

# Convention News

**T**HE regular meetings of the different Working Groups of the Diocesan Convention began again last week after a four-week summer recess. Group 6 (Religious) is still in difficulties. The new draft document to serve as a basis for discussion has not been written yet. The latest word from the subcommittee entrusted with the task of composing the draft indicates that the Working Group will not be able to meet until the end of September.

The meeting of Group 7 (Social Mission) arranged for Au-

gust 25 was cancelled in order to give the "reconstituted drafting committee" more time to prepare material for the next meeting. It is hoped that this will take place on September 8.

Shortly after the beginning of the summer recess the Conveners of the Working Groups met with the Steering Committee to discuss the progress of the Convention during the first four and a half months of regular meetings. All agreed on the need for faster progress. The Conveners were unanimous in the view that it would be unwise to alter radi-

cally the way in which the Working Group discussions have been conducted so far: improvements are necessary, but these should be made within the framework of the system in use up to this:

a radical departure from this system would be, as one Convener put it, "too traumatic an experience for the delegates" who have gradually accustomed themselves to the present method.

There was general agreement among the Conveners that a deadline for the completion of the work of the Working Groups should be fixed and that this deadline should be Easter 1971.

It was also agreed that the Convener of the Working Groups need not necessarily be the chairman of the meetings. There was much to be said, it was suggested, for inviting different members of the Working Groups to take turns in chairing the meetings. This has been done in the case of Group 7 with very satisfactory results.

## RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

**D**URING the summer recess the members of Working Group 2 received a copy of the revised version of pages 5-13 of the draft document. The revision was carried out by the redrafting committee in accordance with the views expressed at the meetings at which the matter contained in these pages had been debated. The delegates were asked to send in their comments in writing on two points:

a) whether the content of the new version accurately reflects the views of the delegates as expressed during the discussions; b) whether the manner in which the ideas have been expressed is satisfactory. The revised version will not be discussed again: at a later date it will be proposed to the Working Group for their acceptance or rejection.

Group 2 at a meeting on August 18 continued its discussion—interrupted by the summer break—on a recommendation urging "greater freedom in celebrating the Eucharist in homes and in other places so that small groups can more frequently come together to celebrate the liturgy." Some delegates opposed Mass in the homes: they felt there were sufficient churches in the diocese to make this unnecessary; they feared the practice might lead to unwelcome social divisions and perhaps to a lack of reverence for the Mass.

Those who favoured the recommendation were of the opinion that Mass in a church tended to be remote and impersonal; that Mass in the home would lead to greater participation by those present and to the fostering of a community spirit; they pointed out that no home is unworthy of the Mass.

The recommendation dealing with catechists was discussed next. A phrase deprecating the employment of untrained catechists was felt by some to be too absolute. However, it was pointed out that this problem would rarely arise today. Untrained catechists at present employed should be trained; a just solution must be found for the case of the untrainable. The recommendation also states that candidates for training as catechists should have a complete secondary school education: there was some discussion as to whether this meant just sitting for the Form 5 examination, irrespective of the result. Another part of the recommendation proposed that "present catechists should be put on a contract basis as soon as possible with a third party to ensure justice to both employer and employee." Some speakers suggested that the contract ought to be with the diocese, the catechist then being assigned to a parish. Others thought the contract should be with the parish (not with the parish priest). Mention of a third party in the recommendation indicated the Group's desire to show its concern that the rights of catechists be fully protected.

## EDUCATION

**G**ROUP 3 started to discuss secondary education at a meeting on August 19. The first topic dealt with in the draft document is the curriculum of the Chinese Middle School. The point debated at the meeting was the Chinese language: the way to promote its study and the aim of teaching it. Some speakers felt that since the seven ways of fostering the study of Chinese suggested in the draft had been drawn up by experts, it was beyond the competence of the Working Group to say whether these were right or wrong; nor was it the role of the Diocesan Convention to descend to such technical details. This did not however prevent other speakers from expressing their views: some blamed the present less than satisfactory situation on too much stress laid on memory work; others on the poor standard of teachers and their outdated methods. Wider reading in Chinese literature and more stress on Chinese composition (the teachers giving a lead here by publishing essays) were among the means proposed to remedy the situation. One delegate pointed out that there was no need either in Taiwan or on the Mainland to encourage the study of Chinese; it was necessary in Hong Kong, she maintained, only because Chinese is not an official language.

One of the ways suggested by the draft for fostering the study of Chinese is to "get rid of the students' misconception that those who study English are more fortunate than those who study Chinese." One speaker said this was not a misconception, but a hard fact of life. Another pointed out that by the end of the century the place of Chinese will be very important; but those who will be 30 years of age at that time are at present concentrating on English. As

a result of the debate it was agreed to re-phrase the recommendation in a positive way, urging that students be made to realise that Chinese is every bit as important as English.

The draft mentions three goals which should be aimed at in the teaching of Chinese: to enable students to express themselves accurately in Chinese, to preserve Chinese traditional culture through its literature both ancient and modern, and to enable students to absorb the advice and good example of ancient sages as a means towards moral formation. These three aims were accepted by the Working Group with little discussion.

## PRIESTLY LIFE

**W**ORKING Group 5, at its meeting on August 21, continued discussing the section of the draft document entitled: The priest, minister of the Eucharist and the other sacraments. At a previous meeting the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist had been discussed. At this last meeting various points concerning the priest's part in the administration of the remaining sacraments were brought up.

Some speakers pointed to the undesirability of administering baptism and confirmation to large crowds of candidates; others stressed the need to strike a happy balance between the individual and communitarian aspects of the sacraments. One delegate proposed recommending that priests keep abreast of post-Conciliar developments in sacramental theology: the way a priest understands the sacrament of baptism, for example, will determine the way in which he administers it—privately at the back of the church or in front of the altar with the participation of the parish community.

Should ordinations take place in the Cathedral or in smaller, less well appointed parish churches? Should the candidates be all ordained together or separately, on different days, in different parish churches? There were many opinions put forward on these questions, but no firm conclusions were arrived at.

The need for instructing the faithful about the sacrament of the anointing of the sick was emphasised, with special attention being paid to the significance of the recent change of name. Many Catholics, it was stated, know nothing about this sacrament, with the result that they do not call the priest to administer it to their sick relatives. A delegate spoke of the need for the priest to convey by his tone of voice and by his unburied gestures that he is aware of the solemnity of the occasion and of what it means to the sick person and to those present at the bedside.

Another speaker stated that marriages and funerals are two occasions when a priest is given the opportunity of contact with numbers of non-Catholics. A short homily, if well done, can make a deep impression. Regrettably, however, it very often happens at a wedding or a funeral that the priest cannot be heard and as a result the congregation quickly becomes restive and people soon start conversations with their neighbours. The question of different classes of marriages was also briefly touched on.