

### THE JAMAICA COLLOQUY REPORT

I did not have much fun in the sun in Jamaica, but still it was very interesting. The course was set up by the Anglican Bishop of Jamaica and the principal of their church teachers' college that trains both government and church teachers. They had come to the ITI in Caracas in January, and were very impressed. The Bishop went back and continued to correspond with the House in Caracas, and he set up this course for his clergymen. It was their annual clergy conference, the content of which was being provided by the Ecumenical Institute. This was the context in which we went to Jamaica.

Let me give you a picture of the situation, who was there, the course, and the key events. Major cities are Kingston, Mandeville, Montego Bay, Black River, Falmouth, Ewerton and Ocho Rio where the famous Playboy Club is. You can drive around the island. If you ask how far it is from Kingston to Mandeville, they tell you in hours, because there is not a straight road on the entire island. Every road is curved and it is all two-lane. You can get stuck; we got stuck for half an hour one time when somebody left a bulldozer on the road and went off to lunch. We had to sit until he came back.

This is an island of about 2 million people, 500,000 of whom live in Kingston. Kingston resembles New Orleans and it is very crowded. Jamaica has just gone through a period of political unrest, where they were having 3 or 4 murders daily of people of the opposition party, and the party in power was finding its members murdered, especially in Montego Bay. They clamped down in a national emergency, which meant curfews, road blocks, searches, restrictions on travel, and detainment without charge. They still have big detainment centers throughout the island where people are in jail without charge.

There is great economic division here. You see it most pointedly in the big cities; the rich and the poor live side by side. Anybody that has a decent job has gone out and gotten a fairly good-looking house. These houses and villas are right next to tin shacks, cardboard shacks, and people camped out on the roadway. The rich section of Kingston or rich sections of Montego Bay are not that far away from the very poor people on the island. Right now they are struggling to bring economic equity throughout the country, but they have it all trapped in ideas and ideologies. The way they talk about it is a struggle

of capitalists over against socialists. They image that to be the major struggle economically, and you lose the sense of any real participation of local man and any understanding of the real contradiction there.

These are people struggling to get hold of their roots, and so you see a great cultural struggle going on. In Jamaica, people are of African heritage, but are cut off and not directly in touch with that; yet they know that they are not English, either, and they are struggling to see what it means to be Jamaicans. One of the interesting offshoots of this struggle for roots is the whole Rastafarian Movement in Jamaica. Rastafarians are people who believe Haille Selasse was God and the manifestation of God, and he will come someday and enable them to be expatriated back to Ethiopia. That is the master plan, and in anticipation of that and as a symbol they comb their hair very long and let it sort of corkscrew up into tight curls that stand out all over their heads. They have big beards. Their hair is called dreadlocks and sometimes they are nicknamed the Natty Dreads, the people with the natty dreadlocks. There is a story about a tourist who wandered around Montego Bay looking for sights and turned the corner and ran into one of these Rastafarians. She gasped and said "Jesus Christ!" when she saw this head full of hair and this wild beard. He said "See that thou tellest no one." So there is a great struggle for roots here, and the Rastafarian Movement is just one example of it.

Now the people who came to this course were an impressive lot. We had in this course the Bishop of Jamaica of the Anglican Church, the Suffragen Bishops of Mandeville, Montego Bay and one other, the church secretary of the Bishop of Jamaica who will likely be the Suffragen bishop of Kingston when the elections take place. The Suffragen bishops are elected by the rest of the priests on the island and they are like area priors. They are looking out for the life of the church in these areas. We also had four archdeacons in the course, 4 canons, uncountable deacons and priests to the point where it was very clear that this course had penetrated 70-80% of the priests in the Anglican church in the island, and had covered the major cities of the island. As we worked with this group it became clear that this was a group in search of methods of effective action. They were men of quiet desperation. Their question was not whether or not to continue being a priest but whether there was anything they could do while they were being a priest that would have any effect or if being a priest was just a dead end. They were men of quiet

desperation. There was not much yelling and screaming; there was a sense of pride in a rich and powerful organization and yet underlying that was guilt that that rich and powerful organization had not done more to become an effective voice in the life of the nation. The racial makeup was all Black except for one or two English who came in and out.

The course itself began on Monday night with CS-1. We did a combination of the three CS-1 lectures, and a quick workshop on issues to grab their attention. Tuesday and Wednesday was RS-1. We did God, Christ, Holy Spirit and Church. The first evening we did an Ecclesiola demonstration, and the second evening we did the movie Requiem for a Heavyweight. Thursday we did a modified Town Meeting. If you have done this sort of course, you know the only way it can be described is "sort of a modified Town Meeting," just like this was sort of an RS-1 and sort of a CS-1. It is very difficult to describe it in the usual terms, but this was out to be a demonstration of key methods. The Bishop wanted them to see the methods that we have to offer, and so we showed them methods of looking at the times, methods of holding the theological revolution, and methods of building social change.

I got in Sunday night, and early Monday morning I went to Mandeville. After the course was over on Friday morning we left Mandeville and went up to Montego Bay. We stayed in Montego Bay all day Friday, and Saturday afternoon we left and went to Falmouth and visited a couple of ITI grads there. Then we went over to Ewerton and visited more ITI grads there, coming back to Kingston on Sunday. Then we stopped and made our plans and evaluated the course. In the midst of this we got to see quite a bit of the most populous part of the island, as well as staying in various peoples' homes. This encounter in other peoples' homes was maybe even more effective than the course, because there we got to talk to people, and encounter people and set up quite a number of things.

The key events of the course were first of all Tillich and Bonhoeffer. Something strange is happening with people in that course. The whole contradiction was that they had taken a social passion and turned it into a concern for personal piety. Tillich was an address first of all on personal piety. Then when you got to Bonhoeffer where they saw that standing in the social situation, human freedom and ultimately human faith in God is only acted out in the social situation, then they almost fell off their chairs. They were extremely excited about Tillich and

Bonhoeffer; their testimony at the end of the course was something like "I used to be afraid of Tillich when I was in seminary but I am not afraid of him now," and "That Bonhoeffer Freedom was very helpful."

The other key event was the Ecclesiola; we did a spirit conversation, the meditation muse and a sociality that was a news conversation. They were not especially excited about the spirit conversation; it takes a bit more context than we used to get people really convinced that a conversation about water is somehow enabling to the lives of other people. The meditation muse, and the method of the solitary workshop was something that they had never tried before and they were very excited about it. One of the things that became clear early was their pain over the social. People began to say things like, in the Niebuhr seminar, "Well, I just do not know what I would do." In the church conversation, after giving the man the popedom of Christendom and asking him what he would do, he tried a couple of things and then he just collapsed in his chair and said he would pray to God and wait for an answer--that was what he would do. There was pain over just what they could do in the social to make a difference, and it became so clear by the end of the Niebuhr, that the Town Meeting experience was just grand. The Town Meeting workshop was the height, of course, because here you dealt with their sense of inability. We worked on the issues by dividing the group into what they called "cures" or what we call "parishes." We divided into urban and rural cures, those who worked in the urban cures and those who worked in the rural cures. We then worked out the issues, the underlying contradictions, the proposals, and the tactical timeline for the urban and the rural cures, just to give them a taste of what is possible. All the way through we were afraid we were going to have to fight the ideologues in the group, who want to get everything down to ideology, but as the workshop proceeded, it was clear that we had bypassed that. We were also interested in teaching several of the methods: the brainstorm, the gestalt, the plenary, the corporate writing, and so forth. When they got to the plenary and read off their work, they got very excited about it, but the whole thing was capped by the question we raised, namely, "Which of the things that you have proposed could be done?" When somebody finally said, "Well, we can probably do all of it, there is none of it that could not be done," a deep silence fell over them.

The closing spin where we laid out the Ecumenical Institute was the last key event, and I think the most important impact then was the description of social demonstration and the description of the global band around the world and the five centrums. You could say that we won their confidence in Tillich, we got them intrigued by the time Bonhoeffer came, and we accomplished our task in the closing spin. For, all of a sudden, it became

not just nice things that you could do, but methods that were already in being in the world, and successful. And it changed the whole face of the course that that kind of impact was going on.

The effect of all this was one of broadening the base of our contacts. Before we had had only about six or seven ITI grads to work with in Jamaica. Now we branched out from the strongest church on the island and touched the vast bulk of its ministers. We set up an ITI. The Bishop of Jamaica, it became clear, had invited us for the purpose of getting his ministers excited enough about the methods to get an ITI next year. That was what he wanted, an ITI centered in the Caribbean, that would draw from all over the Caribbean people of all denominations and begin to teach these methods.

We went with him on several calls--we went to see a Mr. Chen in Kingston, a Chinese fellow. He was at the bank and the Bishop of Jamaica swept in with his entourage. We seated ourselves and they talked for about 10 minutes. I kept wondering when they were going to talk about money for the ITI--he had wanted me to come with him to set up this money for the ITI. There were only about 2 minutes left (Mr. Chen had said he could only give us about 15 minutes because he had a meeting), then there was one minute left and they were still chatting about picnics and barbeques. Then the Bishop said, "By the way, next year we are going to have this program called the ITI and we are going to need some financial support." Mr. Chen said, "How much will you need?" and the Bishop said, "oh, about \$5000 from you." And Mr. Chen said, "All right. We will put it in a special account. Pick it up any time you need it." Afterward the Bishop got back in the car and said, "Whew. I'm glad that is over. That was going to be the hardest one." So this ITI that was not in existence except in the Bishop's mind the day before we came now has half the money raised. We told him in our estimation it would be between six and ten thousand dollars for the ITI, and he did not flinch or gasp, but just said, "Well, okay." It now has \$5000, it has a site, it has a recruitment network set up, and it has the backing of the hierarchy. We went to see the Catholic Bishop of Jamaica, and the president of the Council of Churches, and the President of the Union of Theological Seminaries, all of whom came to the Bishop's office, and he would have them come and sit down, then spend 20 or 30 minutes talking about barbeques and such, and then he would say, "We're having this interdenominational meeting called the ITI." George and I would lay it out, and then he would ask them for their support. They have offered their support and image themselves as a team that is going to get interdenominational cross-Caribbean representation in such an ITI. We will probably get a lot of students

out of that seminary. The other kinds of implications of these are that George and Steve are now in Kingston, working with Bishop Edmonson on his plans to go through the Caribbean. It was he who suggested that we might go through the Caribbean with him and use that time to set up the contacts for other ITIs. George managed to contact several people who might come to Caracas for the Consult. The Bishop made a commitment to send 4 people to the Academy this year, and more next year, and he has given his priests a choice of missing Easter and getting a supply minister, or making their plans quickly and coming in October. He was very interested in people coming to the Academy, because he wants to have four indigenous faculty for the ITI. We told him that that was exactly what he would have if he got them here, and he will have that.

The major contradiction at this point is that we have done a great penetration on only one facet of the Island life. We have not touched the grassroots, we have not finally touched the Catholic church or the Baptist church or the Methodist church, which is a substantial number of people. The other contradiction is that we are not operating clearly out of any Caribbean strategy; the Caribbean is very low priority in the Latin American continent. So the question comes of the importance of the momentum built here in the Caribbean while not committing any more troops or any more resources to do that. They are starting to build a strategy to pull that off, but they simply do not have the troops to spend here while they are getting ready for a Consult and for Social Demonstration and to continue their thrust on the mainland of Latin America. Again, we have touched only the Anglicans, we have touched only the rich. Even the youngest priest gets an incredible mansion along with his service. The houses the priests live in are beautiful places, and they are very embarrassed about such beautiful places, so many times our task has been to bring absolution, allowing that home to be a resource rather than a source of guilt. We stayed in a lot of people's houses along the way, and these contacts gave us a chance to see people on a much more intimate level and allowed us to explain to them more clearly what we were doing. The more we talked the more excited they became. Surprisingly, or not surprisingly, a number of priests became unglued at the construct of the Order. They were intrigued by the life style of the Order and the structures of the Order and the decision to live in the community. They were intrigued by the social methods and could not tell enough stories about Social Demonstration, and they were most intrigued by Cairo which nobody had any data on.

Finally we have begun something that is going to be part of a vision of the future. My anticipation of the future is something like this: I doubt seriously if the time will ever come when we do not need something you would call the Order dynamic in a Social Demonstration, but when the Social Demonstration starts, this more massive grassroots support is the key to replication. You can bring them in by the droves to the Demonstration sites, train them up and turn them out to replicate and allow that Demonstration site to be the global interchange and the global point of exchange. Something like that is probably the ramification of this course, building the kind of situation where more and more people are going to be streaming to get a Demonstration going someplace down the road.