

Jesuit Father Pedro Miguel Lamet, the editor of *Vida Nueva*—the most widely read religious journal in Spain, with a circulation of 20,000—was dismissed from his position. The January 9, 1988, issue of the *Tablet* attributes the dismissal to pressure from right wing circles in the church, including, notably, Opus Dei. Other journalists have resigned from the paper to protest the dismissal of Father Lamet, who, in his valedictory article in *Vida Nueva*, talks of a growing atmosphere of silence and fear in the church.

● (1530)

Some might dismiss this as an isolated case, but those who are aware of the debate within the church on liberation theology, the resurgence of revisionist influence and the role of movements and ministries know that there is a malaise within the church which is not yet grabbing all the headlines but which, nonetheless, exists. Why should the Canadian Senate take sides in this debate by agreeing without question to what Opus Dei wants? The fierce debate on the laity at last fall's synod of bishops illustrates the concerns of many within the church on the role of lay movements, such as Opus Dei. Some honourable senators have said that no attention should be paid to the religious and theological issues when considering the bill. Is this a realistic approach, in view of the participation of the organization making the request in a debate permeated by religious issues? Furthermore, can we, in all conscience, ignore the fact that the positions taken by Opus Dei in this debate cause great unease among many Catholics and non-Catholics alike? Honourable senators, in this respect, I will deal with two issues: Opus Dei's views on the role of women and the group's arrogance.

In his speech of June 2, 1987, Senator Le Moyné pointed out the sexist attitude of Opus Dei and, as he called it, the "quagmire of clichés on the role of women in contemporary society" contained in the statements of Escrivà de Balaguer, the founder of the organization. Indeed, the Canadian Senate should have nothing to do with a group that holds views which many women find offensive. During last fall's synod on the laity, according to the issue of the *Tablet* of February 6, 1988, the report of one of the Spanish-language groups, of which Monseigneur Alvarez Portillo, Prelate of Opus Dei, was a member, dismissed the feminist movement as being "highly ambiguous" and "alleged, without offering any evidence, that it was 'an ideological deformation of the truth' ". Lest anyone think this is a general feeling within the church, I should point out that the report of another Spanish-language group "boldly denounced the 'cultural machismo that exists in Catholic countries' because it 'is lacking in respect towards women' ". The cavalier attitude of Opus Dei members towards the debate on the role of women within the church and within society as a whole comes across clearly in an article by Russell Shaw, a member of Opus Dei in the United States, in the February 27, 1988, issue of the *Tablet*, entitled "Judged by Opus Dei". Mr. Shaw states, on page 235:

... the prelature's—

that is, Opus Dei's,

[Senator Hébert.]

—insistence on maintaining separate activities for the spiritual formation of men and women is anathema to Catholic feminists who suppose that virtually any acknowledgement of differences between the sexes means treating women as something less than equal. Yet, serious as it is in the minds of those whom it exercises, this is in fact a comparatively superficial matter.

Thus, those who dare question the Opus Dei's attitude towards the participation of women in its work are branded as feminists and their concerns are dismissed out of hand. One has to wonder if the questions of equal pay for equal work, battered wives and the role of women in developing countries are also treated as "comparatively superficial matters." Does the Senate want to have its name linked to a group that holds such views?

The resentment shown by Opus Dei members when responding to criticism is typical of a group that has often displayed its holier-than-thou attitude. Senator Le Moyné quoted note 399 of Opus Dei's founder, from his famous book *The Way*, which indicates the attitude of Opus Dei:

399. If we resort to force to prevent a man from committing suicide, thus saving a life and earning general plaudits, why should we hesitate to use the same coercion—holy coercion to save the Life—

with a capital L,

—of those who are bent on stupidly killing their own soul?

In other words, only Opus Dei members know what is right, and other people should imitate them instead of blindly going about their lives in the way they, themselves, see fit. Has time tempered the zeal of Opus Dei members and made them more tolerant of the views of others? No, not really. In an editorial in *Le Devoir* of May 11, 1987, it is stated:

[Translation]

It was not to seize power in Spain nor to exert some influence on worldly affairs that Mgr Escrivà de Balaguer founded Opus Dei, but to save the society of his time—

All of us!

—from its mistakes and its misfortunes, by leading "the way" to a new crusade, that of secular technocrats vowing to live an ideal of perfection for them and for their circle. A modern chivalry of the professional duty.

[English]

Whose ideal of perfection are we talking about? Opus Dei's ideal of perfection? This arrogance is also evident in Mr. Russell Shaw's article in the *Tablet*, where he states, on page 236:

Ideally, Opus Dei contains the seeds that might eventually ameliorate the current excesses in American Catholicism and thereby eliminate conflicts among Catholics.

In other words, when all Catholics think like the members of Opus Dei, there will be no more conflicts within the church in the United States and, eventually, the world. If this is an indication of the level of tolerance within Opus Dei towards