

Getting down to basics with an Earthy Summit

An Earth Summit! We have now many summit meetings, but never before an Earth Summit. And the vast majority of Earth's inhabitants do not know that it is about to take place.

It could be the most decisive meeting that the human community and the earth community has ever participated in.

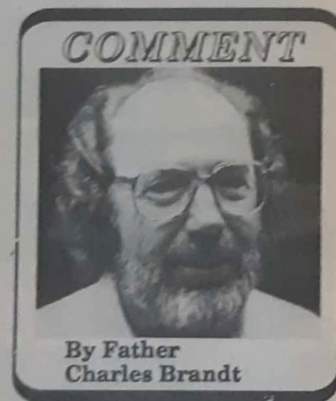
The Summit is a direct outflow of the Bruntland Report, presented in the form that we know it, *Our Common Future*. A few years before the UN General Assembly issued its call for the Summit, it had asked a group of 21 respected men and women drawn from all walks of life and from every part of the world to examine the twin issues of environmental degradation and economic development.

After many months of work under the leadership of Gro Har-

lem Bruntland, the Prime Minister of Norway, this World Commission on Environment and Development presented its report, *Our Common Future*, to the General Assembly in 1987.

The Commission declared that the environment - where we live - and development - "what we all do in attempting to improve our lot within that abode - are inseparable. The key to a harmonious balance between the two is Sustainable Development: the concept that nature must be used on a basis that can be sustained into the distant future".

One might say that since the Bruntland Report, centred on the concept of sustainable Development, we have been on the Road to Brazil, to Rio de Janeiro, a U.N. Summit Meeting for the Earth. This UN Conference on Environment and Development (UN-



By Father
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CED), June 1-12 in Brazil, will be the largest United Nations forum ever held on the Fate Of Our Planet. It is an Earth Summit, as heads of state or government from most of the 166 UN member nations will lead their delegations to Rio de Janeiro.

Organizers predict as many as 10,000 official delegates to the Earth Summit, perhaps 30,000 earth activists representing local, national and international non-government organizations.

Why this Earth Meeting drawing its membership from all parts of the planet? What is its goal? The goal is to devise strategies to halt - even reverse - the effects of environmental degradation by strengthening sustainable, environmentally sound development in all countries.

UNCED was conceived, its Secretary-General Maurice Strong said, as "a means of mobilizing the political will of nations to take a number of concert actions to redress the world's environmental and economic imbalances."

The Summit marks the 20th Anniversary of the first UN Conference on the Human Environ-

ment in Stockholm. In Stockholm, environment took its place on world agenda. In Brazil in June, the link between environment and economic development is being considered at the highest levels.

To slow environmental degradation, negotiators have been developing policies and actions to combat the contamination of fresh water, oceans and the atmosphere; the loss of croplands, forests, plants and animal species; desertification; the growing trade and traffic in toxic and hazardous substances; and disturbing increases in population.

At the same time they are developing mechanisms to improve human living and working conditions, health and the quality of life.

The conference also is expected to produce:

- an Earth Charter, a statement

of principles governing economic and ecological behavior for all nations;

•an action plan called AGENDA 21, which will be a blueprint for sustainable development into the 21st century.

The Summit can fulfil its ambitious objectives only if governments, non-governmental organizations, businesses, trade, unions, and citizens everywhere give it support. The need is very great. And it is now. For as UNFED Secretary-General Maurice Strong says, "Nothing less than the fate of the world is at stake."

Next week will review the issues to be examined at the Summit, and also the sacrifice that will be required to meet the objectives.

Father Brandt will be participating in the Earth Summit and this is his first of two parts on the subject.