests that America's immense resources be placed at the service of the common good to a far greater degree than in recent years.

Too many people think that if you just leave the free market system to operate, enough opportunities will be created to end poverty. But that has never happened. Even

of our economic system. By pointing out that economic systems serve the needs of mankind, not the other way around, the Bishops break through the veil of myths that obscure policy decisions.

The Bishops' statement has been a bitter pill for many to take. The draft letter has been attacked by those who prefer to leave the prob-

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the current strong recovery hasn't had much effect on the 35 million poor Americans and the millions hovering just above the poverty line.

So the Bishops' letter is an important step in reaching the vast numbers of Americans who don't understand the moral imperative to create a more just society.

By elevating economic issues to the moral plane the Bishops have raised essential questions about the nature of our society and the role

of the poor and the disinherited out of their consciousness; who prefer to consign moral principles to an hour or two on a Sunday morning rather than practice them all week long.

For that reason the letter is a historic pronouncement calling the nation back to a moral awareness of the need to become more just socially and economically. It is a call to recover America's ideals and its devotion to moral principles and fairness.

Vietnam From A Black Perspective (Twenty voices speak out)

A review of Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans, by Wallace Terry. (New York-Random House-1984), 311 pages, Hardcover, \$17.95.

Bloods is an unforgettable reading experience. The voices of the twenty Black Vietnam War veterans spotlighted here will haunt, shock and sadden you.

The Black soldiers in Vietnam called themselves "Bloods." For them, the Vietnam War was a war waged on many different levels, and *Bloods* is their story. In a compilation of first person narratives, we relive their vivid experi-

ences with them.

Wallace Terry, a respected Black journalist, covered the Vietnam War as a correspondent during the height of that conflict (1967-1969). He was touched and disturbed by the often vastly different treatment and experiences of the Black soldiers there.

Even in an unpopular war, the problems for Black soldiers in Vietnam were unique. In the fact of racism, their loyalty was unquestionably expected; and fatalities among Black soldiers were disproportionately high. At a time when the civil rights movement in America was at its peak, young, poor Blacks were asked to die in a rice paddy 10,000 miles from home.

The Pursuit of Happiness

If you can't catch it
you won't have it.

-Jamaican Proverb

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