NCC'S NEW PRESIDENT PROMOTES REVOLUTIONARY CHURCH

PRESS ROOM - NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
301,03, CIVIC AUDITORIUM
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

THE PRESS: FLETCHER COATES (UN 3-9463)
STAN MATTHEWS (UN 3-9395)
RADIO-TV: BOB JEAMBEY (UN 3-9334)
PHOTOS: JAY MOORE (UN 3-9397)

C109 GA 12/8/60

FOR RELEASE:
1 P.M., FRIDAY, DEC. 9

SAN FRANCISCO, CAL., DEC. 9 -- The church must set an example for bold leadership in a day of "swift and continuing change" and not shrink back in "frightened timidity," the newly-elected president of the National Council of Churches told a luncheon meeting here today.

"This is an age in which all too many Americans seem to want to go back to something," said J. Irwin Miller, industrialist and churchman from Columbus, Ind. "When the church offers an example of frightened timidity before the new opportunities of our day, wistfully wishing we could go back to some simple life on the farm, society is not likely to take its directions from the church."

Mr. Miller addressed the President's Luncheon, at the Sheraton-Palace Hotel, which concluded the Sunday-to-Friday triennial General Assembly of the National Council of Churches. Elected at yesterday's general session, Mr. Miller, board chairman of the Cummins Engine Company and the Irwin Bank and Trust Company of Columbus, and a member of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ), is the first layman to serve as National Council president. He succeeds the Rev. Dr. Edwin T. Dahlburg, pastor of Delmar Baptist Church, St. Louis, Mo.

Mr. Miller noted that a time of testing had arrived for the interdenominational church body, after ten years devoted to knitting together its diverse membership. Only the personal example

of its members, he said, would determine "whether this Council is only another large organization in an already over-organized society, or whether it truly is a Christian instrument of great strength and sharpness, peculiarly adapted to the needs of our day."

"Christian bodies have the habit of complaining about the shallowness, the extravagance, and the waste of our civilization," he said. "If our worship, liturgy, music, art, writings, and preaching are full, dusty, second-rate, cherished by us only because they are comfortable and familiar, because we lack the zeal and the imagination to reshape them in exciting and relevant terms, then our complaints about the shallowness and mediocrity of society will turn out to be just that--only complaints."

The church will not be heeded when it speaks out against complacency and love for the status quo, said Mr. Miller, if it contents itself with "the same old programs."

"All societies have been frightened by a sudden awareness of the potentialities of new knowledge and new techniques, but in history none have ever been able to retreat and pretend these new things weren't there," he said. "The world looks first to our example before it listens to and weighs our words."

Out-going Council President Edwin T. Dahlberg and Council General Secretary Roy G. Ross responded briefly to Mr. Miller's speech.

Bishop B. Julian Smith, presiding bishop of the first district of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Chicago, presided at the meeting. The Rev. Carl G. Howie, pastor of United Presbyterian Calvary Church in San Francisco, led the group in a prayer of invocation. Adele Norman Silke, a member of the First Baptist Church, Palo Alto, sang.