

New Direction for Industrial Chaplains in New Zealand

by

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The Rev. Canon Bill Wright, senior industrial chaplain on Teesside, U.K., spent eleven weeks in New Zealand this winter as the guest of ITIM (Inter-Church Trade & Industry Mission). His purpose in being here was to share insights from his own industrial involvement in the U.K., and to enable ITIM to review its own work and lay plans for the future.

Bill Wright has spent the last 17 years as industrial chaplain to the 10,000-strong ICI complex at Billingham, Teesside. The main thrust of his work there has been the improvement of job relationships — within groups (such as supervisors) and between groups (such as management and unions).

The independence of the chaplain's position has enabled Bill to relate to staff at all levels and get to grips with work concerns people cannot always share with another within the company structure. Becoming known, building relationships, and establishing trust takes time but after many conversations a chaplain can often pinpoint widely felt issues.

At such a time he can discuss with a company (without divulging personal confidences) appropriate initiatives that might be taken, and Bill Wright's own work has included, for example, the establishment of groups for supervisors to share and make plans around their own concerns, and similar groups for various levels of management as well as for shop stewards.

A second stage in relationships develops at the inter-face between groups — a foreman communicating with his workers, management with foremen, or staff in one department having to relate to staff in other departments. Bill Wright has used his independent status as well as his acquired skills in group dynamics to establish a wide variety of groups committed to sorting out organisational problems together.

The success of such groups, however, depends on the participants themselves developing skills in working with others. In British industry, as well as in New Zealand,

such skills are hard to find. Managers are appointed for their technical expertise, not for their ability in working with people. Management styles are still, in most instances, too authoritarian, with the result that "us and them" attitudes are fostered, confrontation is the norm rather than collaboration, and effective joint problem-solving is a rare exercise.

Because of the need for such skills the Teesside Industrial Mission team, with the assistance of the University of Durham and local training staff in industry, initiated a variety of courses to train people in the basics of communication, leadership, teamwork, and joint decision-making.

Courses were also run for shop stewards on any subjects they liked, e.g. economics, industrial relations legislation, or handling meetings. The Teesside experience has been that when unions are well established, well respected, well funded, and the leaders well experienced, stable industrial relations have resulted. Whether current legislative moves in New Zealand will have the same effect is debatable.

The Teesside chaplains have also initiated many "frontier groups" in which appropriate people have come together to consider and take action on such issues as unemployment, redundancy, technological change, the gap between school and factory, and faith and work.

CANON WRIGHT'S NEW ZEALAND VISIT

Two of New Zealand's full-time industrial chaplains trained on Teeside from 1970-73 and at their suggestion ITIM nationally invited Bill Wright to visit. Bill arrived in Auckland on 30 June and commenced a busy schedule of seminars with industrialists, union leaders and members, industrial chap-

lains, church leaders and lay people.

He appeared as guest on TV-2's Friday Conference to discuss worker participation; visited many major industries from Whangarei to Invercargill; and met with the Minister of Labour and senior Department of Labour officials in Wellington.

Arising out of the various public presentations at seminars or through the media there came invitations to visit specific companies to explore with management (in sessions lasting anything up to 16 hours) ways of developing greater teamwork within the organisation.

As a result of such a visit one organisation that employs 500 people, many of them highly skilled, has established a programme of seven two-hour meetings at which the organisation head, along with 15 top sectional leaders, are meeting to discuss their own methods of communicating and working together. An ITIM staff member is acting as an observer at these meetings to pinpoint statements or actions that help or hinder the formation of more effective relationships. The meetings are unstructured and the learning arises directly out of the interactions as members of the group learn to identify tasks and seek consensus decisions about the handling of them.

REFLECTIONS FROM A BRIEF VISIT

Without in any way suggesting that eleven weeks is sufficient to form a comprehensive assessment, Bill Wright made these observations about the New Zealand industrial scene prior to departure:

- ◆ Although industrial development here is new and comparatively small, New Zealand shares with bigger companies in the U.K. the same problems of job relationships and technological change.
- ◆ Ritual stances by trade unions and employers indicate a quality of aggression in industrial relations.
- ◆ The currently proposed industrial legislation has heightened the conflict, especially the issue of seeking change in the balance of power.
- ◆ Very few young people were encountered in trade union offices.
- ◆ Little evidence of systematic training for trade union leaders and job delegates was found.
- ◆ Trade union leaders dissipated a lot of valuable time collecting union fees.

- ◆ Too much emphasis was given to the technical ability of managers and not enough to "man-management" training.
- ◆ Companies often communicated with pieces of paper rather than face to face.
- ◆ Unionism amongst white collar workers and managers is not yet evident.
- ◆ Little cross-fertilisation of ideas between companies exists, except for the work of Productivity Groups.
- ◆ A few companies had established very good worker participation through Productivity Teams.
- ◆ Immense interest by managers and unions alike had been shown in greater degrees of participative management.
- ◆ There is scope for work to be done to make a smoother transition from school to work for young people.
- ◆ Many companies are willing to accept an industrial chaplain as a change agent.
- ◆ There is much hopeful evidence that New Zealand is still very much at first base in industrial relationships and could build very good models of effective teamwork.

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR ITIM

Although industrial chaplains now visit more than 130 industries around New Zealand much work needs to be done in extending their role. Very often chaplaincy has been "sold" as a domestic counselling and welfare service, and while valuable work has been performed in this area there is an inappropriateness about an industrial chaplain having a domestic agenda.

In actual fact from the very beginning managers and shop-floor workers have freely shared with New Zealand's industrial chaplains the concerns that relate to their job relationships. Because of the "domestic" image, however, it has been difficult for a chaplain to become included as a person who might have some contribution to make to a company's job relationships agenda.

Not all chaplains, of course, have the skills to contribute in the latter way. Many are parish clergy who do only a few hours weekly in industry and further training will be necessary to give them competence in such skills as process observation or group dynamics. A company will rightly suspect amateurs, but in many cases the companies

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themselves have the resources to help train a chaplain, thus adding competence to their chaplain's independence.

The preceding comments make clear some of the emphasis the local Industrial Mission will now give to its work:

- ◆ Establishing the concept of a chaplain more as an "industrial" than as a "domestic" counsellor.
- ◆ Clarifying between companies and chaplain their mutual expectations.
- ◆ Training chaplains more thoroughly to help them meet their extended role.

Bill Wright's visit also highlighted the need for churches to release more money and person-power for work in the industrial sector, as well as for the establishment of a lay education programme to enable participants to see that "faith at work" extends beyond personal behaviour. Of greater significance in this regard is an intelligent concern for the reform of those structures that deny individuals the freedom to develop their own skills for the good of the organisation and their own satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

There are two types of management. "Type A" assumes that senior management

alone define a company's needs, think up ideas, make plans and institute them. Decisions are communicated downwards for implementation; reactions and suggestions occasionally filter back up.

"Type B" assumes that when anyone in management or on the shop-floor senses a need appropriate representatives from each level get together to hammer out a solution. There are, of course, various intermediate steps between the two types.

The advantages of "Type B" are obvious:

- ◆ Ideas are generated by a much wider group of people, many of whom have direct knowledge of the issue at hand.
- ◆ Overall commitment to any plan is assured by involving those affected from the outset.
- ◆ The level of staff morale and fulfilment is greatly enhanced.

Although few examples of "Type B" are to be found in New Zealand, Bill Wright's visit evoked real enthusiasm for this style of management wherever he went — from workers, from managers, and from government. It is on this enthusiasm that the hope for the future of our industries can be based. ©

INDUSTRIAL LAW CASES

HOLIDAY PAY ACCRUES DURING ILLEGAL STRIKE: SUPREME COURT UPHELD BY COURT OF APPEAL

Hellaby Shortland Ltd v Weir, Court of Appeal, Wellington, 30 April 1976
(C.A. 89/75), McCarthy P., Richmond and Cooke J. J.

Lord Upjohn recently observed in the English House of Lords that "... Factory Acts are Acts passed for the benefit of the workers and ought to be broadly construed." These remarks were, of course, made in the context of English legislation, but they have been adopted and repeated in the New Zealand Court of Appeal, by Mr Justice Richmond, with respect to the Factories Act 1946 of New Zealand. Richmond J, joined in his opinion by McCarthy P, and joined in a separate concurring opinion by Cooke J, thus upheld the decision of Mahon J in the Supreme Court that striking workers are entitled to statutory holiday pay which accrues during that strike. (*Weir v Hellaby Shortland Ltd* (1975) 2 NZLR 204, noted at (1976) NZJIR 19).

Appellant Hellaby, Defendant in the court

below, argued that statutory holiday pay, which accrues under ss 26 and 28 of the Factories Act 1946, is payable only to workers who actually worked during the fortnight of the holiday in question, i.e. workers who were in the factory doing physical labour during that fortnight. The Appellant argued that the phrase "Any person . . . employed in any factory" in s 28 (1) can only refer to persons actually performing work in the factory. The unanimous Court of Appeal did not accept that submission, but agreed with Mahon J that "Any person . . . employed" in s 28 (1) refers to the status of the contract of employment, and not actual labour. If a contract of employment subsists, then, when a worker is sick or on strike (remembering that the employer may elect to treat the breach as funda-