

"Be present with the poor," key to transforming society: De Roo

In a passionate plea to a capacity audience of over 300 people on October 26, Bishop Remi De Roo of Victoria outlined a five-point model for the transformation of society and to ensure that the "preferential option for the poor" is nurtured and sustained in Canada.

"You really start to have an impact on the lives of others by being present to them," he said. "You must listen to their experience, share their stories and try to hear what they are saying with your ears and your heart. We must then try to develop that capacity for compassion in the very rich sense of the Latin word *suffer with*."

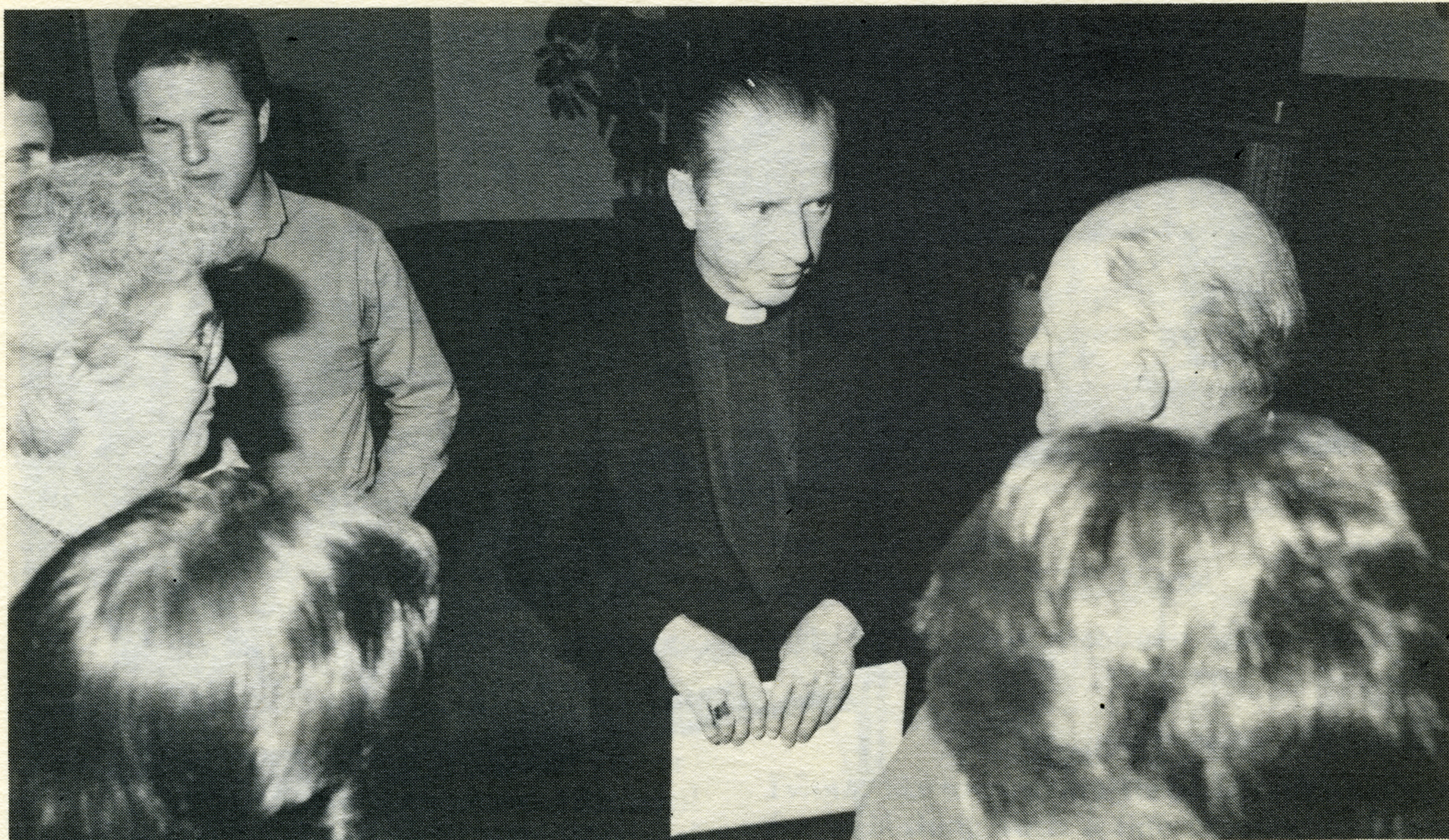
De Roo, Chairman of the Canadian Catholic Bishops' Social Affairs Commission, gave his address in Siegfried Hall as the centrepiece of an evening program sponsored by the College's Alumni Association and the St. Jerome's Centre for Catholic Experience.

His answer to the question "Does the Church have a role to play in Canadian life?" was an unequivocal yes, but he emphasized his definition of Church. "I am not equating Church with hierarchy," he said. "All of us who are baptized and believe in Christ Jesus our Lord and his continuing presence through the power of the Spirit in society are the Church."

"We are beginning to appreciate what it means to live the Second Vatican Council," said De Roo who, as Canada's youngest Bishop, played a role representing the Canadian Church at that historic Council in the early 1960s.

"We must be Christians of initiative, Christians who believe that we have been given the power of Christ and that our Gospel has a message for the transformation of society. We must always ask how we can bring our faith to bear on the world around us."

He went on to describe this pattern of action as a five-point model developed in the Canadian Bishops' most recent statement *Ethical Choices and Political Challenges*. He outlined its components as participation in lived experiences,



Bishop Remi De Roo meets alumni at a reception before dinner.

social analysis, moral judgements, eliciting creative alternatives, and developing strategies for the transformation of society.

"Social analysis doesn't mean doing academic studies which lie on shelves gathering dust," he cautioned. "It means a special dynamic of looking deeply into what is wrong with society and the world by going beneath the superficial expression down to the causes."

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Remi De Roo, October 26, 1984

De Roo characterized unemployment as a problem which, without social analysis, causes us to scapegoat people. "We'll talk about the "lazy welfare bums" who should be working, forgetting that statistics tell us that in Canada there is only one job for 20 workers." He also noted that we blame unions for unemployment problems when in reality 67% of the Canadian work force is not unionized.

De Roo also stressed that we need to apply the Gospel in making moral judgements of the current situation. De Roo and the Bishops' 1983 statement, *Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis*, maintain that unemployment must be examined from the perspective of its victims in order for us to see a different reality.

"Experience is beginning to show us that creative alternatives will come precisely from the poor - not from those who have succeeded in the power struggle or those who are comfortable with the status quo."

But "action strategies" vital for the transformation of society must be the subject of public debate, he observed. "We must empower the powerless by placing resources such as persons and materials at their disposal, by giving them moral support." Neighbourhood action groups are one method of achieving this goal, he noted. In this light, De Roo gave recognition to the work of College alumni Stephanie and

Joe Mancini, co-founders of Kitchener's *Working Centre*. "Their tremendous model of societal transformation through local action groups is admired right across Canada."

A lively question and answer period followed De Roo's lecture and alumnus Joe Mancini offered a note of thanks to the Bishop.

A sung evensong prayer service fittingly concluded the program giving those in attendance an opportunity to reflect prayerfully on the evening's remarks.

All those in attendance, including the over 60 alumni, went home with much food for thought. The evening was an important first step in the Alumni Association's effort to promote the educational, spiritual and social traditions of the College.

Cassette tapes of Bishop De Roo's lecture are available to alumni for just \$6.00 each. Complete the coupon on p. 8 and send your cheque, made payable to the St. Jerome's Centre, to the Alumni Affairs Office at the College.

Are you unemployed?

In this day and age, not everyone who graduates finds instant employment; and, for others, that first job may not be the right job. St. Jerome's alumni are eligible to take advantage of the Alumni Referral Service of the UW Graduate Placement Office which assists alumni in finding permanent or temporary positions.

Visit their office and outline your qualifications to a trained career counsellor. As positions for which you may be qualified become available, a copy of your resume will be sent to the employer.

The Alumni Referral Service is an effective and successful program. It attracts between 500 to 600 employer enquiries a year and, at present, jobs for alumni are becoming available at a rate of 25 per week. Why not give them a call at (519) 885-1211, ext. 4047.



Bishop Remi De Roo