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Catholic Physicians Meet in San Francisco

(Editorial)

THE FEDERATION of Catholic Physicians' Guilds sponsored a meeting for Catholic physicians during the Convention of the American Medical Association in San Francisco. The combined lunch and program were held at noon, June 28 in the Fairmont Hotel. One hundred and six people attended the luncheon. During the meeting a certificate of affiliation was presented to the Sacramento Guild which has been recently organized. The Most Rev. Robert J. Armstrong, Bishop of Sacramento, showed his interest in the recently established guild by attending with the Sacramento delegation.

The program of the meeting was built around the topic, "Health Insurance and the Social Responsibility of the Catholic Physician". The theme of the panel emphasized the positive approach to the problem as the best means of defeating compulsory government health insurance.

In opening the panel Dr. William Chester, Vice-President of the Federation, stressed the obligation of the Catholic physician to patients and in particular to the "good-solid middle-class man and his family." With all the good will in the world he faces catastrophic illness with fear and trepidation. The hospitals and the physicians must help such people to solve the problem of costly medical and hospital care. We must do it in a convincing positive way. Negation won't provide John Doe the medical care that he and his family need and it won't help John to pay the doctor, pay his hospital bill and retain his dignity, as a solid citizen of these United States. We can provide the positive answer with voluntary insurance plans.

The Rev. Bernard Cronin, Assistant Director of the Department of Social Service in the Archdiocese of San Francisco, discussed the application of the encyclicals to the problem of health insurance. He summarized the contentions of the opposing schools of thought and then pointed out that "Government's

function in the field of health is primarily to encourage and aid but not to control and replace the voluntary agencies immediately in the field. As the Popes have declared repeatedly, governmental action is justified when individuals and voluntary organizations have failed to do the job". At another point he stated "In the eight of the social encyclicals of the highest moral authority on earth, it simply isn't accurate to even imply that any and every form of compulsory health insurance is wicked".

In bringing the panel to a close, Dr. Arthur Offerman of Omaha stated "Many physicians recognize that there are grave problems in the distribution and the economics of medical care. The responsibility for the solution of this social and moral problem should be accepted by the members of the medical profession at the local level—in their own state and county society—and by the physicians individually".

Doctor Offerman pointed out that Blue Shield and Blue Cross plans made it possible for the great mass of people to accept personal responsibility for their own health and welfare. These plans preserve the dignity of man when they make it possible for him to provide good health care for his wife and family and children. These plans have the potential power of making man independent of his Federal or state government in the matter of personal health care. These plans, if developed to their fullest extent, will prevent the trend toward totalitarianism in health care.

Rev. John J. Flanagan, S.J., Acting Editor of LINACRE QUARTERLY reported in the absence of Father McGowan on the activities of the Federation. A part-time secretary is now responsible for affairs of the Federation in the St. Louis office. Miss Jean Read has doubled the subscriptions to LINACRE QUARTERLY in the last nine months and has kept in touch with the various guilds. It was reported that there are 1500 active members and that new guilds have been formed in Buffalo, Sacramento and Omaha. Guilds are in the process of formation in several other cities.

The Federation did not hold a business meeting as these are scheduled every two years. Next year in Atlantic City the Executive Board with representatives from all affiliated guilds will meet. There will be election of officers at the Atlantic City meeting.