

and must otherwise eat out, thus making saving impossible. And then, in turn, comes another under notice to leave even the miserable two rooms they are in, and who speaks shudderingly of parting from her husband and taking the children to Newington Lodge. When you have talked to a few of these people, the question ceases to be an academic one. You must rush to the rescue, even if it be by less than perfect means. Believe it or not, when you establish any of these families in a couple of large rooms with a low rent *and security*, they act as though you had installed them in Buckingham Palace.

Although I have had no takers on the proposition to my friends that they should buy houses themselves, there has been an immense generosity in response to the Society's appeals, especially the one launched in our last Annual Report and followed up nobly by the Catholic press. The Cardinal himself sent a generous cheque with a warm blessing on our work. Many priests have allowed us collections in their churches. Poor people have pressed their life savings on us and families who possess homes sent us cheques as a thanksgiving offering. Enough money has come in for us to buy two houses besides helping almost as many individual families in four months as we had hitherto helped in a year. And then came the near-miracle of a man, unknown to any of our Committee, who is buying a house in which we can put five families, which he wants us to organize and run!

Those interested in the work of the Catholic Housing Aid Society may write to the Secretary, c/o 33 Maiden Lane, London, W.C.2.

In the Mid-day Sun

DUNCAN CAMPBELL, O.P.

I have been asked to write some account of the Church's life in the West Indies, and how it is affected by changes taking place thick and fast in these islands. I say that I have been asked, because I would certainly not have tried to do so on my own initiative. I mean by this that I feel a priest is the one least able to see and judge the situation at such

a level, and that for two reasons. The first is a purely personal, silly one. It is that one becomes so accustomed to people and things here as elsewhere that it is an effort to stand back and look at them. When I first came here, I learnt the names of streets, shops, government departments, various other places. I have to 'think', now. I go to them, that's all, without thinking of their names. Not only names, but things that would strike the stranger at once, are precisely the things not noticed later on. Unbelievably so. A young woman came to ask for an interview with the Bishop who was out. I took her name, and made the appointment, and informed the Bishop later on. Not recalling the person, he asked me to describe her. He still didn't remember, and then suddenly asked—'You didn't mention; was she black, or brown, or white?'—and was very understandingly amused: I confessed, I couldn't say! I just hadn't noticed.

It is all very unhelpful, I realize, but it is the only answer that can sometimes be given: 'I dunno. I just *live* here'.

The second reason for a priest's being unhelpful is that he is the last one to know, or be told, what real feeling is, especially on any difficult matter. It is not only something deliberate. It is something that must happen. To speak in a sort of scientific way, a priest disturbs the field, like a magnet. There are things he cannot get hold of, or be told, especially if he asks. Even in a place, like his own home town, where he exists as a private person, the mere fact of being a priest interferes to change everything. My own family was astonishingly well-behaved when I visited them.

I hope this will not be taken as a mere, modest literary disclaimer, but as the fact it is, to be borne in mind throughout and remembered; that every statement is just wild hypothesis or dangerous guess. The breath-taking inaccuracy of prediction from, especially, the experienced politicians, well-travelled, educated people, newspaper editors, and so on! Who were informing us here, stridently, a few years back, and convincing Westminster apparently, that all that was needed was that the last shackles of colonialism be struck off for the people to march together into a glorious future. Recent events have been a deep, dangerous shock to all this, for everywhere they have been quite contrary to these hopes. There is bewailing, warning, fault-finding now, so much so that one is mischievously tempted to say that if only left *alone*, by politicians, editors and the rest, the people would—march forward into a glorious future!

All this *is* mischievous and silly—and characteristic of much talk,

unfortunately and nevertheless. My point is that thinking, official and publicly acknowledged 'persons', here especially, are unable to feel the drift and stir of real opinion and sentiment.

I mean more than this.

Can I explain it by asking just what picture can you be given, do you want to be given, of the state of things here? Figures will show, for instance, perhaps the worst housing in the world. Do you want to see the crowded, tumble-down slums, the wretched shanty villages spoiling almost paradisaical scenery? Other figures will show the worst illegitimacy rate in the world—eighty per cent. Do you want to have described the swarms of children in tatters, bellies distended with malnutrition, stumbling half-heartedly to school, at far too young an age, to sit in the drab, grubby class-halls and sleep the hot day through? Still others will betray what might become the highest illiteracy rate in the world, as other more zestful countries bring theirs down; will betray what, so to speak I hope, is the lowest Mass attendance in the Catholic world—five per cent or less, in some areas.

But all this is a false picture, if it sends perhaps a chill of horror down your back, a sympathy for, you imagine, the desperate plight of missionaries here, alone, isolated in what must be a sullen or apathetic people.

Our day-to-day life is not that. As we visit, we choose. Poor homes: or beautiful, well-appointed households where several servants smile pleasantly, proudly, as they show you in to Madame, or bring you, in spite of your protests, your third rum-and-ginger. You are visiting people unbelievably well-off under today's conditions, quite naturally and so to speak simply accepting their lot. Madame is anxious to do her bit of (admittedly fashionable) social work, and her husband will discuss the future of the islands, ready to visualize, propound, in fact socialist plans, which he imagines kindly will bring everyone else up to his own level as 'working for government' or 'real business' then, like himself. His boys discuss their scholarships abroad, or inter-Island sports. The girls sit on the floor, spreading beautiful skirts, poised, sophisticated, and tell you the inanities of the latest film. Your host will insist on driving you back, well in time for dinner, in his Jaguar, while your hostess murmurs naughty sympathy with you at what she hears of the presbytery fare.

The next day you decide to visit the homes of the poor. As you approach the wooden shanties, children tumble out excitedly, scattering chickens and pigs, calling off the starved, ferocious dogs, and grab you affectionately by the hand, while their mothers hide the old cans

filled with boiled rice that was the family dinner, and the district hums with the news of your arrival: 'Fadder come'. People appear from everywhere, and a dozen huts that wouldn't keep chickens turn out to be a village of two hundred people. 'We is all Catholics here, Fadder', they say proudly, and a warm, loving sea of smiles surrounds you, all the more because it is such a long time, I am afraid, since you were able to be there before. It is only one of perhaps fifty such villages around town making what you call your 'parish'.

All Catholics? A problem is before you. Are you going to speak, to say what *you think* these people need? Be so tactless as to mention Mass attendance, and risk a puzzled frown across some faces? Break the lovely surface, and ask about the American Preacher they probably all went along the road to hear, and some even gave their names to as 'members' of whatever-it-was-all-about? Bruise them with clumsy and, they will feel, ridiculous suspicions? Really be so rude, and before the children, as to remark on the absence of rings on the mothers' hands? Have them smile, then, slyly and awkwardly, and wish perhaps the old Fathers didn't give the young this unpleasant feeling about, about . . . 'life', which they accept and name so. 'I is not in life, Fadder' means that your elderly penitent has at last outlived the fevered dance of the blood in sex, and can face you at last without any awkwardness across the pews and the communion rail.

You go away, loaded with ill-spared gifts—which you *must* accept—bananas, coconuts, grapefruit, eggs, piled in the back of the little car, a coward? or wiser than you know? and hope that your love and attention will re-establish it in their minds, and something deeper than words will draw them to you, and to what you represent, at the altar. Perhaps one or two of the girls, who can lay hands on clean dresses, will repay your courtesy, and be there at Mass—for a week or two.

This is really a false picture, too, of course. I couldn't help writing it, just to get us started. They all know perfectly well they shouldn't be so rich, or so poor, that they should go to Mass, get married. Can I ask you to jump from there to what you will know as the reality? We have to learn to do so, as all description falsifies. A Cotswold village, say, as described by a Frenchman, could appear like a Llamasery in Tibet, unless automatic adjustments and corrections are made. Make them, please.

I will best help you make them by stepping down from the role of guide, and placing some of the problems fair and square before you, that you will feel raised by all this, and perhaps by my tone of mentioning them, too.

We mentioned housing, for instance. The West Indies are undeveloped and poor. Most people are living lives beneath proper standards of health or human dignity. Someone must do something about it. Here, however is a difficulty at once. Not what you might think; I will risk a clumsy generalization that perhaps you will agree with, though a sociologist might smile and want to help me out here. There is a principle involved, like gravity, that affects everything. It is that human beings perversely, stubbornly, freely wish almost the opposite of what you would expect. It is in what we know as 'the poor man's pride'. As it concerns us, it is the fact that those who need help are the least willing to take it.¹

As a sort of more detailed example of this: I have had to sit at many meetings of district Church Councils—formed as an experiment. In a battered schoolroom perhaps eight local worthies—sterling characters all—weatherbeaten and slow, are seated, and while, in patience, I possess my soul, the grave rigmarole of Minutes, read, moved, seconded and confirmed by vote, is gone through with as much solemnity as a meeting of the Governors of the Bank of England. In fact, they must have got through theirs with less. Main items on the Agenda are, probably, seeing that the money collected for the poor Social Worker's wages is all paid in, and that the woman who did not come on Thursday to cook the school meal is properly reprimanded, and steps taken to see it doesn't occur again. One's original dreams, of social transformation co-operatives model villages tend to fade, slowly. One sees how important it is that cook comes every day.

Perhaps, after years and years, when I am dead and cooks do come every day and the social worker is paid by government as she should be and the little Council, still meeting, has won the necessary prestige and confidence and pull, something might be started. In fact, the one I am thinking of has seen to the making of a thousand blocks for a chapel, almost—so to speak—since I wrote. But for that day, and without, I hope, yielding to the bitter temptation of telling the other fellow what he should be doing, may I make a suggestion? I think, after *Mater et Magistra*, that more detailed, even if provisional, quite fallible and frequently revised plans should be put forward in each diocese as the Church's idea of social transformation, mentioning names and quoting figures and putting to use the undoubted talents among the clergy at

¹So in *Monsieur Vincent*, the lovely film ends with the saint telling the young Sister, 'Serve the poor with a smile; then they may forgive you the bread you have to give them'.

present idling frustratedly (as one seems to notice, more, in the missions). It is not interference. It is simply interest. It will be taken, and respected, as such.

There will have to be large-scale changes, movements of funds, reductions of prices, before even energetic little district councils can safely tackle anything more important than the school cook, and a social worker. We were having a film in another school at the Parent-Teachers' meeting, all to encourage at least a handful of parents to take interest in the school. We had British News, with the glittering paradise that is the United Kingdom, to look at: Exhibitions, Marvels, Model Towns, Royal Appearances. (And we wonder why so many want to go there). Our first nuclear submarine was shown, and a price mentioned (we may have heard wrong): twenty million pounds. The Head Teacher, in the perhaps two-hundred-year-old building, leaned to me and hissed: 'Enough to build a modern school in almost every parish in the West Indies'. He felt they deserved it, before the silly submarine—and not as a gift, either. Was he right? And will those in a position to say so, say so? Then—we might even get them.

We mentioned illegitimacy. It is what shocks most, at starting. My first Sunday morning here I helped to baptize thirty bawling bastards. I will never forget it. I mentioned it too, soon after, gently, frankly, foolishly, in the youth club, as part of my Impressions that they had asked for. 'But everyone in England uses contraceptives', said a West Indian priest who was there; 'and that's much worse'. It was no use my saying, heavily, that *I* never used them. But there is a difficult statement to make about it all.

It is very wrong to have children outside marriage. There are no excuses. Poverty, loneliness, bad environment—don't we all have these in some form or another? And it is the high illegitimacy rate, *eight* or *nine* out of ten, remember, that in its present, 'runaway' condition makes for the shacks, the tumbledown schools, malnutrition, instability and resulting 'low credit' of this whole area; not the other way around, *pace* the news editors, politicians *et al* aforesaid.

Let us talk about what can be done about it. Gentleness and severity are equally ineffectual. I do not pretend to know. I simply want to say it defeats us, middle-class Europeans like myself, and Europeanized West Indians as well. We are 'funny' about sex, in West Indian eyes, not what we should be, simple, placid, accepting. But we are blessedly ineffectual in communicating any hatred or fear of it, however disguised. An elderly Father told me, wryly, of how he asked one severely,

'And where do little girls go who do bad things with boys?' 'Into de bushes, Fadder' said the sweet little thing.

Somehow, let me say it quickly, I am guessing that we must, here, build the family from the ground up, on other lines: more love; boy and girl wanting to stay together; to flaunt their love, at the wedding in the parish church; joining it there to the love of Jesus for us all; having their children with knowledge (of conception days); and proudly, from God. The fault is not lust, so much as improvidence, disrespect to woman, injustice to mother-and-child, hostility to authority. It is all seen as the Priest roping in, tying together; Women wearing the trousers; the Ring as the end of a chain; endless child-bearing, and so on. I may be making an awful mistake, but I raise all this in the teenagers' classes, amid broad frank grins from girls as well as boys, and I think the line joins. 'You speak as a man', the boys say, gravely.

The illiteracy we mentioned could be solved by honest, dedicated teaching. Low literacy harms us, and badly, in the state of the Press, full of venom, hostile to the Church and almost any authority. If it is not a build-up for visiting Evangelists, it is outrageous and quite libellous attack on the church authorities. Both editors are Catholics. Not knowing what to do about it, I act as if nothing ever happened, and go down to give them Church News, at present trying to arrange extracts from *Mater et Magistra* in one paper. I am met with a nervous but curiously cordial reception. The other cheek is kissed.

The real result is, one doesn't know what is going on. So much clamour and comment on safe trifles, and ominous silence about appalling scandals, bitter disappointments like the secession of the large islands and the deep anxiety there must be in thinking minds about any honourable and dignified future in small islands. Opinions startle you. The youth club—but, of course—came to the resounding resolution that this House would welcome the return of colonialism. A group of very prominent Catholic men, at a meeting, were overwhelmingly in favour of the United Kingdom's restriction of immigration. When, just to get a real discussion going and to air any suspicions, I suggested there might be a possibility of base motives—a desire to restrict other elements, wives, children, who would make demands on welfare services now that the desired labour force was there—I was told the restrictions did not at all apply in this way only to those without support or guaranteed employment. Do they? I dunno. I was assured with embarrassing fervour that the Home Government, almost alone in the world, was pursuing the only enlightened and disinterested policy

for all concerned, as usual. (Remember of course that West Indians who can get to any other country, and even from island to island, to live, can be counted in tens). Your only friend just *has* to be a good one, is it? I was argued quite out of court, as often in that group. I did in fact know little about it, having read the papers. Remember, I just live here.

It should be known that Mass attendance figures are what they are, throughout the Caribbean and Latin America too. There are outstanding exceptions—where something of a European, petit-bourgeois or peasant Catholic society has been set up, but we seem unable to cope with, let alone modify, or transform, anything outside that pattern. Here too, where the ratio priest/people is never higher than 1/5,000 the ideal Mass would be said in the sports ground, with clothes—fashionable or not—inconspicuous, and be Mass radically transformed, so that the priests dominate such a situation—microphones—and the people take real part on such a scale, with community singing—and since such singing is impossible to arrange except in simple hymns and antiphons—massed choral speaking, with group leaders, and enough local deacons to distribute communion to such numbers. However, this problem I respectfully pass on, up, just remarking once again that, for what is said to be two thirds of the world's Catholics, ninety-five per cent are, presumably, living 'in sin' on this matter (any connection?) as on the other. 'The lower decks are awash, Sir'.

May I mention the problem coming your way in the immigrants? We give them a letter to take to the priest on arrival, which they will dutifully do, expecting to be arrested by the police if they do not. Cultivate, Father, a flashing smile, backslapping volubility, to welcome them. Where Protestant migrants—the majority hitherto from Jamaica—have been shocked and grieved at irreligion in England, Catholics may be surprised at the really high degree of Catholic life there (Yes!) if they are welcomed and brought in. We receive, it is at once heartening and humiliating to notice, far more notifications of marriage from abroad than we actually perform. There are families in every parish, surely, that will gladly make them welcome if asked.

With our great privileges we in the Church have great responsibilities to see as much as we can in real life Christian ideals of community, of vocation, of offering, take the place of class, privilege, demand. Facts and figures are to be faced and worked out; policies laid down, followed; insights worked for, applied; if we have, for all men, the way, the truth, and the life.