

## BACKGROUND AND BEGINNINGS

The first NFCCS meeting in history took place on a Sunday afternoon, October 24, 1937, at Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart, at that time located in New York City.

The meeting, attended by representatives of sixteen New York area colleges and universities, was called by a Manhattanville student, Miss Winifred Byles, who earlier in the year had attended, in Paris, The Sixteenth World Congress of Pax Romana, the International Movement of Catholic Students. After her participation in the Paris meetings, Miss Byles had agreed to act as United States Secretary for Catholic Colleges. In that capacity she was asked to assist in the establishment of a national federation, both for the American students' own purposes and for affiliation with Pax Romana.

Reflecting a conviction growing in many Catholic schools, the students present at the first meeting for the proposed federation agreed that there was a definite need for a unification of Catholic student forces. The common Catholic action interest of the representatives established the climate for further organizational plans.

The actual formation of the National Federation of Catholic College Students was effected on December 12, 1937, when a delegation from Saint Peter's College, Jersey City, submitted, as a committee of the earlier meeting, a declaration of the new Federation, with a suggested constitution and by-laws. The first formal meeting of the NFCCS followed on February 6th, 1938, when the tentative constitution was adopted, and Robert Becker, of Manhattan College, was elected to the office of President. Mr. Becker was succeeded later that year by Miss Louise Quigley, of Manhattanville. As well, 1938 found the new Federation affiliated with Pax Romana.

In preparation for the first meetings, Miss Byles and the other organizers had sought for the Federation and its proposed constitution the approval of Patrick Cardinal Hayes, Archbishop of New York. Cardinal Hayes granted this approval, and appointed Father Joseph McSorley, C.S.P., as Chaplain. This manifestation of the interest of the Hierarchy was complemented by the negotiations on the part of Federation personnel to have the Federation recognized in some official context by the National Catholic Welfare Conference.

As early as 1935, the Holy See had expressed its desire that the Catholic young people of the United States be organized in various appropriated methods, for the over-all welfare of the Church in this country and for apostolic activity. In 1937, the National Council of Catholic Youth (then called the National Catholic Youth Council) had been authorized, to function in the then Youth Bureau of the NCWC. Subsequently, the initial work of the NFCCS to be recognized bore fruit: in 1940, the Federation was accepted as a unit of the newly-established NCWC Youth Department, as a member of the College and University Section and of the NCCY. The Youth Department's Episcopal Chairman, Bishop John A. Duffy of Buffalo, urged from the outset the full and careful extension of the NFCCS. Father Vincent Mooney, Monsignor Paul F. Tanner and later Father Charles Birmingham, as Directors of the Department and NFCCS National Chaplains, heeded this advice closely.

While in its first two years of existence no special effort was made to secure nationwide membership in the NFCCS, Catholic colleges and universities in

all parts of the country voiced their interest. Actual membership, however, was largely limited to schools on the Eastern seaboard. This pattern rapidly changed, however, after the First National Congress of the NFCCS, held in September, 1939, at Manhattanville College.

The First National Congress, scheduled in conjunction with the 1939 World Congress of Pax Romana, also held at Manhattanville, saw Gertrude Kirk elected President and authorized by the delegates to proceed with a revision of the constitution, more clearly to state the aims and operations of the growing Federation. The revised constitution, approved in Easter Week of 1940, stated the purposes of the NFCCS to be: "...to assist both the colleges and the various student groups to give energetic and practical application to the teachings of the Holy Father and the Church's leaders regarding the formation of a Christian-minded apostolate among the Catholic laity; to contribute to the spreading and deepening of a high-trained Catholic opinion by: (a) assisting in the development of student councils or their equivalent in Catholic institutions of higher learning; (b) acting as a medium for the exchange of ideas and experiences on the part of the affiliated units; (c) providing the membership with suggestions and practical material in the field of authentic Catholic Action; and (d) representing the Catholic student body in national and international life."

In this early period, there emerged the regional structure of the NFCCS and the Commission system of operation.

The early regional plan developed through the charter members' discussions, considerably spurred on by suggestions of the "Minute Men Confraternity" of St. John's University, Brooklyn. By 1940 three NFCCS regions were in operation: New York-New Jersey, Philadelphia, and Baltimore-Washington. Others, such as the Pittsburgh Region, were in the planning stage.

The commission approach evolved in a similar fashion, the commissions being designated as special interest areas--fields in which Catholic student either were doing work, or should be. National Commissions existent in 1940 and 1941 were Catholic Action Study, at the University of Dayton; Decent Advertising, at Manhattanville College; Decent Literature, at the University of Notre Dame; Family Life, at St. Mary-of-the-Woods College, Indiana; International Relations, at Trinity College, Washington, D.C.; Liturgy, at St. John's University, Minnesota; Mission Study, at Mount St. Joseph College, Ohio; Press, at Marquette University; Rural Life, at Saint Benedict's College, Atchison, Kansas; Student Councils, at Manhattan College (this formerly the Association of Student Councils); Youth Movements, at Dunbarton College, Washington, D.C.; and War Relief, at Immaculata Junior College, Washington, D.C.

Much of the original development of NFCCS machinery took place as a natural result of needs of the new Federation. In addition, the NFCCS Promotion Committee--including national officers and other advisors--worked to devise suitable methods of operation. The constitution revised in 1940 established the national officers, the National Congress as the supreme legislative body, the national Commissions for the study of particular problems and the promotion of general programs of action, the Regional Councils and Commissions, and a National Advisory Board, and the National Council as an Administrative Body.

## The Years of World War II

The promised expansion of the NFCCS, in membership and program, was understandably impeded by the advent of the Second World War. In April, 1941, Frank Horka, of Loyola College, Baltimore, had been elected president at the Second National College. He and his successors, Robert Nelson, of the University of Detroit (elected at the Third National Congress, in 1942), Rosemary Murphy, of Manhattanville College, and Anne Schutte, of Trinity College, Washington, D.C. encountered similar difficulties in maintaining the Federation during the war period. The major sustaining role during this time was played by the NFCCS national office in the Youth Department, NCWC.

During these years, NFCCS work was largely connected with the war effort. Travel problems prevented the holding of regular meetings. Little or no effort could be made to enroll new affiliates. The period's relative and necessary inactivity did provide, however, a base for the tremendous enthusiasm which characterized the years immediately following the close of the war.

## The Post-War Period

Late in 1945, and more particularly in 1946, it became clear to administrators and student alike that the entire higher educational picture was to be changed radically by the return of veterans to the campuses. The veteran population in the schools not only increased enrollments, in many cases to the danger point, but also brought unusually mature students into campus life.

In general, the cessation of the war released student energies pent up for almost five years. Activities, ideas, programs were numberless, and were seized upon with enormous interest and appetite. Catholic students found themselves newly involved in reinvigorated ideas of the lay apostolate, the student apostolate, the social mission of the Christian. These factors of necessity were reflected in the NFCCS.

During the war years, the ordinary functions of the National Congress were remanded to the National Council. In mid-1946, the National Council for the last time elected a national President, Patrick O'Meara, of the University of Notre Dame. In the late summer of 1946, a Leadership Workshop operated by the Federation saw the introduction of many new ideas and approaches, which were later voiced at the first post-war National Congress. Also in 1946, Archbishop Richard J. Cushing of Boston, then the Episcopal Chairman of the Youth Department, NCWC, brought to the University and College Department of National Catholic Educational Association a request for an administration "look" at the Federation, in view of the great expansion it was obviously to experience. The report prepared in response to Archbishop Cushing's request was a careful analysis of the potential achievements, as well as difficulties, of the Federation, and as well expressed in most favorable terms the Federation's value. This willingness on the part of Catholic educators to support the NFCCS lent added impetus to its growth.

The Fourth National Congress, held at Toledo, Ohio, in April of 1947, elected as President James P. Dougherty, of Saint Joseph's College, Philadelphia. Its major business was a constitutional revision. The stated aims of the Federation were extended, voicing in reference to post-collegiate and lay leadership ideas implicit in earlier Federation work. The method of affiliation with the NFCCS was

stabilized, in that the affiliating unit was required to be whatever student organization was responsible on a given campus for the representation of the students and the coordination of their activities. The revision also provided for methods of operation for the National Congress. The nature of the National Commissions was defined, naming them as national inter-collegiate associations for study and action in relation to religious, cultural, social, political, and economic problems created in the light of Catholic teaching and from the viewpoint of student life.

The Fourth National Congress also contributed to the concept of a decentralized Federation, in that proposals for the establishment of agencies, on a semi-permanent basis, in a wide number of fields---such as student aid, cultural affairs and so on---were rejected. The Congress did call for the institution of a Student Relief Campaign, in direct response to the needs of destitute and war-stricken students abroad. The program was to be closely identified with the relief activities of Pax Romana.

Interest in Pax Romana activities was extremely high at this time, in not a little measure due to the students' much sharpened awareness of international affairs, as result of the Second World War. United States interest was more than welcomed by Pax Romana, particularly in view of the urgent needs of students in the war afflicted nations. The Student Relief Campaign contributed to the Federation's international interests, and the Campaign itself was unexpectedly and hearteningly successful.

Affairs internal to the United States also elicited great response in the Federation. National committees in such areas as legislative review, veterans' affairs and world health proved engrossing activities for NFCCS personnel. With special reference to the American students scene, NFCCS representatives were influential observers at the constitutional assembly which produced the United States National Students Association.

The Fifth National Congress, held in Philadelphia in May, 1948, witnessed the continued fervor of the students for a variety of programs. At this Congress, Charles Hogan, of Xavier University, Cincinnati, was elected to the Presidency. Major interests of the Fifth National Congress, and the following year, were the continuation and expansion of the Student Relief Campaign, the promotion of the Joint Committee for Student Action (JCSA: a secretariat uniting the work of the NFCCS and of the national Newman Club Federation, with special reference to international affairs), the expansion of the NFCCS itself, and the furthering of the social action program arising from the students' current major interest.

The year 1949 was, in several respects, the end of the Federations' post-war period. It saw a high point reached in certain programs which owed their major support to stimulus offered by World War II. At the Sixth National Congress, at Chicago in May, the Student Relief Campaign was re-organized as the Overseas' Service Program (OSP), with the fund-raising, D.P. student placement, and foreign correspondence exchange elements being coordinated in the single agency. Interest in national affairs consolidated itself in the establishment of working committees on civil rights and on Federal aid to education. Elected President by the Sixth National Congress was Thomas Brickley, of Saint Vincent College, Latrobe, Pennsylvania.

The following period, 1949-1950, saw the introduction of a new Federation service, its Travel Program. Jointly with the National Newman Club Federation, the NFCCS organized and executed the largest single Holy Year pilgrimage to Rome and Europe. OSP activity continued apace. New regions formed since 1947 began to feel

their proper pace. Several Commission areas were found to be dated, and newer Commissions emerged into prominence.

### The Early 'Fifties

The Seventh National Congress was held in Pittsburgh in April, 1950. Louis Manderino, of Saint Vincent College, Lathrobe, Pennsylvania, was elected President. Specifically in this period, and in the year following, the NFCCS faced several important decisions. Something like a plateau had been reached in certain areas. Interest in international affairs, while still vital, began to wane. The internal composition of the Federation underwent some change, in the gradual withdrawal of so heavy a veteran enrollment in the schools. The student population of 1946 and 1947 was no longer the major force in student activities. The urgencies of the immediate post-war years dimmed.

With these changes, federation officers prepared for another constitutional revision, accomplished at the Eighth National Congress, held in St. Paul in August of 1951. In some respect the newly revised constitution emphasized the internal rather than the external interests of students and for the Federation. The earlier accent on social action concepts and programs was transformed by a renewed approach to the intellectual life of the college and university. While the change appeared to be radical in some areas, it is to be understood in the context of the Federation's intentional flexibility, and more particularly in the context of the student situation of the time. Elected to the Federation's Presidency at the Eighth National Congress was Edward Diedrich, of Saint Benedict's College, Atchison, Kansas. Also at this time, His Excellency Bishop James A. McNulty of Paterson took office as the Federation's first official Episcopal Moderator.

Depending from the constitutional revisions and from the general changes in Federation emphasis, the 1950-1952 period saw stronger light focused on the actual operations of NFCCS. Commission procedure and programs of the regions. New emphasis was placed on evaluation of NFCCS activities, with efforts being made to reinterpret and to restate basic tenets of such programs.

The Ninth National Congress was held in August, 1952, at the University of Notre Dame. Its delegates elected as President Robert Simmons, of the College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, Massachusetts. A major issue of the Congress of this year was the presentation of the newly reorganized National Council of Catholic Youth, by the Director of the Youth Department, NCWC, the Right Reverend Joseph E. Schieder, who had become Director of the Department in 1948. The NCCY, authorized in 1947, had encountered difficulty in that its Diocesan Section, which was to complement the College and University Section, had been organized only in 1949. Consequently, the actual establishment of the over-all National Council of Catholic Youth had been delayed. This matter was presented at the Eighth National Congress, and the Federation's original membership in the Council was reaffirmed. Subsequently, the operating charter of the NCCY was ratified by the NFCCS at the Eleventh National Congress. Another consideration imminent during the Ninth National Congress was the gradually increasing difficulty being met by the OSP in its various activities.

In the year prior to the holding of the Tenth National Congress, at Cincinnati in August of 1953, concern for the Federation's Commissions was evidenced by the establishment of the Committee of National Commission Chairmen. Membership difficulties were also experienced, in the certain schools seemed unable to adapt to NFCCS programs, or vice versa. International affairs, with special reference to Pax Romana contacts, experienced a decline.

At the Tenth National Congress, David P. McWhirter, of Loyola University of Los Angeles, was elected President of the federation. The Congress initiated, as well, a period of renewed introspection for the NFCCS, resulting from a general sentiment that, again, the Federation was experiencing certain changes.

In the 1953-54 year, the climate of re-evaluation became more definite. This was concretely expressed in several areas. A specific effort was made to analyze the Federation's position in respect to its membership and its activities. A major reorganization was effected in the Overseas' Service Program, in that it was re-designed as the College and University Relief Administration (CURA), incorporating a domestic scholarship program to benefit so-called "missionary" dioceses in the United States. The necessary legislation was presented at the Eleventh National Congress, Held in Chicago in August, 1954. At that time, the phenomenal success of OSP in its years of existence was reported: more than two million dollars in funds and goods had been channeled abroad by OSP. However, the stimulus responsible for this Catholic student generosity had so decreased that the relief programs of the NFCCS required a re-direction, with new emphasis on needs of the United States.

During this year the Federation's contact with Pax Romana was also reorganized specifically through cooperation with Pax Romana's North American Commission, which had been established consolidated. At the same time, concern increased as to the over-all effectiveness of the Federation, in relation to its member schools.

The Eleventh National Congress saw this concern expressed in the creation of an Introspection Committee, whose specific purpose was to examine the NFCCS and its current problems as closely as possible, in light of the purposes of the organization. At this Congress, William F. Ford, of John Carroll University, Cleveland, was elected President.

The 1954-56 period was in large part a continuation of the preceding year the operation of the Introspection Committee characterized much of the year's work, as much on the regional as on the national level. Involved in the evaluation process was consideration of the Policy Resolutions Committee, which has been initiated at the Tenth National and continued by the Eleventh National Congress. The operations of CURA, while in some measure experimental in its first year, proved increasingly successful. Commissions continued to be a chief point of concern, if not the major point as to their effectiveness as basic operating machinery for the Federation.

The Twelfth National Congress was held in Pittsburgh in August, 1955, and elected Thomas J. Reinstadtler, Jr. of Saint Vincent College, Latrobe, Pennsylvania, as President. The general tenor of the Twelfth National Congress continued into the year following: a general retrenchment of position. At the Twelfth National Congress, the unrest of the Federation was resolved in an understanding that the courses open to the Federation were many. However, the specific problem of the Federation's ability to represent its members was contrasted with its service function, as expressed primarily in its commission system. This position was embodied in the establishment of a committee on the Manhattan Resolution for the Re-Affirmation of the Constitutional Preamble (the Preamble being that revised in 1951 by the Eight National Congress).

As in the preceding year the work of the Introspection Committee had colored NFCCS activity, the work of the Manhattan Resolution Committee affected the activity

of the 1955-56 year. In the realm of the Commissions, the 1955-56 period witnessed continued emphasis on evaluation of commission effectiveness. CURA, in its second year, enjoyed high interest. The Federation's international programs were resuscitated and the Pax Romana affiliation was greatly strengthened.

Cleveland, Ohio, was the site of the Thirteenth National Congress, held in August, 1956. Held in conjunction with the Congress was a Moderators' Workshop, following patterns successfully used in 1951 and 1954. As well, the Student Government Presidents' Conference was held, having become an annual event sponsored by the National Commission on Student Government after its successful introduction at the 1951 Eight National Congress.

Among the issues of the Thirteenth National Congress was the Constitutional erection of CURA as a permanent national agency. This legislation was effected. Strong sentiments were expressed through the course of the Congress that exclusive preoccupation with the commission system had unduly narrowed the scope of the Federation; accordingly the Manhattan Resolution was defeated and a committee was mandated to study the Preamble and report on amending it at the Fourteenth National Congress.

For the second consecutive year, the Federation also awarded its "National Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Lay Apostolate", a program inaugurated by the Eleventh National Congress to honor outstanding Catholic college graduates. Elected as President by the Thirteenth National Congress was Diarmuid F. O'Scannlain, of Saint John's University, Long Island, New York.

The 1956-57 year reflected an approach which could be termed a compromise with earlier Federation concepts and programs, in that its broad character has been emphasized in preference to more limited approaches. In reference to activities its international affiliation with Pax Romana has been considerably strengthened, both through close cooperation with the North American Commission and with Pax Romana activities abroad. The President, serving on the Directing Committee of Pax Romana, influenced this course, as did the International Affairs Vice-President and the NFCCS delegation which attended the 1957 Inter-Federal Assembly. Internally, the 1956-57 again found attention focused on the Commissions, with re-statements of certain interest fields, such as Social Action, being planned for the future.

Any historical commentary on the NFCCS can only be incomplete...the constantly changing interests and attitudes of its members properly modify its character, its programs, its achievements. Its flexibility and its scope testify to its real stature. Its Catholic basis is its bedrock...the diversity of its members, in their particular time and place, in its flowering.