

## Convention News

THE second meeting of Working Group 2 (Religious Instruction) took place on Tuesday, March 10th. The Convener, Miss Pauline Cheng, suggested a time-table for subsequent debates on the draft document. Chapters I, II and IV would each be discussed at two meetings; chapters III and V at one meeting each; two meetings would be given to both the Introduction and the Summary. This would mean a total of ten meetings, stretched over five or six months. This tentative plan met with general approval. After a decision had been taken to deal with the chapters section by section rather than paragraph by paragraph, the discussion got under way.

The question was asked as to why, according to the draft, the early Christians would not recognize themselves in our present parish communities (pp. 5 f). Various reasons were suggested in explanation. Many felt it was because our present parishes are too big to allow concern and love to appear. Some dissatisfaction was expressed at the definition of a Christian given in the document (p. 5). Mutual love is not the monopoly of Christians, it was pointed out. Mention of the Christian's relationship to Christ and of baptism should be made. There seemed to be wide agreement to a suggestion to re-order the paragraph to give more prominence to the Christian's being "one who lives a life of deep personal commitment to Christ, his actions animated by the Spirit."

A further point discussed was the parish structure. One speaker appealed for a more living parish, with more freedom given to experiment; he stressed the advantages of a certain amount of healthy competition and rivalry among parish communities. However, not everyone was in favour of such friendly competition or of encouraging too great a diversity among the parishes: some felt that unity within the diocese would be impaired if too much latitude were granted in the matter of experimentation.

The discussion on the first chapter will continue at the next meeting (Tuesday, March 31st, in the Catholic Centre, at 8 p.m.)

Working Group 3 (Education) met for the first time on Wednesday, March 11th. Because of the large attendance, it was proposed to split up the Group into two (or more) sub-groups. Opinions were expressed both for and against this proposal. One speaker thought that the language difficulty could be overcome by using a system of

simultaneous translation. It was agreed to investigate the feasibility of this. Eventually it was decided to continue as one group, at least for the moment.

When it had been agreed to accept the draft document as the basis for discussion, the meeting took up the first item on the agenda, the Report on Pre-School Education. But before the discussion started, one speaker wanted to know why debate on the Introduction (especially on pars. 8 and 9) had not been included in the agenda. In reply it was pointed out that a discussion on the Introduction might be more profitable later on, when the remainder of the document had been dealt with, since it touched on various points that were treated at greater length here and there throughout the document.

The Report on Pre-School Education brought up the question of religious instruction, whereas the reports on the other stages of education did not mention this matter. An explanation for this was given: in general the whole question of religious instruction was being left to the draft dealing specifically with this topic. But the subcommittee that drew up the draft under discussion were afraid that the Religious Instruction document might not consider the needs of children at the kindergarten stage.

A proposal was then made to adopt the 6 recommendations made by the Pre-School Sub-Committee. Recommendation n.5: "Less homework — at most one page", met with some opposition. Many felt that children attending kindergartens should be given no homework at all. Some speakers seemed willing to exclude written homework only. One delegate expressed the opinion that some little homework was useful in instilling at an early age the good habit of doing one's duty. On a vote, it was decided that the recommendation should be altered to exclude all homework at pre-school level. With this amendment the Report of the Pre-School Sub-Committee was adopted.

The next meeting of this Working Group will take place in Caritas Centre, Boundary Street (7/F), Kowloon, on Wednesday, April 1st.

Working Group 8 (Communications) is the first Group to have elected the members of its Re-Drafting Committee. They are: Father Peter Brady, Mr. Joseph Chan, Miss Anna Chu, Mr. Vincent Law and Father Marazzi.

An expert in the running of public meetings has kindly drawn up a set of 14 rules embodying the basic principles of parliamentary procedure. These will be the Standing Orders for subsequent meetings of the Working Groups. They have been sent to all delegates in an English version. A Chinese version is being prepared and will be sent out as soon as possible. It is hoped that delegates will study these rules carefully and by adhering faithfully to them, allow the business of the meetings to proceed as efficiently as possible, while at the same time guaranteeing all present a reasonable opportunity for expressing their views.

N.B. Throughout April all Working Groups meet at St. Teresa's Caritas Centre, Kowloon.