

# Convention News

## EVANGELIZATION

UNTIL Group 6 (Religious) starts its meetings again, Group 11 (Evangelization) will meet on Monday instead of Saturday, as they have been doing up to this. It is hoped that many more priests will be free to attend on Monday evenings and contribute to the discussion.

At the meeting on June 15, sections C and D of the first part of the draft (Church and Mission) were debated. These sections deal with the Church and other religions and the Church and religious freedom respectively. One speaker remarked that in the first section there emerged a clear notion of how the Church looks on herself and on her role in relation to other religions; he therefore felt that something should be added here concerning the Church as sign. Another speaker thought it would be a good idea to take as a starting point the actual situation: besides the Church, we see around us many other religions: what are we to think about these? Can people be saved through them? A number of delegates considered that the long quotation from Vatican II found in the section might be shortened, or paraphrased; other texts from the Council documents relevant to the Church's relations with other religions were mentioned.

A delegate suggested that the section might be restructured, dealing in turn with three points: the Church's attitude to Jews, Moslems and other non-Christians; the role of non-Christian religions in the salvation of their adherents; the function of the Church in their salvation — its function as sign. Another suggestion was to follow the progression of thought in the Vatican decree on the Missions, which starts from the simple presence of the Church among non-Christians through her schools, hospitals and works of charity, and from there goes on to discuss witnessing to Christ by proclaiming the Gospel when the opportunity arises.

A priest-delegate expressed the view that there should be a clear statement in the document on our duty to preach the Gospel to those of other religions.

The approach of Vatican II to non-Christian religions was "personalistic and existential", another delegate reminded the Group, an approach of dialogue on basic human problems which all religions strive to explain, e.g. goodness, sin, true happiness, death, judgement, reward and retribution, and questions such as, What is man? What is the purpose of life?, which they try to answer. He suggested therefore that the document should make mention of some of the basic elements common to all religions, thereby pointing towards the goodness to be found within all systems of belief.

When the discussion moved to the next section, on religious freedom, one speaker stated he was not very clear on the reason for dealing with the issue in this part of the document. Other speakers pointed out that it is an issue that missiologists have been discussing a good deal lately; that it suggests answers to questions such as: have we the right to preach the gospel to those of other religions? Can we oblige others to believe? How free should people be left to choose their own religion? Here again some delegates suggested cutting down the long quotation from the Vatican II decree on Religious Freedom. Another suggestion made was that the document should define

what is meant by other religions. Can we really speak of the existence of non-Christian religions in Hong Kong? Another speaker replied that although there might be no religions in the strict sense with clearly defined doctrinal systems, nevertheless there were many and distinct religious practices among a great number of people, e.g. on the occasion of funerals. It was also pointed out that there are several minority groups in Hong Kong with their own religions, e.g. the Parsees, the Sikhs, Hindus; what do we know about them and what should be our relationship with them?

A non-delegate present stressed how important it is for missionaries to know what precise difficulties non-Christians of differing religious backgrounds encounter when the Gospel is presented to them; without this knowledge it is not easy to know how to approach individual non-Christians. A Sister felt we should acknowledge in the document the unique freedom the Church enjoys in Hong Kong to preach the gospel.

Finally a vote was taken on the order to be followed in the first four sections of this part of the draft. It was felt that an improved order would bring out more clearly the relevance of the section on religious freedom.

## SOCIAL MISSION OF CHURCH

TO facilitate discussion on chapter IV of the draft document (Employment and Working Life) two documents were specially prepared and sent to the members of the Working Group. One of these contained extracts from papal encyclicals and Vatican II documents dealing with workers' rights; the other was an attempt to show how some of the more important principles of social justice can be applied in practice to Hong Kong.

At the beginning of the last meeting of Group 7 (June 16), the Convener expressed the hope that the revised document would have a special chapter on the problems of young workers today and that the workers themselves would be chiefly responsible for preparing it. He also stressed how important it was for the success of the Convention that workers should voice their opinions. Document 7, he continued, is a basis for action — for a peaceful revolution to win minds and hearts for Christ. We begin with ordinary people, as Christ did when he chose his 12 apostles. Other revolutions have started with the intellectuals and the middle classes; but in the Church the ordinary people must be the front-line soldiers in the struggle for truth and justice; hence the importance of the workers; a Church that would concentrate solely on the middle classes would not be a strong Church.

The Convener then introduced Mr. Charles Lee, who had kindly consented to chair the meeting. Mr. Lee expressed the Group's gratitude to Mr. Paul Tsui, who had given so much of his time to preparing for the meetings but who was now forced, because of the added responsibilities of his work, to hand over the chairing of the meetings to another. Mr. Lee in conclusion asked for the whole-hearted cooperation of all in order to avoid wasting the valuable time of delegates.

The first point that came up for discussion was wages. A delegate showed how a statement

in the draft declaring the right of every working man to a living wage which will enable him to support his family in common decency and to put aside some savings is supported by extracts from the papal encyclicals collected in Document 1. Another delegate felt that in a rich society like ours this was to ask for too little; we should ask for a just share for workers in the annually increasing wealth of Hong Kong. Another speaker raised the point of affording workers sufficient leisure for further education; she referred to a survey made among local workers which indicated that it is lack of time rather than of money which prevents workers seeking the further education they aspire to.

Would higher wages adversely affect Hong Kong's economy? One speaker foresaw higher wages leading to increased prices, and the start of the spiral of inflation; moreover increased labour costs, he maintained, would make Hong Kong much less attractive to foreign investors. Other speakers discounted these dangers: Hong Kong's attraction to foreign investors is not limited to its cheap labour force, but includes such factors as the ease with which imports and exports flow in and out of our free port, and the high level of education and skill of our workers. A worker-delegate quoted his own experience: his request for a modest wage increase had been refused and the actual increase given by his employer was 25 cents per day. Another worker referred to the statement in the draft that families need at least two wage-earners to make ends meet. People should not be deceived by the TV aerials and fridges, etc. to be seen in resettlement or low cost housing estates, he said; moreover, many wage-earners are very young boys getting less than \$200; they should be in school, but their families need their support.

Another speaker described how some workers had been able, in recent years, to double their wage packets by bringing organised pressure to bear on management through the threat of strikes. Healthy trade-unionism, he said, would help solve many of Hong Kong workers' problems. In conclusion, he stressed the need for educating workers regarding their legitimate rights.

A YCW member spoke of the need for a chapter on the working conditions of young workers. The age period 15-25 is a most difficult one, he stated; young people, when they leave school and take on their first job, need much help and attention from adults. A special section on young workers should deal not just with wages but with the young workers' whole life, their dignity, their love affairs, etc. It is important to point out to them their God-given mission: in the factories they are apostles; it is they who must bring the good news of the gospel to their fellow workers.

## ECUMENISM

GROUP 9 has discussed practically the whole of its draft document. The redrafting committee has already prepared a revised version of the Introduction and the last paragraphs of this revised Introduction were discussed at the last meeting of the Group (June 18). Much of the debate centred on the way different ideas had been expressed rather than on the ideas themselves, since these had been

thrashed out when the draft document was being discussed at previous meetings.

The first point raised was the statement that we should work together with other Christians in charitable enterprises, social action, moral and cultural matters, in order to bear common witness to Christ and help to solve today's enormous social problems. A delegate asked whether this meant recommending the elimination of many of our own institutions: because of our different point of view on some matters, was it not necessary to retain distinct organisations in certain fields? Suggestions were made for qualifying the statement to meet the objection. Here, as elsewhere, it was not easy to find a formula that, on the one hand, would not give the impression of our being overcautious and somewhat less than enthusiastic in our desire for Christian unity, and on the other hand would not alienate the sympathies of the more conservative members of the faithful. Finally it was decided to recommend co-operation in charitable and social enterprises "whenever this is possible." Another delegate proposed making explicit reference to education as a field where inter-Church co-operation is most desirable.

One of the paragraphs under discussion contains a number of rhetorical questions. One speaker thought that the final document should affirm rather than ask questions. There followed a discussion on this point and of how the corresponding Chinese text should be framed.

The final paragraph of the Introduction cautions against complacency. After stating that in Hong Kong there has been a long history of harmonious relations—"peaceful co-existence"—between the major Christian Churches and that recently these relations have become a good

deal warmer and more cordial, the text issues a warning against confusing this state of affairs with the movement towards unity. Peaceful co-existence falls well short of what ecumenism aims at, and of itself does not—as the past has shown—produce that change of heart, that new attitude towards other Christians, without which there can be no ecumenical movement.

At an earlier meeting of the Group, it had been decided to answer every letter received containing comments on the draft document, and in some cases to answer them at length. A letter had been received from a priest some weeks ago and a member of the Group undertook to prepare an extended answer to it. The proposed reply was the next item on the agenda of the meeting. To some the reply appeared to blame the writer for misunderstanding parts of the draft document which had in fact been lacking in clarity. One delegate, while expressing disappointment at the spirit of the letter which seemed opposed to the Council decree on ecumenism, was nevertheless grateful to the correspondent for showing to the Group what their task was: to win over a conservative mentality like the author's to the approach of Vatican II. His letter also showed up the weakness of the draft document which was written by people with a background of involvement in the ecumenical movement. The result was a document that in some statements was not sufficiently explicit for readers who did not share this background. Another conclusion drawn by one of the delegates was that the revised draft should avoid all appearance of attacking the Church for past failures and of attributing to "the Church" attitudes and outlooks that should be more accurately ascribed to "some Catholics."

## Programme of Forthcoming Meetings of Working Groups

<b>Place:</b> Caritas Centre, Boundary St., Kowloon	
	8 p.m.-10 p.m.
Religious	: (No Meeting)
Evangelization	: Monday, June 29
Social Mission of Church	: Tuesday, June 30
<b>Place:</b> Catholic Centre	8 p.m.-10 p.m.
Communications Media	: Wednesday, July 1
Ecumenism	: (No Meeting)
Government of Diocese	: Friday, July 3

# OUR CONVENTION

SIX months ago, in his Christmas Message, Bishop Hsu presented to the whole diocese the documents drafted for the Diocesan Convention. Having asked us all to read these documents and discuss them, he said: 'Let no serious-minded Catholic say that he is not concerned. Unless he realises that he is concerned, the Convention will fail in its primary purpose, namely, to involve the people in the renewal of the Church.'

Since then the Working Groups have been set up and have been meeting regularly. The members of these groups and a fairly large number of the public have been busy discussing the matters proposed to them. What of the rest of us, those of us who are not members of a working group and for one reason or another have not felt impelled to put any ideas forward? Have they gradually come to think that the Convention is no affair of theirs, that they have no duty in the matter? If this idea has become at all common, it is only reasonable to suppose that the Convention will accomplish little; for the 'silent majority' has a vital part to play.

The Convention is not merely a more or less scientific inquiry into the needs of the diocese. It is a corporate action of the People of God. If it is to be fruitful it needs all the wisdom and all the energy we can muster; but much more urgently it needs an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It demands therefore that the whole People of God in Hong Kong shall pray earnestly for that outpouring.

Sunday after Sunday the Leader of the Prayer of the Faithful says: 'That the Holy Spirit may enlighten the delegates to the Diocesan Convention and assist them in their discussions for the good of the diocese, we pray to the Lord.' And the congregation answers 'Hear your people! Have mercy, O Lord.' Is this for us a real prayer? Or has it turned into a rubrical observance? The success or failure of the Convention depends very largely on the answers to these questions.