

THE LONDON HOUSE OF HOSPITALITY

CATHOLICS are often criticised, where social questions are concerned, of talking much and doing little. This is not the place to make public confession—usually unwarranted, almost always odious; and whether or not there is justification for this criticism is more a matter for private examination of conscience. The fact remains that a certain empty verbosity is a fault to which fallen human nature is only too prone, and it is some gain if we are alive to the possibility in us of that strain of Pharisaism, “for they say and do not.”

The Young Christian Workers' Movement strives to counteract this tendency. Having before its eyes the words of Pope Pius XI that “the first apostles of the workers are the workers,” it aims at transforming the conditions in which the young workers live, not by force of arms, but by the love of Christ and of souls in Him. This means being intensely practical, getting down to brass tacks, to concrete cases. A realization of this has given birth, quite spontaneously, to a House of Hospitality in London, following the example of that in Wigan. The idea of wage-earners under present conditions extending hospitality on any considerable scale may seem fantastic, and the effort in London, from very small beginnings, has not been without difficulties and seeming failures; but the work goes on, and appears to be growing. After some three months of life, this new venture is able to give some account of itself. Naturally, the control and direction of the house cannot be in the hands of those who are themselves at work elsewhere all day, and there is now a resident voluntary staff, but the Young Christian Workers, after taking an active part in the starting of the house, assist whenever they can.

Since the opening of the house on June 12th, over two hundred meals have been given, eighty nights' rest, and twelve men have been completely fitted out with clothing and placed in work. That is on the material side, but who shall

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measure the spiritual gain that comes from the contact with a living Christian charity; the vision obtained of Christian truth, from a word in season on the Church's social doctrine?

A young ex-communist came to stay at the house, full of the usual complaints against the Church's attitude to the working man. His contact with the members of the house led him to enquire into the teaching of the Papal encyclicals, and he returned to the sacraments after fourteen years. As this man's health was bad, the house arranged for him to go to camp for a fortnight, and he has since written to tell the house of his happiness. Another man, as a result of his visit to the house, returned to the sacraments after twenty-three years. Something of the impression made upon those for whom the House was instituted may be gathered from the following letter:

"Just a note to let you know that I haven't forgotten my duty to the house and enclosed find order for _____, which I shall send each month. I call your place St. Joseph's House of Prosperity and will always be grateful to Fr. _____, for sending me up to you and thanks a million for all you and the boys have done for me. When a fellow is so many miles from his Mother and Dad and Family as I am, he sure does appreciate the kindness that has been shown to him."

Another important feature of the house is that it is a centre for those interested in Social Service. Recent visitors include a member of the Y.C.W. from Austria; J. Connelly, editor of the Canadian *Social Forum*; Fr. Paul H. Furfey of the Catholic University of America, and author of *Fire on the Earth*, Jean Doerane, leader of the Belgian J.O.C., and of course, Bob Walsh of the House of Hospitality at Wigan.

One cannot but be struck by the fundamental and generous Christianity, which appears so unassumingly in this advanced post of the Church's battlefield. Not the least of its attributes is the cheerfulness of its members in the face of great difficulties. Its connection with the Liturgical Movement—so closely linked with Catholic Action—is shown by the fact that the staff recite Compline together daily.

It is clear that such a work cannot continue without some

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material aid. The rent, the finding of meals, clothing, etc., for so many of Christ's poor, taxes the resources of the house to the utmost. Gifts, not only of money, but of groceries, old clothes, bedding, etc., will be most gratefully received. Please address to: The Secretary, St. Joseph's House, 129 Malden Road, London, N.W.5.

PETER WHITESTONE, O.P.

PROGRESS OF THE Y.C.W.

Accounts of the Young Christian Workers' Second Annual Congress have appeared in the Catholic Weekly Press. But a general reflection on their position in this country and their prospects in it might yet be useful.

At the first Annual Congress, December 4th, 1937, at Wigan, six groups were represented, numbers in all about 100. At the 1938 Congress, September 4th, at St. Dominic's, London, N.W.5, 11 groups were represented and numbers approximately 200. There were boys also from places which have not yet a group but are preparing to start. The number of Priests present at the meeting of Priests connected with the movement was also roughly double that of last year. And this year the Congress was honoured by the presence of the Cardinal.

As at the last Congress the impression given by the members was that of real confidence in the enormous work the movement undertakes: to make itself responsible for every interest, spiritual, moral, intellectual, social, of the Young Worker. Indeed the responsibility is the inspiration, a point of strategy in Catholic Action. The London boys, to begin with, made all arrangements for the Congress—for feeding, for meetings, for transport in London; meeting trains and seeing off at all hours of the night and day. The Societies' magazine was brought out (again exclusively by the efforts of the 14-25 years-old members), with a printed