

Religion in America

Exemption of Taxes Enjoyed by Churches Topic of Controversy

By ROBERT M. ANDREWS
United Press International

In California a man can grow a beard, get a private religion, build a chapel and operate a business with a 52 per cent advantage.

So complains an unnamed churchman about the liberal tax exemptions that American churches traditionally have enjoyed, especially in business enterprises that have little or nothing to do with religion.

His troubled view is expressed in a thorough study of the controversial issue, just published by the National Conference of Christians and Jews. The author is Andrew D. Tanner, a Nashville, Tenn., lawyer and authority on tax exemption litigation.

Tanner cites others — leading clergymen and laymen alike — who express uneasiness over the church's special position in the tax laws.

According to Tanner's report, the most widespread source of criticism is the way churches have entered competitive, profit-making businesses without having to pay the 52 per cent corporation tax on gross income.

Laundries To Hotels

Tanner cites these as "some typical operations":

One New Hampshire church operates a laundry. A major denomination's printing house, while grinding out tracts and Sunday School lessons, also prints supermarket trading

stamps for profit. Other churches, or their organizations, own hotels, big-city office buildings, radio and television stations, sports stadiums, department stores and industrial plants. One religious order, because of its tax-free status, owned a television station that sells advertising time 10 per cent cheaper than its chief competition.

Since 1950, all income of a church or association of churches has been tax exempt, whether its source is "related" to religion or not, although most of it supports missionary and welfare work. Other charitable and educational organizations must pay taxes on "substantially unrelated trade or business activities."

Church And State

Arguments for and against removing or modifying tax exemptions go to the heart of the thorny issue of the separation of church and state.

Those in favor say a tax exemption is a subsidy as real as that given to forgiven taxes. Those against argue that churches should not be taxed because "the power to tax is the power to control."

Tanner himself sides with the view that "tax exemption is necessary to maintain a free church in a free state" and that "any change should be slow and gradual."

As a start, he suggested that churches might volunteer to

Italian Hamlet Is Watched in Study By Massachusetts

STEFANACONI, Italy (UPI) — Few people who live here are aware of it, but everything of consequence that happens in their little hamlet is watched and tabulated thousands of miles away in classrooms at the University of Massachusetts.

Students and professors at the University know which families own television sets, which ones farm and which own shops, how much money is in the local banks and what the mayor is planning to do next week.

Stefanaconi is a village of less than 2,500 population down south near the toe of the Italian boot. It is one of many places in the south that have been losing population in recent years and that, for more than one reason, is why it is getting so much attention in Massachusetts.

Among those who left here were a couple named Lopreato, whose 15-year-old son Joseph grew up to be a sociology professor at the University of Massachusetts. After coming back here on a vacation one year, he selected Stefanaconi as a typical town for studying underdevelopment in the Mediterranean area.

Plays Cards

When he comes here now, he spends long hours playing cards with the villagers, talking with childhood friends, walking about the village and questioning farmhands. They all think he's just seeking diversion from the cares of a professional life.

But Lopreato is gathering research material on his home town and he already has published a number of articles about it in sociological journals.

Stefanaconi has been undergoing some import changes since Lopreato began studying it.

It used to have only a clay road running through it, muddy in winter and dusty in summer. Now it has a well-kept, asphalt-paved highway.

Television antennae are sprouting from rooftops. Where there were only three cars before, there are now 30 and an

unaccounted number of motor-scooters. At the village cemetery, families build marble chapels that cost as much as a medium-priced Italian car.

Instead of the usual southern diet of bread and onions, people eat meat now at least once a week, and pasta two or three times.

People Flee

Despite these outward signs of prosperity, people continue to flee to the industrial north or to other countries, and half the farmland around the village lies idle.

In 1951 Stefanaconi had 3,155 residents. Ten years later it had 2,500 officially, but in fact even less because many emigrants were still listed as residents.

Lopreato says people leave not merely to escape poverty but also to get away from the strict and often stifling social conventions of the south, which are little changed from the Middle Ages and impose particularly severe taboos on women.

The explanation for the newfound prosperity of the village, Lopreato says, is that the emigrants are sending money back to members of their family who stayed at home.

The townspeople once used this money to pay off debts and buy land. Now they have lost faith in the land, which never did produce much any way, and are either saving for old age or buying the symbols of good living.

Their way of life is changing in almost every respect. A few years ago there were only five small shops in the village because it was a matter of self-respect to the villagers to live entirely off whatever they could produce themselves. Now there are 11 shops, and people go to market even to buy their onions.

A modern jet engine for high speed aircraft uses more than a ton of nickel in its construction.

Ice Age May Be Cause For Birds' Migration

By JAMES V. HEALION
SHARON, Conn. (UPI) — Nature's great winged exodus is under way and once again the mass migration will baffle man as it has since time began.

The rush comes with the rustle of autumn when literally millions of birds leave their summer homes for more hospitable climes.

The avian tide sweeps south via seven aerial highways in the United States. It usually reaches its peak around the end of September.

Great droves of shore birds ride sea breezes along the eastern and western rims of America to the green pampas of Argentina.

The hawk soars down the Appalachian flyway as the routes are called while immense duck formations streak over the Mississippi valley. Still others fly cross-country from west to east to bask in the warmth of the Gulf States.

The grasslands of the Great Plains weave to the wingbeat of birds darting south via that flyway as others push through the mountain passes of California's Sierra Nevada.

Ornithologists estimate that only 15 per cent of the world's birds log round trips each year while others such as bluejays, scolding and goldfinch as "permanent residents" in their range.

Travel at Night

Some of the feathered commuters travel at night. It's thought they seek protection from their enemies and are guided by the stars.

Certain species move during the day, depending on endurance and feeding preference. Some skim over the ocean's surface and some have been known to fly as high as 20,000 feet.

Some fly non-stop. The Golden Plover is said to fly 2,400 miles at a clip when it slips down from its Arctic fastness.

Ducks and geese log up to 500 miles in 24 hours and, at journeys end, their total flight sometimes runs to 3,000 miles.

The marathon title is held by the Arctic tern. This little bird sweeps across the Atlantic to Europe, skirts the African coast to Antarctica and swings over

South America, a round-trip of 25,000 miles.

The outriders of the autumnal exodus are Canadian geese whose V-formation and raucous honking herald their flight.

While prey and predator flock the flyways there are no great number of casualties. The stranger birds stoke up for the trip by eating more food than usual and aren't likely to intercept their less sturdy traveling companions.

Scan Skies

The skies are being scanned by ornithologists and bird-watchers across the nation these days.

In the East, Hawk mountain, near Kempton, Pa., is a favored observation point as is Cape May, N. J. Stanley Quickmire, director of the National Audubon center at Sharon, Conn., says great numbers of birds sometimes collect at Cape May point.

If the winds aren't just right, the birds wait there before crossing Delaware bay. Quickmire said instinct tells them they may be blown out to sea if they move against the wind.

There are numerous other vantage points in the general vicinities of the seven flyways some of which are sanctuaries maintained by the National Wildlife Service.

Still, the migrations remain a mystery. Ornithologists have never been able to figure out exactly what causes the birds to sweep south.

Another factor that seems to elude the experts is the birds' unerring use of the flyways which shuttle them back and forth.

Some say the flights are triggered by a kind of built-in radar that responds to climatic change. They say the onslaught of ice formations in the age of the cave man touched off the flights and they became hereditary.

Dennis the Menace



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