

## THE CATHOLIC WORKERS' COLLEGE

was founded in 1948 by the late

Father Edward J. Coyne, S.J.

A new modern wing was built and equipped in 1956 at a cost of over £32,000.

Five Jesuit priests have been permanently set aside and trained for work in the College.

The College provides lectures and discussions  
for members of Trade Unions  
for employers, managers and businessmen  
for supervisors and foremen  
for engaged couples  
for National Teachers.

Peace for all—in family life, in industrial life—based on the dignity of every human being: that is the College's aim.

Since 1956, when the new extension to the College buildings was opened, the number of students on the annual roll has risen from 797 to 1,358.

This indicates a growing realization of the need for even greater educational effort in this field of social and industrial relations.

## EDUCATION IN A CHANGING WORLD

*The Catholic Workers' College: Report of the Reverend Prefect of Studies, 1960-'61, delivered on the occasion of the awarding of College Diplomas and Certificates to 401 Trade Union students, Wednesday, 13th September, 1961.*

Mr. President, Members of the Board of Sponsors, Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

### Introduction

This Report on the work of the College and on the College Oral Examinations was considered and approved by the Board of Sponsors for the Trade Union Courses at the Annual General Meeting of the Board held at the College this afternoon. While the main subject of this Report normally concerns the activities and progress of our Trade Union students, it is customary also at this Annual Meeting to say something about the general activities of the College and to restate our aims, ideals and hopes.

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To-night I have decided to devote more space than usual to general matters and to suggest to you some fundamental reasons why Colleges such as ours have an important role to play in preparing our people to meet the challenge of a changing world.

### Ten Years' Effort

At the outset, may I recall the fact that, on February 6th of this year, the College celebrated the tenth anniversary of the opening of the present Trade Union Courses. On that date in 1951, 44 men enrolled for lectures in Industrial Relations, Social Theory and History. From that nucleus of 44 students, the present general student body of 1,358 has developed. The number of students has increased thirty-fold in these ten years and the number of lectures has risen from four to forty per week. Besides the Trade Union Course for men, the College, during these years, provided lectures for women members of Trade Unions, for managers and businessmen, for supervisors and foremen, for National Teachers, for members of Political Parties and for men and women engaged to be married.

These years, too, saw other developments which are worthy of notice. The original College buildings were greatly extended and fittingly equipped. Closer links were forged between the College and those organizations for the benefit of whose members this College exists. The Boards of Sponsors for our Trade Union and Management Courses to-day supervise and promote the activities of 843 students. An immense amount of voluntary service was given us by a devoted team of men and women lecturers and an incalculable amount of equally loyal service by innumerable groups of past and present students. There was no lessening of the wonderful spirit of Christian co-operation between students and staff, which was so outstanding a characteristic of earlier years. Indeed, in such important aspects of College life as perseverance at the Courses, regularity of attendance and assimilation of knowledge, the traditional high standards have been maintained unimpaired.

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We record these successes and blessings in a spirit of thankfulness to God and to each and all who participated in founding and building up this Workers' College. Some of our earliest and staunchest supporters have gone to their reward; and if I mention here two by name, it is only because we miss them to-day as much as we did at the time of their deaths. Walter Beirne and Terry Farrell, each in his own way, played an important role in the life of the College during this first decade. I can well believe that their efforts on our behalf are no less efficacious to-day than when they were with us.

### Education in a Changing World

The College has indeed been singularly blessed with loyal friends and benefactors, most of them still happily with us, to encourage and advise us in our efforts to teach men to order their family, social, industrial and national lives. These friends are men of vision. They have seen that, if Irishmen are to live, as their Creator intends them to live, intelligent, well-informed, free and responsible beings, then no system of education can afford to dispense with training such as this College seeks to give. Too frequently, when we speak or think of education here in Ireland, we think of youth preparing for the battle of life in some way or other. That concept of education fitted well enough a static world where ideas, once learned, never changed and were never challenged. It was enough when traditional moral, social, political and cultural values and ideals were accepted, understood, acted upon and taken for granted. But this is no longer so. There are no unchallenged ideals in the world. There are no social systems that are quite secure. There are few personal landmarks which could not very quickly be ploughed under. There can be no final preparation for a way of life the brand mark of which is instability.

### Effects of Change on Man

In the last twenty years the political boundaries of the world have been radically re-drawn; and the new ones are not forever. Political and economic associations in Western Europe have blurred the meaning of national boundaries and

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of the role of the independent state. Organizations which grew up to fill a gap in the social system of their own country now find their path criss-crossed by the tracks of similar organizations abroad. Science and technology make dangerously valuable contributions to the process of production; these promise to wipe the sweat from the worker's brow, sometimes at the cost of his job. In this swirling flux of events and systems even the familiar details of everyday life are not entirely secure. New goods, new needs, new prices, new earnings, new loan-systems bring the confusion of great events into the daily round of personal life. The value and purpose of that personal life is queried and contradicted in a welter of ideologies. There is nothing new in change; but the rapidity with which change follows change is something special to our time. Not all this new knowledge is evil or to be rejected; but it is all new and entangled with much that is false or only partly true. Not all is unwholesome or degrading to the human spirit, but men's minds are confused and they find it difficult, of themselves, to sift truth from falsehood, good from bad.

The very changes that have taken place in the means of communications have themselves intensified this assault on men's power to judge and discriminate. Adults and children are exposed to a daily barrage of ideas, sounds and sights which are in conflict with much that a previous generation accepted and cherished. Some of the new is true; some is false; much is well mixed up; each item comes tumbling on the heels of the previous one and all push forward with persistent, bewildering speed. Through press, photo, radio, cinema, television, they invade alike the trained and the untrained mind, and vie for its allegiance and approval. For, to-day, the thought of every man is bared, whether he like it or not, to truth and falsehood, good and bad, even in the privacy of his home.

### The Traditionalists

Now to this welter of change men react differently and frequently badly. On the one hand there are the traditionalists who oppose every sort of change on the doubtful principle that "what was good enough for father is good enough for

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me." A doubtful principle, if only because reverence for one's patrimony is seldom the real reason for refusal to meet the challenge of a changing world. Frequently, such men are mentally lazy. They close their minds and wills against what is new simply because it is new. They resist change because they will not make the effort to cope with it. Such men are found in Irish industrial life as they are found in every other department of life.

Other men, less honest perhaps, certainly more numerous, since they include young and old, resist all change which is detrimental to their own private interests. If there is nothing in it for them, they are blind to the possibility that a change may bring benefit to others. The needs of others, needs perhaps greater than theirs, the demands of the common good of their fellow-men, the promptings of justice, of charity, of patriotism, none of these can open their eyes. Such men, too, are found in the industrial life of Ireland and on both sides of the table, as they are found in political and social circles everywhere.

### And the Progressives

At the other extreme are the so-called Progressives and these are of many types. Common to all, however, is a rebelliousness or a restlessness with the world as they see it. This leads to an indiscriminate desire for new things. New social institutions, new methods of production, new cultural and social outlets: only from these do they expect improvements and from these they expect them infallibly. They disregard, certainly they misread, the history of the human race. Man can go backwards or sideways as easily as forward. But Progressives believe, implicitly or explicitly, in human progress in every field of human endeavour; in their eyes, progress is continuous and simultaneous with change. In this sense the Marxist is perhaps the most explicit. The iron law of inevitable progress is at the centre of his creed. The method of production of material goods, he holds, ultimately fixes everything else in Society. And these methods, by a pre-determined law, evolve to produce a collective paradise on earth; from then on, no change of system is admissible; having inevitably reached the collectivist heaven, man must inevitably stay

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there. This rigidly necessary progress to mass happiness shows how impersonally the Marxist looks on man. At the back of his philosophy is the denial of man's spiritual nature and of the freedom of man's will. The progress he asserts is that of the Collectivity, of Society, and not that of the human persons who make up Society. All Progressives share this difficulty to some extent, they always prefer social progress to human progress. In theory, at least, the Marxist progressive is the most anti-human. There are men holding such views in Ireland to-day.

Another type of progressive is found among our teenagers and younger men and women. Theirs is more rebellion against the past and the present than concern with the future. It might be truer to say that they rebel against a caricature of the past, because, for the most part, they are persons without a history. For them everything of a past age is backward, everything new is progressive. An idea in politics, economics or social affairs will be acceptable if it breaks with the past. Existing modes of cultural expression are old and tired in their eyes. "It cannot be much worse than the present" is as much philosophy as they need. For some, it is true that the present may offer little more than "sweat and tears," and it is altogether reasonable that such men should seek an amelioration of their lot. Others, however, seek change as a means of escape from irksomeness of daily routine, from the weariness which results from human labour. Instead of trying to change their outlook and attitude to their work, they change their job but leave themselves unchanged. So they drift from job to job, from place to place, restless and rebellious.

### Education, a Permanent Need

Now, it is against a background such as this, in an era of stupendous and rapid changes, that the men and women of Ireland have to live and work. It is precisely because of this that formal and informal agencies of adult education are necessary in our times. Men must learn to see change as part of modern life, but not as something either automatically evil or necessarily good. There are no material forces which produce progress in a deterministic way. On the contrary,

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every change in economic policy, in technology, in social organization, in the arts and crafts is the creation of man. The only necessity is that men must choose between the old and the new and abide by the necessary consequences of their choice. The very flux of events highlights the glory of being "conscious, free and intended to act in a responsible manner." It is to aid men and women to a maturity which faces up to this challenge that Colleges such as ours are needed.

Without such support even well-intentioned men slump in bewilderment. The plain fact is that very few men nowadays have time to think out problems to a satisfactory solution. This is generally true, but very particularly so of people in management and in administrative positions. All problems now are complex ones, for their solutions include intricate relationships with other fields of activity and of thought. Partly for that reason, difficulties arise much more frequently; a change in one sector demands compensating shifts in a large number of others. Moreover, nothing is firmly and finally settled; even the successful solution to a problem triggers off a series of subordinate and consequent ones. For this reason, too, the data and information on facts, which men need if they are to face problems, is too great to be readily available. A College such as ours does not pretend to be able to hand out the answer to any difficulty which may arise. Its purpose is, rather, to gather the knowledge required to enable a man to make up his own mind. Its aim is to suggest useful ways of considering the problem. Its hope is to stimulate men to draw reasonable, constructive conclusions of their own.

Now, as the problems to be faced are continuously changing, so this function of adult education must remain a permanent need. Indeed, without some such support many men of good will feel overpowered by the intricacy of things and fall into apathy. And there are, in fact, many signs of decline in personal initiative, responsibility and self-reliance. Men to-day are too willing to relinquish both duties and rights to societies of various kinds. In his new Encyclical, Pope John warns that if modern man wishes to live under free government, he must be prepared "to work on his own initiative, to exercise his responsibility, to affirm and enrich his personality." It is

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surely not without significance that this theme of personal responsibility and initiative, within political society and within lesser social groups, recurs again and again throughout Pope John's letter. For a careful reading will show that this is the unifying idea which runs through this latest re-statement of the Church's teaching on the Social Question.

### Responsibilities of Workers

During the past ten years, on occasions such as this, speakers have frequently referred to the apathy and lack of participation of ordinary workers in the affairs of their Unions. It is undoubtedly true that the ordinary worker all too frequently fails to exercise any responsibility in his Union. He belongs to his Union but how often does he take an active interest in its affairs? attend its meetings? cast an intelligent vote in elections of officials? help to determine its policies? Apathy among workers is also noticeable in factory and workshops, where the worker seldom receives any encouragement to exercise initiative or responsibility at his work. Indeed, rationalization of industry and technological change have tended to deprive the worker of pride and zest in his work. Many of the new productivity methods seem concerned more with selling-costs than with increasing the initiative and responsibility of the workers. It must be emphasized that in industry there can be no sound economic solution which is not accompanied by a parallel solution to the human problems of work.

Pope John, in a very strong passage in his recent Encyclical, makes it perfectly clear that justice demands that the structures and functioning of the productive system should be such as to provide the worker with opportunities to exercise initiative and responsibility:

"Justice is to be observed not only in the distribution of wealth but also with reference to the structure of the enterprises in which productive activity unfolds itself. There is, in fact, an innate exigency in human nature which demands that, when men are engaged in productive activity, they have the opportunity of employing their

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own responsibility and perfecting their own being. Wherefore, if the structures, the functioning, the surroundings of an economic system are such as to compromise human dignity.....or if they systematically blunt in them (i. e., the workers) the sense of responsibility or constitute in any way an impediment to expressing their personal initiative, such an economic system is unjust, even if, by hypothesis, the wealth produced through it reaches a high standard and this wealth is distributed according to the criteria of justice and equity."

What Pope John here teaches about economic society applies likewise to political society and to the lesser societies, to Employers' Associations and to Trade Unions. They, too, must provide their members with opportunities for the exercise of responsibility. They, too, must seek means to promote and develop a deep sense of responsibility in their members. For responsibility is the hall-mark of free men.

Now, our experience over the years has provided us with some insight into the very real problems, fears, prejudices and difficulties of the men and women on both sides of the negotiating table. We have come to know, also, the very real desire that exists on both sides to find just solutions to their many problems. But fears are only annihilated by hope, prejudices by the knowledge of facts and in this connection we think that the time may be opportune for the setting up of a fact-finding Committee on Human Relations in Industry. Such a Committee could expose the human problems which perplex and aggravate both workers and management. This Committee could make recommendations, which might form the basis of future discussions between Trade Unions and Employers, with a view to order and peace in Irish industry. For a peace based on justice and charity must also be freely negotiated in the light of all the relevant facts, and man is a central fact in industry, which we can ignore only at our own peril. We live, it is true, in difficult times, but our very difficulties should act as a spur urging us on to new effort to find solutions in a spirit of utmost responsibility. For each of us that is the challenge of our time.

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number of 329 is 47 more than last year's total and is the highest number of men students ever to present themselves for these College Examinations.

In the Trade Union Women's Course, 57 first year students passed their examination, of whom 24 passed with distinction; in the second year Diploma group 15 students presented themselves, 15 passed 5 with distinction. This total of 72 women who passed their examinations is also a new record and reveals an increase of 24 over the total for the year 1959-'60.

### Thanksgiving

And finally, a word of sincere thanks to all our many friends. To you Mr. President and Members of the Board of Sponsors, to the Chairman and members of the Trade Union Organization Committee, to the Members of the various sub-committees, to the Members of the Ladies' Committee who will provide us with a welcome cup of tea, as they have done on many other nights during the past year; to all the College lecturers for their loyal support and to you students and your families at home; to all our Associate Members and Benefactors; to the Officials and Committee members of the Trade Unions in Dublin; to one and all go our gratitude for an immense amount of generous co-operation, help and encouragement during 1960-'61. It is my earnest hope that this spirit of Christian co-operation and charity may continue to animate our efforts and yours, and I pray that our heavenly Patron, St. Joseph the Worker, may obtain for his College all that is necessary to make it a more efficacious instrument of order and peace in a changing world.

Edmond Kent, S. J.,  
*Prefect of Studies.*  
13 September 1961

*(For private circulation among the students and Associate Members of the Catholic Workers' College, Sandford Road, Dublin 6.)*

## THE COLLEGE ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP PLAN

Many grave social and industrial problems confront us in Ireland to-day.

There is abundant evidence to show that the College Courses have something positive to contribute towards a just solution of these problems.

### The Associate Membership Plan

gives you and your friends,  
your Union or Union Branch,  
your firm or association,

an opportunity to aid us in providing these Courses. It enables us, too, to keep you up-to-date on Papal and other authoritative pronouncements in the field of social philosophy and industrial relations.

### As an Associate Member:

you will receive the College bulletin, **Solidarity**, every second month and, with it, other suitable literature; you may call on us for advice on any matter that lies within our competence.

In return we ask you for an annual, personal subscription of one pound; or a Small Group subscription of three pounds; or a Large Group subscription of ten pounds.

If you wish to become an Associate Member, write to:

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