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## Letter to the Editor

Catholic Physicians' Guild

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# Letter to the Editor . . .

## Letter from New Zealand

The past year has not been the happiest we have known. The stock market crash of last October saw market capitalisation fall by over 50 percent. Bankruptcies abound, but I am still optimistic about the long-term outlook for the economy. This country is abundantly blest by Nature and the people have a 99 percent literacy rate. Some say that, if only we could export the politicians, all would come right . . .

Meanwhile a very worrying problem is the demographic situation because of a small population loss during each of the last three years, mainly the result of emigration to Australia. With a total population of only 3.3 million, any loss is serious.

Like all Western countries, apart from Eire, our birth rate has fallen to below replacement levels, thanks to the devastation of widespread contraception, sterilization and abortion. The average family is only 1.9 children. It is worth repeating that for replacement alone, much less growth, the family size should be about 2.4.

The Church preserves a remarkable unity and a happy relationship with the hierarchy. There is no question of disloyalty to the Pope. But we are suffering from the worldwide shortage of vocations to the priesthood and religious life. There is endless speculation about the multiple causes of this phenomenon but I was recently impressed by two new etiological factors proposed by Fr. Paul Marx, OSB, of Washington, D.C.

One is the simple fact that Catholic families are now quite as small as those of other faiths, thanks to their slavish acceptance of the usual birth control techniques, and therefore there is a huge deficit in the pool of young people from which to draw recruits. The second is that, thanks to the same birth control philosophy, marriage and childbearing have been devalued, sex is open to all and therefore the sacrifice of these things as a celibate or consecrated virgin is no longer

perceived as a great thing. So materialism and hedonism reign unchecked.

When I was young there was no mention of racialism in this country but, now that they number almost 10 percent of the population, there has been a resurgence of Maori nationalism. They are demanding the return of land confiscated by the government during the Maori Wars of 1860-70. Maori is now an official language and attempts are made to make it compulsory for primary school children. This, of course, is usually resisted by the white parents. Some areas of the cities have become Polynesian enclaves and Maori gangs terrorise the local residents with assaults, murders, rapes and robbery. It will take the wisdom of Solomon to resolve the problem.

Heart transplants have at last been performed in this country, now that the public hospital funding has been arranged. Three operations have been completed at Green Lane Hospital, but the first patient died suddenly from an acute rejection reaction at 14 days.

There has been a major inquiry into the management of carcinoma of the cervix at National Women's Hospital. Prof. G. H. Green had attempted over many years to prove that *ca. in situ* (CIN 1) did not invariably progress to invasive *ca.* and therefore it could safely be observed with cytology smears or with minor surgery short of hysterectomy. Unfortunately several cases did develop invasive *ca.* while participating in this clinical trial. The patients claim that they had not given any consent, informed or implied, to this controversial management. At the time of writing, Judge Cartwright has not given her decision on the case but we can be sure that there will be huge claims for damages, many heads will roll and the reputation of this teaching hospital will suffer.

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Auckland