

News of C. W. Groups Given By Editor

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Summary: A series of stories about the work of Catholic Worker groups she recently visited on a speaking trip: Portsmouth and Newport, RI; Boston and Worcester, MA; Milwaukee; Chicago; Rochester, NY; Detroit; and Pittsburgh. (DDLW #335).

DAY AFTER DAY

Much happens in a month to so large a family as ours. This last month three of our crowd have been in hospitals, besides John Griffin, who has to spend most of his time there. I've had to be doing so much travelling that I haven't been out to Jamaica to see him but one can't forget John. I look at the garden on the upper farm with the little statue of the Blessed Virgin in the middle of it, and remember how he went in for landscape gardening when we first got the farm and did so much to beautify the place. I look at the coffee line in town and remember that he had the hard work of starting it.

Mr. Breen has been in the hospital for the past month but he is home now. Seventy years old, he recovered from his slight attack of pneumonia and we are all happy to have him take his place with us again. Extreme nationalist though he is, the Italians at Columbus Hospital won his heart completely. Mother Bernardino, "the sweet little mother," he called her, took good care of him and we are grateful to her. Every one who has been a patient with Mother Cabrini's nuns are amazed at the true spirit of love evidenced there. Everyone is treated as though he were the president of the United States, one man told me. They truly look upon each patient as representing to them Christ himself.

Travelling

Most of the time since the last issue came out I have been on the road, leaving New York April 27 for a visit at Portsmouth Priory, Newport and Providence. It is a pleasure to take the boat and cheaper too if one does not pay for a berth. The Colonial Line has a Ladies' Cabin where there are a score of berths, and the night I left only two were occupied so we had much space to ourselves. It is quieter down in this big cabin at the rear of the boat than in any of the private cabins, quieter, that is, in regard to human noise. There is the thud of the engines of course but that is a part of the joy of sea travel.

Ade de Bethune met me at Portsmouth and we went down to the Abbey for the day and had a gathering in Newport in the evening. We talked until after one and got up early to go to six-thirty Mass at the Cenacle. Ade has a group of friends at Newport (where one might say she lives in the slums) and we could call hers a Catholic Worker group too. She gives of herself and her talents freely and an evening in her company is one profitably spent.

Boston

After a meeting in Boston where we had a large crowd at the Old Town Meeting House, a crowd of us drove to the Catholic Worker Farm at Upton to make the down payment of fifty dollars and to make plans for ploughing and chicken raising. Even before the old house is repaired which will serve as a guest house, chickens will be started and a big vegetable garden put in. The group in Boston have an old army ambulance which they bought at auction to transport visitors and food supplies. The farm being near Worcester, our group there will be able to meet at the Upton farm once a week.

After speaking in Worcester I took the train immediately for Milwaukee where the Social Action Conference was being held, a great affair with priests, Bishops and Archbishops from all over the country present. Our Father Hayes from Chicago was a speaker at the stock yards sessions, Father Rice and Father Hensler over steel. Father Ehrbacher and Fr. Sullivan from Detroit over autos, and a number of the Catholic Worker Detroit group who are autoworkers made the sessions lively affairs. Father Ligutti had a conference on rural life. Indeed it is impossible to remember all the sessions and all the friends of the CW who were present. That's the worst of the conferences—one cannot begin to cover all the important conferences, and there are so many people one wishes to see, there is no time to talk to any of them.

Milwaukee

The Milwaukee group continue their work of feeding from sixty to seventy-five men their dinner every night. The next job is to take over the upper floor of the house they are in and start sheltering some of the ambassadors of Christ. That will mean too, a coffee line in the morning.

Chicago

The Chicago group are now housing more men than any of our groups, and it is through the initiative and the faith of two young fellows, Al Reser and Ed Marciniak, both of whom are occupied during the day, that this work is being done. We had a big meeting there and the men who were guests at the house of hospitality were present together with all those of our readers who attended. One poor fellow came in slightly under the weather and lay down on the window sill in the front store. He was new to the place (probably he had just been referred to it) and he came with a little bundle under his arm. As he slept the newspaper wrappings came off and a couple of stale rolls fell out of his package on to the floor, a mute

reminder to those around of the precarious half starved existence of our unemployed. One week fourteen hundred men were fed there, and day by day none knows where the money for food is going to come from. The men themselves go out and gather up damaged vegetables and beg fish. Perhaps someone will come along to donate meat as they do in Pittsburgh.

In New York last month, one of our friends was buying meat in a butcher shop around the corner from Mott St. and a customer was talking about the long line of men coming in to breakfast. "Who feeds them," she was asking the butcher. "You'd be surprised," he said mysteriously, dropping his cleaver dramatically. "Jesus Christ Himself!" He had taken it out of the hands of St. Joseph entirely. He is a devout man, this Italian, and has painted himself a life-sized picture of the Blessed Mother on the wall of his shop.

The Rochester group met at the Peter Claver house and a good crowd turned out. Most of the work there is as yet confined to discussion groups and distributing literature, in addition to the works of mercy each one is able to perform personally. There is an opportunity to have meetings at the Municipal Lodging House, discussions preceded by entertainment, so some local talent must be found before the meetings get under way. There is a good opportunity there to distribute literature among the unemployed and start a Union of the Unemployed as they are doing in Chicago and Pittsburgh.

Pittsburgh

It is good to get around and visit our friends and the groups in other cities to find out what each is doing and to compare notes so that all may be helped. In another place in this issue of the paper there is a list of all our groups and friends who are helping us in the different cities throughout the country. I have not included the schools and colleges and seminaries where we have close friends and helpers. Where there are groups in the schools and colleges, we ask them to send in the names of their representatives so that we can send them bulletins and press releases. Our lists are incomplete.

After I got home from one trip I had only ten days at Mott Street before going out to Windsor, Detroit, Toledo, Akron and Pittsburgh to speak some more. We have good groups in all these towns and three of them have headquarters.

The new house of the Detroit branch is large enough for the men to sit down as they wait to be served at noon and the place is airy and faces the park in front of the Michigan Central Station. The basement can be fitted up so that the men can use the showers and that will be a godsend. One of the Great Lakes seamen said, "It's easier to go hungry for a couple of days than to do without a cleanup." And this is the way most of the men feel.

In Pittsburgh a tremendous building has been turned over to the Catholic Radical Alliance and so far only one end of one floor has been cleaned up for use. The Akron group, mostly rubber workers, drove me to Pittsburgh and when we arrived in town there was no food in the house, just the soup stewing on the stove in huge milk cans for the next day. We sent out for baked beans and bologna and sliced up onions to top off the meal. Bill Lenz, who lives there and together with Steve McCarthy is in charge of the work, are sixty and seventy years old respectively, and to see these men sitting down with the youths from Akron warmed the

heart. The groups are made up of young and old, worker and scholar, Negro and white, men and women. Truly a lay apostolate.