

Now is the Time . . .

By Rev. Paul Duchesne, M.M.

The Maryknoll Sisters' building project is meeting the success such a worthy cause deserves. The scheme got underway just before the Government's announcement of its intentions with regards to the problem of housing in huts. But there is no conflict. If this project were to succeed miles beyond the Sisters' fondest dreams and if several other such efforts were initiated, in addition to that of the government, the mighty challenge would still be only half met. But should that deter anyone?

Mr. Barnett's statement shows keen understanding of the problem. There is some over simplification — too few millions for so many thousand homeless — but the scheme is a giant step in the right direction. Now is the time for all voluntary agencies, religious groups and philanthropic individuals to rally round. It requires many hands to row such a mighty boat. Now is the time for factories, companies, even schools, to work out a plan whereby the company advances the cost of a house (\$2,100) to be paid back monthly. Schools could guarantee loans for their teachers. Government would be more prone to grant land in larger plots to institutions or companies than it would be to accommodate individual applications.

If one thousand homes were built in the next six months, the housing problem would not (yet have begun to) be solved because so many flats are accommodating two and three families, but one thousand houses would so relieve the situation, that if it did not cause a drop in rents, it at least would go a long way towards tolling the knell of that most vicious institution, key money. At the time of the Tung Tau Village fire many long letters-to-the-editor deplored the shanty towns and condemned the authorities who permitted conditions to reach such proportions. Now is the time for the author of those letters to put away his pen and either to dig down into his pocket for the cash or, by giving of his time, get out and by one means or another get a few houses built through some organization to which he belongs. We must overcome the "let-Government do it attitude. The let-George-do-it apathy should have no place in Hongkong where crowded conditions make every man your neighbour.

"If someone would only . . ." "They should . . ." "Why doesn't someone . . ." It is so easy to sit back in our easy chairs and soliloquise about what "they" or "someone" should do for the hawkers; do about the beggars or the people who live

THE GROUND IS BROKEN



(1) Reverend Paul Duchesne, M.M. looks over the building site for the group of ten duplex houses which are being built for refugees in the King's Park Welfare Centre. (2) The entrance to the King's Park Welfare Centre.

in oil-tin huts. But here we have the Maryknoll Sisters doing something about it. And don't think it's easy or that there's nothing to it. It implies hours of daily talking, pleading, cajoling, begging, settling disputes, drying tears, turning away people whose faces are white and shrunken with hunger, whose eyes are burning pools of fever sunken above cheeks pinched with cold . . . All we are asked is to deny ourselves a new suit, a new dress or a night out. Now is the time to play Monopoly, by buying real houses . . . for the poor. This is a real real-estate game.

A little fire-proof house is insurance from worry for the father of a family. A cottage, green shutters and a garden gate, peace — and rest, for weary

bones at sunset, this is the dream of every man. Hongkong's weary refugees will gladly forego the gate and the shutters. The sunset is God's gift to everyone. Make a bargain with God. Give Him something then ask Him for what you want. Trust Him to return to you on His own terms. God does not limit Himself to any three or five percent interest . . . Ownership security is freedom from anxiety, leaving poor parents free to devote more time to problems of schooling, health, unemployment etc. Government's understanding and Mr. Barnett's happy timing will do much to settle minds already sick with worry.

"If a man loves enough, every act will represent his love." Giving is the supreme act of love.

of every man. Hongkong's weary refugees will gladly forego the gate and the shutters. The sunset is God's gift to everyone. Make a bargain with God. Give Him something then ask Him for what you want. Trust Him to return to you on His own terms. God does not limit Himself to any three or five percent interest . . . Ownership security is freedom from anxiety, leaving poor parents free to devote more time to problems of schooling, health, unemployment etc. Government's understanding and Mr. Barnett's happy timing will do much to settle minds already sick with worry.

"If a man loves enough, every act will represent his love." Giving is the supreme act of love.