GOVERNOR HUGHES COMES TO DAVENPORT

by

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I ATTENDED THE GOVERNOR HUGHES PRESENTATION AT ASSUMPTION HIGH SCHOOL, January 24, and was quite impressed with what I heard and saw.

It is a sad commentary, however, on our times, on our state, and on our cities, when the chief executive, a political leader, is invited by the religious bodies to charge them with the responsibility that Jesus Christ gave them 1960 years ago. Immediately after this meeting I attended a Task Force meeting in Des Moines, where an executive of the League of Larger Municipalities said the ministers should be complimented for "sticking their necks out" and inviting the Governor to meetings around the state. I have a different view and that is that the priests, protestant minister, and rabbis have shown a lack of courage by not addressing themselves to what has been considered America's number one domestic problem for a hundred years.

The CIC has offered consulting services to the police department for courses in race relations. I would like to volunteer my services to the Priests' Senate for the same purpose. I am appalled at the lack of knowledge of the priests of my generation, those with whom I attended St. Ambrose College. They have no concept of the Negro problem. The Governor's appearance in Davenport can only be implemented by positive, active follow-up from priests and ministers and rabbis. One sermon supporting fair housing will not guarantee the passage of a fair housing ordinance.

Before he made any public pronouncements Governor Hughes visited the ghettos of the major Iowa cities. He did not contact civil rights leaders or city administration officials to get their impressions of what the problems are. He made door to door visits, unannounced, to establish dialogue with the ghetto inhabitants.
In his speech the Governor focused attention on substandard housing, lack of employment opportunities, and de facto school segregation, the very areas that the CIC has addressed itself to for the past ten years. Apparently the communities have been receptive to the Governor's articulation of the problems without finding it necessary to call him a "trouble maker," "radical," or "communist," some of the epithets that have been applied to the CIC leadership by members of the clergy of all denominations.

A small minority of priests and ministers have been involved directly in the problems of the minorities and the poor for a number of years, and have provided a protective shield for the majority who have refused to become involved. The celibate priesthood in itself is a protection from the economic pressures that can be exerted by disdendent parishioners. Gospels that sting are the vehicles to prevent the fire next time, hippies, and an addiction to smoking pot.

In conclusion, let me dispel any complacency that may exist in the community that a Detroit or a Newark couldn't happen here. The ingredients are all present—substandard, segregated housing, a development, de facto school segregation, and a low threshold of despair by the ghetto inhabitants. Business and industry, with the exception of the civil rights organizations, have shown more courage in addressing themselves to the employment problem than have our religious leaders.

Please help us in the fight to preserve the tranquility that seems now to exist in Davenport. Help make Davenport a model city, free of segregated housing and inferior education for persons with pigmentation.

SUPPORT the CIC Fair Housing Ordinance - Write or call your alderman.

PRESENT de facto school segregation - Support the school board in providing balanced education.

UPGRADE job opportunity for minorities - Support and consult the Merit Employment Council.