

COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA

THE newly-elected re-drafting committee of Working Group 8 (Communications Media) has already got down to work. A revised version of the first part of the document was presented to the Group at its last meeting (April 8th). In a discussion regarding the suitability of the Chinese title of the draft a proposal was put forward that the Vatican Council usage be adopted. However, it was agreed to postpone a decision on the title to give delegates the opportunity to submit written suggestions to the Convener. At this stage of the meeting a seven-minute halt was called to permit delegates who had not received the new draft in good time to read over the first four paragraphs. When the meeting was again called to order, views were exchanged on the contents of this introductory section. A suggestion that experts be invited to give their opinion as to whether any important topic had been omitted was countered by the Convener who stated that the document was to be prepared by the delegates themselves. The meeting decided that nothing needed to be deleted from nor added to the section under discussion. A few comments regarding textual amendments were referred to the re-drafting committee.

GOVERNMENT OF THE DIOCESE

Much of the time of the last meeting of Group 10 (Government of Diocese) was taken up with a discussion of the notion of collegiality. The idea when applied to the role of the bishops in the government of the universal Church seemed clear

enough. But what does it mean when applied to the role of the clergy and the laity in the making of decisions on the diocesan level? A motion was introduced to avoid the use of the term in the draft document. From the ensuing debate a distinction emerged between a strict meaning of collegiality (as applied to Pope and bishops) and a broader use. This second meaning was to be taken as the action of priests and laity in presenting suggestions, facts and opinions to the bishop, thereby assisting him in his decision-making. The very meeting of the Working Group, which aimed at presenting proposals and recommendations concerning government of the diocese, it was pointed out, was an exercise of collegiality in this wider sense. As there seemed to be a wide consensus among those present that this was an acceptable use of the term "collegiality", the proposer begged leave to withdraw his motion. Later, as a result of a vote, par. 6 of the draft document was agreed on, and the discussion moved on to par. 7 (The Diocese or Local Church).

Views were exchanged concerning the statement: "A bond of uniformity in the essentials of the one faith and of lawful diversity in some particulars". One delegate suggested replacing the word "uniformity" with "unity". Another proposed substituting "one discipline" for "one faith".

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

The homily, the subject of a great deal of comment in letters sent to the Convention at an earlier stage, was the topic discussed at the last meeting of Working Group 2 (Religious Instruction). The draft document treats of the homily in a special paragraph of chapter 1 and again in Recommendation 4 at the end of the chapter. The meeting voted to deal with paragraph and recommendation together. The paragraph as it stands seemed satisfactory to most and provoked little comment: at a later stage of the meeting it was accepted by an overwhelming majority. The debate centred around the recommendation, which comprises four distinct parts. The first part deals with helps towards composing sermons. Some wanted this deleted: there are too many books of sermons in

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circulation, it was alleged: they do little more than encourage laziness! Against this it was urged that it is in fact very difficult to find suitable books, especially since the introduction of the new two-yearly cycle of scriptural passages into the text of the Sunday Masses; many busy priests have found such books useful in the past; the work done recently by the Diocesan Liturgical Commission in circulating sermon notes to priests has been found extremely helpful.

The second part of the recommendation deals with lay participation in preaching. In spite of a few who voiced the opinion that priests should not abdicate their important responsibility of preaching the word of God, it was decided to press for greater lay sharing in this field. After some debate the recommendation was amended to read: "Priests should encourage qualified laymen, forming a group wherever desirable and possible, to participate in the Sunday sermon, sharing in its preparation and at times delivering the sermon. This group would have the double function of training Catholics and acquainting priests with the life situation of the faithful." It had been pointed out during the discussion that involving lay people in the work of preaching would prepare them for a possible future situation where the number of priests would be less and greater responsibility would accordingly fall on the laity for the apostolate of the word.

A motion to add: "Women may preach" to the recommendation was passed by 35 votes to 9, with 10 abstentions. The third part of the recommendation (urging greater attention to the proper use and functioning of amplifying systems) was passed as it stands. The final part of the recommendation was amended to read: "the diocese should pay special attention to providing seminarians with practical and up-to-date courses in sacred eloquence, homiletics and elocution."

EDUCATION

Group 3 (Education) continued its discussion of pre-primary education at its meeting on April 15th. The Convener asked for comments on the draft document's recommendation to stagger the admission of new children over a period of weeks.

A delegate pointed out the practical difficulties that might arise if the admission period were spread over too long a time, e.g. assessing of fees and of teachers' salaries. It was agreed to leave practical details like this—and a list of six other points brought up by another speaker—to the subcommittee on pre-primary education, which it was hoped—would continue in existence.

Much of the discussion on the next section of the draft—Primary Education—centred around the first recommendation, the provision of some form of post-primary education for young people who, for various reasons (mainly of an economic nature) are unable to follow the full secondary course. A misunderstanding arose from the Chinese translation of the text of this recommendation, which seemed to imply a prolongation of primary education for a further two years. Some delegates felt that the Convention could do little about this problem as it was one of Government policy; another stated that in the past a scheme similar to the one envisaged here had proved a failure. It was stressed by another speaker that such further schooling should not be purely academic, but should have a strong bias towards technical training; and here the help of industry should be sought. At the end of the debate the amended recommendation was

passed to the effect that the diocese should recommend to the Education Department that it should find ways of extending education to all up to the age of 15.

The next subject for discussion was a recommendation of greater efforts to provide primary schools for the "deprived masses". It was pointed out that there are in fact many vacancies in existing primary schools; the difficulty perhaps arises from an uneven distribution of schools. One speaker brought up the question why the "deprived masses" do not frequent Government primary schools where vacancies are many and fees low. Another pointed out that the Church should look on her role as one of helping the Government to see its responsibility to provide education for its citizens and helping it to carry out this responsibility. One delegate expressed the view that the Church ought not refuse to take over primary schools in newly-built resettlement estates: others will do so if the Church does not. The consensus of the meeting seemed to be that greater efforts should be made in the area of primary education, but always taking into account the overall needs of the particular district involved.

Programme of Meeting for the coming week

Caritas Centre, Boundary Street	8 p.m.-10 p.m.
Liturgy	Monday, April 27th
Religious Instruction	Tuesday, April 28th
Education	Wednesday, April 29th
Laity	(No Meeting)
Catholic Centre	8 p.m.-10 p.m.
Priestly Life	Friday, May 1st