

Conflict over World Vision advertising

by Bruce Duncan

THE MANAGING editor of the Brisbane Catholic weekly newspaper resigned last month in protest against a decision by the Australian Catholic Bishops not to allow advertising or publicity by the World Vision aid agency in Catholic papers. Mr Doyle was reported as saying that he preferred to resign rather than embarrass Archbishop Francis Rush of Brisbane who has always given Mr Doyle strong support.

Mr Doyle's decision came as a great surprise to the religious press. He is highly regarded by his colleagues and during the 22 years he has edited the *Catholic Leader* built the paper into a very substantial, thoughtful and sometimes provocative weekly which is the nearest Australia has to a national Catholic weekly. It is unfortunate that Mr Doyle's outstanding contribution to the *Leader* should end on such a note.

While entirely respecting Mr Doyle's conscientious decision on what he sees as a matter of principle, and admiring his courage in taking the action he did, we can see the ban by the bishops as not an unreasonable step, and one which cannot be reduced to a matter of jealousy between the agencies.

Debate on aid philosophy

A long and intense debate about aid in the last ten years has produced a major rethink in the philosophy of aid. The older philosophy espoused aid as a gift to the poor or sick individuals. While there is a role for emergency aid in times of famine or war, this philosophy came increasingly under criticism from the Third World itself.

First, such aid tended to help individuals and not social groups or communities and hence at best would tend to promote beneficiaries of aid programmes into the economic elite without really changing basic structures in a society.

Second, many people in the Third World resented the paternalism which lay behind many aid programmes. They resented being told what aid they would receive, and how it would be administered. Because local communities often were not consulted about aid programmes, much aid has been wasted, inappropriate or frittered away in corruption.

Third, much aid was seen merely as a palliative without addressing the basic causes of poverty and social distress in the Third World. It is now generally accepted that poverty will not be eradicated until people in both the Third World and the developed world are educated to understand its causes. An obvious way to promote such education was for community-based discussion about aid programmes by recipients as well as greater understanding of Third World poverty by donors. In this way, it was thought that people at both ends of the aid relationship would realise that underdevelopment is mainly a result of political factors and not just economic.

MY LITTLE TAX DEDUCTION

Thank you Australia. Gifts to World Vision are now tax deductible. Your generosity has been enhanced.

For some this will mean a "reward" for caring about needy people in the developing world, because an annual gift of \$200 to World Vision will increase your refund by \$66. We don't want to suggest that getting a reward for being kind is necessarily a bad thing. But we would like to suggest an alternative.

Now you can give more — and it won't cost you a cent! Before, every dollar you gave to help a needy boy or girl, or to assist a community development project through World Vision, represented 33¢ in tax. Now that you're getting that 33¢ back you can do two things with it — keep it or give it away. May we challenge you to convert your tax benefit into more aid for children in need of care, for families in need of hope, for communities anxious about tomorrow.

For instance, right now World Vision needs \$855,000 to finance a children's hospital in Phnom Penh, Kampuchea. It is the only children's hospital in the whole of devastated Kampuchea and the need to get it fully operational is terribly urgent. Your gift today (equivalent to the tax you might otherwise have paid) could mean life instead of death for a Kampuchean child.

Saving a child's life is really rewarding! And it won't cost you a cent.



USE THIS TABLE AS A GUIDE FOR TAX-FREE GIVING.	
CURRENT ANNUAL GIFT TO WORLD VISION	TAX* REFUND
\$100	\$33
\$200	\$66
\$500	\$165
\$1,000	\$330

WORLD VISION KAMPUCHEAN CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Most aid agencies accepted the criticisms and reconstructed their programmes. They favoured projects which benefitted communities as a whole rather than individuals within communities; they insisted that recipient communities be as involved as possible in the decision-making process about the type of aid and its application; and they insisted that donors and recipients of aid be educated in the politics of aid and development as much as possible. Thus we now have organisations such as Asia Partnership for Human Development in

which decisions on what programmes are to be supported are made in the recipient countries; and Force Ten, which supplies its monthly donors with regular bulletins on how aid is being used in various Third World projects: it is educating its donors.

World Vision has been somewhat out of step with this general rethinking of the

philosophy of aid. It has taken a hammering not so much from other aid agencies but from development experts and academics in recent years.

The Catholic Church was forced to consider its attitude to World Vision after a series of articles in Sydney's *Catholic Weekly* which claimed that World Vision in the Philippines was using its aid in proselytising. Further investigations proved that the reports were accurate and World Vision moved to correct the abuses. However, the Catholic bishops in the Philippines are reported to be still concerned about World Vision aid programmes there.

Despite this long period of debate and discussion, World Vision has continued some of the policies under criticism. Its strong emotional appeal to sponsor a child out of dire poverty has made it one of the most successful of the agencies in terms of money collected. But arousing such pity is no substitute for thinking through the long term goals of aid programmes and evaluating their effectiveness in changing the basic situations of injustice. The relief agencies are quite entitled to draw attention to these inadequacies in the philosophy and practice of World Vision, and would be quite remiss not to do so.

Objections have been made to some of the advertising from World Vision. Pictured here is one advertisement which says: "My little tax deduction!". It's hardly surprising that people in developing countries often take offence at this sort of advertising. ■

in brief

Chinese Archbishop surprised by reaction

THE RECENTLY-APPOINTED Archbishop of Canton, Deng Yiming, said in Hong Kong that he was surprised at the official Chinese reaction to his appointment by the Vatican as Archbishop. He said that he thought his nomination as Archbishop would normalise his situation. He had been the bishop of Canton, but he denied that he was vice-chairman of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association there. ■

Enjoy reading *Outlook*?

Then show your copy to a friend. Your support will keep us growing.