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THE CAMPION ERA

The Development of Catholic Social Idealism in Australia, 1929-1939

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M.A. Thesis

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May 1974

I hereby certify that this is my own work, and that  
all sources used have been acknowledged.

B. H. Gray

## PREFACE

The nucleus of this work is to be found in an Honours thesis on the Victorian Campion Society which I wrote for the History Department, School of General Studies, Australian National University, in 1967. I have here extended and developed the themes and areas of research which I first explored in that study.

The nineteen-thirties encompassed the Great Depression, the victory of Nazism in Germany, the Italo-Abyssinian War, the Spanish Civil War, and the outbreak of World War II. It was an age when European Liberalism, which fifty years before had been all-conquering, teetered on the verge of extinction; when political, economic and intellectual confusion were rife; and when the future of the West appeared to be dangerously dependent on the interplay of the contending totalitarian ideologies, Communism, Nazism and Fascism. Yet, for the Catholic Church, it was an era not of decline, but of consolidation and resurgence.

For Australian Catholicism also, it was a decade of revitalisation. Why this should have been so, how the renewal took form, and to what depth it permeated the Catholic culture of this country, are the problems which I hope to elucidate in this thesis.



### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Since this thesis is based almost entirely on primary sources, most of which are in private collections; and since in its compilation interviews have constituted, as it were, the mortar between the bricks of documentation, I am indebted for their assistance to a considerable number of people.

To all those whose names appear in my Bibliography, under 'Primary Source Collections' and 'Interviews', I extend my gratitude. In addition, I thank those many people who allowed me access to archives, and to seminary, school and University College records. I must single out in this regard Father J. Keaney of the Melbourne Archdiocesan Archives; Monsignor C. Duffy of the Sydney Archdiocesan Archives; and Father Greg O'Kelly of the Jesuit Archives, Hawthorn, Victoria. For their hospitality over a prolonged period I especially thank Messrs. Heffey and Butler, Solicitors, of Lonsdale Street, Melbourne; and Father Peter Hoy of the Sacred Heart Monastery, Croydon, Victoria.

Mr. Kevin Kelly, at present Australian Ambassador to Portugal, has assisted me in more ways than I can enumerate. Dr. John Molony, of the Australian National University, has been most generous with his time and advice.

Finally, I must thank Professor C. M. H. Clark for his patience and encouragement. It was he who first suggested to me this field of research, and he has supervised my efforts throughout.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- A.C.T.S. : Australian Catholic Truth Society
- Adv. : Advocate (Melbourne)
- ANSCA : Australian National Secretariat of Catholic Action
- C.B.L. : Catholic Boys' Legion
- C.E.G. : Catholic Evidence Guild
- C.F. : Catholic Fireside (Sydney)
- C.P. : Catholic Press (Sydney)
- C.W. : Catholic Worker (Melbourne)
- C.Y.M.S. : Catholic Young Men's Society
- H/B : Heffey/Butler Collection of Campion Society records
- K.S.C. : Order of Knights of the Southern Cross
- M.A.A. : Melbourne Archdiocesan Archives
- S.A.A. : Sydney Archdiocesan Archives
- Y.C.W. : Young Christian Workers' Movement

Note on Terminology

In this work I have favoured the term 'Catholic actionism' when speaking of activities of a Catholic Action type, which do not constitute Catholic Action in the technical Church sense. The nature and meaning of Catholic Action, as defined by the Catholic Church, are explained in the text.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE MODERN WORLD

For the Catholic Church in Europe, the French Revolution introduced a century of disorientation, persecution, and outward decline. Already weakened by its struggles to maintain its universality and independence against the absolutist monarchs of the eighteenth century,<sup>1</sup> it was now confronted by a new and more far-reaching kind of absolutism - the State-absolutism of the disciples of Rousseau, Robespierre and Hegel. Its experiences during the Revolutionary decade in France left it with no illusions as to the treatment it could expect from the apostles of liberty, fraternity, democracy and enlightenment. It entered the post-Napoleonic period desperately clinging to the skirts of its monarchical tormentors of a generation before.

The new age found its distinctive character not in the towns and village communities of traditional Europe, but in the burgeoning industrial cities. For the Church, its thought and institutions geared to the old rural order, the cities were both alien and menacing. They were ugly; they were squalid; and they bred irreligious masses whom the Church could not reach. Furthermore the new urban bourgeoisie formed the backbone of anti-Christian Liberalism; and the industrial proletariat, as it sought leadership

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<sup>1</sup>

For a concise account of the conflicts of the period, see Philip Hughes, A Short History of the Catholic Church (London, 1967), Ch.

and class-identity, gravitated towards equally anti-Christian Socialism. Similarly threatening, at least in Germany and Italy, was the new Nationalism, which found substantial support among the Liberals. Pervading all three political movements was the Hegelian metaphysic, with its idealisation of the State as the ultimate source and object of identity, allegiance and authority among men. Implicit also in the new ideologies was the equation of social progress with material prosperity. Such ideals of society were anathema to Christian thinking on the nature of man and the purpose of earthly life.

In practice Liberalism showed its greatest persecuting zeal in those countries where the Church was most closely identified with the old social order. Thus in France, the Italian States, Spain and Portugal the establishment of Liberal governments was usually followed by the nationalisation of, or discrimination against, Church schools; the confiscation of Church property; the banishment of Monastic Orders; and the withdrawal of legal recognition from Church marriages. In Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, and the Prussian territories, moves to liberalise the State were at first to the advantage of Catholics; and thus a more tolerant relationship initially obtained between the Church and the Liberals in those countries. Nowhere, however, did this congenial state of affairs last. In the 1847-48 Swiss Civil War the Catholic cantons fought unsuccessfully for greater autonomy against Liberal and Protestant armies; and from 1871 the German National Liberals fully supported Bismarck in his anti-Catholic Kulturkampf. In Belgium and Holland in the 1870s Liberal regimes established



secular schools, withdrew State financial support from Church schools, and nationalised parochial school premises. Only late in the century, when it found itself seriously threatened by revolutionary Socialist movements, did Continental Liberalism mute its intolerance towards Christianity; and even so, it was not until 1905 that the last notable drive against the Church by a Liberal government in a major European country was launched, the nation in question being France.<sup>2</sup>

Associated closely with, and providing the intellectual sustenance for, the Liberal political movements, were a variety of related literary and philosophical schools, among them rationalism, 'scientism', and religious Modernism. Thus, in addition to political harassment, the Church in the nineteenth century had to endure wholesale attacks on its intellectual and cultural foundations.

The initial reaction of Rome to this situation was one of extreme defensiveness. Popes Pius VII (1800-23), Leo XII (1823-29), Pius VIII (1829-30), and Gregory XVI (1831-46) were all staunch upholders of the Metternich system. Pope Pius IX (1846-78) began his pontificate in a liberal mood; but after being forced to flee Rome during the 1848 Revolution, he became an uncompromising conservative. In his famous Syllabus of Errors (1864) he listed most of the major tenets of contemporary Liberalism, and condemned the proposition that the Church should

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See Michael P. Fogarty, Christian Democracy in Western Europe 1820-1953 (London, 1957), passim.

accommodate itself to all or any of these. He thus dissociated the Church entirely from the social thinking of the age; and in so doing, caused considerable consternation among those Catholic intellectuals, bishops, priests and laymen, who viewed Liberalism not as a totality, but as a conglomerate of distinct elements, and who were seeking to construct a Christian social synthesis which would incorporate the best of these elements.

It would be wrong to regard the pontificates of Pius IX and his immediate predecessors as being entirely disastrous for the Church. These years also witnessed a great missionary upsurge; the Oxford Movement conversions in England; the expansion of Irish Catholicism to America and Australasia; an unprecedented multiplication of teaching Orders of priests, brothers and nuns; and a remarkable consolidation of the religious authority and prestige of the Papacy, culminating in the 1870 definition of Papal Infallibility. By 1850 no sign remained of the flabbiness and anti-centralist tendencies which had ebbled the vitality of the Church during the eighteenth century. However, it was above all the re-emphasising of the Papal supremacy which, during the reign of Pius' successor, Leo XIII, enabled a momentous advance in official Catholic social thinking to occur, and to take hold throughout the Church.

Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903), unlike Pius IX, was both an accomplished diplomat and a rigorous intellectual. From the beginning of his pontificate he worked incessantly to determine how the Church, while developing in a manner consonant with its



basic principles, could relate positively to the conditions, institutions and movements of the new age. As a first step in this process of re-assessment he sponsored a Church-wide revival of Thomistic studies, seeing in the Natural Law theology of Thomas Aquinas the only viable conceptual framework from which a comprehensive system of Christian social ethics could be evolved. In the more immediate context, he found his inspiration and guidance in the school of German Catholic social thought which had been effectively begun in 1848 by Father (later Bishop) Emmanuel von Ketteler. Leo's social philosophy was propagated as the official teaching of the Church through a succession of Encyclicals, the most far-reaching and famous of which was Rerum Novarum - 'On the Rights and Duties of Capital and Labour' (1891).

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Rerum Novarum, like all statements of Catholic social principles, proceeded from certain fundamental assumptions about the nature of man and society: God had made the world, was the ultimate source of all rights and duties, and was the rightful object of man's earthly endeavours; He had ordained, for man's good, an ideal Order of life, which man, despite the Fall, could perceive in progressive degrees through reason; and only if, and insofar as, men and societies recognised and approximated to this ideal Order would true individual happiness and communal harmony on earth be attained.

The Encyclical asserted that man was naturally sociable,

and that the family was the basic social unit. Being 'antecedent, as well in idea as in fact, to the gathering of man into community', the family had 'rights and duties which are prior to those of the community, and founded more immediately in nature' (article 13).<sup>3</sup> The father had the right to maintain his family; to provide a secure environment for his children; and to supervise their education and upbringing (arts. 13-14).

The State, regardless of its form of government, acquired its authority from God (vise Romans 13:1-7); and a political system could be regarded as legitimate if it was 'conformable in its institutions to right reason and natural law' (art. 32). A government, however, should perform only those functions necessary for the general good which lesser social organisms could not effectively perform.<sup>4</sup>

Every man had the right to private property, although not necessarily to the unregulated usage of his property:

The right to possess private property is derived from nature, not from man; and the State has the right to control its use in the interests of the public good alone, but by no means to absorb it altogether (art. 47).

Ownership of land was particularly accordant with man's nature, as 'he makes his own that portion of nature's field which he cultivates - that portion on which he leaves, as it were, the

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<sup>3</sup>  
I am here quoting from the translation of Rerum Novarum in Etienne Gilson (ed.), The Church Speaks to the Modern World: The Social Teachings of Leo XIII (New York, 1961).

<sup>4</sup>  
This principle, subsequently known as the 'principle of subsidiarity', is assumed but not stated in Rerum Novarum. It is more explicitly dealt with in Quadragesimo Anno (1931).

impress of his personality' (art. 9). The law 'should favor ownership, and its policy should be to induce as many as possible of the people to become owners' (art. 46).

Socialism, the ideology which maintained that the State should appropriate to itself all the means of production, distribution and exchange, was unjust, unrealistic, and debasing. It 'would rob the lawful possessor, distort the functions of the State, and create utter confusion in the community' (art. 4). It would leave men, like brutes, dependent for their whole welfare on forces beyond their control; and it denied them the degree of independence which was necessary to the realisation of their human dignity, and which property-ownership alone could provide (art. 6). It cultivated illusions of a future world of utopian equality, and ignored the fact that inequality 'in capacity, skill, health, strength' was an ineradicable feature of human life. Where it incited class warfare, it destroyed the harmony which should exist between capital and labour, and threatened to propel mankind into 'confusion and savage barbarity' (art. 19). Its 'lying promises' would 'one day bring forth evils worse than the present' (art. 18).

Employers were duty-bound to be just in their dealings with their workers, and to help safeguard their material and spiritual welfare. Defrauding an employee was 'a great crime which cries to the avenging anger of Heaven' (art. 20). The worker was entitled to a just wage, sufficient for him not merely to sustain himself and his family in reasonable comfort, but to 'put by some little savings and thus secure a modest source of income' (art. 46).

The workman, furthermore, had a right to join associations to advance his economic interests (arts. 45, 49); and if by such means he was unable to secure his entitlements as an employee, then he could licitly call on the State to intervene to ensure that justice obtained (art. 45).

The Encyclical encouraged the formation of trade unions, co-operative organisations, benevolent societies, and in particular, vocational corporations akin to the medieval Guilds, wherein employers and employees would be united in furtherance of their mutual interests (arts. 48-60). The State was not entitled to interfere with such private associations except insofar as good order demanded, 'for both they and it exist in virtue of the like principle, namely, the natural tendency of men to dwell in society' (art. 51).

.....

Rerum Novarum was to have a more profound effect on Catholic thinking than perhaps any other papal document in history. Intellectual remedies, however, were not of themselves sufficient to restore Christian values to an increasingly pagan Europe. To reach the masses, organisational means were required; and thus in the second half of the nineteenth century the parishes and the Religious Orders, hitherto the Church's primary means of spreading its message, were supplemented by a vastly expanded network of Catholic schools, and by a new institutional phenomenon - the mass lay association.

The organisation of the laity to help defend the Church's interests, maintain its solidarity, or extend its social influence, occurred initially in a spontaneous fashion in many parts of Europe. The most prolific activity took place in Germany, where, from 1848, the 'year of Revolutions', Catholic workers' associations and rural alliances, Catholic electoral associations, Catholic educational and recreational societies, and regular Catholic Conventions, became common features of Church life. At the forefront of the overall movement was Bishop von Ketteler of Mainz. After the completion of German unification in 1870, the highly effective Catholic political party, the Centrum, was established. In Belgium, Holland and Switzerland, Catholic political and industrial groupings were in evidence from the 1840s.<sup>5</sup> In France the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, an organisation of social relief, was founded in 1833 by Frederic Ozanam, a Sorbonne academic and peripheral member of the ill-fated liberal Catholic circle which had grown about the Abbe de Lamennais. In the 1870s Albert de Mun and the Marquis of La Tour du Pin founded a Workmen's Club movement; and in 1886 de Mun established the Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Francaise, a study-group movement.<sup>6</sup>

In Italy the development of any kind of Catholic political alliance was prevented by the Papal policy of non-

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<sup>5</sup> See Michael P. Fogarty, op. cit.

<sup>6</sup> See Rev. J. Fitzsimons, 'Catholic Action in France', in John Fitzsimons and Paul McGuire (ed.), Restoring All Things: A Guide to Catholic Action (London, 1939).



recognition of the newly-formed nation. This policy had been introduced as a standing protest against the Piedmontese/Sardinian invasion and annexation of the Papal States, including Rome itself, which had constituted the final stage of Italian unification. Since Catholics were forbidden by the Church either to vote or to stand for parliament, the Church in Italy, if it wished to exert a social influence, had to find non-political means of doing so. From 1874 regular Catholic Congresses were held; and from these sprang various associations to spread Catholic literature and newspapers, or to do charitable work. In 1881 a formal co-ordinating body was established in the Opera dei Congressi e dei Comitati Catholica, or Congress Movement. Sub-sections of the Opera dealt with Catholic education, charity, the press, culture, and economic problems. An affiliated 'Catholic Union for Social Studies', founded in 1889, helped institute Catholic banks, Mutual Help Societies, Co-operatives, Insurance Societies, rural associations, and housing schemes.<sup>7</sup>

Out of the Opera dei Congressi and the general Italian situation there emerged the conception of a unique kind of lay movement, which came to be known as Catholic Action. The term was first put into official usage in Leo XIII's 1898 Encyclical Spense Volte; but the theory was only developed extensively during the pontificate of Leo's successor, Pius X (1903-14), receiving its most important early enunciation in the Encyclical Il Fermo Proposito (1905). 'Catholic Action' became a technical term

<sup>7</sup>  
See Rev. J. Carroll-Abbing, 'Catholic Action in Italy', in Fitzsimons and McGuire, op. cit.

applying only to a special type of lay association with a formal mandate from the Hierarchy to function as a Catholic Action body. Such associations were to operate under the direct pastoral authority of the bishops, who could use them to assist with any kinds of religious work. Other lay organisations, by contrast, such as Catholic charitable, political or sporting bodies, had the right to direct their own affairs, and were subject only to the ordinary teaching authority of the bishops - i.e., to the (negative) right of the episcopacy to prevent Catholics or Catholic associations from propagating views on faith or morals contrary to those of the Church.

Being part of the Church's formal structure, Catholic Action bodies were forbidden to engage in political or pressure-group activity. They were, however, given the special charge of cultivating a sense of Christian social mission. Those whom they educated in the Church's social principles were expected to apply these autonomously in their ordinary lives, and in their political, economic and social deliberations and actions. Thus Catholic Action, while itself remaining strictly within the realm of God, was designed to mobilise well-trained lay forces on the borders of Caesar's realm, and to send them forth to function as the Church's independent agents in the secular world. Catholic Action was defined as 'The participation of the laity in the apostolic mission of the Hierarchy'; and its motto, derived from Ephesians 1:10, was 'To restore all things in Christ'.

In Italy the Opera dei Congressi, crippled by internal

factionalism, was dissolved by Papal decree in 1904; and in 1906 it was succeeded by a loose federation of formal Catholic Action movements. In keeping with the strongly authority-centred ecclesiastical policies of Pius X, Italian Catholic Action from this point onwards was decentralised and kept firmly under the control of the individual bishops in their various dioceses. Re-organisations in 1915 and 1923 provided for greater centralisation and cohesion; but the parish and the diocese remained the basic units of the movement.

From Italy, Catholic Action spread throughout Europe, taking different forms in different nations. The most notable variation from the Italian scheme was the Belgian/French, which owed its distinctive structure and methods to a Belgian priest, Canon (later Cardinal) Joseph Cardijn. Taking as his model the Communist cell, Cardijn shortly before the First World War began forming circles of Catholic workers based not on parishes, but on factories and occupational groupings. From these grew the movement which eventually took the name of Jeunesse Ouvriere Chretienne (Christian Working-class Youth).

Cardijn developed his scheme on the principle that in modern conditions the ordinary man did not find his primary source of identity and interest within the parish, but in his employment and his economic class. If the Church were to realise its ambition to extend its influence to the alienated industrial proletariat,



it needed to have cells of trained, militant Catholic workers operating in factories, workshops, and working-class suburbs. In this way a Christian influence would gradually permeate modern society, from the bottom upwards. In Cardijn's group-meetings Catholic social principles were not merely discussed in the abstract, but were related to the concrete problems and situations which the members encountered in their everyday lives.

Initially the main Belgian Catholic Action body was not Cardijn's small organisation, but the Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Belge, which had been formed at the instigation of Cardinal Mercier in 1912. However, during the post-War years the expansion of the former was so rapid, and its methods so popular, that in 1924 it was induced to merge with the larger association; and subsequently its techniques became standard throughout the A.C.J.B. The same period also saw the J.O.C. (or 'Jocist') theory and methods being adopted by the French A.C.J.F. In 1927, in a Papal message to an A.C.J.B. Conference at Liege, the J.O.C. was singled out for special praise.

During the pontificate of Pope Pius XI (1922-39) Catholic Action was emphasised as never before. No longer was Liberalism an appreciable threat to the Church; instead, totalitarian Communism, Nazism and Fascism vied for the allegiance of the European masses. From Rome there issued a stream of Encyclicals dealing with the problems of the times, the most

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See Rev. J. Fitzsimons, 'Catholic Action in Belgium', in Fitzsimons and McGuire, op. cit.

important of them being Quadragesimo Anno (1931), which reaffirmed and extended the social principles propounded by Leo XIII in Rerum Novarum. Time and again, the Pope called the Catholics of the world to a massive campaign of Catholic Action. Only by this means, he insisted, could the West be secured against the encroachments of a new age of barbarism.

.....

In the English-speaking nations in the inter-war years a further factor was contributing to the growth of Catholic vitality, in the English Catholic Literary Revival. A long-term extension of the Catholic upsurge which had begun with the Oxford Movement, this Revival carried into the popular culture much of the vision and conviction which had been propagated at a more exclusively scholarly level by Newman, Ward, and their associates. At its forefront was the partnership of Gilbert Keith Chesterton, humorist, journalist and prose-writer, a master of the paradox and the aphorism; and Hilaire Belloc, historian, sociologist, poet, critic, and parliamentarian. While Chesterton sought to turn the laugh against Voltaire, Belloc strove to invert the world-view of Macaulay.

In the wake of these two came, among others, the popular theologian Father Ronald Knox; the historians Christopher Dawson and C. C. Martindale, S.J.; and the publicists Arnold Lunn, Owen Dudley, Halliday Sutherland, Christopher Hollis, and Douglas Woodruff. Corresponding with this English Revival was a European

Catholic literary resurgence, leading figures of which were the Norwegian Sigrid Undset; the Germans Wust and Adam; the Italian Fanfani; and the Frenchmen Huysmans, Peguy, Gheon, Barres, Mauriac, Maritain, and Gilson. Many of the works of these writers were published in English translations.

It is apparent, then, that by 1929 the position of the Catholic Church in relation to modern society was much more assured than it had been a half-century before. In the new Catholic social synthesis, in the militant lay associations, and above all in Catholic Action, the Church had found viable intellectual and organisational means with which to meet the major social challenges of the age. In the English-speaking world a further source of strength and confidence existed in the Catholic Literary Revival. Thus when the onslaught of the 'thirties struck the West, it encountered in the Universal Church a power no longer weak and disorientated, but poised and ready to meet whatever new threats and problems the era should generate.

CHAPTER 2AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVES. 1890-1929

While the Catholic Church in Europe was deploying to meet the challenges posed by the Modern Age, the Church in Australia was working vigorously to ensure its survival as a vital factor in the emerging national culture. Australian Catholicism, however, is a complex phenomenon; and in order to assess its social achievements, it is necessary to distinguish within it various levels of identity- and role-consciousness. To adopt the two broadest applicable categories, it must be considered as both a social and a religious entity.

Seen in terms of its most obvious social function, Australian Catholicism served as the vehicle by which the Irish immigrant community was able to evolve from a despised minority in a transplanted British culture, into an integral part of a native Australian culture, while preserving its distinctive identity throughout. The primary avenues of this social translation were the Australian nationalist and Australian Labour movements; while the continuance of Catholic cohesiveness was ensured by the Catholic schools systems. The best-known 'pilot' of the transition was Sydney's Cardinal Moran.

The most notable memorials to this phase of Australian Catholic nationalism, or, more correctly, Irish-Australian nationalism, are the prolific writings of the many poets, prose

writers, journalists and civic leaders of Irish descent who figured prominently in the patriotic awakening which began in the 1880s. This movement, however, had a tribal rather than a religious basis. It owed little to Catholicism in any universal sense, but a great deal to Irish social traditions of egalitarianism, and of passionate devotion to country and people. Even the most assertively Catholic work of the upsurge, Father Patrick Hartigan's ('John O'Brien's') Around the Boree Log (1921), displayed no consciousness of any intellectual relationship between a Christian world-view and the emerging national ethos. Thus however integral a part of the Australian nationalist movement was the Irish-Australian contribution, it had its genesis in social rather than religiously-based attitudes.

The performance of Australian Catholicism as a religious force is more difficult to assess. By the most obvious statistical criteria it was an undoubted success, flourishing while all other major denominations wilted. Regular Mass attendance increased from around 20% in 1860, to some 60% a century later.<sup>1</sup> The Catholic schools, the heart of Australian Catholicism, likewise prospered, despite the discriminatory financial policies of the State government aimed at drawing the children of the masses into the Governmental secular schools. In the 1860s a minority of Catholic children attended Catholic schools; yet by the early 1960s some 80% did.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick O'Farrell, 'The Laity in the Australian Church - Part II', Bulletin of Christian Affairs, July 1973, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Eris O'Brien, 'Catholic Education Systems' under 'Roman Catholic Church', Australian Encyclopaedia, Halstead Press, Sydney, 1965, Volume 7, p. 486.



However, the above facts simply indicate that the effective hold of the Catholic Faith in Australia on its nominal adherents increased over the period delineated. By the criteria prescribed by Pope Leo XIII, this was not of itself an indication of satisfactory progress. Leo had insisted that Christianity was an integrated world-view with far-reaching implications, and that Catholics were duty-bound to bring its influence to bear on all facets of society and culture. Yet we have already noted that the Irish-Australian nativist upsurge did not proceed from any such consciously religious motivation. Indeed, it would appear obvious that before a Catholic social movement could develop, a disciplined philosophical consciousness would have had to gain an ascendancy among the Catholic elite over vague emotive dispositions. Thus the search for any distinctively Catholic perspectives on Australian society must begin with an examination of early Catholic intellectual enterprises.

From the 1880s the centre of the tiny Australian Catholic intellectual movement was the State of Victoria. There a small, intellectually-aware elite of priests and laymen exercised considerable influence during the archiepiscopate of Dr. Thomas Carr (1886-1917). The foremost figure in this group was Mr. Benjamin Hoare, an English-born convert, leader-writer for the Age newspaper, and a man of wide literary interests. In 1888 he and his associates founded the Catholic Magazine, officially as the quarterly journal of the Victorian Catholic Young Men's Societies' Union; and in 1892 this was succeeded by the Austral Light, an independent Catholic monthly which aspired to be 'in the front rank of literary beacons, a lamp of light over the semi-darkness that covers the great deep

of human thought and human speculation.<sup>3</sup> Both publications enjoyed the consistent moral and financial support of Archbishop Carr;<sup>4</sup> and in 1900, when financial difficulties threatened to close down the Austral Light, the Archbishop bought it out and made it his official archdiocesan organ. However, and although it acquired an Australia-wide reputation, the magazine appealed to only a small educated section of the predominantly working-class Catholic populace, and it operated perpetually at a loss. In 1920 Dr. Carr's successor, Archbishop Mannix (1917-63), bought out the much more popular Catholic weekly, the Advocate, from the Winter family, and made that his official periodical. The Austral Light then passed out of existence.

While the Austral Light had sought to be Catholic, patriotic, and intellectual, there was nothing specifically Catholic about its intellectuality or its patriotism. It was essentially a cultural magazine, fostering an intelligent interest in topical questions of a social, literary, and scientific nature. On problems of labour and capital, its criteria of assessment were broadly liberal, not ideologically Catholic. These observations also apply to the style of intellectuality which characterised the Australasian Catholic Congresses of 1900, 1904 and 1909.<sup>5</sup> Notably lacking from both the Austral Light and the Congresses were any sustained

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<sup>3</sup> Austral Light, January 1892 (inaugural issue), p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> See the Catholic Magazine, October 1891, editorial: Archbishop Carr had bestowed on it 'a handsome gift of money' to pay for good light articles.

<sup>5</sup> See the official commemorative volumes for the three Congresses.

attempts to analyse comprehensively Australian social and cultural trends according to Christian values.

In addition to the Austral Light, two other noteworthy Catholic ventures of a semi-intellectual kind were launched in Melbourne during the episcopate of Archbishop Carr: the Australian Catholic Truth Society, and the Newman Society of Victoria. The A.C.T.S., which was formed on the instigation of Dr. Carr and the Austral Light group during the 1904 Australasian Catholic Congress,<sup>6</sup> produced monthly pamphlets of a Catholic educational nature. The Newman Society, an organisation for Catholic graduates and undergraduates, was founded in 1910 at a meeting in the Archbishop's residence.<sup>7</sup> Initially it was intended to act as a temporary substitute for a Catholic University College, a project dear to<sup>8</sup> the heart of Dr. Carr, but then beyond his financial resources. In 1918, however, as a result of an unexpected bequest, Newman College was opened at Melbourne University; and the Newman Society then decided to continue in existence as an association independent of the College. In practice it was little more than a social club, serving a negligible intellectual function.

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<sup>6</sup> See J. J. Norris, The Australian Catholic Truth Society, A.C.T.S. No. 88, 1910; P. I. O'Leary, The Australian Catholic Truth Society, A.C.T.S. No. 576, August 1930; 'Bonaventura' (D. P. F. O'Keefe), 'The Work and History of the A.C.T.S.', Catholic Young Man, May 1934, p. 20, M.A.A.

<sup>7</sup> See letter by Father W. B. Mangan, a founder of the N.S.V., in the Advocate, 24 January 1935, p. 25.

<sup>8</sup> See Pastoral Letter of the Archbishops and Bishops of the Province of Melbourne, A.C.T.S. No. 52, 1907.



The limitations evident in these general Catholic intellectual enterprises were also reflected in the narrower sphere of specifically religious thought. Indeed, the only exclusively religious Australian Catholic periodical with any pretensions to intellectuality was the Australasian Catholic Record. Founded by Cardinal Moran in 1895 as a quarterly magazine for clergy, it had resumed publication after a thirteen-year break in 1924 as the official organ of the Australian Apostolic Delegation. In reality it was produced by the staff of St. Patrick's College, Manly, the main seminary for the New South Wales secular clergy (i.e., those clergy not in Religious Orders). During its first phase of existence the Record had displayed some interest in extra-Church matters; but after its re-establishment its perspectives narrowed. Its thought became constricted within a closed canonical synthesis of Catholic belief which bore only on the strictly religious side of life; and it became entirely preoccupied with the minutiae of Canon Law, moral theology, and liturgy. It showed no consciousness of the field of social endeavour, or of problems of the social order. It contrasted sharply with Manly, which was founded in 1915 as the Annual of the Manly Union of students and graduates of Manly Seminary. This magazine prided itself on its vital Australian nativist tradition, and its creative literary emphasis. The two periodicals stood on opposite sides of the conceptual void which separated Catholic religious thought in Australia from Catholic communal visions for Australian society.

This radical disjunction between traditional religious thought and current social life was the very problem which modern

Catholic social thought had been designed to overcome. It is apparent that the most important intellectual developments in the Universal Church during the pontificate of Leo XIII were extremely slow to be assimilated into the thought of the Australian Church. The reasons for this intellectual lag are manifold. One was the preoccupation of the Australian Church with the massive practical problems involved in building churches and schools. Another, which is particularly deserving of note, was the significance which general Australian socio/political developments assumed in Catholic eyes.

Whereas in Europe the new Christian social thought had virtually been forced on the Church by the emergence of the hostile secular Liberal state, in Australia the developing secular culture initially appeared to Catholics to be not threatening, but liberating. It was the view of Cardinal Moran (1884-1911) that the Australian nativist movement in general, and later the Australian Labour movement in particular, would, if whole-heartedly supported by Catholics, help destroy the anti-Catholic sectarianism which had plagued public life since the foundation of the colony. Moran could even dismiss the Secular Education Acts as relics of the intolerant past, which, he expected, would be discarded as the new mood of national fellowship and good-will expanded and matured.<sup>9</sup>

Being generally satisfied with the way in which Australian

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See Patrick O'Farrell, The Catholic Church in Australia: A Short History (Thomas Nelson, Australia, 1968), p. 165; Chapter 4, passim.

society was developing, Moran felt no incentive to stimulate the formation of any distinctive Catholic social movement. His championing of Rerum Novarum is well known; however, while this may have helped deter the Australian Labor Party from espousing doctrinaire socialism, it did not take the form of a sustained or systematic promotion of the Encyclical's teachings. Patrick O'Farrell has noted that

In his celebrated expoundings of the social teaching of Leo XIII; he set forth the principles, but he did not relate them to actual social practice in Australia.<sup>10</sup>

Indeed, Moran's overall pragmatism, and his maximisation of the ideal of Catholic integration into Australian society, would seem to be basically at odds with Catholic social thought, which called for the critical evaluation and conscious influencing of secular society.

Significantly, it was only when disillusionment with Moran's optimistic social expectations had become widespread that the first vestiges of a Catholic social movement became evident in Australia. The event which had the delayed effect of triggering off these early efforts was the formation of the militant Australian Catholic Federation.

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Disaffection with Moran's policies had set in among the Catholic elite before the end of the Cardinal's reign. Maximisation

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<sup>10</sup>  
Ibid., p. 186.

of social integration had not had the expected effect of generating popular good-will towards Catholics as Catholics. The Australian Labor Party, despite the substantial Catholic support it had received, had shown no more interest than had the more conservative parties in rectifying the Catholic educational grievance. The Governmental secular schools continued to enjoy a monopoly of taxation support, with Catholics having to pay their taxes equally with everyone else, and at the same time support their Catholic schools. Moran's death in 1911 was followed closely by the formation of the Australian Catholic Federation; and the Cardinal's policy of social integration was replaced by one of social confrontation.

Appropriately, the Catholic Federation had its beginnings in Victoria, where episcopal infatuation with the Labor Party had been less in evidence than in New South Wales. O'Farrell quotes Archbishop Carr as having as early as 1902 expressed scepticism of Moran's blithe trust in his 'timorous N.S.W. Catholic politicians.'<sup>11</sup> With Carr's active support, the Australian Catholic Federation was founded at a meeting in Melbourne on 12 December 1911, with Mr. Benjamin Hoare putting the actual motion which brought it into being.<sup>12</sup> It was vaguely modelled on similar organisations which, with the encouragement of the Papacy, had appeared in various overseas countries. It sought to unite the existing Catholic societies in a powerful federation, which would operate as a

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Ibid., p. 165.

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Cecily E. Close, 'The Organisation of the Catholic Laity in Victoria, 1911-1930' (unpublished M.A. thesis, Melbourne University, 1972), p. 65.

social and political pressure-group

The Federation failed. Its undisguised raison d'etre was to pressure the State Labor Parties into adopting more equitable policies towards Catholic education, and this it was unable to do. Only in Victoria were any concessions at all wrested from political Labour, and there the decisive factor was not the Federation itself, but an independent off-shoot which operated within the Trade Union movement, the Catholic Workers' Association. In New South Wales the Federation's only notable success was achieved through its party-political 'front', the Democratic Party, which in 1922 put Dr. Cyril Fallon into the State Legislative Assembly for one term under a system of proportionate representation. The Federation's primary goal, however, proved unattainable, essentially because it was unable to control a significant proportion of the Catholic votes which had traditionally gone to the Labor Party. Furthermore, the heated Conscription referenda campaigns of 1916 and 1917 diverted Catholic attentions away from the education issue. The main lesson to be learned from the Federation experiment was that most Catholics apparently agreed with James Henry Scullin, that the Labor Party had been 'a greater financial gain to Catholic workers than twenty grants such as is being asked would be.'

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The Catholic Federation did not see itself as a Catholic social movement, but as a sectional pressure-group. Indeed, it had

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 Quoted in Celia Hamilton, 'Catholic Interests and the Labor Party: Organised Catholic Action in Victoria and New South Wales, 1910-1916' Historical Studies of Australia and New Zealand, November 1959, p. 71



sought to maximise its area of concurrence with traditional Labor Party viewpoints, in order to minimise resistance to its educational demands. Despite this, however, the break with Labor involved a break with the established reference-group from which Catholics had taken their social attitudes. The result was an unprecedented stirring of interest among the Catholic elite in Catholic social philosophy.

In New South Wales, The Catholic Federation Magazine, which was published between August 1919 and January 1921, featured a succession of articles designed to highlight the Church's role through the ages in protecting the interests of the working-man. Furthermore, the issue of November 1919 told that Father P. T. Tighe, S.J., had spoken under Federation auspices at the Trades Hall on 'The Church and the Worker'; that an essay competition had been conducted on the topic, 'The Church and the Toiler'; and that efforts had been made to establish a social studies club.<sup>14</sup> The May issue for 1920 mentioned that 'Each Sunday a lay-speaker takes the Domain Platform and addresses a very mixed audience on Catholic social subjects.'<sup>15</sup>

In Victoria an even more marked upsurge of interest in Catholic social thought accompanied the rise of the Federation. During 1912 and 1913 the Melbourne-based Australian Catholic Truth Society published a spate of pamphlets on Catholic social principles,

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<sup>14</sup>

The Catholic Federation Magazine, 1 November 1919, p. 33, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

<sup>15</sup>

Ibid., 1 May 1920, p. 33.

a subject in which previously it had been remarkably uninterested.<sup>16</sup>

In February 1913 the Federation established a Social Study Club,<sup>17</sup> and attempted to form others in connection with its branches.

In 1916 Father William Lockington, a New Zealand-born Jesuit and Federation activist, helped found the Catholic Women's Social Guild, which initially sought not only to engage in charitable<sup>18</sup> work, but to promote the discussion of social questions.

Lockington the following year also organised the first of the Victorian Catholic Federation's annual Winter Series of Catholic Evidence lectures, in which addresses on social problems figured<sup>19</sup> prominently.

The real pioneer of Catholic sociology in Australia was not Lockington, however, but another Jesuit, Father Matthew Egan. Australian-born and Irish-trained, Egan combined a profoundly scholarly mind with an extremely retiring personality. Despite his natural reticence, he threw himself whole-heartedly into the intellectual side of Federation activities. He took charge of the Social Study Club formed in 1913; and when the C.W.S.G. was founded,

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A.C.T.S. pamphlets prior to 1918 which dealt with social questions were: Nos. 11 (Rerum Novarum) and 14 (1905); No. 68 (1909); Nos. 143, 168, 177, 178, 179 and 180 (1912 and 1913); Nos. 215 and 218 (1915); No. 240 (1916); Nos. 264, 272, 273 and 281 (1917): see back-copies in the Advocate offices, Melbourne.

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Close, op. cit., p. 90.

18

Ibid., p. 203.

19

Ibid., p. 192: the first series of lectures included Dr. G. R. Baldwin on 'Authority and the State' and 'National Guilds'; and E. Adams (founder of the Catholic Workers' Association) on 'Emancipation of Women'.

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he organised study-groups among its members. The original Federation Study Club apparently faded away after a year or two; but in 1916 or 1917 Egan helped found a successor in the 'Leo Guild', an association of young Catholic intellectuals, the members of which were prominent both in Federation affairs and in the anti-Conscription campaign.<sup>21</sup>

In 1917 the Leo Guild gave birth to an independent, radical Catholic monthly, Australia: A Review of the Month. Edited by Henry Minogue, an Arts/Law student and talented English scholar, Australia first appeared in November with an Introduction by Melbourne's controversial Archbishop, Dr. Daniel Mannix. Mannix asserted that

if the people are going to take a firmer grip upon political affairs, it is not likely that the workers will rest content with the present conditions...And, if they are to move along safe lines, it was never more necessary than it is now that the public mind should be leavened by Catholic principles. Therein lies the opportunity of Australia.

Yet although the nominal purpose of the magazine was to examine current issues in a Catholic light, few of its articles even mentioned Papal social thought. Most of them did, however, reflect a rash, youthful political radicalism of a familiar Australian Labour movement variety. Furthermore, and although Belloc's The Servile State (1911) received an occasional passing reference, the

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Ibid.

21

Ibid., pp. 164-5.



only regular contributions which displayed any deep awareness of Catholic social philosophy were those of Father Egan. Thorough, unemotional and scholarly, these contrasted remarkably with the bellicose and polemical writings of his younger associates. It is apparent that, despite his erudition, Egan had little influence on the intellectual development of the others. His failure to impress his views is attributable to his personal reticence, and to his inability to express himself fluently in speech. Australia thrived in the heated atmosphere of the late War period, but as the controversies of the time subsided its support diminished, and in July 1920 it ceased publication.

In Ballarat, seventy miles north-west of Melbourne, the same era saw the foundation of a Catholic Study Club by Fathers: McGloin and Reidy, the latter a leading Catholic Federationist of the district. Planned to begin functioning in February of 1917, the club included in its preliminary list of members James Scullin, editor of the Ballarat Evening Echo, a future Prime Minister of Australia, and at the time a prominent adversary of the Catholic Federation. The organisers emphasised the need for the club by reference to Papal statements, and to models in France, Germany and England. They prepared a programme of six discussions, the main topics being Strikes, War and Peace, the Living Wage, and Education. The basic texts for study were to be Rerum Novarum and other readily available tracts on Catholic social thought.

A pencil-written programme and tentative membership list of the 'Catholic Study Club' were discovered in St. Patrick's Hall, Ballarat, in 1970, and given to Mr. Kevin Kelly. The phrases 'This War'; 'Examine Coal Strike' (presumably the serious N.S.W. coal strike of

Shortly after the war, in 1921, Father Egan organised a Social Study Club within the Melbourne Catholic Young Men's Society, being assisted by the General President for that year, Michael Chamberlin. Beginning with some twenty members, the club set out to study all the Papal Encyclicals since the 1864 Syllabus of Errors. The members gave some talks to C.Y.M.S. branches; and during their first year they distributed 'over a thousand copies of a pamphlet issued by Fr. Egan'<sup>23</sup> - presumably his 1920 A.C.T.S. publication, The Foundations of Catholic Sociology. The group, which called itself the 'Ozanam Club', was notable for its perseverance, if not for its vitality. Its method of study was dry and plodding; and it lacked any romantic element, or any sense of immediate relevance to the problems of the day. After three years all the Encyclicals had been covered, but by then only a few stalwarts remained, and the Ozanam Club<sup>24</sup> passed out of existence.

November 1916); and 'Begin February', put the proposed starting date at February 1917. Scullin had clashed publicly with the Federation in April and May 1916; but Father Donald Reidy himself became an outspoken critic of the Federation's leadership, and this could help explain the inclusion of both men in the club (re Reidy, see Close thesis, pp. 181-2; Donald A. Reidy, 'The Future of the Federation', Australia: a Review of the Month, 7 March 1918). Furthermore, the anti-Conscription campaign of 1916 would have served to re-consolidate Catholic ranks, despite differences of opinion over the Federation.  
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General President's address to 1921 C.Y.M.S. Annual Communion Breakfast, Adv. 17 November 1921.

<sup>24</sup>  
Interviews with Sir Michael Chamberlin, February and May 1967, 20 January 1972; 1922 and 1923 C.Y.M.S. Annual Reports, in C.Y.M.S. papers held in Celtic Club, Melbourne. The establishment of this study-group had first been suggested in 1920 by Father J. J. Barry, Administrator of the Cathedral, and later Bishop of Goulburn (see Chamberlin's address in Adv. 17 November 1921). Among Father William Hackett's papers is a lecture script dated 29 September 1927, and titled, 'The Popess Joan - the Ozanam Club' (Box 6, Hackett papers, Jesuit Archives, Hawthorn, Victoria). I am unable to account for this, having found no other evidence that the Ozanam Club was ever revived.

Another social studies group was operative in Melbourne during the same period, centring on a Fitzroy butcher and ex-seminarian, James Skehan. Its membership was apparently older and better educated than that of the Ozanam Club; and it seems to have overlapped with the dying Catholic Federation. Francis J. Corder, a young lawyer who was later to be the last President of the Federation, was a member; and so too was another well-known Catholic lawyer, Gerald Hasset. Father William Hackett, S.J., became involved with the group shortly after his arrival in Australia. <sup>25</sup>

The rise and demise of this upsurge of interest in Catholic social philosophy was contained roughly within a decade, from 1913 to 1923. It had materialised at a time when the militancy of the Australian Catholic Federation, the Irish rebellion, the War, the Conscription referenda, industrial unrest, and an abnormal level of sectarian animosity within the Australian community, had combined to produce a widespread sense of social disorder. It had been rooted but weakly in the Catholic lay populace of the day, and had only with difficulty survived as long as it did. Despite the efforts of Father Matthew Egan, S.J., no school of Australian Catholic sociology had been born. Not until a later era of social dislocation was Australia to witness the emergence of a

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Interviews with Sir Michael Chamberlin, February and May 1967, 20 January 1972; interview with Father J. H. Cleary, 21 November 1972. Father Cleary was introduced to the group immediately upon leaving school in 1919. He first met Father Hackett at a meeting of the group (Hackett arrived in Australia in October 1922). He can recall the members visiting Corpus Christi College, Werribee, after he (Cleary) had entered there in 1923.

more lasting movement of distinctively Catholic social awareness.

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The nineteen-twenties saw few notable developments take place within the Australian Church. In Victoria, Archbishop Carr's lay elite seems to have aged with its pastor, and to have faded away after his death, its passing being signalled by the closure of the Austral Light in 1920. Some of those involved continued to be active on the Committee of the A.C.T.S.; in the Jesuit-run Professional Men's Sodality which centred on St. Patrick's College, East Melbourne; and in other Catholic organisations. However, they no longer occupied a central position in the Catholic life of the State. The decline of their influence had doubtlessly been occasioned in part by the apparent reluctance of the Austral Light to throw itself with Archbishop Mannix into the popular political frays of the War years;<sup>26</sup> and to the fact that Mr. Benjamin Hoare had publicly attacked him over the Conscription issue.

Although no new Catholic intellectual leadership class emerged during the following decade, Dr. Mannix planted the seeds of future intellectual flowerings when he settled on the Society of Jesus some of the key positions of influence in his archdiocese. In his inaugural address in this country Mannix had emphasised the

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The passionate involvement of the Advocate and the Tribune in the Conscription and Irish rebellion controversies contrasts with the moderation of the Austral Light on these issues.



importance which he attached to University education;<sup>27</sup> and when Newman College was being built, he chose the Jesuits as the Order best suited to manage it. Furthermore, when in 1923 Corpus Christi College, Werribee, was opened as the seminary for the Victorian secular clergy, it was the Jesuits who staffed it. No other Order within the Church had such a powerful modern tradition of intellectuality as they did; and now they were well situated to influence to their ways of thought the future lay and clerical leaders of Victorian Catholicism.

Corpus Christi College began to form a type of young priest discernably different from that produced by Manly College in Sydney. Where Manly was notable, even by the standards of the day, for its harsh discipline and rigid insistence on conformity to an inflexible pattern of thought and behaviour, Corpus Christi encouraged a greater degree of initiative and intellectual awareness among students. Staff-student relationships were also much closer and happier in the latter College. Furthermore, the Corpus Christi clergy were not identified with, and did not dissipate their energies into, the clerical power-struggle which was being waged by the Manly Union priests against Irish-born bishops over the issue of native-or-Irish succession to episcopal office. During the 'twenties one significant product of Corpus Christi student initiative was the 'Conversion of Australia Movement', an infra-College society which sought to foster the twin ideals of Australian patriotism and an outward-going, apostolic

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O'Farrell, Short History, p. 213. For Mannix's policy on University education, see also W. A. Greening, 'The Mannix Thesis in Catholic Secondary Education in Victoria', Melbourne Studies in Education, 1961-62, edited E. L. French (M.U.P., 1964).



Catholicism. Many who were later to become close clerical associates of the Campion Society had their grounding in this Movement.

A further Jesuit venture which was to be of crucial importance to the Catholic intellectual upsurge of the 'thirties was Melbourne's Central Catholic Library. This was the brain-child of Father William Hackett, a cultured Irish Jesuit from a family 'distinguished for its patriotism and its literary talents.' He had reputedly been sent to Australia as a result of a too close association with the leaders of one side in the Irish Civil War; and he was certainly 'a friend and confidant of Mr. de Valera and a number of his contemporaries'.<sup>28</sup> He was also a disciple of Catholic social thought; and he had been a colleague of Father C. D. Plater, founder of the English Catholic Social Guild.<sup>29</sup>

Upon arriving in Melbourne in October 1922, Hackett was disturbed to note the paucity of Catholic intellectual life in that city. In order to help rectify this situation, he resolved to establish a first-class Catholic library in the central metropolitan area.<sup>30</sup> With the blessing of Dr. Mannix, and the practical assistance of the now-skeletal Catholic Federation and the Catholic Women's Social Guild, he opened his Central Catholic Library in May of 1924.<sup>31</sup> Beginning as a room in the Federation's offices with 740 volumes, it soon acquired its own premises, and by 1930 had grown

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<sup>28</sup>

Hackett's Obituary, Adv. 15 July 1954, p. 23.

<sup>29</sup>

Cecily E. Close, The Organisation of the Catholic Laity, p. 241.

<sup>30</sup>

Regarding Hackett's aims, see C. C. Martindale, 'Central Catholic Libraries', the Month (English Jesuit), October 1930.

<sup>31</sup>

Adv. 29 May 1924, p. 13.

to 10,000 volumes - and its debt had grown to £600.<sup>32</sup> During the 'thirties, in defiance of the general economic trends, the Library was to flourish, and was eventually to be described by Dr. Mannix as 'a real power house of Catholic Action'.<sup>33</sup>

In Sydney a central Catholic library - the Southern Cross Library - was opened in 1929. It was established by the highly secret Order of Knights of the Southern Cross, having grown out of the Order's own private library - although this fact was known only to those within the Order.<sup>34</sup> However, while Hackett's library had been founded for a clearly intellectual purpose, the Sydney venture had a less specific, more popular emphasis. In 1930 only 2,000 of its 7,000 books were non-fiction,<sup>35</sup> compared with 8,000 of the 10,000 volumes in the Melbourne library at the same time.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the popular nature of the Southern Cross Library enabled it to obtain within six months of its foundation the 700 subscribers which it had taken Father Hackett six years to accumulate.<sup>37</sup>

The only other Catholic enterprises with any kind of

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1930 C.C.L. Annual Report, Adv. 3 July 1930, p. 16.

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Quoted in Adv. 16 June 1938, p. 29.

34

See 'The Southern Cross Library: Historical Notes' (c. mid-1939), box 'Evidence', Sydney Archdiocesan Archives.

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T. A. Murphy, C.S.S.R., 'The Circulation of Catholic Literature in Australia', Australasian Catholic Record, April 1930.

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1930 C.C.L. Annual Report, loc. cit.

37

T. A. Murphy, op. cit.; 1930 C.C.L. Annual Report, loc. cit.

intellectual flavour to begin in Sydney during the 'twenties were the Catholic Evidence Guild; the separate Catholic Evidence lectures organised annually by the Knights of the Southern Cross; and the Catholic Hour on Radio Station 2UE. However, the 'intellectuality' of all these ventures was confined to traditional apologetics, that is, to presenting standard justifications for Catholic teachings against the common kinds of objection put by non-believers.

The Sydney Catholic Evidence Guild was inaugurated in 1925,<sup>38</sup> its initiator being Mr. Frank Sheed, a Sydney University law student who was later to become co-founder of the internationally famous Catholic publishing house of Sheed & Ward. Sheed had earlier witnessed at first hand the rapid growth of London's Catholic Evidence Guild; and it was upon returning to Sydney to complete his University studies that he obtained Archbishop Kelly's permission to start a similar organisation there. He was assisted by another young lawyer, a one-armed veteran of World War I and Catholic Federationist named Peter Gallagher, who was long to remain the central figure in the Guild.

Although the evangelical work of the Guild was highly regarded by Archbishop Kelly, there was never more than a handful of people actively involved in it.<sup>39</sup> Its primary work was the operation of a Sunday afternoon pitch in Sydney's Domain, in

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<sup>38</sup> Peter Gallagher to Kevin Anderson, 17 October 1934, 1934 Newman Convention box, M.A.A.

<sup>39</sup> In 1934 there were only twelve licensed speakers - Ibid. In 1937 the number licensed was still twelve, but only seven of them were then active: 1937 C.E.G. Annual Report, box 'Evidence', S.A.A.

competition with speakers representing a multitude of other religious and political causes. Its members were permitted to speak 'only on Apologetic or Doctrinal subjects': they had been forbidden to touch 'on economic or social problems' by Archbishop Kelly, who chose to interpret their Constitution in this restrictive fashion.<sup>40</sup> The effect of this interdict was to prevent the Guild from lecturing on Catholic social thought.<sup>41</sup>

Shortly after its foundation the Sydney Catholic Evidence Guild was forced, by ruling of Coadjutor Archbishop Sheehan, to alter its name to 'the Catholic Speakers'. This change was necessitated by the fact that, unbeknown to Sheed and Gallagher, the Order of Knights of the Southern Cross had been using the earlier appellation 'in correspondence with Politicians, Departments, Companies etc.'<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, in January 1924 the Knights had actually launched a 'front' organisation which operated as the Catholic Evidence Guild. Beginning enthusiastically, this Guild had initially sought (unsuccessfully, it appears) 'to found a Catholic Social Guild within the Order to train our young men to speak on the Catholic Platform and to arrange for lectures on Catholic Sociology and Economics, to the members.'<sup>43</sup> In practice the main

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<sup>40</sup> Gallagher to Anderson, loc. cit. That the interdict was Archbishop Kelly's is not stated in this letter, but implied. The relevant Constitutional clause reads: 'Politics, party or national and related topics shall be avoided': see Sydney C.E.G./Catholic Speakers' Constitution, box 'Evidence', S.A.A.

<sup>41</sup> Gallagher to Anderson, loc. cit.

<sup>42</sup> William Ross to Archbishop Gilroy, 17 June 1938, box 'Evidence', S.A.A.

<sup>43</sup> Sydney (K.S.C.-based) C.E.G. minute-book, 1924-26, entry for

activity of the Knights-based Guild was the despatching of members to the Domain, not, it seems, to talk from a pitch, but to mingle in the audiences and defend Catholic views against hostile speakers. However, early in 1926 it became moribund;<sup>44</sup> and so, in order to retain some realistic backing for their cover-name, the Knights inaugurated an annual mid-year Catholic Evidence lecture series.<sup>45</sup> They presumably took as their model the Victorian Catholic Federation's annual Winter Series of Catholic Evidence lectures.

The Knights of the Southern Cross were also behind the production of the Catholic Hour on Radio Station 2UE. Catholic broadcasting in Sydney had begun in connection with the 1928 International Eucharistic Congress, with the Knights doing most of the pertinent organisational work. Subsequently the Secretary of the Order, William Ross, was given the responsibility for obtaining finance and a Government broadcasting licence for a Catholic radio station, which in 1931 began operating as Station 2SM (for Saint Mary's).<sup>46</sup> The best-known segment of the Catholic Hour on 2UE, and later on 2SM, was the 'Question Box' of Sacred Heart priest

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16 January 1924. Although this is the initial entry, it does not appear to be recording an inaugural meeting. Mr. P. L. Cantwell, who joined the Knights in May 1920, does not recall the Order, during its first twenty years, ever having systematically promoted Catholic social thought: Interview, 12 April 1972.

<sup>44</sup> Evidence of (K.S.C.-based) C.E.G. minute-book.

<sup>45</sup> Peter Gallagher to Archbishop Gilroy, 26 June 1938, box 'Evidence', S.A.A.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Mr. P. L. Cantwell, 12 April 1972. Mr. Cantwell gave me extracts from a paper which he delivered in 1944 on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the Knights.



Dr. Leslie Rumble, which began in 1929. Again, the emphasis was doctrinal and apologetical.

The afore-mentioned International Eucharistic Congress was a spectacular Catholic pageant which ran in Sydney from 6-9 September, 1928. Its huge rallies, splendid ceremonies, and assemblages of Catholic dignitaries from all over the world, impressed on Australians as nothing had done before the strength and vitality of Australian Catholicism, and the majesty of the Church Universal. It gave little attention, however, to the intellectual aspect of Catholicism, less than had the Australasian Catholic Congresses earlier in the century. The most impressive overseas intellectual to attend was Father C. C. Martindale, a renowned English Jesuit author and speaker. However, Martindale appears to have had a greater effect in Melbourne, where he spoke after the Congress, than he had in Sydney, with several future Melbourne Campion Society leaders being much impressed by the style and vision of Catholic intellectuality which he projected. In Sydney he addressed the first General Meeting of the Sydney University Newman Society; but this body had been formed less for intellectual reasons, than for the immediate practical purpose of rallying Catholic University men to take part as a unit in the great final procession of the Congress.

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<sup>47</sup>  
Frank Maher, Denys Jackson, Arthur Adams and Kevin Kelly were among these (evidence of interviews). One of Martindale's Melbourne talks was published as Modern Problems, A.C.T.S. No. 539 (late 1928 or early 1929).

<sup>48</sup>  
Interview with Father Desmond O'Connor, S.J., a founder of the Sydney Newman Society, 8 February 1967. See also Sydney Newman Society Report, 1934 Newman Convention box, M.A.A.

The picture which begins to emerge of Australian Catholicism in 1929 is of an insular Church, thriving after its own fashion, but remote from the intellectual movements which for over half a century had been re-vitalising the Church in England and Europe. Within the Australian Church, however, two distinct sub-traditions were taking shape. In Victoria, precedents for a vigorous Catholic intellectuality could be found in the now-defunct Austral Light and in the Catholic social stirrings of the Catholic Federation era. The influence of the Jesuits in Melbourne gave further hope for the future; while the considerable intellectual capacities of Archbishop Mannix himself, and his enormous popularity with his priests and people, must also be taken into account.

In Sydney a less viable Catholic tradition was emerging. Insofar as it contained any provision for intellectual expansion, it was for consolidation in the area of traditional apologetics. Presiding over developments in Sydney was the aged Archbishop Michael Kelly, a centralist who kept a tight rein on Sydney Catholicism in all its aspects, and who viewed intellectual movements with profound mistrust. His Coadjutor, Archbishop Sheehan, was an ecclesiastical scholar of international repute; but he was destined never to succeed Dr. Kelly, and during his fifteen years in Australia (1922-37) he remained in comparative obscurity.

The differences between Victorian and Sydney Catholicism were also reflected in the nature of the main lay associations in the respective Churches, and in the status accorded them. Since no intellectual movement could hope to have a significant impact

unless its influence could be channelled through established organisational networks, a brief survey of the structure and development of Catholic lay organisation in the two regions, in the years to 1929, will help to throw light on subsequent happenings.

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The kinds of Catholic lay organisation which existed in Australia during the early part of this century bore no resemblance to the new Catholic Action movements which were rapidly gaining strength in Europe at the time. Indeed, the intellectual backwardness of Australian Catholicism precluded the development of Catholic Action, which of its nature presumed a thorough understanding of the implications of Catholic social philosophy. Whereas Catholic Action bodies were required to be militantly apostolic, seeking to spread Christian ideals and values, Australian Catholic lay associations were almost entirely inward-directed and socially protective. Catholic pious sodalities, benefit societies, and sporting and social clubs, served to preserve among Catholic adults the consciousness of communal identity and religious commitment which would have been impressed on them in their youth in the Catholic schools, as also in their home environments. Even the militant Catholic Federation was simply an organ of social defence, and was not at all 'apostolic' or evangelizing.

Nevertheless, whether militant or quiescent in nature, the lay societies provided the Catholic community with the organisational structures which gave it the potential to function

as a viable social force. They maintained in existence networks of personal associations, and a class of recognised communal lay leaders, without which Australian Catholics would have lacked any sense of group potency in times of social challenge. By 1929 two powerful lay bodies had become pre-eminent as sources of Catholic cohesiveness in Eastern Australia. These were the Order of Knights of the Southern Cross in New South Wales; and the Catholic Young Men's Society of Victoria.

The Order of Knights of the Southern Cross was a product of the new Catholic policy of social aggressiveness which had replaced Cardinal Moran's social integrationism, and which had earlier given rise to the Catholic Federation. It originated in the Commercial and Professional Catholic Men's Association of Sydney, which had been inaugurated on 22 March 1919 'to organise Catholic men with a view to their rendering aid to each other in temporal matters should it be deemed necessary.'<sup>49</sup> Overlapping with, but not springing from, the Catholic Federation,<sup>50</sup> and modelled on the American Knights of Columbus, this Association sought to do in business and professional life what the Federation was seeking to do in politics: namely, to protect Catholics against sectarian

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<sup>49</sup> Minutes of inaugural meeting, cited in the Golden Jubilee edition of Advance Australia, national organ of the K.S.C.s, March 1969, p. 7 (there is a copy in the M.A.A.).

<sup>50</sup> P. S. Cleary, President of the N.S.W. Catholic Federation, was not an early Knight; however, William J. Ross, a Democratic Party candidate in the 1920 N.S.W. elections, in June 1920 became full-time General Secretary of the Order. Two prominent Labor Party politicians were foundation members (Ibid., p. 13; also interview with Mr. P. L. Cantwell, 12 April 1972. Mr. Cantwell stood unsuccessfully as United Australia Party candidate for Illawarra in the 1932 N.S.W. State elections). The rules of the Order expressly forbade party politics to be discussed at meetings.



discrimination by organising joint action against discriminating parties. On 7 July 1919 a general meeting of members voted to change the name of the Association to the Order of Knights of the Southern Cross;<sup>51</sup> and on 19 August, with the formal approval of its Constitution by Archbishop Kelly, the Order officially came into being.<sup>52</sup>

The Order was entirely lay directed, although a priest was attached to each branch as Spiritual Director. Membership was open to all Catholic laymen, upon invitation and the swearing of a strict oath of secrecy. So secretive was the Order that members were forbidden to speak of it even to their wives; and its existence was never so much as hinted at in the Catholic press.<sup>53</sup> Despite these strictures, its growth was rapid. By October of 1920 it had three branches; and by June of 1921 the last-formed of these had 206 members.<sup>54</sup> In October of 1921 it achieved a coup which ensured its proliferation throughout Australia, when it entertained and explained its aims to five Archbishops and eleven Bishops who were assembled in Sydney for the centenary celebrations of St. Mary's Basilica. By the end of 1923 the Order had branches in all States of the Commonwealth.<sup>55</sup>

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Advance Australia, March 1969, p. 9.

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P. L. Cantwell, 1944 Silver Jubilee paper.

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C. C. Martindale, S.J., apparently unaware of the extent of the Order's secretiveness, mentioned it in his published account of his 1928 Australian visit (The Risen Sun, Sheed & Ward, London, 1929).

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Advance Australia, March 1969, p. 13.

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Ibid., pp. 10, 13.



Before the end of the decade the Order of Knights of the Southern Cross had become established as the lay organisational backbone of the New South Wales Church. In addition to matters already mentioned, three notable accomplishments of the Sydney Knights during the 'twenties were the initiation of the first national Catholic Education Congress, which was held in Sydney in October 1922; the securing in 1928 of amendments to the Local Governments Act to exempt churches and schools from taxation; and the provision of most of the manpower needed to organise the 1928 International Eucharistic Congress.<sup>56</sup> By 1929, Catholic lay leadership and organisational expertise in New South Wales were concentrated to a considerable extent within the Order.

In Victoria, an organisation similar to the New South Wales Knights of the Southern Cross, the Knights of St. Francis Xavier, had been founded in December 1917, fifteen months before the Sydney enterprise began. Its initiators were Michael Chamberlin, J. P. Waldron, and Father J. J. Lonergan, the first two of whom were prominent identities within the Catholic Young Men's Society, and the last-mentioned the C.Y.M.S. General Spiritual Director. As with the N.S.W. body, the Knights of St. Francis Xavier was based on the Knights of Columbus, and was designed to combat discrimination against Catholics in private enterprise and civic life. Unlike the N.S.W. Order, however, it numbered in its ranks few who were well established in politics, business or the professions. It was largely because of this weakness that in March of 1922 it agreed to

<sup>56</sup>  
Ibid., p. 13; P. L. Cantwell, 1944 Silver Jubilee paper.

amalgamate with, and to change its name to, the Knights of the Southern Cross. Jack Waldron wrote of the reasons for this decision:

Our members were composed of very young men, the bulk of them public servants...Our membership was less than fifty. We saw that Sydney had men of substance. They had the sinews of war without which we could never hope to progress. They had many times our members...<sup>57</sup>

The youthful complexion of the Victorian Knights of the Southern Cross reflected another significant difference between the Catholic life of the two States. In Victoria the Catholic young men were better organised, and played a much more important role in the Church, than in New South Wales. Indeed, the Order of Knights of the Southern Cross in Victoria was exceeded in vitality and overall importance by the organisation from which it had indirectly sprung, the Catholic Young Men's Society. It was this body more than any other which typified the distinctive character of Victorian Catholicism.

Catholic Young Men's Societies had begun in Ireland in 1849 as general-purpose social, sporting, and educational associations. Their growth paralleled that of comparable non-Catholic bodies such as the Young Men's Christian Association, Mechanics' Institutes, and Schools of Arts; and within the Church, of the Irish Christian Brothers and other teaching Orders. In 1859 a C.Y.M.S. was founded at St. Francis' Church in Melbourne; and subsequently others were set up in parishes throughout Victoria. In 1882 a loose C.Y.M.S. Union was formed; and in 1892, after years

of negotiations, the tightly centralised Victorian Catholic Young Men's Society came into being, federating twenty-one existing societies. This unification resulted from the efforts of the Austral Light group, and was strongly supported by Archbishop Carr. <sup>58</sup> The first President of the federated C.Y.M.S. was Mr. Benjamin Hoare. <sup>59</sup>

The importance attached by the Austral Light intellectuals to the formation of a powerful Young Men's Society sprang from their conviction that such an organisation was vital to the long-term interests of Australian Catholicism. This was the time when the Federationist movement was firing the romantic enthusiasm of young people throughout the Australian colonies; and it was thus no accident that the Austral Light had been given that particular name, or that the Victorian C.Y.M.S. had taken as its motto: 'Pro Deo et Patria'. The Austral Light group believed, as did Cardinal Moran and Archbishop Carr, that if the Australian Church did not harness to itself the new sense of national purpose, then its young people would come to identify social vitality and dynamism exclusively with secular movements. A case mentioned in this context was the Australian Natives' Association, in which, it was

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<sup>58</sup>  
See the Catholic Magazine, October 1888, pp. 22-4, January 1891, pp. 1-3, October 1891; C.Y.M.S. First Annual Report, 1892 (photocopy in M.A.A.); J. J. Norris, Catholic Young Men's Societies, A.C.T.S. No. 77, 1909.

<sup>59</sup>  
Technically, the Archbishop was ex officio President, and Hoare Vice-President. Subsequently the former office was 'up-graded' to 'President-General', and the latter to President. Later C.Y.M.S. documents always list Hoare as the first President.

noted, 'Our Catholic young men are largely represented'.<sup>60</sup> The C.Y.M.S. was intended as a means both 'to infuse a spirit of Unionism'<sup>61</sup> into the Catholic young men of Victoria; and to keep the Church in the mainstream of the developing national culture.

The mass appeal of the C.Y.M.S. resided largely, although by no means entirely, in its Australian Rules football competition. In addition to this, it conducted tennis, cricket and debating tournaments, and other social functions. Control was vested in a Council, and below that in a Board of Management,<sup>62</sup> with the bulk of the office-holders invariably being debaters. Indeed, since fewer than 10% of the members were involved in debating,<sup>63</sup> it is apparent that this particular facet of the Society's activities served to attract the intellectually more capable of the Catholic young men, many of them in semi-professional occupations,<sup>64</sup> and to coalesce

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<sup>60</sup> James B. Coghlan, 'Federation of Catholic Young Men's Societies', Austral Light, January 1892, p. 37.

<sup>61</sup> Catholic Magazine, October 1891.

<sup>62</sup> As best I have been able to ascertain, all the C.Y.M.S. General Presidents between 1921 and 1939 were debaters.

<sup>63</sup> In 1933, a record year for debating, 162 members (81 teams) participated in the debating competition, compared with 468 who obtained selection for football teams (1933 C.Y.M.S. Annual Report, Catholic Young Man, December 1933, M.A.A.). Membership at the time was about 1,700, which would put debaters at some 9½% of the total.

<sup>64</sup> Of the General Presidents from 1919 to 1939, seven were Public Servants: P. E. Smyth (1919), G. Dowling (1924), J. F. Meere (1925), A. McVeigh (1927), J. J. Martin (1931), J. A. Peevers (1936), and T. J. Hickie (1938); one (F. P. McManus, 1929) was a teacher and University graduate; four were certified accountants: M. Chamberlin (1921), A. C. Hodgkinson (1930), P. J. O'Rourke (1935), and D. S. Sherriff (1939); and two were Law clerks: J. F. Foley (1926, 1928) and J. D. Coyne (1933). The remainder were J. J. Collins, a journalist (1920), R. Boxshall (1922), F. P. Mount (1932), M. F. Hynes (1934), and J. McGrath (1937).



them into a recognised leadership class. This cohesion would have been strengthened after 1918 by the ties formed at St. Kevin's College, the Christian Brothers' senior school which opened that year. St. Kevin's took all the progressing pupils from the four other Melbourne Christian Brothers' secondary schools on to their Leaving and Leaving Honours years, and thus helped create lasting bonds of fellowship among them.

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Further to this, the powerful C.Y.M.S. debating tradition served as an ideal background for Catholic young men with an active interest in Labor Party and Trade Union politics. A supplementary training in this regard was provided by the ordinary C.Y.M.S. branch and executive meetings, which were conducted strictly according to parliamentary procedural rules. Although C.Y.M.S. strength in the Victorian Labor Party did not peak until the early nineteen-fifties, the Society's efficacy as a spring-board for political life was amply illustrated in 1929, when three ex-C.Y.M.S. leaders were included in the Scullin Federal Labor Ministry - Scullin himself; Frank Brennan, his Attorney-General; and Parker Moloney, his Minister for Markets.

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Regarding the purpose of St. Kevin's College, see W. A. Greening, 'The Mannix Thesis in Catholic Secondary Education in Victoria', Melbourne Studies in Education, 1961-62, edited E. L. French.

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Frank Brennan had been 1907 C.Y.M.S. General President; Scullin had been in the Ballarat C.Y.M.S., and during the 'twenties was an Honorary Member of the North Richmond branch and a regular adjudicator of C.Y.M.S. competition debating; and Moloney's brother, Ernest, had been 1908 General President. Parker Moloney's personal gratitude to the C.Y.M.S. was expressed in a letter which is cited in the Tribune, 21 November 1929, p. 11.



The ascent of the C.Y.M.S. to primacy among the many Victorian Catholic lay associations appears to have taken place during the Catholic Federation era. The main organisational basis of the Federation had not been the Young Men's Society, but the Hibernian-Australasian Catholic Benefit Society.<sup>67</sup> However, the failure of the Federation seems to have sapped the vitality of the Hibernian Society, and to have reduced it from a seed-bed of Catholic militancy into a quiescent social clubs' federation which doubled as a co-operative benevolent society. Doubtlessly the demoralising influence of the Irish Civil War also hastened the decline of the H.A.C.B.S. The C.Y.M.S., for its part, was not weakened but strengthened as a result of the Federation adventure,<sup>68</sup> in which many of its leaders played prominent roles. Above all, the Society earned its battle-colours in the eyes of the new Archbishop, Dr. Mannix, who in June of 1918 publicly expressed his gratitude to its members

from the president down to the junior member, for the assistance which I have always received from them, and especially at those times in which I needed it most.<sup>69</sup>

Mannix 'directed priests to give every possible assistance to the C.Y.M.S.',<sup>70</sup> a gesture which indicated the high regard in which he held the Society, and was to hold it throughout his long episcopate.

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Cecily Close, op. cit., p. 58.

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T. J. McGlade, 1901 C.Y.M.S. President, was 1918 Federation President; F. E. O'Connell, 1910 C.Y.M.S. President, was Federation President 1913-17; R. A. Warming, 1913 C.Y.M.S. President, was Federation Treasurer for several years from 1913: see Cecily Close, op. cit., passim.; also lists of C.Y.M.S. General Presidents and General Secretaries, M.A.A.

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Adv. 6 July 1918.

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Ibid., 29 June 1918: speech by Father J. P. O'Connell to the East Brunswick C.Y.M.S.

No comparable youth movement existed in New South Wales. The first C.Y.M.S. to appear in Sydney had been established in 1858, antedating the St. Francis' C.Y.M.S. in Melbourne by a year; and subsequently other Societies had been formed in various parishes. However, no effective city- or State-wide federation was ever long maintained in being. In 1897 an effort was made to give the Young Men's Societies a central governing body, like that operating in Victoria, but nothing came of it. In May 1899 'the attempt was revived, this time under Cardinal Moran's personal patronage.' A Committee was formed, consisting mainly of Moran's politician friends; but in this, as in so many matters of concern to the Cardinal, they proved ineffective, and the attempt failed.<sup>71</sup>

A temporarily successful N.S.W. C.Y.M.S. Union was at last formed on 3 August 1901.<sup>72</sup> It had possibly been inspired in part by the First Australasian Catholic Congress, held in Sydney in 1900, at which four papers on Catholic Young Men's Societies had been read - one of them written by R. M. Riggs.<sup>73</sup> However, its basis of support was weak: debating 'was its main unifying activity'; whereas, in the opinion of a Sydney observer, the Victorian C.Y.M.S. 'used debate simply as a window dressing while they engaged in the more serious work of cricket and football.' In 1909 'the whole edifice fell to pieces; branches gave up the

<sup>71</sup> Patrick Ford, Cardinal Moran and the A.L.P. (M.U.P., 1966), p. 238.

<sup>72</sup> Brian T. Doyle, 'The Catholic Story' (a chronology), Catholic Weekly, 12 April 1951, p. 4.

<sup>73</sup> Report of the First Australasian Catholic Congress (Sydney, 1900), pp. 408-12.

weary struggle to keep going and decayed into the dust of nothingness...Founded on the ruins was the present <sup>74</sup> /Catholic Young Men's/ Cricket Association.' Individual parish youth clubs remained scattered throughout Sydney, most of them calling themselves Literary and Debating Societies.

On 1 September 1913 efforts to reconstitute a Sydney Catholic youth movement culminated in the formation of the N.S.W. Catholic Debating Societies' Union. It only began to function effectively in 1915, and did not hold its first debating competition until 1917.<sup>75</sup> It was assisted by the Catholic Federation, which actively encouraged the proliferation of Catholic debating clubs.<sup>76</sup>

Throughout its thirty-odd year life the mainstay of the C.D.S.U. was Robert M. Riggs, a clerk who had been General Secretary of the Victorian C.Y.M.S. from 1900 to 1909, and who had subsequently moved to Sydney for employment reasons.<sup>77</sup> Riggs wished to see the Union develop to a level of prestige and influence comparable with that of the Victorian body; however, in this hope he was doomed to disappointment. To an even greater extent than the N.S.W. C.Y.M.S.

<sup>74</sup>

A. E. Fernon, 'Personalities of the Moment: R. M. Riggs', Catholic Fireside, 1 February 1935, p. 9.

<sup>75</sup>

Ibid., August 1934, p. 21.

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The N.S.W. Catholic Federation's periodical (August 1919-January 1921) was titled: The Catholic Federation Magazine and Official Organ of the N.S.W. Catholic Debating Societies' Union. In reality only a small segment of the magazine was given to C.D.S.U. reports.

<sup>77</sup>

A. E. Fernon, loc. cit.

Union before it, the C.D.S.U. was denied a mass basis by the restricted nature of its activities. It was essentially nothing more than a debates co-ordinating committee; and it was forced to share the patronage of Sydney Catholic young people with a Catholic Young Men's Cricket Association and a Catholic Young Men's Tennis Association. Indeed, in contrast to Victoria, Sydney Catholic youth possessed no unifying movement, no communal leadership class, and no active sense of corporate identity.

Thus in the forty years preceding the Great Depression a number of important differences had grown between the Catholic traditions of Victoria and New South Wales. Not only did the Victorian Church exhibit greater intellectual flexibility; it possessed a prestigious and well-organised young men's movement of which there was no counterpart in New South Wales. In the latter State, by contrast, lay vitality was concentrated within the secret Order of Knights of the Southern Cross, and thus was largely confined to an older age-group. Being invisible, the Order did little to mitigate the aspect which Sydney Catholicism presented to the outsider, as being staid, sterile, and clergy-bound.

Since the ensuing decade was to be one of great social and intellectual turbulence, it is from Victoria rather than New South Wales that the most vigorous Catholic reaction to the era could be expected to have come. An indication of how this reaction first developed, and of the form which it took, will be revealed by a survey of the Catholic press during the crucial early Depression years.

CHAPTER 3THE SHOCK OF DEPRESSION, 1929-31

The year 1929 brought a steady worsening of industrial and economic affairs for Australia. Export prices fell, overseas credit sources dried up, and external trade, like world trade generally, declined. Employers and financial interests began to demand reductions in wages and government expenditure in order to lessen inflationary pressures, improve the competitive position of exports, and bring Australian standards of living more into line with national income and production. Trade Unions vigorously opposed these measures, and responded to the worsening employment and wage situations with strikes and increasing militancy. The year was marked by serious strikes on the waterfront, the coal-fields, and in the timber industry; and by a general weakening of confidence in the Federal and State Arbitration and Conciliation tribunals.

In Victoria, Archbishop Mannix began to speak with increasing frequency on the economic situation. His main preoccupation was with the rising unemployment, and he called for more relief from the Government, more consideration from employers, for those out of work. His tone was moderate, his concerns immediate: he supported no political party, and deferred to no social ideology, Catholic or otherwise. Speaking at church and school openings, foundation-stone layings, Communion Breakfasts and other functions, he persistently stressed the right of the working-man to the dignity of employment:

Every man who was ready and able to work had an absolute right to decent sustenance...The first claim on the



industry should be its workers. There should be constant work for the men, or, failing this, constant employment.<sup>1</sup>

The main organ through which Victorian Catholics were acquainted with the statements of their Archbishop was the Advocate, the official Melbourne archdiocesan weekly. Edited by an Irish secular priest, Father Francis Moynihan, it sought to be popular, informative, and broadly liberal. It had inherited from the Austral Light a respect for intellectual competence, and in this regard was superior to any other Catholic paper in Australia. Its first two pages were given to the capable literary reviews of P. I. O'Leary, and through these the interested reader could keep abreast of overseas literary happenings, Catholic and general.<sup>2</sup> Its editorial page incorporated, in addition to the leader-article, a 'Current Comment' section consisting of a half-dozen or so segments on topical issues. It featured occasional articles by special correspondents on overseas Catholic affairs; a regular 'Our World News Service' section; and frequent essays by leading English Catholic writers. During 1929 it ran a long series of articles by G. K. Chesterton entitled 'What They Don't Know', directed against familiar Protestant and rationalist objections to Catholicism

The second Victorian Catholic weekly, the Tribune, was much smaller than the Advocate, and was concerned almost entirely with parochial and social news. Its editorials rarely touched on

<sup>1</sup> Adv. 26 September 1929, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> A posthumous selection of O'Leary's essays was published as Bard in Bondage, edited Joseph O'Dwyer (Hawthorn Press, Melbourne, 1954).

politics, and when they did were more partisan, more clearly Labour-orientated, than those of the other paper.

In Sydney the official Catholic weekly was the Catholic Press. Its editor was P. S. Cleary, a veteran Catholic journalist who had been President of the New South Wales Catholic Federation in its hey-day. It was larger than the Advocate, and gave much more space to news from the individual dioceses of the State. However, it was less conscious of overseas happenings, and rarely contained feature articles. Since Archbishop Kelly did not share Archbishop Mannix's predilection for speaking on public issues, Cleary's editorials gave Sydney Catholics the only significant guidance they were likely to find within the local Church on social and political questions.

The other Sydney Catholic weekly was the Freeman's Journal, which was owned by the Hibernian Society. Although the oldest Catholic paper in Australia, by 1929 it was little more than a parochial news-chronicle; and even as such, it contained little information which could not also be found in the Catholic Press. Its editorials were written in a windy and euphuistic style; and when they dealt with current affairs, which they rarely did, they were generally ill-informed and indecisive.

The social perspectives of the two major Catholic papers on the eve of the Great Depression were rather vague and insular, and, viewed in retrospect, ill-suited to the task of analysing the problems of the decade ahead. Ideological conflict scarcely impinged at all on the Australian Catholic consciousness. Communism

rated only an occasional press mention, and then generally in reference not to Australia, but to religious persecutions in Russia. Mussolini was something of a hero with both papers, particularly in the months following the signing in February 1929 of the Italian-Vatican Concordat. Fascism as such, however, was ignored by the Catholic Press, and viewed with hostility by the Advocate, which in September equated it with Belloc's 'Servile State'

The very thing upon which the Fascist State prides itself /i.e., its totalitarianism/ will yet prove the rock of its destruction.<sup>3</sup>

The Advocate tended to attribute all commendable aspects of the Italian regime to Mussolini personally, and all distasteful and oppressive aspects to the Fascist Party, which it regarded as a semi-distinct and more malevolent influence. Even so, it rarely commented on European affairs except when, and insofar as, the interests of the Church were involved.

On Australian matters the attitudes of the two papers were remarkably similar. With regard to external relations they were nationalistic and isolationist, deploring in particular sentimental and economic reliance upon Britain. The Advocate spoke contemptuously of those politicians and newspapermen who cultivated the illusion 'that England is a sort of doting mother whose heart throbs with maternal solicitude for its offspring, the Dominions.'<sup>4</sup> Asia was perceived as a potential threat, and an

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<sup>3</sup> Adv. 26 September 1929, Current Comment. P. I. O'Leary was the probable writer of this, as of most other Advocate current affairs comments. Father Moynihan preferred to concentrate on the business and administrative side of the paper's operation.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 26 December 1929, Current Comment.

increased population as Australia's best long-term security.<sup>5</sup>

On internal political and economic questions, both the Advocate and the Catholic Press followed pragmatic policies, although their views generally coincided with those of moderate elements in the Labour movement. The most contentious issue of 1929 was that of Arbitration; and on this the Catholic papers, in strongly supporting the principle of Arbitration, were at variance with the Nationalist conservatives and the left-wing of Labour alike.<sup>6</sup> Both papers tended to sympathise with employees rather than employers in industrial disputes; but at the same time they reproached those in the Labour movement who sought to overthrow the capitalist system, rather than to improve it.<sup>7</sup> Only on fiscal policy was there a noteworthy difference between the two weeklies. The Catholic Press called for an expanded programme of public works as a means to create employment;<sup>8</sup> while the Advocate reluctantly advocated reductions in wages and government spending, maintaining that this was the only way by which the economy of the country could be stabilised.<sup>9</sup> The Labour movement was united in support of the former course of action, and in opposition to the latter.

<sup>5</sup>  
C.P. 18 April 1929, editorial; Adv. 4 April 1929: 'Melbourne's Example to Women'.

<sup>6</sup>  
 See Adv. 14 February 1929, Current Comment; 13 June, Current Comment  
C.P. 21 February 1929, editorial; 26 September, editorial.

<sup>7</sup>  
Adv. 24 January 1929, Current Comment; C.P. 7 March 1929, editorial; 18 April, editorial.

<sup>8</sup>  
C.P. 18 April 1929, editorial.

<sup>9</sup>  
Adv. 24 January 1929, Current Comment; 7 February, Current Comment.

In September the Federal Nationalist government was defeated in the House of Representatives, and a General Election was precipitated. The central issue in the poll was whether or not the Federal Arbitration and Conciliation system was to be dismantled, with the Nationalists saying yes, and the Labor Party no. Both Catholic papers urged its retention, and left no doubt as to which political grouping they favoured.<sup>10</sup> Even then, however, their support went to the policy of Labor rather than to the party as such.

The election took place on 12 October, and resulted in a resounding victory for the Scullin Labor team. From this point onwards the social perspectives of the Advocate and the Catholic Press began to diverge. As the Depression advanced, this divergence was to become increasingly pronounced.

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When it became apparent that James Henry Scullin was to be Australia's first Catholic Prime Minister, the Advocate's previous restraint in matters of politics gave way to jubilation. It was delighted to note that Scullin's Cabinet of thirteen would contain seven Catholics, three of whom - Scullin, Brennan and Moloney - were Victorians and ex-C.Y.M.S. leaders.<sup>11</sup> It did not

<sup>10</sup> Adv. 26 September 1929, editorial; 10 October, editorial; C.P. 19 September 1929, editorial; 26 September, editorial.

<sup>11</sup> See Chapter 2, footnote 66.



anticipate all 'plain sailing' for the new Ministry, but even so it felt confident that it

should easily prove superior to the Cabinet which, on Monday next, will meet for the last time.<sup>12</sup>

With regard to the new Prime Minister personally, the paper could scarcely find superlatives sufficient to do him honour. It drew attention to his 'striking quality of Australianism'; to his 'powers of lucid speech'; to his 'straight and steel-true sincerity'. It boasted that it was 'an experience to hear Mr. Scullin lecture on the need for a true Australian sentiment.' It attributed to him powers of leadership far beyond the ordinary: he was

possessed of something of a quiet ascendancy over the House of Representatives, a mastery not of party nor even of power, but of personal influence, of demeanour, of unobtrusive dignity.<sup>13</sup>

Archbishop Mannix was somewhat more reserved in his praise. He was pleased that Scullin's Catholic convictions had not impeded him in his ascent to the Prime Ministership; but at the same time 'He was not inclined to be hard on the outgoing Government as some people seemed to be'. He recognised that the new Administration faced a difficult task; and he cautioned that

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'The people should be patient with the Government.'

In Sydney, the Catholic Press reflected the mood of Dr.

<sup>12</sup>  


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Adv. 17 October 1929, editorial.

<sup>13</sup>  
 Ibid., 17 October 1929, p. 23.

<sup>14</sup>  
 Speech at C.Y.M.S. Annual Communion Breakfast, Tribune 31 October 1929, p. 1.

Mannix rather than that of its Melbourne sister-paper. P. S. Cleary's experience in the Catholic Federation, and his past activities as an anti-socialist propagandist,<sup>15</sup> had left him somewhat cynical of political parties, the Labor Party included. His political comments were generally perceptive and incisive, and frequently sardonic. He welcomed Scullin's election, but warned that 'the new Prime Minister's greatest danger will come from the back-seat driver, the loud-mouthed demagogue outside Parliament'.<sup>16</sup> He attached no significance to the predominantly Catholic composition of the new Ministry.

The events of the subsequent two years were to vindicate the caution of Dr. Mannix and the Catholic Press, and to shatter the illusions of the Advocate. Even as the votes were being counted which would confirm Scullin's victory, the great Wall Street crash was beginning. In Australia, as throughout the industrialised world, the unemployment rate began to soar, defying all government attempts to stabilise the economy. Scullin's Administration, buffeted this way and that, was never given the chance to find its feet. On its Right, the Commonwealth Bank Board refused to allow it the measure of credit it demanded; and its attempts to alter the composition of the Board were thwarted by the Nationalist-controlled Senate. On its Left, powerful sections of the Labour movement condemned its every effort to reduce government spending and to balance its budgets.

Stresses within the governing party began to show in

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<sup>15</sup> Patrick O'Farrell, Short History, pp. 236-7.

<sup>16</sup> C.P. 17 October 1929, editorial.

November of 1930, when the Federal Labor caucus rejected Commonwealth-State budgetary agreements made in August. Early the following year the caucus split when followers of rebel New South Wales Premier Jack Lang withdrew and formed themselves into an independent Parliamentary grouping. This rift was followed almost immediately by the secession from the caucus of ex-Ministers Lyons and Fenton. In May these two joined with the Nationalists to form the United Australia Party, with Lyons as leader. The following month the depleted Labor government roused the fury of large sections of the Labour movement when it at last agreed with the States to effect severe budgetary economies. Finally, in November 1931, weakened and demoralised, the Scullin government fell. In the ensuing General Election it was decisively defeated by the Lyons U.A.P. combination.

The Catholic papers stood loyally by Scullin throughout these two fateful years. Both the Advocate and the Catholic Press supported him on all major issues; and they consistently deplored what Cleary described as 'the dog-fight methods of the paid Labour  
<sup>17</sup>organisers'. However, as the Catholic Press had originally anticipated a difficult time for the Government, it was not unduly shaken when it failed to surmount its problems. Cleary accepted  
<sup>18</sup>with equanimity the verdict of the December 1931 elections. The Advocate, on the other hand, had expected a great deal of Scullin; and his failure affected its whole political outlook.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 18 December 1930, editorial.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 24 December 1931, editorial.

During the comparatively settled first year of the Government's term of office the Advocate had sustained its eulogistic tone of the previous October. In June of 1930 it had canonised the Scullin Ministry as 'unquestionably the ablest that has ever had power in the federal domain.'<sup>19</sup> In August, when Scullin departed for a four-month trip overseas, it pronounced him 'one of the greatest of our Prime Ministers.

In courage, resource, integrity and ability he is in the finest tradition of our most outstanding public men.<sup>20</sup>

When in January 1931 he returned to a deeply divided party, the Advocate felt confident that he would revive 'the elements of sanity in the party', and that 'A rapid moulting of "the left wing" should follow.'<sup>21</sup>

While there still appeared to be hope for the government, the paper maintained its traditional trust in political pragmatism. In March of 1930 it rebuked Labour radicals, and warned that 'only the common sense and wise direction that made it the force it was'<sup>22</sup> would carry the Labour movement through to its legitimate goals. In September it denounced 'Cheap and impractical theories', and asserted that 'What is wanted today...is the severely practical and constructive.'<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Adv. 19 June 1930, editorial.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 21 August 1930, Current Comment.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 8 January 1931, Current Comment.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 6 March 1930, Current Comment.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 18 September 1930, editorial.

However, when in the final months of 1930 the Labor government began to show signs of disintegration, the Advocate's faith in the 'severely practical and constructive' began to wane. In December it despaired that, since 'the Labor Government has failed, more lamentably and completely than any other...

it would seem that the Capitalist system is incapable of producing that just distribution of wealth on which the country's welfare depends.<sup>24</sup>

For the first time, it showed disaffection with the existing structure of society, and it began to seek in Catholic social philosophy an explanation of the world's ills. In May of 1931 it proclaimed that the roots of disorder were to be found in mankind's rejection of Catholic principles; and that the Reformation 'was the seed of the deadly upas tree of unrestrained individualism.<sup>25</sup> which so blackly presents itself to-day'. In July it dissertated at length on the ideological basis of current troubles, seeing them as 'striking proof of the fruits of the withdrawal of<sup>26</sup> Christian principles from man's dealings with man.'

Contributing to this sense of fundamental social disorder was the international situation. No longer did Australia's problems and their solutions appear to be comfortably insular; they were inextricably bound up with world-wide developments. Yet the Advocate, as it looked towards Europe, could see little to inspire

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<sup>24</sup>

Ibid., 4 December 1930, Current Comment.

<sup>25</sup>

Ibid., 14 May 1931, editorial.

<sup>26</sup>

Ibid., 30 July 1931, editorial.



hope. It frequently deplored the influence of 'Caesarism' in Italy, where constant disputes occurred between the Vatican and the Fascist Government.<sup>27</sup> From 1931 it began to report in alarmed tones the rapid growth in Germany of a new totalitarian movement based on Nordic racism, Nazism.<sup>28</sup> Elsewhere a familiar enemy, Communism, was gathering strength. The paper warned that 'The whole temper of the age, and the tendency to State absolutism and totalitarianism' posed a formidable threat to the Universal Church, and one which was likely to increase rather than diminish.<sup>29</sup> Even so, it was the Church which represented the one remaining hope for mankind:

Alone in the world one voice rings out clearly and definitely, directing men to the path that shall lead them to international peace and harmony and property in this world, and to eternal salvation in the next.<sup>30</sup>

The Advocate's dramatic flight to Catholic social idealism was, however, at this stage more apparent than real. Its insubstantial nature is evidenced by the fact that the paper evinced no new interest in Papal social thought, made no effort to examine current problems in the light of Catholic principles, and did not attempt to stimulate the formation of study-groups. Indeed, when in May the most important Papal Encyclical of the decade, Quadragesimo Anno ('On the Reconstruction of the Social Order'), was released, the Advocate gave it no more attention than

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<sup>27</sup> Adv. 8 January 1931, Current Comment; 4 June, editorial; 9 July, Current Comment; 6 August, p. 11; 13 August, editorial.

<sup>28</sup> For early attacks on Nazism, see Adv. 9 April 1931, p. 23; 3 December, p. 8; 31 December, pp. 8, 13.

<sup>29</sup> Adv. 22 October 1931, Current Comment.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 4 February 1932, editorial.

basic protocol and respect for the Papacy demanded. The same applied to the Encyclical Non Abbiamo Bisogno ('Concerning Catholic Action'), which was released at the end of June.<sup>31</sup>

Yet regardless of its superficiality, the Advocate's idealism represented the first sign that Catholic social philosophy had begun to acquire a new relevance for Victorian Catholic opinion-leaders. In seeking explanations and solutions for the worsening social disorder, they had become aware, however vaguely, of what was to them a new dimension of thought. To explore this dimension, an intellectual leap of major proportions would be required.

Unbeknown to the Advocate, by the close of 1931 the organisation which would accomplish this leap was already in existence. From within that small section of the Catholic populace which had obtained a University education, a unique movement had arisen, and had begun propagating a new kind of Catholic militancy and social idealism. This was the Campion Society.

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At Melbourne University, as elsewhere, the coming of the Depression had brought marked changes in established social attitudes. This was a time when Universities were largely the preserves of the

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<sup>31</sup> Abridged texts of Quadragesimo Anno and Non Abbiamo Bisogno were printed in the Advocate of 2 July and 13 August respectively. Subsequently they were rarely mentioned in the paper.

well-to-do, and when the general student outlook was implicitly conservative. Explicit interest in politics (and religion) was discouraged by unwritten but time-honoured codes of 'correct' student behaviour. At Melbourne University, the prevailing world-view was probably best typified in that of Professor Ernest Scott, the distinguished occupant of the Chair of History from 1914 to 1936, whose historical writings reflected a pride in British civilisation, and a confidence that the progress of mankind could be measured in purely secular terms.<sup>32</sup>

During the 'twenties the main variation from this traditional campus conservatism had been provided by a well-established strain of 'liberal internationalism', an attitude syndrome which enjoyed a global popularity during the first decade of the League of Nations era. Disseminated through the campus by associations such as the League of Nations Union and the Public Questions Society, this quasi-philosophy assumed that the way to universal harmony lay through disinterested consideration of all contentious issues. The emphasis was placed on discussion rather than decision, detachment as against commitment. A reaction against this outlook had led to the formation in 1925 of 'a more virile organisation' in the Labour Club, the founders of which maintained 'that University men exercise far too small an influence on the politics of the country'.<sup>33</sup> Although not

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<sup>32</sup> For convenient illustrations of Scott's historical perspectives, see his History and Historical Problems (O.U.P., 1925); and his Men and Thought in Modern History (Macmillan, Melbourne, 1920).

<sup>33</sup> Farrago 3 July 1925.

affiliated with the Labor Party, and although consciously intellectual in nature, this club sought to prepare students to take part in the normal party processes of Australian political life. However, after a lively beginning, it sank into a somewhat passive state for the remaining years of the decade. A Liberal Club, formed shortly afterwards, passed out of existence in 1928. At the beginning of 1929 Farrago, the student newspaper, was of the opinion that 'The heyday of the political clubs was over.'<sup>34</sup>

Not even the University, however, could escape the intellectual and social ferment which was unleashed throughout the world by the economic collapse which subsequently ensued. As unprecedented poverty and unemployment began to appear throughout the country, giving rise to widespread disgruntlement with the established social framework, the facade of student aloofness began to crumble. The times obviously called for social commitment and decisive action; and to the disgust of the 'old school', politics began to attract an increasing amount of student attention. In May of 1930 the Melbourne University Conservative Club was formed;<sup>35</sup> and in September an Australia Party Club came into being.<sup>36</sup> By the beginning of 1931 Farrago was mourning the passing of the older, a-partisan traditions:

Farewell, happy fields! The childish realm of fancy and mimicry is left behind; the mad follies of Commencement

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 15 March 1929.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 13 May 1930.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 9 September 1930.

are a sad, sweet dream; we must enter the sterner, turbulent domain of party politics...<sup>37</sup>

At the University as in other sectors of the community, many people began to search for a permanent solution to the existing chaos in a new and better social order. For some, the path towards a stable society seemed to lie along the lines of a complete change of social values. One Professor assured the Philosophical Society that

The ideal country is one of small townships and rural life...where alcohol, meat, tobacco, motor-cars, trams, must all be taboo.<sup>38</sup>

However, for many seeking an ideal society, a much more immediate and attractive model presented itself in Soviet Russia, that country which, alone amongst the Occidental communities, had apparently escaped the effects of the Depression. During 1930 the Labour Club began to display an increasing fascination with Marxism, and with the Soviet experiment in particular. In March it formed a study-circle on Russia;<sup>39</sup> and a month later it spoke against the Debating Society in support of the motion: 'That the effects of the Russian Revolution were really desirable.'

Significantly, the opposition team in this debate was made up of three young men from Newman College, Murray McInerney, Charles Gerard Heffey, and Raymond Triado. Another Catholic student,

<sup>37</sup>

Ibid., 28 April 1931.

<sup>38</sup>

Ibid., 8 April 1930. The speaker was Professor Demarquette.

<sup>39</sup>

Ibid., 1 March 1930.



Valentino Adami, took the floor during the general discussion and 'attacked...the Red army.'<sup>40</sup>

As a result of their Catholic schooling, most of the ever-growing number of Catholic undergraduates regarded Communism, in theory and in practice, as a positive evil. Moreover, they were being made uncomfortably aware that many others in the community did not share this conviction. In mid-1931 Father William Hackett, S.J., addressing the recently-formed, militantly conservative Melbourne University All-For-Australia League, gave voice to these growing Catholic apprehensions:

It appears that the daily press is too sympathetic towards Russia. It has a sneaking regard for the Soviet attitude to 'obstructionist religion'. 'Thou Shalt not Kill' is regarded as 'obstructionist religion' in Russia.<sup>41</sup>

However, the means for obtaining an intellectual appreciation of the Church's objections to Communism, or of any other aspect of Catholic belief for that matter, were not readily available to the average student. The Newman Society was merely a social club; and Catholicism did not constitute an intellectual force on the campus. This is not to say that Catholics were isolated: indeed, it had been one of the earliest achievements of Father Jeremiah Murphy, S.J., upon being appointed Rector of Newman College in 1923, to induce Newman residents to participate

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<sup>40</sup>

Ibid., 8 July 1930.

<sup>41</sup>

Ibid., 7 July 1931.

fully in University life.<sup>42</sup> However, Father Murphy discouraged Catholic assertiveness, fearing that it could produce sectarian conflict and disrupt the general harmony prevailing among students. He 'detested controversy - he thought that there had been too much controversy in the past.'<sup>43</sup>

Not all Catholics were entirely happy with this situation. The new ideological stirrings were precipitating fundamental questions on the nature of man and the purpose of social enterprise; and these were matters on which the Catholic Church claimed a competence to speak. Late in 1930 Murray McInerney, as Secretary of the Newman Society, posted circulars to all known Catholic graduates - several hundred of them - requesting their advice and assistance in reference to possible Catholic intellectual activities at the University. The response was typically apathetic, with only seven bothering to reply. One of these, however, was a young Arts graduate and Law student named Frank Maher. Writing from the central Victorian town of Seymour, where he was employed as a temporary teacher, he expressed an interest in McInerney's proposal, and promised to get in touch with him when he returned to Melbourne at the end of the school-year.<sup>44</sup>

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In 1930 Francis Kevin Heathcote Joseph Maher was twenty-

<sup>42</sup>

For comments before and after the change had taken place, see articles by G. F. Taylor in Newman, Annual of Newman College, 1923, p. 48; and 1926, p. 42. Back-copies are held at the College.

<sup>43</sup>

Memorandum, K. T. Kelly to author, 1970.

<sup>44</sup>

Interview with Mr. Justice McInerney, May 1967.

five years of age. He was an ex-resident of Newman College, and had concluded the first section of his Arts/Law course by obtaining Honours in History and Economics, and by winning the Wyselaskie Scholarship in the latter subject. He had been a member of International and Intervarsity debating teams; and since abandoning full-time University studies had spent some months in the Jesuit novitiate in Sydney. He had heard Father C. C. Martindale, S.J., speak in Melbourne in 1928, and had been impressed by the style of intellectuality which he displayed. From these experiences, and from his awareness of the new social currents which were gathering force in the community, he had become concerned at the intellectual backwardness of Australian Catholicism.<sup>45</sup>

He returned to Melbourne at the end of 1930 and succeeded in gaining a teaching post for the following year at St. Kevin's Christian Brothers' College. He had Murray McInerney's suggestions still in mind when on Christmas Day he chanced to meet an old school-friend, John Merlo, at the International Tennis at Kooyong. Their conversation during the afternoon covered a variety of topics; but as they were leaving the grounds, Maher later recalled, 'One chance remark he made...convinced me, "This is the man to begin a Catholic Action group."<sup>46</sup>'

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<sup>45</sup> Telephone interview with Mr. F. K. Maher, May 1967. Draft copy of *Campion* memorandum to the Episcopal Sub-Committee on Catholic Action, late 1937, in possession of Mr. Justice McInerney.

<sup>46</sup> F. K. Maher, 'Campion Beginnings', Orders of the Day, June 1939, in collection of *Campion* papers held by Messrs. Heffey and Butler, Solicitors, of Lonsdale Street, Melbourne.

John Merlo was also twenty-five, and at the time was teaching at Melbourne High School, a selective State school. While at Melbourne University he had won the Wyselaskie Scholarship in both History and Economics; and he held a Master of Arts degree and a Diploma in Education. Quietish in manner, and giving an appearance of guilelessness, he was one of the few Catholics who circulated in liberal University circles, and 'he knew all about the new liberal-internationalist outlook current in the few years before Fascism.'<sup>47</sup> Like Maher, he realised that the ordinary educated Catholic had a poor intellectual comprehension of his Faith and its ramifications; and so he readily agreed to his friend's proposal that they try to form some kind of a study-group. The two met again a week later, and Merlo suggested as a possible colleague a fellow-teacher at Melbourne High School, Denys Jackson.

Jackson was a loquacious and erudite English Tory, and was then thirty years old. Born into a High Anglican family, he had converted to Catholicism in his youth under the influence of the writings of Newman and the Oxford converts. He had taken out his B.A. from Liverpool and his M.A. from Manchester, specialising in the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods of English history. He had come to Australia in 1927 under contract to the Victorian Education Department; and upon his arrival had gained the impression that 'Australian Catholics...regarded their Catholicism as a revered part of their Irish heritage.' Thus when Merlo told him

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<sup>47</sup>

Interview with Mr. D. G. M. Jackson, May 1967.

of Maher's proposal, he saw in it an excellent opportunity for getting some intelligent Catholics, and giving them the idea of Catholicism as a cultural basis of Western civilisation.<sup>48</sup>

Jackson in his turn approached a 'brilliant, tempestuous friend',<sup>49</sup> Frank Quaine, a gifted French scholar and outstanding University debater. Quaine's father, J. P. Quaine, an occasional contributor of articles to the Advocate, was the proprietor of an antiquarian book-shop in Prahran, by means of which the son had acquired a considerable breadth of reading. He was deeply interested in European culture, and was a confirmed Francophile. He agreed with Jackson that the study-group scheme was worthy of support.

Maher contacted Murray McInerney, who proved amenable to his proposal; and he in his turn persuaded his lively red-headed friend, Gerard Heffey, to consent (somewhat hesitantly) to attend an initial meeting. At the time both were in residence at Newman College, preparing for the History Honours exams which would complete the Arts sections of their Arts/Law courses. Both were active in College affairs, and in the University Debating Society; and McInerney was on the staff of Farrago.<sup>50</sup> They were well aware of the new ideological influences which had permeated through to the University, and had 'spent the previous year arguing with contemporary undergraduates with Communist sympathies.' From this

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<sup>48</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>  
F. K. Maher, 'Campion Beginnings'.

<sup>50</sup>  
See Newman, 1928 and after; Farrago 7 July 1931.



experience they had acquired 'the beginnings of an intellectual interest in our Faith'; and they saw in the planned study-group a possible means of adding a tertiary dimension to their Catholic education.<sup>51</sup>

Maher also brought into the venture William Knowles, a twenty-six year old solicitor whose mother, Marion Miller Knowles, had been a prominent Catholic poetess and writer of the Austral Light era. Knowles invited along Arthur Adams, another recently-graduated young lawyer. Adams shared Law chambers with Mr. Harry Minogue, editor of Australia of thirteen years previously, and had been greatly impressed by the profundity of his older colleague's religious convictions and literary knowledge.<sup>52</sup>

On 28 January 1931 the eight men gathered together in the legal apartments of Bill Knowles. All had emerged to some extent from the self-contained, inward-looking Catholicism of their day into the broader streams of University life; all had become aware of the new ideological currents which were buffeting their contemporaries; all had come to the 'melancholy conclusion that they knew far less about their Faith than any educated man should.' They were 'intellectuals and Catholics, not intellectual Catholics.'<sup>53</sup> All were apprehensive, pessimistic: they had 'no

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with Mr. Justice McInerney, May 1967.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Judge Arthur Adams, May 1967.

<sup>53</sup> Prelude to Catholic Action, A.C.T.S. No. 718, September 1936, p. 7.

clear idea of what it was they were to aim at, no programme of work, no scheme of organisation planned.<sup>54</sup> At least three came

expecting the birth of the new Society to be also its funeral. It was not the first time a few light-hearted young men had tried to move the mountain of Catholic inertia in things of the mind.<sup>55</sup>

For a while they sat facing each other uneasily: their conversation was 'very vague, very formal, very silent.' But then Jackson took issue with Quaine over some comment or other; and, as Maher recalled:

He quickly became neither vague, nor formal, nor silent. He and Quaine saved us. We had come together because we felt that we were painfully ignorant of the modern Catholic approach to life, because we had realised we were being poisoned by slow degrees in the pagan atmosphere in which we lived. So we listened humbly and gratefully while Jackson and Quaine gave off fireworks about Latin culture and the neo-scholasticism of Maritain. We were dazzled and delighted.<sup>56</sup>

All the others were affected in much the same way. Heffey wrote:

I remember attending the first meeting of the Campion with a certain amount of misgivings, and I remember leaving it wondering why no one had ever thought of the idea before.<sup>57</sup>

Excited by the success of their first meeting, the eight agreed to meet again on 11 February, and each fortnight after that. 58

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<sup>54</sup> President's (Maher's) Report, Campion Society Quarterly Meeting, 24 January 1934, H/B.

<sup>55</sup> Secretary's (Maher's) Report, Q.M., 6 July 1932, H/B.

<sup>56</sup> Maher, 'Campion Beginnings'.

<sup>57</sup> C. G. Heffey, 'Early Days of the Campion', Orders of the Day, August 1939, H/B.

<sup>58</sup> President's Report, Q.M., 24 January 1934, H/B.

As their first text, they decided to study Survivals and New Arrivals, Belloc's vigorous defence of Catholic belief against the diverse challenges of what he termed the 'New Paganism'. As Heffey recounted, the impact of this work was decisive:

One has only to read the first sentence of this to discover, as we did, that he has a loyalty to the Faith of which previously he was not quite aware.<sup>59</sup>

Over the succeeding weeks they began to familiarise themselves with the Central Catholic Library, being assisted and advised by an increasingly intrigued Father Hackett. They became acquainted with the leading writers of the English Catholic Literary Revival; encountered 'names and ideas and movements of which we had never heard.'<sup>60</sup> They became absorbed in a host of fascinating new books, in works such as Belloc's The Servile State and Europe and the Faith; Chesterton's Orthodoxy and The Everlasting Man; Dawson's The Age of the Gods; W. T. Walsh's The Thirteenth - Greatest of Centuries. They 'infected one another with enthusiasm; became filled with scorn of a decadent paganism';<sup>61</sup> and their conviction grew that

the Church made Europe, and that everything good of which our modern world can boast has its origins in that age when, with all its defects, men proudly acknowledged a citizenship in a Christendom and a standard of values that are fast disappearing.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>

Heffey, 'Early Days of the Campaign'.

<sup>60</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>

Prelude to Catholic Action, p. 8.

Their meetings were kept deliberately informal. Papers were given, but could be departed from at will. There was no set order of proceedings, no office-bearers, no minutes; yet the fortnightly gatherings were invariably stimulating, exciting affairs:

No-one of us dreamed of missing a meeting - if we had to go to a dance, we turned up to the meeting first.<sup>63</sup>

The members tended to inspire each other through the interaction of their personalities and the play of their ideas. A semblance of order was maintained by Frank Maher, who displayed from the beginning a natural aptitude as a chairman. Undoubtedly, however, the central figures at this early stage were Jackson and Quaine, who, through the scope of their historical knowledge, their enthusiasm, and their oratorical prowess, dominated the meetings. The others 'learnt as much from their obiter dicta as from the paper given.'<sup>64</sup> At the conclusion of the 'formal' proceedings, the participants would adjourn to Lucas' Cafe in Elizabeth Street, where animated discussions would continue.

By the time a couple of months had passed, the eight had become conscious that they had developed into a unique society, an association which had no counterpart anywhere else in the Victorian Church. Where the Catholicism of those around them tended to be defensive, theirs had acquired an assertive, Chestertonian quality. Where others interpreted the Catholic Faith intellectually in terms

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<sup>63</sup> Maher, 'Campion Beginnings'.

<sup>64</sup> Heffey, 'Early Days of the Campion'.

of traditional apologetics, they did so by reference to its contribution to Western civilisation and culture. They thought of the Church not as a static entity, but as a dynamic force in a desperately confused world. Their enthusiasm was such that they 'were regarded as dangerous fanatics in various quarters'; and

Catholic individuals who were quite unused to anyone except the clergy talking of religious matters were mystified and sometimes bored by our exuberance.<sup>65</sup>

They had undoubtedly acquired a distinctive identity, and in April they resolved to adopt a name. They wanted a patron<sup>66</sup> 'who was a saint, but wasn't Irish' - someone who embodied the ideals to which they aspired. An obvious choice was St. Thomas More, but they decided against taking his name as it was also that of a famous Irish song-writer of the time, and thus could have proven a source of embarrassment.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, at Jackson's suggestion,<sup>68</sup> they settled on another leading figure of the Catholic Reformation in England, on an Oxford scholar and Jesuit missionary named Edmund Campion, who had been executed during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Campion appealed to them 'because he was a University man, a brilliant

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Ibid.

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Interview with Mr. D. G. M. Jackson, May 1967. In point of fact Edmund Campion had not then been canonised a Saint, and carried the lesser Church title of 'Blessed'. He was canonised in 1971.

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Heffey, 'Early Days of the Campion'.

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Ibid.



pamphleteer, an incomparable conversationalist, and a gallant martyr.<sup>69</sup> They applied to the Archbishop through his Administrator for permission to constitute themselves as a Catholic society under Campion's name; and at their meeting of 13 May they were<sup>70</sup> informed that this had been granted.

The Campion Society had begun.

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<sup>69</sup> Prelude to Catholic Action, p. 9.

<sup>70</sup> Rough note, 13 May 1931, H/B.

CHAPTER 4THE EARLY EXPANSION OF THE CAMPION SOCIETY. MID-1931 TO 1933

The years 1932 and 1933 saw the Depression rise to the peak of its severity, and then begin slowly to ebb. The mental and social disorder which it had produced on a world scale did not, however, perceptibly diminish. Faith in Capitalism, both as an economic system and as a structure of social values, had been irrevocably shattered; and throughout the West the continuing battle was between those who advocated reform, and those who called for revolution. The most dramatic political event of the period occurred in Germany, where at the beginning of 1933 a battered and discredited liberal democracy was replaced by the National Socialist dictatorship of Adolf Hitler.

The Melbourne Advocate, viewing the world with ever-increasing dismay, continued to seek solace in the rhetoric of Catholic social idealism. In July of 1932 it proclaimed that the 'social, moral and economic influences' which had wrought such havoc were 'inherent in the revolt against Christian principles, against a right order of being, against the teachings of the Catholic Church.'<sup>1</sup> After the Nazis came to power this alarmism rose to a new pitch of urgency.<sup>2</sup> In May of 1933, surveying the world situation,

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<sup>1</sup> Adv. 14 July 1932, editorial.

<sup>2</sup> Adv. 17 March 1932, Current Comment; 14 April, p. 7: 'The German Presidential Election: "Hitlerism" a Menace to Europe'; 1 September, p. 6: 'The Future of the Church in Germany: Imperilled Between Bolshevism and the "Nazis"; 8 September, Current Comment; 3 November, p. 9: 'The Peril of False Prophets: Nazis a Menace to the

the paper saw only 'chaos and a civilisation which is crumbling fast.' It maintained that what was taking place was 'a general attack by the forces of paganism against Christianity'; and it spoke of 'the urgent necessity for Catholic Action.'<sup>3</sup> It wrongly assumed that Catholic Action embraced all forms of episcopally endorsed Catholic lay activity; but even so, this was the first time that it had highlighted the need for Catholics to translate social judgement into apostolic action.

The Campion Society, meanwhile, had been expanding both in size and in the scope of its activities. During the course of 1931 the original eight had been supplemented by a steady trickle of new members. First of these was Francis Xavier McMahon, a journalist. Then Val Adami entered 'to open up Central European

Church'; 10 November, Current Comment; 12 January 1933, p. 13; 9 March, Current Comment; 16 March, editorial; 30 March, p. 15: 'Hitler in the Saddle: Horrifying Outrages on Jews'; 13 April, p. 15 (text of sympathy letter from Archbishop Mannix to Mr. Phillip Cohen, President of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation); 6 July, p. 11: 'Modern Nationalism and Jingo Religion'; 13 July, p. 15; 10 August, pp. 6, 10; 17 August, editorial; 24 August, p. 14; 21 September, editorial; 19 October, editorial; 28 December, p. 21.

The above references belie Eric Andrews' claim (Isolationism and Appeasement, Canberra, 1970, pp. 11, 124-5, 201-2) that Australian Catholic spokesmen 'softened' their condemnation of the Nazis 'at any rate until the late 1930s.' Cf. my Chapter 3, ft. 28. A moderation of the Advocate's hostility towards Nazism is perceptible in the months August-October 1933, following receipt of the news of the signing of the July Vatican-German Concordat. By the end of 1933, as Hitler's depredations continued, the paper's attitude towards him and his regime was again one of detestation.

Andrews' assertion that the Papacy displayed an 'equivocal attitude' towards Nazism (p. 11) is equally fallacious, and reveals an ignorance of the personality and policies of Pope Pius XI: see Pinchas E. Lapide, The Last Three Popes and the Jews (Souvenir Press, London, 1967), Chapter 4, passim.; Guenter Lewy, The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1964), passim.

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Adv. 25 May 1933, editorials: 'A Call to Catholic Action'; 'Civilisation's Crisis'.

politics with his knowledge and quiet wit'; and after him came John Downey and James Edwards, two Law students. In September Kevin Kelly was admitted; and he was followed by John Daly, a widely-read young scientist; and Davern Wright, an Arts/Law student, talented Classics scholar, and University debater. An additional 'friend and guide from the first' was Father William Hackett, whose genial personality and extensive literary knowledge early gained him admittance to the inner councils of the Society. He was an invariable companion on Campion hikes, the first of which took place sometime during the year.<sup>4</sup>

Of these newcomers the most important, in Campion terms, was to be Kevin Kelly, then a twenty-one year old Public Servant and part-time Arts/Law student. Possessed of a fiery personality and a keen intellect, Kelly had been prevented by impoverished family circumstances from assuming full-time University studies. He was already a Councillor of the Victorian Public Service; a Labor Party activist; a University debater; and a personal acquaintance of Prime Minister Scullin. As with the others, his first experience of the Campion was decisive; and after attending his initial meeting, he recorded that he had 'never enjoyed a night so much.'<sup>5</sup> He soon established himself within the Society as 'a tower of strength in every way'.<sup>6</sup>

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F. K. Maher, 'Campion Beginnings', Orders of the Day, June 1939, H/B.

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Interviews with Mr. K. T. Kelly; memorandum, K. T. Kelly to author, 1970; entry in Kelly's diary, 16 September 1931.

6

Maher, 'Campion Beginnings'.

As their enthusiasm and group assurance increased, the Campions began seeking propaganda outlets through which they could project their newly-acquired vision of the Church, its past, and its role in the modern world. Even before the Society had acquired its name, the members had been making enquiries among friendly clergy as to opportunities for action which might be available to them. One Jesuit suggested that they work 'through established channels - e.g., local C.Y.M.S.'; and Father J. J. Lonergan, Administrator of the Cathedral, recommended that on the 'matter of lay action' they should 'have an interview with the Archbishop.'<sup>7</sup> However, neither of these courses of action was pursued. Later in the year investigations were made into the 'cost and possibilities of running a Catholic magazine (or semi-Catholic)';<sup>8</sup> but again, nothing was done, presumably as the scheme was judged to be impractical.

It was not until September that determined moves were made to initiate outside work. In that month the Campions decided that, as they wished 'to do something for the philosophy whose implications they have been working out', they would seek an informal address from Mr. F. J. Corder, a veteran of many past Catholic semi-intellectual ventures, and then the President of the moribund Victorian Catholic Federation. Corder accepted their invitation; but his talk was far from stimulating. It was a 'tale

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<sup>7</sup> Rough note, 13 May 1931, H/B.

<sup>8</sup> Rough note, 'Activities, 1931', H/B.

<sup>9</sup> Entry in K. T. Kelly's diary, 16 September 1931.



of difficulties and apathy',<sup>10</sup> detailing a depressing succession of failures. The speaker concluded that one 'might as well try to move a mountain' as 'attempt to get Australian Catholics to do anything for Catholic Action.'<sup>11</sup> When after the meeting the Campions adjourned to Lucas' Cafe, they were 'a little disillusioned and pessimistic.'<sup>12</sup> However, upon discussing the matter further, and being reinforced by Jackson's infectious enthusiasm, they decided that Corder 'was too old to be in sympathy with our (youthful) optimism.'<sup>13</sup> They resolved to continue on the course they had set themselves.

Their first real opportunity to extend their influence was provided by a Brisbane Catholic magazine, Australia, which they presumably discovered through Father Hackett's library. Edited by Father Adrian J. Mills, a convert from Anglicanism, it had been founded in 1928 as the organ of Mills' organisation, 'The Lay Apostolate'. The periodical reflected its editor's deep concern with the plight of the unemployed and destitute; with the tragic state 'of the remnant that remains of the Aborigines of this land'; with the conversion of non-Catholics; and with the spread of Communism.<sup>14</sup> On the negative side, it was poorly managed; it had

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<sup>10</sup> Memorandum, Mr. Justice McInerney to author, September 1967.

<sup>11</sup> President's (Maher's) Report, Q.M., 4 October 1933, H/B.

<sup>12</sup> C. G. Heffey, 'Early Days of the Campion', Orders of the Day, August 1939, H/B.

<sup>13</sup> Memorandum, Mr. Justice McInerney to author, September 1967.

<sup>14</sup> Mills to Maher, 23 October 1931 (mis-dated 1930); circular, 'The Lay Apostolate', October 1931, H/B. Frank Maher is certain he was not in touch with Mills before the Campion was founded.

a small circulation; and it was plagued with financial troubles.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, it was desperate for articles; and the Champions were looking for active work. They opened a correspondence with Mills; and by July of 1932 eight of their articles had appeared in Australia.<sup>16</sup>

At the end of 1931 a potentially more fruitful opening for Champion action was found in the Catholic boys' secondary schools, or, more specifically, in their Old Boys' Associations. The early Champions were drawn fairly evenly from the four Melbourne Catholic boys' schools which carried matriculation classes.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, Kevin Kelly had been foundation Secretary of the De La Salle College, Malvern, Old Boys' Association;<sup>18</sup> Arthur Adams in 1931 was Secretary of the St. Patrick's College, East Melbourne, Professional Men's Sodality (correctly, the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary);<sup>19</sup> and Frank Maher, being a History Master at St. Kevin's College, was

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<sup>15</sup> Evidence of Mills' correspondence, H/B.

<sup>16</sup> Secretary's (Maher's) Report, Q.M., 6 July 1932, H/B.

<sup>17</sup> Of the 1931 Champions, Maher, Heffey, Knowles, Merlo and Daly had completed their schooling at St. Kevin's Christian Brothers' College; McInerney, Wright, Downey and Edwards at Xavier College (Jesuit); Adams at St. Patrick's College, East Melbourne (Jesuit); and Kelly at De La Salle College, Malvern (De La Salle Brothers). Jackson had been educated in England; McMahon at St. Ignatius', Sydney (Jesuit), and then at Louvain University, Belgium; and Quaine at East St. Kilda C.B.C. (junior secondary) and then Donald's Coaching College, a night-school.

<sup>18</sup> Blue and Gold, Annual of De La Salle College, Malvern, 1929. Back-copies held at the College. The Association was founded late in 1928.

<sup>19</sup> The Patrician, 1931, p. 31. Back-copies held in the Latrobe Library, Melbourne. The Sodality had been founded in 1873.

well placed to exert an influence there.

The Campion call for a Catholic cultural awakening was voiced in two of the 1931 end-of-year Annuals. In The Patrician, Annual of St. Patrick's College, East Melbourne, Arthur Adams proclaimed that 'The need of the Church is Lay Action.' Promoting the Professional Men's Sodality, he asserted that 'There is a duty on the laity, at this stage of our history, if never before, to come together to learn the Catholic viewpoint in affairs.'<sup>20</sup> In Blue and Gold, Annual of De La Salle College, Malvern, Kevin Kelly warned that the 'next few decades' would be 'full of peril to European civilisation.' Echoing Belloc, he claimed that

In so far as that civilisation is good, in so far as it has achieved anything of substance, that achievement is due to the Faith.

He urged all school-leavers 'to assist in the fight for the Faith by the Catholicising of modern thought.'<sup>21</sup>

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Having thus put in a fruitful first year's work, the Campions at the end of 1931 decided to expand their numbers. A recruiting drive was launched among the friends of members, and among the intellectually more promising of the Catholic school-leavers. The result was that at the beginning of the 1932 University

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Ibid.

21

Blue and Gold, 1931.

year the Society more than doubled in size, increasing from fifteen members to approximately thirty-one.<sup>22</sup> Among the new arrivals were Phillip Perkins, Kevin Mitchell, Frank Gargan, and Stan Ingwersen; and three past Duxes of St. Kevin's College: Reginald Hoban, Frank Misell, and B. A. (Bob) Santamaria. The Society was now divided into three groups - the First Central, Second Central, and University - which began functioning in April. The 1931 members remained concentrated in the First Central Group, although for a time they worked on a roster basis to assist the two junior groups.<sup>23</sup> Their primary aim was to provide an extended course in Catholic history and sociology for Catholic undergraduates, to supplement and balance their secular studies.

The multiplication of groups necessitated the preparation of a Constitution, the draft of which was presented and approved at the Society's second Quarterly Meeting on 6 July 1932 (an organisational meeting of 13 April was regarded as the first Quarterly Meeting). This charter established the First Central Group as the official executive body of the Society, with the Secretary of that group being ex officio the General Secretary of the Society. The aims of the Campion were listed as being:

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There exist two widely differing membership lists dated 13 April 1932 (H/B). I have calculated the substantive new membership by comparing these with each other, with a membership list of December 1932, and with other documents, and eliminating the names of those who appear (thus) not to have actually begun, or not to have long continued, attending meetings.

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See note, 'Business No 1 /Group/', 5 June 1932, H/B.

- (a) To promote Catholic Lay Action in its intellectual aspect.
- (b) To encourage its members to attain a fuller realisation of Catholic Culture.
- (c) To ensure the development in harmony of the spiritual and mental lives of members.
- (d) To extend the influence of these conceptions so as to assist in the development of a more intense Catholic atmosphere among Australian Catholics.
- (e) To place the Catholic viewpoint adequately before non-Catholics when the occasion demands it particularly on questions relating to the Social order.

The Constitution laid down various rules and regulations for the proper ordering of the Society: Each group was to have no more than sixteen members; was to elect a secretary as its sole office-bearer; and was not to admit any new member except by a unanimous vote of consent among existing members. Individual Campions were 'to co-operate loyally and cheerfully with Bishops and members of the Clergy', and to 'refrain from all anti-clerical conduct or statements.' Neither 'the Society nor any group thereof' was to 'identify as such nor co-operate with any political body.' There was to be an annual Society Retreat (a day of prayer and recollection conducted under the supervision of a priest); and all meetings were to begin with the 'Oblatio Sui' of St. Ignatius Loyola, a Hail Mary, and 'Invocations to Blessed Edmund Campion, Blessed Thomas More and Saint Francis Xavier.'

Meanwhile, the search for avenues of influence continued. In mid-1932 two sub-committees were appointed, the first to find



opportunities for outside lecture-work; the second to investigate the possibility of the Society utilising the 'Catholic Hour' on Radio Station 3AW.<sup>25</sup> This weekly programme had begun in April 1932, its initiator being Rev. Dr. Matthew Beovich. Father Hackett was the foundation Secretary of its controlling body, the Catholic Broadcasting Committee. The Campions assured Hackett of their readiness to assist the Committee if called upon.<sup>26</sup>

With regard to the proposed Campion lectures, a ready demand was found in the suburban branches of the Catholic Young Men's Society. In the atmosphere of the times, the vigorous Campion style of Catholic intellectuality struck a favourable chord with many non-University Catholic young men, most of whom had been brought up on the drier fare of Dr. Michael Sheehan's Apologetics and Christian Doctrine. In the four months from April 1932 Campion men delivered seven outside lectures, most of them to C.Y.M.S. branches. On 4 July Kevin Kelly gave a 'splendid address' to the Glen Iris C.Y.M.S.;<sup>27</sup> and on 27 September Denys Jackson delivered a lecture to the Kew C.Y.M.S.<sup>28</sup> At the September Quarterly Meeting Campions were advised to 'get in touch with C.Y./M.S./ and arrange lectures.'<sup>29</sup> During the same month one of the newer Campion

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<sup>25</sup>

Note, 'Business No 1 Group', 5 June 1932, H/B.

<sup>26</sup>

Note, 'Speech to New Members', 13 April 1932 (Maher's writing), H/B.

<sup>27</sup>

Secretary's Report, Q.M., 6 July 1932; printed poster advertising Kelly's talk, H/B.

<sup>28</sup>

Rough notes, Q.M., 14 September 1932, H/B.

<sup>29</sup>

Ibid.

members, D. L. (Leo) Canavan, was recommending in the first issue of the Oakleigh C.Y.M.S. branch magazine that all Catholic young men study 'the period when Western civilisation was entirely Catholic - the only era of relatively true and universal happiness.' He believed that 'the C.Y.M.S. should act as a chastening influence against disruptive forces.'

The same period saw the tenuous beginnings of a Campion influence among the younger clergy. One of the Professors at Corpus Christi College, Werribee, Father Robert Peterson, S.J., had given a philosophy lecture to the Society; and, being impressed by the members, had invited them to visit the College and meet some of the seminarians. The tour took place on Sunday 30 October;<sup>31</sup> and the Campions were particularly 'gratified and impressed' by the interest shown in their activities by Father James Murtagh, a recently-ordained young priest who helped Father Peterson entertain the visitors.<sup>32</sup> They subsequently invited Murtagh to attend the December Quarterly Meeting.<sup>33</sup>

The Campion Society's most natural field of influence was, however, the University. If, as Quadragesimo Anno stated, 'the apostles of the working-men must themselves be working-men', then the apostles of the University should be University men.

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<sup>30</sup> Summarised in Adv. 8 September 1932, p. 13. Canavan's name appears in the Campion membership list of December 1932, H/B.

<sup>31</sup> Peterson to Adams (Adami?), 18 October 1932, H/B.

<sup>32</sup> General Secretary (Knowles) to Murtagh, 7 August 1933, H/B.

<sup>33</sup> Murtagh to Adami, 27 December 1932, H/B. He did not attend the meeting, being in Sydney on holidays at the time.

Furthermore, by 1932 Melbourne University had become something of an ideological battle-ground. During 1931 the Labour Club had become increasingly pro-Communist, although few of its members actually belonged to the Communist Party; and it had been untiring in promoting its views through lectures, debates, and the student press. In 1932 it launched a radical journal, Proletariat;<sup>34</sup> elected representatives to two Communist 'front' organisations, the 'United Front against Fascism Society' and the 'League against Imperialism';<sup>35</sup> and sought to send a delegation to Russia.<sup>36</sup> This militancy triggered off a furious conservative reaction, the epicentres of which were the Melbourne University All-For-Australia League and the Melbourne University Rifles. A violent controversy, descending at times into physical violence, raged throughout 1931 and the first half of 1932. Eventually the University authorities were forced to take strong action to restore a modicum of peace and harmony on the campus.<sup>37</sup>

The Catholics at the University were notable for their absence from either warring camp. On the one hand, their general socio/economic backgrounds and religious affinities alienated them from the Protestant-British Empire loyalties of the conservative faction. On the other, their Labour movement sympathies were of a different order to those of the Labour Club. The Club was

<sup>34</sup> Farrago 19 April 1932. The foundation editor was Geoffrey Sawyer.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 31 March 1932.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 21 June 1932. The trip did not eventuate.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 10 May 1932.

ideologically Marxist in complexion, which placed it both outside the mainstream Australian Labour tradition, and in conflict with the social teachings of the Catholic Church. Furthermore, most Labour Club leaders had attended the same prestigious Protestant private schools as their conservative opponents;<sup>38</sup> and this also tended to estrange them as a group from the Catholics.

The Campion Society played no part in undergraduate politics, and, further to this, did not use its own name at all on the campus. It chose rather to exercise its influence through the Newman Society, thus avoiding conflict with that Society, and at the same time endowing the Newman with a much-needed intellectual dimension. A spectacularly successful beginning to this policy of co-operation was made on 30 June 1932, when Murray McInerney and Kevin Kelly, representing the Newman Society, addressed a packed meeting sponsored by the Student Christian Movement on the topic, 'Is Religion Necessary?' - an early 'ecumenical' endeavour. An astonished Farrago reporter wondered whether it was 'actual interest in the subject for debate' or 'merely the novelty of a Newman man speaking at S.C.M.' which drew an audience of five hundred to the meeting.<sup>39</sup>

The Newman Society also sought Campion help in organising a State-wide essay competition which it had decided to conduct on

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The most prominent Labour Club leaders of the early 'thirties and their respective schools were: Geoffrey Sawyer - Scotch College; Alan Nicholls - Ballarat College; Sam White - Wesley College; Alwyn Lee - Wesley College. With regard to the 'twenties, the list would read: Lloyd Ross - University High School; Ralph Gibson - Melbourne Grammar; Brian Fitzpatrick - Essendon High School.

39

Farrago 5 July 1932.

the topic, 'Catholicism and Reconstruction'. The Champions agreed to assist 'by <sup>40</sup>providing/ lecturers and by giving a start to study-groups.'

A less direct Champion influence was also evident in the University Debating Society, an influence which was to be sustained throughout the decade. In 1932 three Champion men - Davern Wright, Frank Misell, and Stan Ingwersen - were elected to the M.U.D.S. executive; <sup>41</sup> and two others - Murray McInerney and Frank Quaine - <sup>42</sup> represented Melbourne in the Intervarsity debating. A topic of the kind favoured by the Champions, 'That Science without Religion provides a sufficient code of life', was debated in June, with <sup>43</sup> McInerney, Kelly and Quaine speaking to the negative. The Debating Society, furthermore, helped preserve good relations between Champion members and their ideological opponents from the Labour Club, by providing them with a common interest and a forum for friendly contention.

At Newman College Murray McInerney, Gerard Heffey and Frank Misell all remained active in student affairs. McInerney edited the Newman Annual for 1931, with Heffey writing in it on 'The New Arrivals'. In the 1932 Annual, edited by Heffey, two

<sup>40</sup> Notes, meeting of First Central group, 22 June 1932, H/B.

<sup>41</sup> Letter, University Group to First Central, late 1932, H/B.

<sup>42</sup> Farrago 11 August 1932. The other two team members were R. W. W. ('Chester') Wilmott and Allan Nicholls, the latter a leading Labour Club identity.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 28 June 1932.



Campion articles appeared, one by McInerney on 'The New Paganism'; and the other by Misell entitled 'Legend and Myth'. All these essays strongly reflected the influence of Belloc.<sup>44</sup>

When the fourth Quarterly Meeting of the Campion took place on 21 December 1932, the speeches testified to the confidence and assuredness of purpose which now permeated the Society. Val Adami, the General Secretary at the time, noted that 'this body which was only a nucleus at the beginning of 1932 is now a real society.'<sup>45</sup> Frank Maher, in his address to the meeting, was pleased to observe that 'the purposes and methods of the Society are becoming really luminous and recognisable things.' Affirming that 'only in organisation have we any real strength', he declared that

It is to provide this organisation, to give coherence to Catholic Action in Australia on its intellectual side, to bring the educated Catholics into contact, that is the objective the Campion Society hopes to attain.<sup>46</sup>

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This successful record of activity for 1932 gave promise of an eventful year ahead; and thus the advent of 1933 found the Campion Society preparing to expand the several bridge-heads of influence which it now had within the Melbourne Church and at the University.

<sup>44</sup> See back-copies of Newman at the College.

<sup>45</sup> Report (Adami's writing), Q.M., 21 December 1932, H/B.

<sup>46</sup> 'Secretary's Report' (Maher's writing), Q.M., 21 December 1932, H/B. According to all other evidence (general correspondence; list of past secretaries of No. 1 Group at the beginning of First Central Group minute-book /begins April 1933/), Adami was General Secretary at this time. Both men gave Reports at the December 1932 Q.M.

Early in the New Year the Society expanded appreciably in size, and effected a number of organisational reforms. A recruiting drive increased membership from thirty-four at the end of 1932 to fifty when the 1933 University year began, necessitating the formation of a fourth group - the Third Central. Notable among the new arrivals were Brian Harkin, a science student and friend of Kevin Kelly; Kevin Wallace, a Commerce student; Leo Ingwersen, Stan's brother, an Arts student; and Frank Murphy, a journalist and Hawthorn C.Y.M.S. leader.<sup>47</sup> In writing to invite Murphy to his initial meeting, Frank Maher was able to boast that the Society numbered in its ranks 'nearly all the most brilliant of the recent graduates, including several first class honours men in History and Economics, as well as many who have done little in the way of exams but are keen to learn about the Church's attitude to the problems they have to face and answer every day.'<sup>48</sup>

As there were now three relatively experienced groups functioning, at the July Quarterly Meeting the Society's Constitution was altered to transfer executive power from the First Central Group to an elected Council. Beginning its operations on 5 August, the Council on 29 August elected Frank Maher as the first President of the Society; Ken Mitchell as General Secretary; and Bill Knowles as Treasurer.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Secretary's (Maher's) Report, Q.M., 21 December 1932; Maher to Frank Murphy, 14 February 1933 (letter in possession of Mr. Murphy); Campaign membership list, late 1933, H/B.

<sup>48</sup> Maher to Murphy, 14 February 1933.

<sup>49</sup> General Secretary's Report, Q.M., 12 July 1933; Campaign Council minute-book, H/B.

The study-programmes for the groups had by this stage assumed a relatively standardised form. New members were expected to progress through a structured three-year course, in which historical topics were alternated with current ideological and social ones. During the first half of 1933 the Second and Third Central groups studied religious, social and political developments in England from the Reformation to the time of the later Stuarts; and, with regard to contemporary problems, they examined Fascism, Nazism, and 'Rationalism in France'. The senior group concentrated on issues of the moment, investigating Capitalism, Socialism, and 'Medieval Economics', in the light of 'The Papal Encyclicals on Labour and Capital'. In addition, two meetings were given to the question of Birth Control; and two to a dissertation by Kevin Kelly on 'The History of the Labour Party in Australia.'<sup>50</sup> The purpose of it all, according to Maher, was to make the Campion Society 'a training-school for the leaders of Catholic thought and action throughout Victoria.'<sup>51</sup>

At Melbourne University, 1933 saw the Campion come into its own. In April, following on a suggestion by Herbert Frederico, President of the Newman Society of Victoria, a joint Newman-Campion Standing Committee was formed to facilitate co-operation between the two Societies.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, the Campions were given full

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<sup>50</sup> Syllabi, H/B.

<sup>51</sup> Rough note, Maher's writing, 'Matters for University Group', Sunday 23 April, H/B. This date fell on a Sunday only in 1933 and 1939; and by the latter year the University Group did not exist as such.

<sup>52</sup> Frederico to Maher, 5 December 1932; G. E. Delaney, Newman Secretary to Campion Secretary, 22 April 1933, H/B.

responsibility for organising a series of Newman lunch-hour lectures on campus. This novel display of Catholic intellectuality was quietly received, with Kelly, Heffey, Adami, Knowles, and McInerney giving addresses during the first half of the year to average audiences of 'thirty or forty'.<sup>53</sup>

At Newman College, Gerard Heffey was President of the Students' Club for the year;<sup>54</sup> and the 1933 President of the University Students' Representative Council, Raymond Triado, became (for a short time) a member of the Campion.<sup>55</sup> At Debating Society functions Campion attitudes continued to be voiced quite frequently. A debate in June on the topic, 'That civilisation must decay when it penetrates to the masses', gave Kevin Kelly an opportunity to contend that civilisation consisted of 'a realization of a code of values.' A member of the opposing team, Mr. Sam White, a proudly Communist Labour Club identity, agreed with Kelly that 'What was needed was a scale of values to replace the present ones.' He acknowledged further that Catholicism and Communism were 'the only two systems that could claim to have such a scale of values.' However, 'Like Mr. Kelly, he left no doubt as to which system he supported.'<sup>56</sup>

Within the bounds of Melbourne Catholicism, 1933 also saw

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<sup>53</sup> General Secretary's Report, Q.M., 12 July 1933, H/B.

<sup>54</sup> See Newman, 1933 (back-copies at the College).

<sup>55</sup> Triado's name is in a membership list of late 1933, but not in an earlier one of December 1932, nor in that of June 1934. H/B.

<sup>56</sup> Farrago 27 June 1933.



the Champion Society's influence and prestige increase greatly. A major cause of this was the 1932 Newman Society essay competition, in which Champion men were outstandingly successful. The judges, announcing the results in July 1933, had 'no difficulty' in placing Denys Jackson first; and they expected that his contribution would attract attention 'beyond the boundaries of Australia.' Third place went to Brian Harkin; and second to a Mr. Kerrigan.<sup>57</sup> The cash prizes, which were amazingly lucrative for these Depression times,<sup>58</sup> would have ensured that the competition was fierce.

The essay competition coup gained the Champion Society a foothold in the Catholic media. Already, during the first half of 1933, some members had, at Father Hackett's request, given addresses over the Catholic Hour.<sup>59</sup> Now, however, Jackson was granted a permanent slot on the programme, and began speaking weekly on current affairs as 'the Onlooker'. Furthermore, he was asked to write a regular column for the Advocate, and in August began a journalistic association with that paper which continues today,<sup>60</sup> more than forty years later.

The Catholic schools also now opened their doors to the

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<sup>57</sup> Adv. 6 July 1933, p. 15. I presume that Mr. Kerrigan was the W. Kerrigan who was in the St. Patrick's College, East Melbourne, Professional Men's Sodality (The Patrician, 1936, Sodality report), who Judge Adams informs me was a civil engineer.

<sup>58</sup> First prize was £21; second, £7-7; third, £3-3 (Adv. 18 August 1932, Current Comment).

<sup>59</sup> General Secretary's Report, Q.M., 12 July 1933, H/B.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Mr. D. G. M. Jackson, May 1967.



Society. Late in 1933 Campion representatives explained the aims and activities of their organisation to the senior classes of three of the four major Catholic boys' secondary schools. At the remaining one, De La Salle, Malvern, the students were busy with examinations; but the headmaster, Brother Jerome, a good friend of Kevin Kelly,<sup>61</sup> volunteered to approach suitable pupils individually. The outcome of these visits was that on 19 December a 'Junior Group' of the Campion was formed, and the following year embarked on a study of European culture under the guidance of Val Adami.<sup>62</sup>

At St. Patrick's College, East Melbourne, the Professional Men's Sodality during 1933 developed in a definite Campion direction. Arthur Adams remained its Secretary; and meetings were addressed by Denys Jackson on 'Hitler', and by Bill Knowles on 'Pseudo-Science'. The members themselves prepared a series of papers covering Quadragesimo Anno and other Papal Encyclicals; and discussions were held on the questions of 'Private Property, Church and State, the Family, and a Comparison between the English and Canon Laws of Marriage.'<sup>63</sup>

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61

Council minutes, 10 December 1933; letters of thanks from Maher to the respective principals, 4 December 1933; Brother Jerome to the Campion, 11 December 1933, H/B.

62

Letters, Maher to respective principals, 4 December 1933; President's Report, Q.M., 24 January 1934. On 27 April 1934, after the Junior Group had shown signs of waning, it was dissolved by the Council, and the members distributed among the University Group, the Second Central, and the East St. Kilda C.Y.M.S. affiliated group (Council minutes, 17 April 1934; President's Report, Annual General Meeting, 24 July 1934, H/B).

63

The Patrician, 1933, Sodality report.

With regard to the clergy, the Campions recognised that in order to influence permanently the mind of Catholic Victoria, they would need the fullest support of the younger priests. On 26 July 1933 the First Central Group, still the executive body of the Society, considered the matter of 'Propaganda among Werribee Students';<sup>64</sup> and a week later the Campion Council, at its first meeting, resolved to invite Father James Murtagh to attend one of the Society's gatherings.<sup>65</sup> In October a second Campion visit to Corpus Christi College took place, with the members being 'impressed by the obvious interest and keenness of the priests and students whom we met.'<sup>66</sup> That this observation is accurate is attested to by the Corpus Christi Students' Manuscript Journal for the year, in which the seminarians were urged to counter the 'propagator of the class war' by working 'to create an elite, not Catholic merely, but intellectual as well, not intellectual merely, but Catholic as well.'<sup>67</sup> The editors obviously had in mind the Campion Society.

The Campions had encountered a minor frustration at Corpus Christi, however, in that they had been refused permission to address the students as a body. The College authorities considered 'that the students would probably not be very interested, and that it would be arrogating our Society to a position of importance which

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<sup>64</sup> First Central Group minutes, 26 July 1933, H/B.

<sup>65</sup> Council minutes, 5 August 1933; General Secretary to Father Murtagh, 7 August 1933, H/B.

<sup>66</sup> General Secretary to Father Robert Peterson, S.J., 9 November 1933, H/B.

<sup>67</sup> Students' Manuscript Journal, 1933. The editors at the time were B. Payne and M. Grady. Back-copies of the Journal were (prior to the sale of the College in 1973) held at the College.

it had not yet attained.<sup>68</sup> This was the second slight rebuff which the Society had received from the Jesuits, the first having been their refusal to appoint Father Hackett as Campion chaplain<sup>69</sup> - a decision probably made in consideration of Hackett's other responsibilities. Father Robert Peterson, S.J., late in 1932 accepted the chaplaincy, but resigned it a year later.<sup>70</sup> It is noteworthy that, although Peterson was a friend, Father Hackett was the Campion's 'only Jesuit enthusiast'. Father Jeremiah Murphy, by contrast, was cool towards the Society, and deplored 'the "activism" of many Campions.'<sup>71</sup> During the 'thirties the Society was to gain a multitude of staunch allies among the Jesuit-trained young secular clergy, but none of note among the younger Jesuits.

In November of 1933 Kevin Kelly had a long interview with Archbishop Mannix, and obtained his 'personal and full episcopal approval of the Campion Society.'<sup>72</sup> Mannix had been kept informed of the Campion's progress by Father Hackett, whom he constantly sought as a dining and travelling companion. His formal approval represented virtually a mandate for the Society's programme of operations, and endowed the organisation with a new status in the archdiocese. Thus reinforced, the Campions wrote immediately to

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General Secretary to Peterson, 9 November 1933, H/B.

69

Memorandum, K. T. Kelly to author, 30 August 1973.

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General Secretary's Report, Q.M., 14 September 1932; Peterson to Adami, 19 December 1932; Father J. Brennan, S.J., Jesuit Acting Provincial, to the Campion, 18 November, H/B.

71

Memorandum, K. T. Kelly to author, 30 August 1973.

72

Council minutes, 8 November 1933, H/B.

Corpus Christi College, again requesting permission to address the students.<sup>73</sup> On the matter of the chaplaincy, the following May they by-passed the Jesuit authorities, and asked the Archbishop directly to use his influence to have Father Hackett granted the position - this time securing his appointment.<sup>74</sup>

In one other area the Campion Society had expanded its activities to a degree during 1933, and this was in relation to the Catholic Young Men's Society. Since the C.Y.M.S. constituted virtually the artery-system of Catholic life among the Catholic young men of Victoria, it represented a very important potential field of influence. Campion lectures to individual C.Y.M.S. branches had continued throughout the year; and a group of young men within one branch - that at East St. Kilda - had applied for affiliation with the Campion.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, in mid-year the Society had appointed a sub-committee 'to investigate the possibility of working in with the C.Y.M.S. giving talks or conducting study circles.'<sup>76</sup> Early in November, acting on Council instructions, Arthur Adams had a meeting with the C.Y.M.S. General President, J. D. Coyne, at which the latter invited the Council to send a

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<sup>73</sup> General Secretary to Peterson, 9 November 1933, H/B.

<sup>74</sup> Maher, Kelly and Heffey visited the Archbishop, who 'intimated that the appointment of Fr. Hackett would be agreeable to him.' Council minutes, 25 May 1934, H/B.

<sup>75</sup> Council minutes, 8 November 1933. The initiators of this move within the East St. Kilda C.Y.M.S. were Kevin Wallace and Phillip Perkins, both Campion members. The group was provisionally affiliated by the Council, and put on three months' probation.

<sup>76</sup> General Secretary's Report, Q.M., 12 July 1933, H/B.

<sup>77</sup> Council minutes, 10 October, 8 November 1933, H/B.

representative to the next meeting of the Board of Management.  
Adams was delegated to go.<sup>77</sup>

This opening of top-level negotiations signalled the start of a new phase in the development of both Societies. More importantly, it marked the beginning of an association which was to bring into being a new kind of intellectual awareness among the ordinary Catholic young men of Victoria. A survey of this era of interaction must begin with an examination of what had been happening within the C.Y.M.S.

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Council minutes, 10 October, 8 November 1933, H/B.



## CHAPTER 5

### THE CATHOLIC YOUNG MEN OF VICTORIA, 1929-34

The Catholic Young Men's Society of Victoria had by no means been standing still during the years in which the Campion Society had experienced its early growth. Indeed, the Depression had had an effect on the older society scarcely less pronounced than on the newer one. With the beginning of co-operation between the two bodies, their mutual vitality was to be compounded.

The C.Y.M.S. was already in a healthy condition when the Depression began. During 1929 its metropolitan branches had increased in number from twenty-seven to thirty-two, and at that figure remained steady until the end of 1934.<sup>1</sup> This represented an average of one branch to every three parishes, which apparently constituted a near-saturation point for the archdiocese. Accurate figures on overall membership are difficult to obtain, as fees were collected on a monthly basis, and many young men joined only for the duration of a particular sporting season. However, the ordinary branch strength seems to have been about fifty.<sup>2</sup> In view of the massive unemployment, constant membership would have been

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<sup>1</sup> See 1929, 1931 C.Y.M.S. Annual Reports, Celtic Club, Melbourne; 1933, 1934 C.Y.M.S. Annual Reports, Catholic Young Man, December 1933, December 1934, M.A.A.

<sup>2</sup> A metropolitan membership estimate of 2,000 is given in the editorial, Catholic Young Man, February 1934, M.A.A. However, later statistics (see, for instance, the 1938 figures in Chapter 12, pp. 267-8) suggest that this is an exaggeration, probably of about 20%.

beyond the financial resources of many.<sup>3</sup>

It was not in Melbourne, however, but in the country areas that the statistics of the Young Men's Society most clearly reflected the insecurity of the times. As young men sought both a sense of security and inexpensive entertainment in group enterprises, the C.Y.M.S. branches began to proliferate at an unprecedented rate. Prior to the Depression rural expansion had been slow; and despite a drive launched in 1925, by the end of 1927 there were only three affiliated country branches. Two years later the figure was seven; and by late 1931 it had increased to fourteen. After a further two years there were thirty-two; and at the end of 1934 the total of country branches stood at forty-six. During 1933 and 1934 regional C.Y.M.S. associations were formed in the North-East, the Central North, and the Western Districts.<sup>4</sup> In all areas the initiative and co-operation of the younger clergy was a major factor in allowing this growth to take place. The end result of it all was that by the close of 1934 a new sense of unity, a new body of leaders, and a new organisational viability, were becoming evident among the Catholic young men of rural Victoria.

In the Melbourne metropolitan area, although branch numbers remained static, the early 'thirties saw a great deal of

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<sup>3</sup> Mr. Michael F. Hynes, who was a leader of the Oakleigh C.Y.M.S., estimates that 'a good 50%' of the members there were out of work during the early 'thirties. Interview, 23 November 1971.

<sup>4</sup> The C.Y.M.S. Annual Reports, 1913-20, 1922-29, 1931, are held in the Celtic Club, Melbourne. See also the 1933, 1934 Annual Reports, Catholic Young Man, December 1933, December 1934, M.A.A.

C.Y.M.S. activity. In December 1930 a C.Y.M.S. Past Members' Association was formed, its quarterly 'Smoke Nights' bringing together many leading business and political identities who looked back with gratitude to their C.Y.M.S. training.<sup>5</sup> At Easter 1933 an Australasian C.Y.M.S. was founded, capping five years' effort on the part of the Melbourne Society. It incorporated the C.Y.M.S. of Victoria; the New South Wales Catholic Debating Societies' Union; the tiny C.Y.M.S. of South Australia; the C.Y.M.S. of Cairns, Queensland; and the C.Y.M.S. of Western Australia.<sup>6</sup> Although it never functioned except as a paper organisation, its formation was hailed at the time as a major success for the Victorian body.

The drive behind these endeavours was provided by a vigorous and cohesive Board of Management,<sup>7</sup> and in particular by R. E. (Reg) Hodgkinson, the General Secretary from 1928 to 1940. Hodgkinson was employed for most of his life as chief assistant to J. J. Liston, director of the Liquor Trades' Protection Association, and himself a former C.Y.M.S. General President.

Yet for all the diversity of its activities, one element was notably missing from the C.Y.M.S., and that was an intellectual consciousness. Debating may have served to sharpen the wits of

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<sup>5</sup> Some of these were politicians Scullin, Brennan, Moloney, and Kiernan; and prominent businessmen T. M. Burke and J. J. Liston.

<sup>6</sup> Adv. 23 March 1933, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> The cohesiveness of the Board of Management is indicated by the fact that among its 15 members in 1933 were eight of the nine who were General Presidents of the Society from 1931 to 1939. The exception was T. J. Hickie (1938).

members, but it did not give them a systematic intellectual formation. Indeed, although Catholic Young Men's Societies had originally been intended to provide educational as well as social and sporting services for members, all attempts to give this added dimension to the Victorian Society had failed. The 'Ozanam Club', formed within the Society during the 1921 Presidency of Michael Chamberlin, had sustained a feeble existence for three years before folding up. A simultaneous educational enterprise initiated by Chamberlin, the 'C.Y.M.S. Business Institute', a commercial night-school, had prospered initially but had closed through lack of interest after a couple of years.<sup>8</sup> A short span of life was also the fate of the 'C.Y.M.S. Forum', which was founded in 1926 as a kind of large-scale current affairs discussion group. It functioned for two years before petering out.<sup>9</sup>

The intellectual and ideological challenges posed by the Depression era, however, were of a different order of urgency to those of the preceding decades; and they preyed on the consciousness of young people to a greater degree than had those of previous times. During the early 'thirties some C.Y.M.S. branches formed discussion groups;<sup>10</sup> and others puzzled over the central issues of

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Report of 1921 C.Y.M.S. Annual Communion Breakfast, Adv. 17 November 1921, pp. 10-11; 1922 C.Y.M.S. Annual Report, Celtic Club; interview with Sir Michael Chamberlin, 20 January 1972.

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1926, 1927, 1928 C.Y.M.S. Annual Reports, Celtic Club.

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Mr. L. N. Early was in a Thornbury C.Y.M.S. branch discussion group during the early 'thirties, and can recall other such being in existence elsewhere: Interview, 17 September 1973.

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the age in branch magazines. As the desire to study social questions spread, C.Y.M.S. eyes turned increasingly to the University-based Campion Society as the most suitable source of intellectual guidance available. Thus the Campion initiatives aimed at securing systematic co-operation between the two Societies were favourably received; and by the end of 1933 formal negotiations were well under way. A central figure in these talks was Michael F. Hynes, then the Junior Vice-President of the Young Men's Society. In September he was responsible for bringing into being a monthly magazine which was to serve as an important means of C.Y.M.S./Campion joint action, the Catholic Young Man.

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The inspiration for the Catholic Young Man had come from the Oakleigh branch magazine, which Hynes had launched in 1932, financing it solely by selling advertising space. In 1933 he received the permission of his fellows on the Board of Management to establish a general Society magazine on the same basis; obtained the services of a young advertising agent, W. J. Ingleby; and set about organising the venture. He was assisted from the start by two close friends, John L. Thomas, a graduate teacher, and D. Leo Canavan, a Commerce graduate; and by three young priests,<sup>12</sup> Father James Murtagh, Father James Cleary, and Dr. James Hannan.

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See, for instance, Chapter 4, pp. 89-90.

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Interview with Mr. Michael F. Hynes, 23 November 1972.



Since Thomas and Canavan were minor members of the Campion Society, and Father Murtagh a close associate of that Society, Hynes was kept well informed on what the Campions were doing.

The aim of the Catholic Young Man, as professed in its first editorial, was to wed the old and the new: to 'maintain the previous ideals of the Society', and to 'stand alongside other organs in typifying Catholic Action.' The inaugural issue featured infra-Society news, light articles, and essays of a more serious kind. An article by Dr. James Hannan, D.D., dealt with the topic of 'Fascism: Ideals and Practice'. Even more evocative of the crucial conflicts of the age was a short contribution by the Honorable E. L. Kiernan, M.L.C., an ex-General President of the Society, a foundation member of the Victorian Knights of the Southern Cross,<sup>14</sup> and an ex-Minister in the Victorian Hogan Labor Government. In tones reminiscent of the Campion Society, he despaired of the state of the world, and presented the Catholic Church as the only reliable guardian of order remaining to mankind:

Shall we strive for a greater measure of social justice, a nobler ideal of progress, and civic and religious liberty...or shall we witness the wreckage of that Christian culture and civilisation so painfully and continuously built up in Europe during the early and Middle Ages, under the guidance of the Catholic Church?

He called on every Catholic young man to face up to 'the necessity of resolute Catholic Action, if civilisation is to be saved'.

At the beginning of 1934 Michael Hynes was elected

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<sup>13</sup>

Both their names appear in the Campion membership list of December 1932, and in subsequent ones.

<sup>14</sup>

See Advance Australia, March 1969, p. 9.

General President of the Catholic Young Men's Society, and Campion/C.Y.M.S. co-operation began in earnest. Hynes not only realised the contribution which Campion writers could make to the Catholic Young Man; he shared none of the suspicion with which many C.Y.M.S. leaders regarded the other Society<sup>15</sup> - a suspicion partly occasioned by the over-confidence and undergraduate brashness of some Campion members. Early in 1934 the Campions agreed to write articles on a regular basis for the Catholic Young Man; and they agreed further to help set up joint study-groups, of which they were to be given complete operational control.<sup>16</sup>

Access to the Catholic Young Man came at an opportune time for the Campion Society, as at the beginning of 1934 it had been forced to sever its links with Father A. J. Mills' Brisbane-based magazine, Australia. Discontent with this periodical had surfaced at the October 1933 Quarterly Meeting, where it had been pointed out that Australia's circulation was small, and its economic policy 'ill considered'. Above all, members objected to Mills' contention that the Australian Labor Party stood implicitly condemned by the Church on account of its Socialization Objective.<sup>17</sup> Subsequent letters of protest from the Campion Council failed to persuade him to alter his position; and so at the Quarterly Meeting of 24 January 1934, on a motion put by Bob

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I have encountered this suspicion in conversations with many ex-C.Y.M.S. men.

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Campion Council minutes, 14 February 1934, H/B.

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Minutes, Q.M., 4 October 1933, Council minute-book, H/B.

Santamaria, the Society withdrew its support from Australia.

Campion contributions to the Catholic Young Man began in February 1934, with at least one and generally two Campion articles appearing each month. In content, they were fairly evenly divided between historical/literary themes, and contemporary social ones. A series on 'Catholic Writers and Writings', which was sustained throughout the year, gave literary/biographical sketches of such figures as Belloc, Chesterton, Ronald Knox, Arnold Lunn, Christopher Hollis, and Cardinal Newman. Of the essays on social themes, the first, which was perhaps the most impressive article to appear in the magazine, was by Denys Jackson (as 'Sulla') on 'The Rights of Labour' in the April issue. This was presumably a condensation of his prize-winning 1932 Newman Society Competition essay. Kindred articles by Campion men in subsequent issues for the year dealt with the Modern Mind, Capitalism, Freemasonry, Religion and Science, Education, and Sex in Advertising.

The second major C.Y.M.S./Campion co-operative venture, the joint study-groups, began with an appeal for support by Frank Maher in the February 1934 issue of the Catholic Young Man. He warned of the possibility of an 'imminent collapse of Western civilisation', and asserted that

Anyone, then, who has the faintest knowledge of the dangerous state of the world he lives in; who is anxious to save Australia from the menace of civil war, industrial chaos, of social revolution and Atheism, will see the need for Study-groups in the C.Y.M.S.

Following on this, an organisational meeting for interested persons was held on 24 April. The Campions had expected to form one study-group; but the response was so overwhelming that they decided to begin with five.<sup>19</sup> The groups were strategically spaced around Melbourne, centring on Clifton Hill, North Essendon, East St. Kilda, the Cathedral Hall at Fitzroy, and Newport. Senior 20  
Campion members were appointed to guide and supervise each of them. Meetings were held fortnightly, mostly in private homes. Participants were expected to join the Central Catholic Library, the circulation figures for which can be used as an index of the intellectual 21  
vitality of Victorian Catholicism.

The initial three-month programme for the groups was designed to give the members a broad Campion perspective on the role of the Church in the modern world. The topics covered were: 'Collapse of Paganism'; 'Catholics and the Modern World';  
'Sterilisation'; 'Catholicism and the Modern Mind'; and 'Fascism'.<sup>22</sup>  
The programme for the subsequent quarter was a little less general; and that for the final three months of the year was more specific again, dealing with 'Fascism (in Italy)'; 'Social and Economic

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Campion Council minutes, 18 April, 27 April 1934, H/B.

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Catholic Young Man, June 1934, p. 13; July 1934, p. 12.

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Twelve-monthly circulation figures, culled in the main from C.C.L. Annual Reports printed in the Advocate in June or July each year, are: 1925: 5,750 books loaned; 1928: 15,511; 1929: 16,828; 1930: 24,000; 1931: 24,866; 1932: 25,000; 1934: 35,000; 1937: 53,000; 1938: 60,000. The number of books in the library increased from 8,000 in 1929, to 12,000 in 1934, to 16,000 in 1937, to 17,600 in 1938.

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Catholic Young Man, July 1934, p. 12.

Theories of the Middle Ages'; 'Nazism in Germany'; 'Catholicism in England To-day'; and 'The Renaissance'.<sup>23</sup> The well-tried Campion technique of alternating historical with contemporary subjects, sweeping perspectives with closer analyses, was followed throughout.

Two of the groups, those at the Cathedral and Newport,<sup>24</sup> petered out after a few months; however, the others functioned successfully. The North Essendon group, according to Frank Maher, owed its prosperity largely to the 'time and enthusiasm' devoted to it by Father James Murtagh, who was then a curate in the parish.<sup>25</sup> Overall, the C.Y.M.S. study-groups found so much support that by as early as July their total membership, at seventy, was already equal to that of the Campion Society itself.<sup>26</sup> The Catholic Young Man was exuberant at their success, which it interpreted as striking proof that

the magnetic and mystical attraction of the Faith for clear-minded and stout-hearted men is as powerful as at any time in our history.<sup>27</sup>

Towards the end of the year Arthur Adams became founder and first President of a Glenhuntly C.Y.M.S., which from the

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<sup>23</sup>

Ibid., September 1934, p. 20.

<sup>24</sup>

Mitchell to Maher, 17 August 1934; Mitchell to Hynes, undated; Campion Council minutes, 28 September 1934, H/B.

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Council's Report, Q.M., 16 October 1934, H/B.

<sup>26</sup>

Catholic Young Man, July 1934, p. 12.

<sup>27</sup>

Ibid.



beginning incorporated a study-group.<sup>28</sup> About the same time 'the  
nucleus of a small group' was formed at Carlton by J. Scarborough.<sup>29</sup>

Thus by the end of 1934 the Campion Society was actively imparting a new Catholic intellectual consciousness to the Melbourne Catholic Young Men's Society. For the opportunity to do so it could thank the C.Y.M.S. Board of Management, and in particular the 1934 C.Y.M.S. General President, Michael F. Hynes.

In addition to this, the same twelve months witnessed a parallel expansion of Campion influence among the Catholic young men of rural Victoria, an expansion which dove-tailed in with the end of the five-year boom which the C.Y.M.S. had experienced in the country districts. This phase of Campion growth likewise warrants examination.

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The first Campion group to appear outside Melbourne was established at Ballarat, a city seventy miles to the north-west. Its founder was Gerard Sherry, then a pharmaceutical apprentice, who for some time had been utilising the Central Catholic Library's postal lending scheme. While on a visit to Melbourne early in 1934 he had chanced to fall into conversation with Kevin Kelly at the

<sup>28</sup> Council's Report, Q.M., 16 October 1934, H/B; Adv. 8 November 1934, p. 24.

<sup>29</sup> Council's Report, Q.M., 16 October 1934, H/B.

Library, and had learned from him of the work of the Campion Society. Upon returning to Ballarat he reflected that in that city 'All other forms of Catholic activity flourish', but that 'Catholic Action...in its all important apostolic sense is practically unknown.' He decided that there was 'no more pressing need here in Ballarat than an organised effort to produce a few intellectually integral Catholics.<sup>30</sup>

Sherry opened a correspondence with Kelly, and began seeking appropriate members for a study-group from among his friends and acquaintances. Enough support was forthcoming for a first meeting to be held on 21 April; and before long the group was flourishing. Most of the young men who became active were drawn from the small class of Catholics in the city in professional or semi-professional occupations. The main early members were Sherry; John Lynch, a teacher; John Sheehan, a law clerk and later a teacher; John Larkins, a law clerk; John Walsh, a civil servant; John Bongiorno, the son of a local businessman; James Kenny, a Railways clerk; William Ratcliffe, also a clerk; and James Murray, a Dentist.<sup>31</sup> A few months after the group started it was joined by Father James McInerney, a close friend of Fathers Murtagh and Cleary in Melbourne, and a keen activist who was henceforth to be a key figure in the Ballarat Campion. Furthermore, Sheehan and

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Sherry to Maher, 16 May 1934, H/B.

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Membership list of 5 May, in letter, Sherry to Maher, 6 August 1934, H/B. Walsh and Lynch are not on this list, but joined shortly after the group began.

Larkins were the foremost debaters in the local C.Y.M.S.;<sup>32</sup> and the aims of the group explicitly included the influencing of 'various Catholic societies', and 'especially the C.Y.M.S.'<sup>33</sup>

Two months after the formation of the Ballarat Champion group, another appeared in Geelong, fifty miles south of Melbourne. It began with five members, the initiator being John Downey, an early member of the Melbourne Champion Society who had been transferred to Geelong as a Clerk of Courts.<sup>34</sup> Two of the others, John Patterson, a Bank Officer, and Roger O'Halloran, a Legal Manager,<sup>35</sup> were C.Y.M.S. debaters. The Geelong Champion did not prosper, however, and soon became dormant. It was to remain that way until stirred into new life by the Spanish Civil War controversy.

News of the spectacular achievements of the Melbourne Champion Society continued to spread. In July of 1934 Father Les McKenna, a priest from Crookwell, near Goulburn, N.S.W., visited Melbourne and 'learned from Father Murtagh of the existence of the Champion Society, and something of its splendid work among Catholic intellectuals.' He 'resolved to study the possibility of establishing a branch in N.S.W.' However, while motoring through the N.S.W. border town of Albury on his return journey, he chanced to meet a twenty-three year old law clerk, Norman Barnett, who was

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<sup>32</sup> Interviews with Mr. Gerard Sherry, 30 August 1971; Mr. Joseph Lynch (John's brother, an ex-C.Y.M.S. leader), 9 January 1972.

<sup>33</sup> Ballarat Champion Report, 1934 Newman Convention box, M.A.A.

<sup>34</sup> Downey to Maher, 27 June 1934, H/B.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Father J. H. Cleary, 21 November 1971.

'anxious for a lift enroute to Sydney, for an exam.' McKenna drove him as far as Crookwell, telling him on the way of what he had learned of the Melbourne Champion Society.<sup>36</sup> Barnett was impressed, and upon returning from Sydney began seeking support for<sup>37</sup> an Albury Champion group. An initial meeting was held on 6 September.

As with the Ballarat Champion, the Albury group was composed predominantly of young Catholics in professional and semi-professional occupations. Apart from Barnett himself, they included J. McKenzie-McHarg, a Wodonga lawyer; E. Tietyens, an articled law clerk; Dr. Worch, a medical practitioner; and Alf. J. Schmude, an ex-Manly seminarian.<sup>38</sup> McKenzie-McHarg and Schmude<sup>39</sup> were both leading C.Y.M.S. debaters of the district. The Albury Champion was as much a social circle as a study-group; but even so, due largely to a group postal subscription to the Central Catholic<sup>40</sup> Library, it was able to sustain a lively intellectual life.

Shortly after the formation of the Albury group another was founded at Wangaratta, forty-five miles away in North-Eastern Victoria. The initiator was E. (Ted) Hennessy, a school-teacher,<sup>41</sup> already a prolific reader of popular Catholic literature. Others

<sup>36</sup> McKenna to Hackett, 18 August 1934, H/B.

<sup>37</sup> Barnett to Heffey, 7 September 1934, H/B.

<sup>38</sup> Barnett to Heffey, 9 October 1934, H/B.

<sup>39</sup> See Adv. 24 November 1932, p. 24 (Schmude is mis-spelt).

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Mr. A. J. Schmude, 3 April 1972.

<sup>41</sup> Maher to Hennessy, 29 October 1934; Hennessy to Maher, 1 November 1934, H/B.

involved were Alf. Gerrard, also a school-teacher, a recent convert to Catholicism and a devotee of G.. K.. Chesterton; A. Bernard Vosti, an insurance representative; and brothers Bill and Patrick Findlay, who had already accumulated a small Catholic library at their home at nearby Chiltern.<sup>42</sup> Again, there was a substantial overlap with the C.Y.M.S. Hennessy had been foundation President of the Wangaratta C.Y.M.S. in 1933;<sup>43</sup> Bill Findlay had been the 1933 Chiltern C.Y.M.S. President;<sup>44</sup> and Vosti had been a member of the Victorian C.Y.M.S. Board of Management before being transferred in his employment from Melbourne to the country.<sup>45</sup>

Thus in metropolitan and country areas alike, the Depression era had seen a new solidarity develop among Victoria's Catholic young men, and a new Catholic intellectual consciousness take root amongst their leaders. The Catholic Young Men's Society was the source of the solidarity, and the Champion Society of the intellectuality. A survey of the other States will now serve to show in what degree this phenomenon was common to Australian Catholic young men generally, and to what extent it was peculiar to Victoria.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Mr. W. Findlay, 1 October 1971.

<sup>43</sup> Adv. 20 July 1933, p. 24.

<sup>44</sup> Catholic Young Man, December 1933, p. 21.

<sup>45</sup> See 1928, 1929 C.Y.M.S. Annual Reports, Celtic Club, Melbourne.



## CHAPTER 6

### THE NEW CATHOLIC IDEALISM IN NEW SOUTH WALES AND THE OTHER STATES

Since the social factors which had stimulated the growth of the Melbourne Campion Society were common to all States of the Commonwealth, it might be expected that they would have produced a common response among Australian Catholic young people. However, a scrutiny of the nation-wide situation will reveal that this was not the case; and that while the new Catholic social idealism was not confined to Victoria, its popularity and importance varied considerably from one State to another. In New South Wales, to begin with, the movement had a slow and unspectacular beginning.

The outlook of the Sydney Catholic Press during the early 'thirties appears to have been indicative of the perspectives of Sydney Catholicism generally. Whereas the Advocate had been severely shaken by the failure of the Scullin government, P. S. Cleary had remained calm; while the Melbourne paper had been noticeably disorientated by the effects of the Depression, its Sydney equivalent had been superficially unruffled; where the former publication had broadened its horizons to set Australia's troubles in a cosmopolitan context, the latter had remained comfortably parochial. The Sydney Catholic 'establishment' - Archbishop Kelly, his inner circle of clerical administrators, his lay notables from the Knights of the Southern Cross - had evinced no alarm at the course which national and world events had taken. A Pastoral Letter of the N.S.W. Hierarchy issued on 11 May 1931, and titled, 'On the Present

Economic Distress', bore the style of Dr. Kelly, and was little more than an assemblage of pedestrian observations and pious sentiments.<sup>1</sup>

Despite this, Sydney Catholicism was not altogether insensible to the need for intellectual reinforcement at a time of ideological unrest. In mid-1930 the K.S.C.-organised Catholic Evidence lectures departed from their usual apologetical themes, and were directed to the topic, 'The Catholic Church and Industrial Problems'.<sup>2</sup> A year later, on 15 May 1931, 'an audience of several thousand' assembled in St. Mary's Basilica to hear a number of addresses in commemoration of Rerum Novarum, released forty years before. Speakers included Father William J. Lockington, S.J., Rector of St. Ignatius' College, Riverview, and Catholic social activist of the Catholic Federation era; Dr. Cyril Fallon, one-time Catholic Federation and Democratic Party leader; and Peter Gallagher, co-founder and Master of the Catholic Speakers.<sup>3</sup> The Encyclical Quadragesimo Anno, which was released in Rome that same day, was printed as an eight-page supplement to the Catholic Press of 23 July.

Quadragesimo Anno appears to have made some Sydney Catholics conscious of the term 'Catholic Action', and of the

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See the Catholic Press, 28 May 1931, p. 13.

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Printed as The Catholic Church and Industrial Problems, Catholic Evidence Guild, Sydney, 1931 (a copy is held in the National Library, Canberra).

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C.P. 21 May 1931, pp. 14-15.

importance which the Pope attached to it. From 20 August to 24 December 1931 the Catholic Press ran a series of twelve articles on Catholic Action by 'Sacerdos', presumably a pseudonym for Father Aubrey Goodman, a member of the Sacred Heart Order, and the only Sydney priest who appears to have been well versed in the subject at the time. They were competent and informative; and, although they stressed the pastoral role of Catholic Action, they made clear that the Pope had prescribed as its most important modern function the Christianising of the social order.<sup>4a</sup>

About September of 1931 a small group of men and women in Sydney formed the 'Waverley Lay Apostolate', under the guidance of Father Fidelis Griffin, the Commissary-Provincial of the Franciscan Order. Their first practical activity was 'instruction given to the Catholic children attending State schools', a form<sup>4b</sup> of pastoral work already being performed by the Theresian Club, and subsequently to become the most notable kind of lay action in Sydney. A second group of the 'Lay Apostolate' was formed on 5 February 1932, under the direction of Father A. Smith, a Sacred Heart priest. Its first meeting was addressed by Father Aubrey Goodman on the subject of Catholic Action.<sup>5</sup>

At the end of 1931 Archbishop Kelly apparently decided that the urgency of the Pope's calls for Catholic Action warranted a more positive response from Sydney. He called a meeting for 2

<sup>4a</sup>  
See 'The Social Crusade', by 'Sacerdos', C.P. 3 December 1931.

<sup>4b</sup>  
A women's charitable society, founded in 1918 by the Sisters of Charity at St. Vincent's Hospital - an equivalent of the Melbourne Catholic Women's Social Guild (see the Annals, October 1935, p. 417, files at the Sacred Heart Monastery, Kensington, N.S.W.).

<sup>5</sup>  
C.P. 3 March 1932, p. 6.

December of the Principals of all Catholic secondary schools; delegates from the Religious Orders; representative of schools' ex-pupils associations; and other individuals whom he nominated. The purpose of the assembly was to inaugurate an Association of Catholic Action. Dr. Kelly himself appointed the first Executive of the Association, making Thomas J. Purcell, a young lawyer, the President,<sup>6</sup> and Father Austin Kelly, S.J., Rector of St. Aloysius' College, Milson's Point, the Secretary. The Executive, in co-operation with parish priests, was to set up 'centres of Catholic Action' in the parishes; and ordinary laymen could become members of the Association 'by joining a centre and giving their names and addresses to the Secretary of such centre.'<sup>7</sup>

It is obvious that the Archbishop set up the A.C.A. without having any but the vaguest notion of what Catholic Action involved. Then aged eighty-one, Kelly was a deeply pious man and a dedicated pastor, but he was no intellectual, and was unable to conceive of the Church's role as extending beyond the traditional pastoral and pedagogical preoccupations of Irish Catholicism. This limitation of vision was evident in a lecture he gave to 4,000 Catholic school children in St. Mary's Basilica on Sunday 30 February 1932, at a rally intended to assist the A.C.A. He exhorted those present to greater personal piety and good works;

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<sup>6</sup> The basis of Purcell's selection was apparently purely personal: he was not a member of the Knights of the Southern Cross, nor was he prominent in other Catholic bodies. However, Archbishop Kelly had valued the friendship of his father, also T. J. Purcell (died 1927). Interview with Mr. T. J. Purcell, 28 March 1972.

<sup>7</sup> See 1932 schemata of the A.C.A., 1934 Newman Convention box, M.A.A.



and in answer to the question, 'What was Catholic Action?' he declared:

It was Catholics living exemplary lives, joining together in hearing the word of God and keeping it.<sup>8</sup>

The aims of the Association of Catholic Action, as detailed in 1932, faithfully reflected the Archbishop's outlook. No mention was made of the social apostolate; and only a hint was given of the need for intellectual formation. The objectives were listed as:

- (1) The personal sanctification of the members by a more intense practice of their Holy Faith; e.g., the assisting at daily Mass, frequent communion, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, etc.
- (2) The instruction (religious) of Catholic children not attending Catholic schools.
- (3) The dissemination of Catholic literature.
- (4) Study groups for the study of Catholic principles. The conducting of clubs, instruction classes, circles and reading clubs.
- (5) Work for the Foreign Missions.
- (6) Praying for and aiding conversions to the Church.
- (7) The visitation of hospitals, hostels, lodging-houses, and institutions frequented by the needy or outcast.
- (8) The making of a Catholic census, promoting sodality membership, and for this co-operating with sodality prefects.
- (9) Any work whatsoever of a spiritual nature for the love and glory of God, and for the help and enlightenment of ourselves and our neighbours.<sup>9</sup>

Within the sphere of operations prescribed for it, the Association of Catholic Action worked enthusiastically and with notable success. In its first year it organised catechists' groups to take religious lessons in about forty Government schools, and

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<sup>8</sup>  
C.P. 3 March 1932, p. 19.

<sup>9</sup>  
1932 A.C.A. schemata, 1934 Newman Convention box, M.A.A.



was able to record 'about 1500 children withdrawn from State Schools and placed in Catholic Schools.'<sup>10</sup> In 1933 the State education authorities banned lay catechists from their schools; but the A.C.A. conducted fifteen catechetical classes outside school hours, and had 'about 500' children transfer to Catholic schools.<sup>11</sup> Other of its activities included the dissemination of Catholic literature; the organisation of instruction classes for non-Catholics; the formation of three Reading Clubs; the collection of contributions for the overseas Missions; the visitation of hospitals; the promotion of sodality membership; and the operation of correspondence catechetical courses for Catholic children in Outback areas.<sup>12</sup>

For all its good work, the A.C.A. had been founded on a false conception of Catholic Action. In February 1933, however, this difficult subject was much elucidated with the publication of Father Aubrey Goodman's A Handbook of Catholic Action. The first text of its kind to appear in Australia, it was essentially an explanation of the theory and structure of the Italian form of Catholic Action. Its immediate practical impact was negligible, however, as no organisation existed within the Sydney Church such as could have utilised the knowledge it presented.

The absence of any Catholic intellectual movement in

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<sup>10</sup> A.C.A. Report, 1934 Newman Convention box, M.A.A.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

New South Wales left a void which, in the restless conditions of the times, demanded to be filled. In Melbourne this service had been performed by the University-based Campion Society. In Sydney, however, the state of Catholicism at the University gave little ground for hope of a comparable movement emerging there.

Sydney University in the 'thirties was by no means a duplicate of its Melbourne sister academy. Its campus was much more conservative, with the University Union, a semi-private club, serving as both the centre of undergraduate social life, and as the guardian of established traditions and values. Unlike Melbourne, Sydney University had no debating society; and debates were conducted instead by the Union at its regular fortnightly formal-dress-and-dinner 'Union Nights'. The event of the year was the awarding of the Rhodes Scholarship, a matter to which the student newspaper Honi Soit, unlike Farrago, devoted a great deal of attention.

The ideological conflict which raged so fiercely at Melbourne was absent from the Sydney campus. Only in May of 1931 was a Labour Club formed; and although initially conservative opposition was intense, this soon died down when it became apparent that in practice the Club was neither Marxist nor militant. It simply functioned quietly, indeed, almost inconspicuously, as (from 1932) the affiliated University branch of the Lang-dominated N.S.W. Labor Party. <sup>13</sup> The development of

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See in particular Honi Soit 29 April, 6 May 1931; 6 April 1932.

any Communist or Marxist movement on campus would have been difficult in view of the hostility to such of Professor John Anderson, the renowned Scottish-born occupant of the Chair of Philosophy. Anderson, whose personal influence among undergraduates has possibly been exceeded by that of no other Australian academic, had flirted briefly with Communism before reacting against its methods. He remained a radical in many of his social attitudes, but rejected Marxism.

The most sustained conflict on the Sydney campus was not ideological but philosophical, and was more reminiscent of the nineteenth century than of the Great Depression era. It was the old controversy of rationalism-versus-religion, with the chief protagonists being the Christian Union (from 1933, the Student Christian Movement) and Anderson's Freethought Society (formed in September 1930). The Christian Union, which was well entrenched at the University, steered a theological course somewhere between traditional Protestantism and the more liberal or Modernist<sup>14</sup> religious philosophies which were gaining ground overseas.

Despite the comparative stability and conservatism of the Sydney campus, the Depression had a marked effect in stirring into life a student social conscience. This became evident in the statements of Professor John Anderson, as in the proceedings of the

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An indication of the S.C.M.'s theological complexion might be found in its reactions to the controversy sparked off by the publication of Truth and Tradition (Angus & Robertson, 1933), an examination of traditional Christian beliefs by the Presbyterian Modernist Dr. Angus, Professor of Theology at St. Andrew's College at the University of Sydney.

Freethought Society and of the older-type liberal clubs such as the League of Nations Union and the Public Questions Society. It was the Christian Union, however, which took the lead in preaching the new gospel of social concern. In July of 1930 it sponsored a series of talks by G. V. Portus on 'Christianity and Communism', the response being sufficiently encouraging to have them published in book form.<sup>15</sup> At the end of 1930 it initiated a fund-drive among students to help the unemployed;<sup>16</sup> and during 1931 it organised several lectures on social issues. Subsequently two future Anglican bishops, David Garnsey and the Reverend E. H. Burgmann, were among those who counselled it on the duties of Christians in respect of the social order.<sup>17</sup>

From all this undergraduate activity the Catholics were conspicuously absent. Indeed, University Catholicism was unhappily situated in relation both to the local Church and to general campus life. Archbishop Kelly, according to O'Farrell, was 'suspicious of the University of Sydney, believing that it endangered the souls of Catholic students.'<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, poor relations had subsisted between St. John's, the Catholic University College, and the Sydney Hierarchy, almost continuously since the College's foundation in 1859.<sup>19</sup> Thus, in contrast to Melbourne,

<sup>15</sup> Honi Soit, 16 July 1930, 11 November 1931.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 12 November 1930.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 6 July 1932, 10 October 1934.

<sup>18</sup> O'Farrell, Short History, p. 214.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 81, 125, 214.

Sydney University Catholics were estranged from their own archdiocese. The converse of this was that a fear of the University grew within the Sydney Church, a fear which focused on Professor John Anderson, who was invested in the popular Catholic imagination<sup>20</sup> with almost demonic powers for destroying the faith of the young.

In Melbourne Father Jeremiah Murphy had broken down the isolation of Newman College residents from general undergraduate life; however, in Sydney this isolation was still very much in evidence. The Rector of St. John's, Dr. Maurice O'Reilly, a witty, cultured, and somewhat pretentious Vincentian priest, had his own select circle of friends, and cared little about what was happening at the University proper. The St. John's residents participated in the general round of inter-College activities, but not in campus affairs. The Newman Society, founded late in 1928, organised a number of lectures and discussions during its first year,<sup>21</sup> but subsequently did little other than organise occasional social activities. It rarely rated a mention in Honi Soit, and was in no sense a force at the University. A women's equivalent, the University Catholic Women's Society, which centred on Sancta Sophia College, was a little more intellectually alive. However, it displayed no interest in social questions; and in a lecture series which it began in July 1933, it dealt only with perennial<sup>22</sup> scriptural, doctrinal and philosophical issues. The Catholic

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Vestiges of the 'black Anderson' legend can still be found among Sydney Catholics today.

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C.P. 21 November 1929, p. 21.

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Honi Soit, 5 July 1933.



societies compared ill with the vigorous Student Christian Movement, the spearhead of social activism at the University.

The depressed state of Catholic undergraduate life moved the Newman Society Committee early in 1934 to write to Father H. B. Loughnan, S.J., Dean of Newman College, enquiring how the Victorian Newman Society was faring. Loughnan's reply, which was read out at a Committee meeting, was unenthusiastic concerning the Newman, but portrayed in glowing terms the work of the Campion Society. It suggested that, if they were interested, they should write to Frank Maher, and get in touch with Father Richard Murphy, S.J., in Sydney. The latter priest had visited Melbourne shortly before, and had been much impressed by the Campions. Desmond O'Connor, an Arts/Law student and St. John's College resident who was on the Newman Committee, was intrigued by what Loughnan had to say, and the following evening on his own initiative called on Father Murphy.<sup>23</sup>

Father Richard Murphy was a Catholic activist of long standing. In 1912 he had helped launch the N.S.W. Catholic Federation;<sup>24</sup> in 1933 he assisted Dr. Herbert Moran to found the Catholic Medical Guild of St. Luke; and later he was to collaborate with Dr. Horace Nowland to bring Alcoholics Anonymous to Australia.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup>

'Campion History', The Campion, Sydney, September 1954. A copy is in the possession of Mr. L. G. O'Sullivan, Canberra.

<sup>24</sup>

See 'The Catholic Story', Catholic Weekly, 12 April 1951, p. 8 (a chronology).

<sup>25</sup>

See I'll Cry Tomorrow, by Lillian Roth (Barker, London, 1956), chs. 25-26 (re Murphy, see pp. 272-3, 278).

He had a nimble mind, a broad range of interests, and a warm personality which appealed to young and old alike. He had first heard of the Champion Society when he was stationed in Brisbane, and had met Murray McInerney during the Intervarsity debating visit of 1932.<sup>26</sup> On his visit to Melbourne early in 1934 he had met Kevin Kelly, and had subsequently been in correspondence with him.<sup>27</sup> He had since attempted to begin a Sydney Champion group from among a few members of the Sydney University Newman Society,<sup>28</sup> but had dropped the project after one uninspiring meeting. However, O'Connor's unexpected call revived his interest; and the two agreed to seek out a number of suitable young colleagues and to launch a Champion group.

An initial meeting of prospective members was held on the evening of 30 April, with O'Connor, Father Murphy, and seven others being present. A fortnight later the Sydney Champion Society formally began, with its first discussion being on the topic, 'The Culture of Europe'. The conversation was lively, but did not proceed beyond the question: What is culture?<sup>29</sup> O'Connor early observed that the historical/cultural approach favoured by Melbourne would have to be introduced gradually; and that 'some of the members would like to do a little in the Apologetics line.'<sup>30</sup> As a bridge

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Memorandum, Mr. Justice McInerney to author, September 1967.

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R. Murphy, S.J., to Maher, 17 May 1934, H/B.

28

'Champion History'.

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O'Connor to Maher, 15 May 1934; O'Connor to Murphy, 15 May 1934, H/B.

30

O'Connor to Maher, 11 May 1934, H/B.

between apologetics and cultural history, several meetings were given to a study of early Christianity and the Fathers of the Church.<sup>31</sup> In the Melbourne Society, by contrast, study-programmes began with the Fall of the Roman Empire.

As with the early Melbourne Campion, most of the initial Sydney members were studying or practising law. Cyril Walsh, one of the first to join, numbered six legal men among the eight whom he could recall as being early members.<sup>32</sup>

For tactical reasons, the Sydney Campion for a time functioned as a semi-autonomous group within the Sydney University Newman Society. O'Connor explained in a letter to Maher that, although they hoped 'to be able to drift away from it [the Newman/]',

We cannot however (on Fr. Murphy's advice) form a new Society. We who are interested in lay work have more to contend with in Sydney than you have in Melbourne by way of Archiepiscopal obstruction.<sup>33</sup>

O'Connor, a leading member of the Sydney Newman Society since its foundation, was well aware that Dr. Kelly liked to keep a tight rein on his lay societies, and most particularly on societies of an intellectual nature.<sup>34</sup> He had come to the opinion that Kelly

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<sup>31</sup> O'Connor to Maher, 12 June, 26 June, 14 July, 26 July 1934, H/B.

<sup>32</sup> They were himself, O'Connor, Tom McNevin (later to become a priest), Len Lochrin, Clarrie Cullen, and Des Ryan. The other two were Patrick Moran, a talented mathematics student, son of Dr. Herbert Moran; and Bert Swan, a Classics coach: C. A. Walsh, 'The Campion Society', The Campion, Sydney, December 1954. A copy is in the possession of Mr. L. G. O'Sullivan, Canberra.

<sup>33</sup> O'Connor to Maher, 11 May 1934, H/B.

<sup>34</sup> Interviews with Father Desmond O'Connor, S.J., 8 February 1967, 1 April 1972.

'regards Catholic Action as a 20th century heresy'.<sup>35</sup> By operating within the Newman, the Sydney Campion Society was able to conceal its existence and thus safeguard its autonomy. On the other hand, it had to resist the pressures of certain enthusiastic Newman Committee members who wished to make it an open discussion group.<sup>36</sup>

A further difficulty which the group had to face was the absence in their city of any equivalent of Father Hackett's Central Catholic Library. The K.S.C.-controlled Southern Cross Library was available to them, but O'Connor regarded it as 'nothing more than a safe collection for shop girls.'<sup>37</sup> He was able, however, to obtain permission to build up a special Campion section within the Library.<sup>38</sup>

With regard to outside action, an early opportunity presented itself to the Sydney Campions in the form of the Catholic Fireside. This was the organ of the Catholic Club, a social club founded in 1905, which by the 1930s was a favoured gathering-place of Catholic Labour movement activists. In tone, the magazine transcended its origins, in that it sought to be not only popular but moderately intellectual. First appearing in July of 1934, its early issues featured articles by Chesterton, Belloc, Knox, Lunn, and Martindale; and its editor, Edward Bennetts, was

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<sup>35</sup> O'Connor to Maher, 12 June 1934, H/B.

<sup>36</sup> O'Connor to Maher, 1 May, 11 May 1934; O'Connor to R. Murphy, S.J., 15 May 1934, H/B.

<sup>37</sup> O'Connor to Maher, 1 May 1934, H/B.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.; cf. O'Connor to Murphy, 15 May 1934, H/B.

on the alert for local talent. O'Connor, who recognised the Fireside's potential as an avenue for Campion influence, early enquired about the possibility of University articles being published. He was immediately offered '8, 12, or 16 pages' monthly - whatever he desired. On Father Murphy's advice, however, the Campions decided not to commit themselves to regular writing at this stage, feeling that it could impede their development and restrict their independence.<sup>39</sup> It was to be over a year before the first Campion article was to appear in the magazine.

Thus in the years from 1931 to 1934 two new Catholic lay organisations, quite different in kind, had appeared in Sydney. The larger and more active, and the one which accorded the better with the established traditions of Sydney Catholicism, was the Association of Catholic Action, with its pastoral and catechetical orientation. The other was the Campion Society, which had begun in an almost clandestine fashion in a University where Catholics did not count, and in a Church where intellectuals were not welcome. The situation could scarcely have been more diametrically opposed to that which existed in Victoria. However, in the third Southern State, South Australia, the new Catholic intellectual and social movements were progressing much more smoothly.

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In Adelaide a Newman-type organisation for Catholic graduates and undergraduates, the Aquinas Society, had been founded in October of 1928. By coincidence, its inaugural meeting had been attended by Father C. C. Martindale, S.J., who at the time was visiting the city on his lecture-tour of Southern Australia. An independent Aquinas Society of South Australia, Women's Branch, had subsequently been established.<sup>40</sup>

As in Victoria and New South Wales, however, the most important intellectual organisation within the Catholic community was not the official University society, but an independent body, in this case the Catholic Guild for Social Studies. In conception and influence, the Guild approximated closely to the Victorian Champion Society. Its founder was Dominic Paul McGuire, then in his early 'thirties, a University lecturer, novelist, and correspondent for overseas Catholic periodicals. Within the Guild McGuire worked in close association with his wife, Margaret.

The Catholic Guild for Social Studies had been launched in February of 1932, and had adopted a programme of activities similar to, but more extensive than, that of the Champion Society. It operated several social studies groups, arranged public lectures, and held summer-schools. A 1934 Catholic Evidence lecture-series in the Adelaide Town Hall, which the Guild conducted jointly with the C.Y.M.S., attracted 'an average attendance of at least 500.' Before the end of 1934 it had taken steps towards establishing an

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<sup>40</sup>

Aquinas Society Report, 1934 Newman Convention box, M.A.A.

Adelaide Central Catholic Library; was investigating the possibility of doing catechetical work; and was planning to form a Catholic Land Association to promote far-reaching schemes of rural reform.<sup>41</sup>

The Guild contained a strain of Catholic rural romanticism which at this stage was absent from the Campion Society; but in other ways the perspectives of the two organisations were similar. The study-topics of the Guild included: 'Rerum Novarum'; 'Quadragesimo Anno'; 'The Church's teaching regarding Property and Ownership'; 'The rise and nature of Capitalism'; 'Communism'; 'The Rights and Duties of the Individual'; 'The Origin and Functions of the State'; 'The Christian Family'; 'The Medieval Guilds'; 'The Just Price'; and 'The Just Wage'.<sup>42</sup> More attention was given to the examination in detail of Catholic social theory, and less to historical and cultural studies, than was the case with the Campion.

Again like the Campion Society in Victoria, the Catholic Guild for Social Studies was by 1934 performing a catalytic function in transforming the attitudes of South Australian Catholics on the implications of Christian belief for the ordering of society.

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In Queensland the Catholic University organisation was

<sup>41</sup>

Catholic Guild for Social Studies Report, 1934 Newman Convention box, M.A.A.

<sup>42</sup>

Ibid.

known as the Leonian Society, and was closely connected with St. Leo's College, the Catholic college on campus. As in the other States, however, the Catholic intellectual stirrings emanated from another body, the Christian Brothers' Old Boys' Association.

Formed in the 1890s and re-activated after the World War, the C.B.O.B.A. was open to all ex-pupils of Christian Brothers' schools, and in 1934 had a numerical strength of 2,000. In 1932 it had launched a monthly magazine, The Risen Sun, 'to encourage young Catholic writers to develop literary expression'; and it had also been responsible for the opening the following year of Brisbane's Aquinas Library. It operated a Dramatic Society and a Debating Society; and it had ambitions to form a Catholic Workers' Educational Association, a Catholic Debating Societies' Union, and 'a quarterly of definitely intellectual appeal.' During 1934 it had at least one study-group operating.<sup>43</sup> Much of its vitality was attributable to the drive and energy of its President, John P. Kelly, a young lawyer.

As a result of a visit by Murray McInerney and Frank Quaine to Brisbane for the 1932 Intervarsity debating, a Champion group had been formed in that city by Dr. John English, 'the then intellectual leader of the Brisbane clergy.' This, however, had been short-lived.<sup>44</sup> During 1934 Frank Maher was corresponding with Arthur S. Hegerty, a leading member of the C.B.O.B.A., in the hope of

<sup>43</sup>  
C.B.O.B.A. Report, 1934 Newman Convention box, M.A.A.; A. S. Hegerty to Maher, 13 June 1934, H/B.

<sup>44</sup>  
Memorandum, Mr. Justice McInerney to author, September 1967.

inspiring another such effort.<sup>45</sup> It was to be another two years, however, before a successful Brisbane Campion Society was to be established.

The organisation operated in Brisbane by Father Adrian J. Mills, 'The Lay Apostolate', and its magazine Australia, have already been discussed in reference to the Melbourne Campion Society. Mills had a great zeal for Catholic Action, but his personality was such as to make sustained co-operation with others difficult. His most memorable work was his organisation of extensive relief operations to assist the destitute and unemployed.

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In Western Australia, a Newman Society had been inaugurated at a meeting in the Archbishop's Residence in September 1924. The second such society to appear in Australia, it had adopted 'the aims of the Newman Society of Victoria.'<sup>46</sup>

Late in 1932 Mr. Keith Spruhan had been in touch with the Melbourne Campion Society from Perth, having assisted in the formation of a Pian Club.<sup>47</sup> Pian Clubs had proliferated in Europe in the early part of the century as semi-secret anti-Modernist societies, but had dwindled as the Modernist heresy had been

<sup>45</sup>  
See correspondence, H/B.

<sup>46</sup>  
Adv. 6 November 1924, p. 11; cf. J. T. McMahon, College. Campus. Cloister (University of W.A. Press, 1969), Part II, Ch. 1, passim.

<sup>47</sup>  
Minutes, Q.M., 14 September 1932, H/B.

successfully suppressed. Modernism had never penetrated to Australia; and it seems that the Perth Pian Club was simply a small Catholic intellectual group. Later in the decade Spruhan was to help found the Chesterton Club, the Western Australian equivalent of the Campion Society.

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In Tasmania a Newman Society had been in existence since 1931. It had persevered in a semi-dormant state, and had done little of note besides organise occasional lectures at the University of Tasmania 'on subjects of Catholic and cultural interest'. During 1934 an attempt was made to form a study-circle, 'but lack of sufficient well informed members rendered this impossible.'<sup>48</sup>

During 1932 Kevin Kelly had been 'in touch with several Catholics' in Tasmania in an attempt to stimulate the formation of a Campion group,<sup>49</sup> but nothing had come of it.

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The Australia-wide picture which emerges is one of general Catholic intellectual revitalisation, with the strength and influence of the new intellectual movements varying considerably

<sup>48</sup>

Newman Society of Tasmania Report, 1934 Newman Convention box, M.A.A.

<sup>49</sup>

Minutes, Q.M., 14 September 1932, H/B.



from one State to another. Catholic social idealism had taken firm root in Victoria and South Australia, was making solid headway in Queensland, existed in vestigial form in New South Wales and Western Australia, and was unknown in Tasmania. Everywhere on the mainland the psychological impact of the Depression had produced some discernable changes in Catholic social attitudes.

Initially these Catholic intellectual movements had grown independently of one another, and lacked any sense of unity. This isolation was to be broken down, however, and a spirit of national solidarity was to emerge, as a result of an important Catholic celebration which was planned for December of 1934, Melbourne's National Eucharistic Congress.

CHAPTER 7THE YEAR OF THE MELBOURNE EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS, 1934

The announcement that Melbourne was to hold a National Eucharistic Congress was made by Archbishop Mannix at the C.Y.M.S. Annual Communion Breakfast on 29 October 1933. It was to take place in December 1934, and was to be the Catholic contribution to Melbourne's Centenary celebrations. Its theme was to be 'Catholic Action', hitherto a little-known term in Australia. Memories of the spectacular success of Sydney's 1928 International Eucharistic Congress ensured widespread popular enthusiasm; and the Catholic Young Man was confident that the Melbourne Congress would 'give expression to the highest ideals and sentiments of a people anxious to express its gratitude to God for a century of prosperity and national progress.'<sup>1</sup>

The Newman Society of Victoria responded to the announcement of the Congress by deciding to run simultaneously a Convention of Catholic University bodies of the Commonwealth, to consider the matter of Catholic Action. The Campion Society, which had four of its leading members on the Newman Committee,<sup>2</sup> doubtlessly had some part in this decision. However, when early enquiries revealed 'the moribund State of numerous University

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<sup>1</sup> Catholic Young Man, February 1934, editorial, M.A.A.

<sup>2</sup> They were Murray McInerney, Gerard Heffey, Frank Misell, and Reginald Hoban (Adv. 4 May 1933, p. 11). Misell was Newman Secretary.

Societies', it was decided to enlarge the Convention to include 'intellectual Societies in other States which...were performing much of the work which might be considered the task of University Societies.'<sup>3</sup>

The new publicity given to the term 'Catholic Action' ensured that within Victoria the expertise of the Campion Society would be in heavy demand. Furthermore, other factors were contributing to the expansion of the Society's influence, not least of which was the rise to prominence on the Advocate and the Catholic Hour of Denys Jackson.

As a result of his success in the Newman Society essay competition, Jackson had made his debut with the Advocate on 10 August 1933. He signified his elitist social views by using the nom-de-plume 'Sulla', the name of the Roman dictator and leader of the Aristocratic party of the first century before Christ. His section was initially sponsored by the Newman Society, but after fourteen months the Newman heading was dropped.

An outline of Jackson's social perspective was presented to Advocate readers in his first 'Sulla' article, 'Reflections on Christianity in the New Age: Crisis in the West.' Concise, knowledgeable and well-written, it consisted of a Bellocian/Wüst-style analysis of the broad cultural and intellectual currents operating in Western civilisation since the fall of the Roman

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<sup>3</sup>

Convention Committee Report, 21 November 1934, Newman Convention box, M.A.A.

Empire. It concluded with a typically Campion flourish:

Catholicism, with the forces allied to it, which stand for the traditional culture of Europe, must regain their control of the world of thought, upon which that of action depends. If we fail to do this, we perish...

Although Jackson had certainly influenced the Campion Society more than he had been influenced by it, his 'Sulla' writings reflected the major preoccupations and attitudes of the Society. His second article was on 'Christian Culture and Catholic Action'; and his third on 'The New Slavery' - an attack on totalitarianism. On 12 October 1933 he began a series of seven articles on Italian Fascism and German Nazism. Writing in a scholarly style, he showed his approval for some aspects of the systems: for the restriction of individualism; the halting of class warfare; the 'Corporative State' structuring of Fascist Italy. However, he strongly denounced the paganism and Racism of the Nazis, and the extreme nationalism of both regimes. In his final essay, 'Catholicism and the Fascist Spirit', he concluded that

Until Fascism can temper its self-love by a love of mankind, the Christian and the humanist can only regard it with invincible distrust.<sup>4</sup>

In Jackson, the Advocate had obtained for the first time the services of someone who was well versed in European history and politics. So much had the paper's insularity of the pre-Depression era broken down that in return for this expertise, and for Jackson's elegance of style and precision of thought, it was

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<sup>4</sup>

Adv. 30 November 1933, p. 8.

prepared to tolerate his basic political standpoint, which, by Australian standards, was highly unconventional. He was a romantic conservative, a Royalist, a believer in strong monarchy as a means of overcoming party-political factionalism. Building on an idealisation of the Stuart age,<sup>5</sup> and drawing on Belloc's The House of Commons and Monarchy; Charles Maurras' newspaper l'Action Francaise; and the examples of Mussolini, Roosevelt and Dollfuss, he had developed an up-dated Christian Monarchism as his personal political philosophy. This, together with modern Catholic social thought, formed the basis of his social outlook.

At the end of 1933 the Advocate's usual leader-writer, P. I. O'Leary, was forced to take extended leave for health reasons, and his job was offered to Jackson by the editor, Father Moynihan.<sup>6</sup> It was thus that this idealistic English Tory was propelled into a key position of influence among the traditionally pragmatic, Labour-orientated Catholic people of Victoria.

Jackson's first editorial, on 4 January 1934, gave readers a foretaste of the highly individualistic line which he was to follow over the succeeding twelve months. Headed 'An Expensive Luxury', it criticised the pomp surrounding the Governor Generalship and the British Crown, denouncing it as the hollow symbolism of a sham monarchy, of a kingship without power or real

<sup>5</sup>

See D. G. M. Jackson, 'A Royalist's Pilgrimage', an autobiographical sketch, Adv. 4 May 1934, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup>

Interview with Mr. D. G. M. Jackson, May 1967.



purpose. Alluding to the views of Belloc, and to ancient Christian ideals of Monarchy, Jackson called on the British to abandon this charade, and to

restore the public person in government, as Italy has done, for example, and then let them surround a real Chief of men with all the dignity most fitting for his high office.

Most of Jackson's leader-articles were fairly conventional, although they reflected a developed Christian social idealism which had not previously been evident in the Advocate. He frequently denounced Capitalism;<sup>7</sup> he called for the introduction of a 'family wage' in place of, or in addition to, the 'basic wage';<sup>8</sup> and he propounded the Bellocian 'Distributist' ideal of a greater sharing of property-ownership within the community.<sup>9</sup> However, his peculiarly individual views were also given a frequent airing. The most notable of these were his 'Christian Monarchism' and his advocacy of the 'Corporative State', two ideals which he presented as the basis of an alternative political order to liberal democracy. His 'Christian Monarchic Corporativism' was transformed from a preference into an enthusiasm when in April 1934 the Austrian Chancellor/dictator, Engelbert Dollfuss, announced that he was going to construct the first Christian Corporative State.

Corporativism involved the organisation of a nation's

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<sup>7</sup> See Adv. editorials of 26 July, 23 August, 6 September 1934.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., editorials of 8 March, 12 April 1934.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 29 March 1934, editorial.

citizens into collectives, or Corporations, based on trades and occupations, with these bodies becoming the basic units of economic and political life. The Corporations were intended to replace both Trade Unions and employers' associations; and further, they were to constitute monolithic political voting blocks, thus annulling the one-man-one-vote principle which held sway in the liberal democracies. Corporativism represented essentially an extension of the medieval Guild (in Europe, Corporation) system into the political arena; and it was this affinity which gained it a considerable following among Catholic social thinkers from the early years of this century. It was regarded by its proponents as a more 'natural' way of ordering society than other systems favoured by modern political theorists. <sup>10</sup>

Mussolini had established a clumsy Corporative system in Italy as a means, according to Mack Smith, both to preserve a show of mass involvement in his government, and 'to keep a tight hold on the workers in straitly centralized unions.' <sup>11</sup> Dollfuss, the Christian Democrat Chancellor of Austria, had adopted the system from his neighbour, primarily in order to alter the national voting structure in his own favour, and thus to help stave off serious threats to his rule from two opposing extremes, the Nazi right and the Socialist left. He maintained that his new Order would be a Christian one, based as far as possible on Quadragesimo Anno and Catholic social principles. <sup>12</sup> However, he was not to be

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For a good concise coverage of the subject, see R. Ares, 'Corporativism', in the New Catholic Encyclopedia (U.S.A., 1967).

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Denis Mack Smith, Italy: A Modern History (University of Michigan Press, 1959), p. 395.

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Adv. 24 May 1934, editorial.

given the chance to try out his ideals in practice, being assassinated in July 1934 during an unsuccessful Nazi coup attempt.

Denys Jackson, a romantic rather than a political realist, took at its face value Dollfuss' rationalisation of his new Order, and proclaimed exuberantly that 'The world is to see the first fully Catholic Corporative State...

It is conformed to nature: it avoids alike the evils of the class-struggle and of State-despotism, while providing a remedy for the anarchy at present reigning in the industrial world.<sup>13</sup>

During the remainder of 1934 he constantly promoted the ideal of Corporativism;<sup>14</sup> and he was to return to it at lesser intervals in subsequent years.

Supplementing Jackson's editorials was his 'Sulla' section, which during 1934 was concerned partly with historical topics, mostly with European current affairs. In content it tended to be more informative, less visionary than his leader-articles. Its most constant preoccupation was with Germany, where the consolidating grip of the 'barbaric, Nordic paganism' of the Nazis filled Jackson with dread.<sup>15</sup> Only at the end of the year was any attention given to Communism, with a series of four articles on 'The Wooden Horse: The New Policy of Soviet Russia' being given

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Adv. 12 July 1934, editorial; 23 August, p. 15; 20 September, editorial and 'Sulla'; 4 October, editorial; 27 December, p. 6.

<sup>15</sup> Adv. 27 December 1934, editorial; cf. editorials of 8 March, 10 May, 12 July; 'Sulla' of 15 February, 26 April, 5 July, 11 October, 18 October.

to an expose of the new 'Popular Front' tactics of the Communists. 16

Jackson's rise in the Catholic media came at a time when his influence within the Campion Society was no longer a major one. It had been the romanticism of Jackson and Quaine which had initially sparked the Society into being; but now the main drive came from elsewhere. Quaine, also a Royalist and a reader of l'Action Francaise, had been Jackson's nearest fellow-spirit; but he was more in his element on the campus than in the Campion, and had gradually drifted away from the Society. <sup>17</sup> In April of 1934 he won a Mollison Scholarship and shortly afterwards departed for France, where he remains today. The Campion Society was now dominated by the activists, chief amongst whom was Kevin Kelly.

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Kelly had been notable for his energy and initiative ever since he had joined the Campion. Many of the 1932 recruits <sup>18</sup> had come from among his friends and acquaintances; and he had established himself as one of the most capable speakers among the members. However, the event which signalled his emergence as the foremost activist in the Society was his foundation in November 1933 of the Melbourne Catholic Evidence Guild.

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<sup>16</sup> Adv., 'Sulla' of 15, 22, 29 November, 27 December 1934.

<sup>17</sup> His name does not figure in Campion documents after 1932, although he remained prominent in University debating, and certainly continued to associate in Campion circles. Two articles by Quaine on 'Prince Sixte of Bourbon' replaced 'Sulla' in the Newman Society section of the Advocate of 14 and 21 June 1934.

<sup>18</sup> See Maher, 'Campion Beginnings', Orders of the Day, June 1939, H/B.

In August of 1933 Kelly had visited Sydney, taking with him a letter of introduction to Peter Gallagher, Master of the Catholic Speakers, from Brother Jerome, Principal of De La Salle College, Malvern. He had spoken from the Catholic Evidence pitch at the Domain; and upon returning to Melbourne had determined to launch a similar venture there.<sup>19</sup> He wanted the Campion Society to assume this added form of activity; and at the Quarterly Meeting of 4 October he conducted 'a spirited attack upon the Council', in which he 'accused it of inertia, and of failing to plan necessary active works for the Society.'<sup>20</sup> However, on 10 October the Council decided against his proposals, ruling 'that actively and as a body, the Society cannot, at this stage, engage in work amongst non-Catholics.'<sup>21</sup>

Not to be deterred, Kelly and his friend Brian Harkin decided to found a Melbourne Catholic Evidence Guild independently of the Campion. Early in November Kelly had a long conversation with Archbishop Mannix at 'Raheen', at which he obtained permission to launch a Guild on a provisional basis.<sup>22</sup> A Catholic stand appeared on Melbourne's Yarra Bank for the first time on the afternoon of Sunday 12 November 1933, and at regular intervals

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<sup>19</sup> Brief history (Kelly's handwriting) of C.E.G., at front of C.E.G. minute-book, 26 June 1934-8 March 1943, M.A.A.

<sup>20</sup> Minutes, Q.M., 4 October 1933, Campion Council minute-book.

<sup>21</sup> Council minutes, 10 October 1933, H/B.

<sup>22</sup> Council minutes, 8 November 1933, H/B.



after that, competing with Communist, Evangelical and other pitches for the attentions of the large crowds of curious or sceptical spectators.

In April of 1934 Frank Murphy joined the original pair; and shortly afterwards Dr. Mannix instructed them to prepare a Constitution so that the Guild could be formally established. An inaugural meeting was held on the evening of Wednesday 8 August 1934. The Archbishop appointed Fathers James Murtagh, James Cleary and Bernard O'Connor, all ex-members of the Conversion of Australia Movement at Corpus Christi College, as General Clerical Assistants; and Dr. Bernard Stewart (the present Bishop of Sandhurst) as Clerical Secretary. Stewart was the son of a prominent Catholic journalist of the Austral Light era, and had graduated in Law from Melbourne University before leaving for Rome to study for the priesthood. Kevin Kelly became Master of the Guild, Frank<sup>23</sup> Murphy the General Secretary, and Brian Harkin the Treasurer.

The Evidence Guild soon attracted a small number of active supporters; however, none of these was either in the Campion or at the University. When Kevin Kelly retired as Master in March 1936, and Brian Harkin moved from Melbourne shortly afterwards,<sup>24</sup> Murphy remained the only Campion member associated with the Guild. It seems that the work of speaking regularly on basic apologetics to critical non-Catholic audiences held little

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<sup>23</sup> Information from C.E.G. minute-book, M.A.A.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

appeal for the Campions, when more glory with less effort could be obtained by addressing sympathetic gatherings of C.Y.M.S. men, or by writing for Catholic publications.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, the Guild bore the singular distinction of being the first independent offshoot of Campion enthusiasm.

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The foundation of the Evidence Guild marked the beginning of a period of unprecedented expansion for the Campion. The Eucharistic Congress year saw the extension of the Society into the Victorian country areas; the foundation of the Sydney Campion; the formation of the joint study-groups within the C.Y.M.S.; the utilisation of the Catholic Young Man; and Jackson's first round as leader-writer for the Advocate - all matters which have already been dealt with.

However, the theme of the Congress was to be Catholic Action; and although the Society knew in the abstract what the term implied, it had only vague notions as to how the theory could be put into practice. Since Catholic Action was supposed to give rise to mass movements, co-ordinated at national and international levels, it was obvious that more was involved than small bodies of Catholic intellectuals giving lectures and writing articles.

The responsibility for filling this large gap in the

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For a caustic comment by a C.E.G. activist on this situation, see letter by A. Wilson, Adv. 16 March 1939, p. 8.

Society's knowledge was assumed by Kevin Kelly, who by 1934 was corresponding with the main Franco-Belgian Catholic Action movement, the 'Jocists'. The person indirectly responsible for the establishment of this link was Father Hackett, who late in 1932 had asked Kelly to write an article on the Australian Labor Party, with particular reference to its Socialization Objective, for the French Jesuit publication, Dossiers l'Action Populaire. Kelly had done so; and as payment he had received some months later a parcel of French Catholic books and reviews. From information contained therein he was able to establish contact with the Jocists, and eventually to open a correspondence with one of their Belgian leaders, M. l'abbe Robert Kothen.<sup>26</sup>

The first indication that the Campion Society had begun to give serious attention to the mechanics of Catholic Action came in April 1934, when, at Father Hackett's suggestion, the members of the First Central Group agreed each to make a special study of the workings of the movement in one overseas country. The survey was to cover Italy, France, Belgium, Spain, Austria, Poland, Holland, England, Ireland, Scotland, the United States, Canada, and Argentina.<sup>27</sup> In July the Jocist influence made its first definite appearance, when Kevin Kelly delivered a paper at the Annual General Meeting on 'the penetration of the milieu' ('la penetration du milieu'), the catch-phrase used by the Jocists to denote their strategy for permeating modern society with a

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<sup>26</sup> Interviews with Mr. K. T. Kelly, 1967.

<sup>27</sup> First Central Group minutes, 11 April 1934, H/B.

Christian influence. At the same meeting Father Hackett gave 'a stirring address on the necessity of Catholic Action.'<sup>28</sup>

While this field of study was attracting the detailed attention of members for the first time, and while the major new areas of activity already mentioned were being opened up, the Society was consolidating its influence within the Melbourne metropolitan area. This was apparent at the University, at Corpus Christi College, in the schools, and on Catholic Radio, in all of which spheres the Campion was working to noticeable effect.

With regard to the University, early in 1934 a Campion Sub-Committee was appointed to organise a second series of Newman lunch-hour lectures. In the months from April to August Father H. B. Loughnan, S.J., Dean of Newman College, spoke on Scholasticism;<sup>29</sup> Kevin Kelly on 'The Catholic Reaction in Literature';<sup>30</sup> Dr. James Hannan on 'The Divinity of Christ';<sup>31</sup> Denys Jackson on 'The Church and War';<sup>32</sup> Frank Maher on 'Europe and the Faith';<sup>33</sup> and Bob Santamaria on Communism.<sup>34</sup> Other talks were given by Frank McMahon and John Merlo.

<sup>28</sup> Minutes, A.G.M., 25 July 1934, Council minute-book, H/B.

<sup>29</sup> Farrago 26 April 1934.

<sup>30</sup> Council minutes, 20 June 1934, H/B.

<sup>31</sup> Council minutes, 25 May 1934; Farrago 4 July 1934.

<sup>32</sup> Council minutes, 10 July 1934; Farrago 11 July 1934.

<sup>33</sup> Council minutes, 9 August 1934.

<sup>34</sup> Campion Annual Report, 25 July 1934, H/B.

The Society's efforts to gain support among the younger clergy continued to meet with success. During the first half of the year Denys Jackson and Kevin Kelly were able to visit Corpus Christi College and address the 'Social Group' there.<sup>35</sup> In October, furthermore, some members of the Conversion of Australia Movement at the College arranged to keep in touch with the Society; and one of them, Bernard Murphy, informed Gerard Heffey that, as best he could judge, 'the students here are very pro-Campion.'<sup>36</sup>

Among the younger Franciscan Friars two notable allies emerged in Fathers Philip Murphy and Sylvester O'Brien. The support of the Franciscans was particularly welcome as, being a specialised preaching Order, they travelled widely giving Retreats, and thus exerted an influence well in excess of their numbers. In April Denys Jackson attempted, unsuccessfully, to form a unit of the 'Third Order of St. Francis', a kind of lay Franciscan Order, within the Society;<sup>37</sup> and in July the Annual Campion Retreat was held at 'La Verna', the Franciscan Retreat House in Kew.<sup>38</sup>

Propaganda work was also maintained among the Catholic boys' secondary schools. At the Quarterly Meeting of 24 January 1934 Maher stressed the importance of this field of operations, advising the Society to 'keep closely in touch with the schools

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<sup>35</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>  
Bernard F. Murphy to Heffey, 22 October 1934, H/B.

<sup>37</sup>  
Council minutes, 18 April, 6 May 1934, H/B.

<sup>38</sup>  
Campion Annual Report, 25 July 1934, H/B.



and extend our activities in that direction.'<sup>39</sup> In June Denys Jackson and John Heffey, the younger brother of Gerard, addressed the senior boys of St. Kevin's College on Catholic Action;<sup>40</sup> and two months later Jackson returned and spoke for nearly an hour on the same subject.<sup>41</sup>

Throughout the year the voice of the Campion continued to be heard over the Catholic Hour on Radio Station 3AW. Denys Jackson had his weekly segment as 'the Onlooker'; and the Society supplied other speakers when requested. At the Annual General Meeting in July, in reference to this field of activity, Maher recommended that members 'seize upon every possible opportunity to become versed in the art of public speaking.'<sup>42</sup>

The metropolitan membership of the Campion had grown to seventy by July, and the central groups had increased in number to five.<sup>43</sup> As the Eucharistic Congress drew nearer, the members could reflect with satisfaction on the Society's all-round strength and prestige, and look ahead with confidence to the major role which it was bound to play in the Newman Convention of Catholic University bodies. Meanwhile, the Newman Society was

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<sup>39</sup> President's Address, Q.M., 24 January 1934, H/B.

<sup>40</sup> Council minutes, 20 June 1934, H/B.

<sup>41</sup> First Central Group minutes, 29 August 1934, H/B.

<sup>42</sup> Campion Annual Report, 25 July 1934, H/B.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

busily engaged in organising this important event.

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Early in 1934 the Newman, having made the decision to call a national Catholic Action Convention, had appointed a Convention Committee to make all the detailed arrangements. The bulk of the work fell on the shoulders of the Committee's Secretary, Kevin Anderson, a part-time Law student. On 7 March he began sending letters to all known Catholic University and semi-University societies, advising them of the Convention. He explained that 'little has been done to organise the Catholic laity of Australia along the lines of what we generally refer to as Catholic Action'; and further, that the Newman believed that it was 'from the ranks of the graduates and undergraduates of our Universities that the leaders and planners of Catholic Action should be sought.'<sup>44</sup> The Convention, it was hoped, would help to produce this leadership.

Eventually some fourteen societies agreed to send delegates. They were: from Victoria, the Newman Society, the Champion Society (Melbourne), the Ballarat Champion Society (for Church juridical reasons a separate body), and the Catholic Evidence Guild; from New South Wales, the Sydney Newman Society, the Sydney University Catholic Women's Society, the Catholic Speakers, and the Association of Catholic Action; from Queensland, the Leonian Society and the Christian Brothers' Old Boys'

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<sup>44</sup> Copy of letter to respective societies' secretaries, 7 March 1934, Newman Convention box, M.A.A.

Association; from South Australia, the Aquinas Society and the Catholic Guild for Social Studies; from Western Australia (tentatively) and Tasmania, their respective Newman Societies. <sup>45</sup>

The various organisations sent to Anderson copies of their constitutions, and brief reports on their histories and activities. From these a list was drawn up of topics and proposals for consideration by the Convention. As it turned out, the bulk of the items on the final agenda were taken from the reports of only two of the societies, the Melbourne Campion Society and the South Australian Catholic Guild for Social Studies. Among the topics included were: the use of broadcasting for Catholic Action; adult education courses; central Catholic libraries; catechetical work; the promotion of lecture tours 'by eminent Catholic authors and publicists'; the establishment of vocationally-based Catholic Action groups; and 'the possibility of forming Catholic Land <sup>46</sup> Settlements in Australia.'

Archbishop Mannix, for his part, decided to utilise the occasion 'of so many Bishops being in Melbourne for the Eucharistic Congress' to hold a meeting <sup>47</sup> of the Australian Hierarchy 'to discuss Catholic Action.'

Finally the Congress date arrived, and for eight days,

<sup>45</sup>

See reports and correspondence, Newman Convention box, M.A.A.

<sup>46</sup>

Draft agenda, Newman Convention box, M.A.A.

<sup>47</sup>

Adv. 13 December 1934, p. 42.

from Sunday 2 December to Sunday 9 December, the people of Victoria witnessed a spectacular display of Catholic might and pageantry. On the evening of 6 December over 150,000 men assembled in the Showgrounds for Men's Night; and two days later the figure was 130,000 for Women's Day. On the final Sunday 500,000 Catholics took part in the great closing procession, which concluded with a General Benediction. Father C. C. Martindale, S.J., again travelled from England to give the people of Australia the benefit of his renowned sermons. Church dignitaries from overseas, and Bishops, priests and laymen from all parts of Australia, participated in the huge celebration. The total impact of the week's events delighted all concerned, with the Catholic Young Man seeing the whole as 'a fitting climax to the past years of Catholic effort and a proud demonstration of the vitality and energy of the Faith in our own day.'

However, with respect to its stated theme, 'Catholic Action', the effect of the Congress was ambiguous. Of the eleven major addresses, only two dealt with Catholic Action, and these were based on elementary misunderstandings of what the term implied. Both Archbishop Duhig of Brisbane, speaking on 'Catholic Action for Women', and Bishop Barry of Goulburn, on 'Catholic Action for Men', interpreted Catholic Action in traditional pastoral terms, not in modern apostolic ones. They preached that it involved simply greater lay participation in the kinds of

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See The National Eucharistic Congress, Advocate Press, Melbourne, 1936, passim.

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Catholic Young Man, December 1934, editorial, M.A.A.

devotional and charitable activities which were already flourishing in the Australian Church.<sup>50</sup> Thus however much popular zeal for Catholic Action was stimulated by the Congress, it remained a zeal without a basis in real understanding.

In the context of the general ignorance of Catholic Action displayed at the Congress, the Newman Society Convention of Catholic University bodies assumed an added importance. It was held over four days, from Tuesday 4 to Friday 7 December. At its official opening on the Wednesday, Bishop Brodie of Christchurch, New Zealand, declared that 'He regarded the movement which the Convention was initiating as the most important movement during the whole Congress.' Dr. Mannix was similarly encouraging, reminding the delegates of the significance which he attached to their efforts:

You are the leaders of the people. What the people see in you will be for them an example, and if you fall short of the example which the Pope has set, then the vast body of people below you, as it were, is likely to fall still further short.<sup>51</sup>

Society Reports were read, sub-committees appointed, and their recommendations discussed. The two most important papers were delivered on the Wednesday, with Kevin Kelly speaking on 'The Theory of Catholic Action', and Paul McGuire from Adelaide on 'The Future of Catholic Action in Australia'. On the final day of the Convention 'a plan was drawn up by which the various bodies could

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The National Eucharistic Congress, pp. 128-136.

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Adv. 13 December 1934, pp. 48-9.



keep in touch and co-ordinate their work.<sup>52</sup> The Convention was regarded as being an outstanding success, with Paul McGuire later writing that it 'far exceeded' his expectations of it.<sup>53</sup>

On Monday 10 December, the day after the Congress had ended, a full meeting of the Australian Hierarchy was held at the Cathedral presbytery. Among other things, it was decided to establish an Episcopal Sub-Committee 'for the purpose of evolving practical plans for Catholic Action'. Dr. Mannix was appointed President of the Sub-Committee, with the other members being Archbishop Killian (Adelaide), Bishop Hayes (Rockhampton, Queensland), Bishop Dwyer (Wagga Wagga, N.S.W.), and Bishop Barry (Goulburn, N.S.W.).<sup>54</sup> The Committee was Victorian-orientated: Dr. John Barry had been Archbishop Mannix's Administrator before being given the See of Goulburn in 1924; and Romuald Hayes, prior to being made a Bishop in 1932, had been a priest of the Sandhurst diocese. The Committee in fact proved ineffective, and did nothing worthy of note. However, it was the precursor of another Episcopal Sub-Committee which three years later was to herald in the official Australian Catholic Action movement.

The Melbourne Eucharistic Congress marked the end of the initial phase in the development of Catholic actionism in Australia.

<sup>52</sup>

Council's Report, Q.M., c. November 1935, H/B. It is doubtful that this scheme was put into effect, or that systematic contact was maintained between the various societies.

<sup>53</sup>

McGuire to Anderson, 12 December 1934, Newman Convention box, M.A.A.

<sup>54</sup>

Adv. 13 December 1934, H/B.

During the preceding five tumultuous years there had appeared in different parts of the country a new consciousness of the social and cultural implications of Catholic belief; and the Congress signified the acceptance of this new outlook by the leaders of the Australian Church. The following two years were to be a kind of incubation period, a time of quiet but steady growth for the Catholic actionist movement, before overseas events were to trigger off a new surge of Catholic popular militancy.

For the Victorian Campion Society the Congress represented a fitting culmination to four years of vigorous development. The Campion typified more than any other body the new kind of Catholic intellectuality which the Newman Convention had so enthusiastically endorsed. Furthermore, and thanks to the Convention, the Society's influence was now being felt not merely in Victoria, but throughout Australia. Frank Maher could justly boast that, with the conclusion of the Eucharistic Congress, there was 'scarcely a Catholic interested in his religion who has not heard of the Campion Society.'

CHAPTER 8PRELUDE TO CONFLICT, 1935-36

The eighteen months which followed the conclusion of Melbourne's Eucharistic Congress saw the world declining further into disorder. This was the time of the resumption of German rearmament, of the reoccupation of the Rhineland, of the Italian invasion of Abyssinia. The League of Nations, the hope of so many for permanent world stability, was shown to be impotent; and once again mankind was forced to recognise the possibility of a world war breaking out. It was the Abyssinian affair, above all, which dragged Europe to the brink of armed conflict.

Mussolini launched his invasion of Abyssinia in October of 1935, being impelled by no apparent motives other than a desire for empire and for military glory. His action, which had been threatening for some time, appeared likely to provoke military counter-measures from Britain, which was supported by France and Russia; and it moved the League of Nations to call for an international trade boycott against Italy. No armed reprisals eventuated, however, and the League sanctions proved ineffective. The aggressors emerged triumphant.

The Australian Catholic weeklies, in common with the press everywhere, evinced alarm at the worsening international situation. On the Abyssinian question, however, an unexpected stance was taken by the Melbourne Catholic papers. It seems

unlikely that this reflected any significant division within the Catholic community; but it did indicate the extent to which Denys Jackson's views on foreign affairs had become paramount in the Victorian Catholic media.

Of those Australian Catholics who took any interest in the Abyssinian issue, the great majority in all likelihood agreed with Archbishop Mannix, or with P. S. Cleary in Sydney. Both these spokesmen disapproved of the Italian action; both were nevertheless cynical of the motives of the opposing Great Power block; and both were adamant that Australia should not become militarily involved. Cleary, in the Catholic Press, referred to Abyssinia as 'the last free country in Northeast Africa',<sup>1</sup> and portrayed it as the unwitting victim of 'the immoral, imperialistic, unscrupulous politics of three European bandit nations'.<sup>2</sup> He advocated full Australian support for the League of Nations trade boycott.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Mannix was less outspoken, but he also believed that the Italians were unjustified in making war 'on the unfortunate Ethiopians.' However, he maintained that part of the blame lay with the Treaty of Versailles, which had 'left Italy with no possibility of expansion of territory...

What has happened in the case of Italy will, unless I am a false prophet, happen before long with Germany as well.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>  
C.P. 18 July 1935, editorial.

<sup>2</sup>  
Ibid., 29 August 1935, editorial.

<sup>3</sup>  
Ibid., 3 October 1935, editorial.

<sup>4</sup>  
Adv. 17 October 1935, p. 12.

The attitude of the Advocate at first differed only marginally from that of Archbishop Mannix. In July, when the conflict was simmering, it maintained that there was 'little to be said in defense of Mussolini's present attitude'. However, it referred unflatteringly to Abyssinia as a 'half-savage empire, which is the chief centre of the slave-trade in the world to-day'; and it insisted that Australia had enough to do 'without accepting the responsibility for the repression of Fascist tyrannies at the other side of the world.'<sup>5</sup> The turn of phrase in this editorial suggests that it was written by Denys Jackson, although he now shared the leader-writing with P. I. O'Leary, who at the beginning<sup>6</sup> of 1935 had replaced him on the paper's full-time staff.

When full-scale warfare broke out, however, Jackson became unashamedly pro-Italian; and his aversion to Fascism was subordinated to his disgust at the state of affairs prevailing in Abyssinia. In his editorials and 'Sulla' articles alike, the<sup>7</sup> Abyssinians were dismissed as 'slave-raiding barbarians', unworthy of sympathy; the British and French were condemned as imperialistic hypocrites, concerned only to safeguard their Suez Canal trade

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 11 July 1935, editorial.

<sup>6</sup> The reasons for Jackson's being replaced appear to have been twofold: P. I. O'Leary was back to good health; and Father Moynihan was unhappy with the use Jackson was making of the leader-articles to promote his personal social philosophy. Moynihan used as an excuse to dismiss Jackson his having stopped the presses to write a glowing obituary comment on Cardinal Bourne of Westminster (died 1 January 1935), who, Moynihan recalled, had been an outspoken public critic of Dr. Mannix during the years of the Conscriptio-Irish Rebellion controversies: Interview with Mr. D. G. M. Jackson, May 1967.

<sup>7</sup> Adv. 26 September 1935, editorial.



artery; and the Soviet Union's show of moral indignation was treated with scorn. The Italians, on the other hand, were presented as being fully justified in retaliating so decisively against Abyssinian 'provocations'. Indeed, Jackson averred, Italy was doing civilisation a service:

Abyssinia is unlikely to become civilised except with the help of Europe; and, among European peoples, it is to Italy that the task of helping her should fall, in virtue of her colonial and economic needs.<sup>8</sup>

The same point of view obtained in the second Victorian Catholic weekly, the Tribune, of which Jackson had been made editor at the beginning of the year.<sup>9</sup> With regard to the Catholic Hour, however, representations by the Lyons government resulted in Jackson being instructed not to broadcast in opposition to Australia's official policy, which was one of support for the League of Nations.<sup>10</sup>

In the Australian context, the Abyssinian policies of the Melbourne Advocate and Tribune were virtually unique. While major differences of opinion existed within the community on the degree to which Australia should become involved in the conflict,

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<sup>8</sup>

Ibid., 3 October 1935, 'Sulla'.

<sup>9</sup>

Archbishop Mannix had arranged for Jackson to be given this position after Kevin Kelly had visited him (Mannix), had raised the matter of Jackson's dismissal from the full-time staff of the Advocate, and had pointed out 'that Jackson had given up a good position in the Victorian Education Department in order to take on "The Advocate" job.' Memorandum, K. T. Kelly to author, 30 August 1973; endorsed by Mr. D. G. M. Jackson, telephone conversation with author, February 1974.

<sup>10</sup>

Interview with Mr. D. G. M. Jackson, May 1967; cf. Eric M. Andrews, Isolationism and Appeasement, p. 24.

in no significant sector was support given to the Italian action. The fact that Jackson had been allowed to steer so individual a course was an indication of the extent to which the Advocate, in particular, had become reliant on his expertise in European affairs. This dependence was the price the paper had to pay for its abandonment of its pre-Depression insularity.

Within the Campion Society the Abyssinian War was a matter of little concern. However, there were two who did share Jackson's views, in Valentino Adami and Bob Santamaria, the two members of Italian parentage. When the conflict erupted, Adami, the older, and, in Campion terms, the senior of the two, persuaded the Council to allow him to call a special meeting 'so that all members might learn the true facts of the Italo-Abyssinian dispute.'<sup>12</sup> His address to this meeting was predictably pro-Italian - 'a great white-washing epic', as it was later humorously described.<sup>13</sup> Santamaria did not speak publicly on the question; however, as editor of the Campion Society's internal news-sheet, he could not resist making one isolated snipe at the propagators of the anti-Italian case; and he recommended that readers follow Jackson's writings on the issue in the Advocate and the Tribune.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>

Eric M. Andrews, op. cit., Chapters 1 and 2, passim.

<sup>12</sup>

Council's Report, Q.M., c. November 1935, H/B.

<sup>13</sup>

Comment at meeting with Mr. Gerard Heffey, Judge Arthur Adams, and Mr. Justice McInerney, February 1967.

<sup>14</sup>

Orders of the Day, October 1935, Box 6, Hackett papers, Jesuit Archives, Hawthorn, Victoria.

The effect of growing world insecurity on Victorian Catholicism was, as it had been during the previous six years, to increase popular reliance on the Church as the one great source of stability remaining on earth. In the Advocate's final editorial for 1935, 'What of the Night?', the 'tremendous vitality displayed by the Catholic Church' was juxtaposed with the spectre of a dispirited world 'whose splendid edifices are toppling on their foundations of sand.'<sup>15</sup> As Catholic self-assurance continued to gain strength, so too did the Catholic actionist movement.

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Predictably, the most notable beneficiaries of the tendency towards Catholic consolidation were the Campion Society and the C.Y.M.S. The latter Society, although remaining comparatively stable in numbers, continued to assimilate the new intellectual perspectives which had been introduced to it by the Campions. This was apparent in the sustained co-operation between the two bodies.

The Catholic Young Man, copies of which were distributed monthly to every C.Y.M.S. man in the State, featured an average of two Campion articles per issue throughout 1935. These were almost all historical in character, covering, among other topics, the Jesuits, Christopher Dawson, Erasmus, Galileo, the Inquisition, and the Reformation. The resignation of Michael Hynes as editor

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<sup>15</sup>

Adv. 26 December 1935, editorial.

and his replacement in March by Francis J. Arkwright did not result in any perceptible change in editorial policy. In size<sup>16</sup> the magazine varied between forty and fifty pages.

The numerical strength of the metropolitan C.Y.M.S. stood at 2,050 in November 1935, an increase of 185 on the previous year.<sup>17</sup> The study-groups which it conducted jointly with the Campion Society apparently increased also: the Campions had nine affiliated suburban groups operating by the end of the year, most of which would have been directly or indirectly linked with C.Y.M.S. branches. They existed in the suburbs of Brunswick, West Brunswick, Camberwell, Clifton Hill, Glenhuntly, Kew, Malvern,<sup>18</sup> North Essendon, and Parkville.

In the country areas the Young Men's Society continued to prosper. One of its highlights was the three-day Fernvale Retreat conducted annually by the North-East Catholic Debating and Sports Association at a site near Tallangatta. The first Fernvale Retreat, held in the New Year of 1934, attracted sixty-five participants from C.Y.M.S. branches of North-East Victoria and Catholic Young Men's Clubs from adjoining areas of New South Wales. The second, in January of 1935, was attended by 220; and for the remainder of

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16

Copies of the Catholic Young Man to August 1935 are held in M.A.A.

17

1935 C.Y.M.S. Annual Report, Catholic Young Man, December 1935. A copy of this issue was among papers held in the Cathedral Hall, Brunswick, Victoria, in 1967, but subsequently lost.

18

Council's Report, Q.M., c. November 1935, H/B.

the decade the annual attendance varied between 200 and 250.<sup>19</sup>

The Campion Society re-organised itself at the beginning of 1935, placing the majority of its established members in two new groups, and putting the new recruits in two others. The most senior members, who previously had been concentrated in the First Central Group, were now distributed fairly evenly among the four, which were known as the Thomas More, Thomas Aquinas, Thomas a'Beckett, and Frassati groups. A small Philosophy Group of three, formed the previous year, was retained. Nineteen new members entered during 1935; but as a similar number either became inactive or transferred to the suburban study-groups, total membership remained at about seventy.<sup>20</sup> One welcome source of membership loss was the religious life, which at the beginning of the year made its first exactions on the Society: John Heffey entered Corpus Christi College, Werribee; John McCristal and John Vaudry began training with the Franciscans; and Percy Salmon<sup>21</sup> joined the Christian Brothers.

The external work of the Campion Society continued to expand rapidly. On 24 January 1935 a film review section written

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Souvenir pamphlets of Fernvale Retreats of 1933, 1934 and 1936 held by Mr. A. D. Seaton, Albury; cf. *Adv.* 11 January 1934, p. 11; 7 February 1935, p. 9; 6 February 1936, p. 12; 11 February 1937, p. 16; 10 February 1938, p. 24; 2 February 1939, p. 25.

20

A 1935 membership list, H/B, gives 68 names, but neglects to include at least two who were then active in the Society.

21

Council's Report, Q.M., 6 March 1935, H/B. Vaudry and Salmon were apparently in affiliated suburban groups, as their names do not appear in any Central group membership lists.



by Campion men made its first appearance in the Advocate. Talks had to be given on the Catholic Hour, articles prepared for the Catholic Young Man, and numerous lectures organised for Communion Breakfasts, C.Y.M.S. gatherings, sodality meetings, and other Catholic functions. Monthly addresses were delivered at Father Murtagh's parish of North Essendon; and in June a Triduum at East Brunswick, organised by the Campion Society in co-operation with Father J. H. Cleary and the local Catholic Men's Club, drew audiences of 'at least two hundred on each night'. Gerard Heffey<sup>22</sup> alone gave nearly thirty lectures over a six-month period. The result was that, whereas a year before Maher had been seeking new activities with which to occupy members,<sup>23</sup> by the end of 1935 he had to admit that it was now 'not possible to fulfill all the requests to give lectures'. He hoped for the establishment of an official national Catholic Action bureau to help reduce the Society's work-load.<sup>24</sup>

In north-eastern Victoria the Wangaratta Campion Society embarked on a new venture late in 1935 when it began posting a monthly circular, Epistles and Postscripts, to Catholic State-school teachers. The monthly circulation, beginning at fifty, was eventually to pass the thousand mark - although only a small proportion of the recipients were paying subscribers.<sup>25</sup> The

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<sup>22</sup>

Council's Report, Q.M., c. November 1935, H/B.

<sup>23</sup>

See minutes, Q.M., 16 October 1934, Council minute-book, H/B.

<sup>24</sup>

Council's Report, Q.M., c. November 1935, H/B.

<sup>25</sup>

Interview with Mr. A. L. Gerrard, 22 November 1971.

authors were Ted Hennessy, Alf Gerrard, and Eileen Ryan, all primary-school teachers stationed in the district. The periodical was concerned mainly with Catholic Action, the world situation, the need to exert a Christian influence in the secular schools, and anti-Christian or anti-Catholic attitudes alleged to be evident in some State primary-school text-books.<sup>26</sup>

Among the clergy and religious the prestige of the *Campion Society* continued to grow, with notable allies being Fathers Murtagh, James Cleary, Bernard O'Connor, O'Sullivan, Gleeson, Considine, Conquest, Sylvester, O.F.M., Dr. Beovich, Brother Jerome of De La Salle, Malvern, and, of course, Father Hackett.<sup>27</sup> The *Campion Council* had become increasingly conscious of the value of close co-operation with the clergy, and had resolved that henceforth new suburban groups would be established 'only where a priest, preferably a young priest, agrees to look after them and to assist them in their discussions.'<sup>28</sup>

The *Corpus Christi College* students were addressed during the year on the work of the *Campion Society* and the *Catholic Evidence Guild*.<sup>29</sup> One social studies group at the College, formed the previous year among a half-dozen second-year students,

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See *Epistles and Postscripts*, February 1936 (No. 4) to December 1936 (No. 14), Box 6, Hackett papers, Jesuit Archives. The September 1936 (No. 11) issue is missing.

27

Council's Report, Q.M., c. November 1935, H/B.

28

Ibid.

29

Ibid.

remodelled itself early in 1935 along Campion lines, adopting a study-programme with a more historical/cultural and less philosophical emphasis than previously. The inspiration for this change had come from John Heffey, whose accounts of his year in the Campion - related 'mostly in an ecstatic strain' - and of the Society's close ties with the younger clergy, fired the enthusiasm of many of his fellow-seminarians.<sup>30</sup> Thus the Campion idealism consolidated its hold on the imaginations of the future diocesan clergy of Victoria.

Among the schools also the Campion influence expanded. In May of 1935 the Society's representatives met in conference with the principals of the Catholic boys' secondary schools, and obtained their assurances of full support. As a result, 'at least a dozen lads who left school during the year' applied for Campion membership.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, at the beginning of the year the Society's closest clerical associate, Father Hackett, was appointed Rector of Xavier College. In July he set in motion a kind of College Campion group in the Bellarmine Society, a voluntary association of senior pupils which held monthly meetings on Campion lines, often addressed by Campion men. The Bellarmine Society was to function successfully throughout the decade, and was to be the means by which many Xavier school-leavers were channelled into the Campion Society.<sup>32</sup>

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See letter, Justin McCarthy (a member of the group) to Gerard Heffey, 24 April 1935, H/B.

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Council's Report, Q.M., c. November 1935, H/B.

32

See Bellarmine Society reports and membership lists in Xavier College Annuals, 1935 ff. (copies held at the College).

A further indication of the rapport which existed between the outlook of the Campion Society and that prevailing in the Victorian Catholic boys' secondary schools can be found in the schools' Annuals of the time. In the editorials, articles, and principals' Annual Reports for 1935 there is evident a strong sense of world disorder, and a conviction that the Church alone could save civilisation. Father Hackett's Annual Report for Xavier College spoke of men's minds being 'partly unhinged', and of the forces of evil, impiety and irreligion growing ever 'more blatant and brazen'. An article on the Campion Society in the Annual of St. Kevin's College pointed to the Church as 'the only institution which upholds the dignity of the human reason', and as the only repository of the true values of civilisation. The editorial in the Annual of St. Patrick's College, East Melbourne, stated that 'society has never been perhaps in a state of greater chaos'; and it presented the Pope as the 'one and only teacher who can and does show the nations the path along which they must go'. The St. Patrick's College, Ballarat, Annual Report asserted that the 'coming struggle' was between 'Catholicism and the forces of Anti-Christian political and social systems.' It urged all Catholic school-leavers, as a matter of urgency, to join 'such associations as the Campion Society'.

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The extent to which this view of the world had been inspired by the Campion Society, and by other intellectual influences peculiar to Victorian Catholicism, can be gauged by

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See 1935 Annuals held at the respective Colleges; Annuals of St. Patrick's College, East Melbourne, are in the Latrobe Library.

comparing these Annuals with those for the same year from a comparable selection of Sydney Catholic boys' schools. A different picture altogether emerges, being equally evident in the magazines and Annual Reports of Lewisham Christian Brothers' College; Waverley C.B.C.; St. Ignatius' College, Riverview (Jesuit); St. Aloysius' College, Milson's Point (Jesuit); and St. Joseph's College, Hunters' Hill (Marist Brothers). No interest in world affairs, no consciousness of ideological movements, no concern for Catholic Action is evident. The Sydney schools, it appears, conceived of their roles in a purely parochial context, much as had the Victorian schools during the 'twenties. Only in the Annual of Lewisham C.B.C. was Catholic Action so much as mentioned, and then it was misconstrued, Archbishop Kelly-wise, as involving simply 'personal sanctification by prayer, the reception of the Sacraments, and the practice of Christian Virtue'.<sup>34</sup> It is obvious that the Sydney Catholic Colleges had not been exposed to the intellectual influences which had brought their Victorian counterparts to see themselves as staging-posts in a world-wide Catholic resurgence to save Western civilisation.

The steady expansion of the Victorian Campion Society resulted in the foundation in 1935 of an infra-Society news-sheet, Orders of the Day. Appearing for the first time on 13 August, the day of the Annual General Meeting, it had as its first editor the nineteen-year-old B. A. Santamaria. It was written in a forceful

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<sup>34</sup>

1935 Annual of Lewisham C.B.C., p. 17 (report of an address given at a Retreat). For other incidental references to Catholic Action, see pp. 27, 43. Annuals held at the College.



and somewhat impetuous style, and consisted mainly of snippets from overseas Catholic writers, oddments of news, and exhortations to the Campions to surge on to greater things. The inaugural issue announced that the Society had embarked on a Three-Year Plan to obtain three major objectives:

1. To co-ordinate Catholic Action throughout the Commonwealth.
2. To hammer Catholicism into an impenetratable fortress on which heresy will shatter itself.
3. To mould the one and a half million Catholics of Australia into an organic unity ready to resume the Catholic Offensive.<sup>35</sup>

Orders of the Day presaged another more ambitious literary venture which was to result in a dramatic extension of the Campion Society's influence. This was the Catholic Worker.

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Talk of founding an Australian Catholic Worker had been in the air for some time before any positive moves were made to bring such a publication into being. The inspiration for the paper had come from the British and Canadian Catholic Workers, and more particularly from the American Catholic Worker, a radical and idealistic journal which had been launched in 1933 by a group of New York Catholic social reformers. By October 1934 Brian Harkin was handing out copies of this paper at the Catholic Evidence Guild's pitch on the Yarra Bank,<sup>36</sup> and was simultaneously sounding

<sup>35</sup>

Orders of the Day No. 1, 13 August 1935, Box 6, Hackett papers, Jesuit Archives.

<sup>36</sup>

See C.E.G. minute-book, M.A.A., entry for 28 October 1934, for the first record of American Catholic Workers being distributed.

out opinion within the Campion Society on the possibility of  
 founding a local equivalent.<sup>37</sup>

Nothing was done, however, until early in 1935, when Bartholomew Augustine (Bob) Santamaria, a hitherto inconspicuous member of the Campion Society, announced that he was determined to bring into being an Australian Catholic Worker.<sup>38</sup> Santamaria was the Australian-born son of a Sicilian immigrant family which had established a small grocery business in the Melbourne working-class suburb of West Brunswick. Educated at the North Melbourne Christian Brothers' and at St. Kevin's College, he had been Dux and School Captain of the latter school in 1931, and in 1932 had proceeded on an Exhibition to Melbourne University, where he had embarked on an Arts/Law course.

Although a member of the University branch of the Campion Society from the beginning of his undergraduate career, Santamaria had done little to distinguish himself in extra-curricular activities until 1934, when he began to play a prominent part in the Debating Society. During the same year he became one of the founders of the University Radical Club, essentially a non-ideological splinter group which had broken away from the Marxist-dominated Labour Club.<sup>39</sup> Early in 1935 he made his first noteworthy

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Paul McGuire to Kevin Anderson, 15 November 1934, Newman Convention box, M.A.A., tells that Harkin 'seems enthusiastic for a Catholic paper along lines of American Catholic Worker.'

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Kevin Kelly is sure that the enterprise began with a definite statement of intent by Bob Santamaria.

39

Farrago 13 June 1934.

contribution to the development of the Campion Society, when he founded an affiliated study-group in his home suburb of West Brunswick.<sup>40</sup> Later that year, as has already been mentioned, he was appointed foundation editor of Orders of the Day.

When it became apparent that Santamaria possessed both the determination and the capacity to carry through his resolution to launch a Catholic working people's paper, a Provisional Committee of nine, composed predominantly of senior Campion men, was formed to oversee the enterprise.<sup>41</sup> The name initially chosen for the proposed paper was The Front, but this was later abandoned in favour of Catholic Worker.<sup>42</sup> It was intended to serve as a bridge between the Catholic intellectuals and the mass of the people; and to be a means of showing how Catholic social principles applied to Australian problems. The Provisional Committee, in a circular to selected priests, promoted it as a potentially effective way of 'combating anti-christian propaganda among the masses of Australians...

The present drift from the Church is becoming increasingly serious and we feel that unless stern measures are taken to fight Communism on its own ground - The popular press - the ground lost may become irretrievable.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup>

Council's Report, Q.M., 6 March 1935, H/B.

<sup>41</sup>

The members were: Santamaria ('Editor Elect'), Kelly, Maher, Harkin, Stan and Leo Ingwersen, John Moloney, Charles Bradley, and Virgil Cain. The last two were not Campion members, but were University men. See circular, The Front, 30 May 1935, Box 6, Hackett papers, Jesuit Archives.

<sup>42</sup>

Ibid.; cf. Orders of the Day No. 3, c. November 1935, Box 6, Hackett papers, Jesuit Archives.

<sup>43</sup>

Circular, The Front, 30 May 1935.

When preparations for the paper were well under way, Santamaria had a long and congenial audience with the Archbishop - the first time the two had met. Dr. Mannix steered the conversation around a variety of topics, everything it seemed except the Catholic Worker, and then concluded the session by off-handedly giving the enterprise his blessing: 'You don't need any permission<sup>44</sup> from me; you're free to start a newspaper any time you want to.'

A Constitution was prepared, putting control of the paper in the hands of a Council of twenty, and below that of a smaller Central Committee. The Worker was not to be an official Catholic publication, although a chaplain would be appointed on an honorary basis to ensure that it was free of moral and doctrinal error. It was to have no formal links with the Campion Society.

The first issue of the Australian Catholic Worker, written<sup>45</sup> almost entirely by Bob Santamaria personally, appeared in the porches of Catholic churches throughout Victoria in the early morning of Sunday 2 February 1936. Its front page bore the large headline, 'WE FIGHT', and beneath it a dramatic sketch of persecutions raging against the Church in Russia, Germany, Mexico, China and Northern Ireland. Militancy, it proclaimed, was the need of the hour:

It's a fight. But we have been fighting for two thousand years. Victory has always been ours. It will be ours again, for our leader is Christ the King, our standard is the Cross.

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<sup>44</sup>

Interview with Mr. B. A. Santamaria, February 1967.

<sup>45</sup>

Ibid.

Consecutive articles rang with the same note of urgency. The Catholic was becoming increasingly isolated - he lived among men 'who believe Birth-Control a boon, Communism a possibility, sterilization and race suicide as advantages, and in materialism as an ultimate standard.' Everywhere the eternal faith was 'at war with the new paganism', and disaster could only be averted if every Catholic rose to the challenge of the times:

The day of the Sunday-morning Catholic is over. The man who goes to Mass because it is a mortal sin if he doesn't; the man who avoids religious discussion because it is bad taste...this man is hardly fit to be called a Catholic. He belongs to the nineteenth century; we are of the twentieth.

On more topical matters the paper took a similarly radical stance. It supported the demands of striking seamen for better wages; and it called on the Government to 'Gaul Sweat-Shop Owners'. At the same time it damned the Communist Party for inciting hopeless strikes simply to disrupt industry; and it vigorously denounced the Communist 'Peace Front' organisations. With regard to the international dispute over Abyssinia, it adopted a neutral position. It noted that the Italian Hierarchy supported the Italian cause, whereas the American Catholic Worker opposed it. Australian Catholics, it stated, were free to make up their own minds on the issue.

The paper sold at one penny per copy, and within a few hours the first edition of one thousand was completely sold out. To the amazement of all concerned its sales had grown to twenty



thousand by May, and to twenty-seven thousand by August.<sup>46</sup> In Sydney, where Desmond O'Connor and the local Catholics acted as vendors, five thousand copies per issue were being sold by mid-year.<sup>47</sup> The Sydney 'Catholic Speakers' also distributed the Worker from its pitches; however, it received confidential instructions from Archbishop Kelly to have each issue censored, 'at least informally', by 'Dr. Rumble or any of the Sacred Heart Fathers whom he might name.'<sup>48</sup>

The Catholic Worker preached the gospel of Quadragesimo Anno and of Belloc, in a style popularised by Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day in the American Catholic Worker. It presented Capitalism and Communism as the main enemies of civilisation, equating the two as 'illegitimate offspring of the same diseased materialism.'<sup>49</sup> To Capitalism it granted the 'exalted position of Public Enemy No. 1', calling it 'a system which is intrinsically more evil than Communism.'<sup>50</sup> It spoke of the family as the basic building-block of society, advocated child endowment and the 'family wage', and scorned the popular ethic which 'identified love with lust'<sup>51</sup> and was 'actually killing off a nation' through the practice of birth

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Catholic Worker 2 May 1936; Orders of the Day, August 1936, Box 6, Hackett papers, Jesuit Archives.

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C.W. 2 May 1936.

48

Edmund O'Donnell, Secretary to Archbishop Kelly, to Peter Gallagher, Master of the Catholic Speakers, 14 February 1936, Box 'Evidence', S.A.A.

49

C.W. 2 February 1936.

50

Ibid., 29 February 1936.

51

Ibid., 2 February 1936.

control.'<sup>52</sup> It spoke out forcefully on questions of unemployment, working conditions, wages, and housing; and it hoped, overall, to help bring into being a new economic order of the 'Distributist' kind advocated by Belloc, where 'all owners are workers and all workers are owners.'<sup>53</sup> It was delighted to be able to print in its issue of June 1936 a congratulatory letter which it had received from Belloc.

Most of the writing for the Catholic Worker was done by Bob Santamaria himself, on an unpaid part-time basis. However, certain frictions and personality conflicts developed within the Central Committee, the chief source of contention veing the manner of Santamaria's implementation of Committee policy decisions. The Council and Committee in effect represented the Campion 'establishment', of which Santamaria was at most a fringe member; and the dominant figure on both boards was Kevin Kelly. Finally, on 22 October 1937, pursuant on a resolution put by Kelly, the Council abolished the editorship, and instituted in its place an Editorial Board of three - Santamaria, Gerard Heffey, and Frank Keating.<sup>54</sup> Shortly afterwards Santamaria relinquished this position also, and ceased to attend Committee meetings. The nominal reason for his doing so was his assumption of the Assistant Directorship of the National Secretariat of Catholic Action. It was held that

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<sup>52</sup>

Ibid., 4 April 1936.

<sup>53</sup>

Ibid., 6 June 1936.

<sup>54</sup>

Memorandum, K. T. Kelly to author, 30 August 1973. Kelly actually put his motion at a meeting of 1 October, and was not present at the 22 October meeting.

the welfare of the Secretariat would best be served if its officers avoided commitments which could involve them in political controversy.

Assessed in terms of its original aims, the Catholic Worker was perhaps not quite as successful as its sales figures suggest. It had been founded as a means of projecting Catholic social principles and the world-view of the Campion Society onto the existing Australian situation; however, much of the original vision appears to have been lost in the transition. The Campion emphasised the cultural role of Christianity; the Worker gave no attention to culture, Australian or general. The Campion denied the validity of the Marxist class-war thesis; so did the Worker, yet it used the language of the class war. The Papal social encyclicals called for social harmony and conciliation; the Worker was belligerent and uncompromising. Belloc tried to envisage fully Christian societies, and idealised rural life; the Worker fixed its attentions on immediate issues, and was almost entirely urban in its preoccupations. The American Catholic Worker sponsored extensive charitable works; the Australian Worker sponsored none. Thus however much it aspired to be an agent of positive social reconstruction, the Worker in practice was little more than an organ of social protest.

The degree in which the Catholic Worker fell short of

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Niall Brennan, who was for a time a member of the Catholic Worker Committee, has some revealing criticisms to make of its inner working in his autobiography, A Hoax Called Jones (Sheed & Ward, London, 1962), pp. 75-6.

the Campion Society's idealism was perhaps the degree in which that idealism was recognised to be impracticable. The type of historical romanticism which served well to fire the imaginations of young Catholics, and to engender a sense of Catholic social potency, was difficult to convert into realistic solutions to immediate problems. The Worker, recognising this, veered away from the mainstream Campion tradition in order to maintain its appeal among the ordinary Catholic working people of Australia.

Ironically, the Catholic Worker was not dissimilar in tone to established Labour organs such as the Victorian Labour Call, or even to Communist journals such as the Workers' Voice. It was concerned almost solely with the material conditions of life; it was amateurish and simplistic in its economic analyses; and it sustained a constant note of moral outrage and militant protest against prevailing social evils. Like Australia: A Review of the Month of twenty years before, its Catholic social idealism was cut and moulded to accord with established Australian traditions of social radicalism. This compromise with the familiar may help to explain its popularity, which by any standards was extraordinary. By the end of 1938 it had 'the best circulation in proportion to Catholic population of any paper in the English-speaking Catholic world'.<sup>56</sup> Even after that its sales continued to rise, until in 1940 they peaked at 55,000 per month.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>

Paul McGuire in The Sign (Passionist monthly, U.S.A.), December 1938, cited Adv. 12 January 1939, p. 2.

<sup>57</sup>

C.W. February 1941, cited in Design for Democrats, by '25 Men', 'The Catholic Worker', Melbourne, 1944.

The Catholic Worker was born into a Catholic milieu which was charged with apprehension, and the events of the months which followed its foundation did nothing to dampen the prevailing sense of alarm. In April of 1936 the paper denounced one of the local newspapers, the Star, for welcoming the accession to power in Spain of the left-wing coalition of Manuel Azana. This man, it recalled, had during his previous stay in office

expelled the Jesuits and other monastic orders, broke off diplomatic relations with the Vatican, secularised the schools and attempted to introduce a system of atheistic education into Spain.

A month later, in highlighting an article in the Melbourne Argus which had allegedly spoken approvingly of the Bolshevik persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Worker predicted that

When it comes to a fight between Communism and Catholicism, the Argus and the others will align themselves with the enemy.

Within a few months the writers of the Catholic Worker were to feel that this prophecy was being alarmingly vindicated, when the Spanish Civil War burst upon the world, and Australian public opinion began to polarise on the issue.



CHAPTER 9IDEOLOGICAL WATERSHED: THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR CONTROVERSY IN VICTORIA

The Spanish Civil War began in July of 1936 when the forces of General Francisco Franco attempted to overthrow the Popular Front government of Manuel Azana, elected to power the previous February. Preceding the conflict was a century of spasmodic attempts at liberal democracy, attempts invariably vitiated by the intolerance and persecuting fervour displayed by Spanish political factions towards one another. Predictably, Azana's accession to power was followed by a spate of priest-murders, church-burnings, and assaults on private property, disorders which the shaky new coalition was either unwilling or unable to prevent. The politically reactionary Spanish Church, fearing the onset of a persecution such as it had suffered under previous Liberal and left-wing regimes, gave its support to Franco, and enabled his unsuccessful military coup to take on the character of a popular rebellion. Italy, Germany and Russia subsequently sent men and material to the battle-front; and fighting raged for three years before ending in victory for Franco's Nationalists.

Throughout the West the Spanish War had a catalytic effect in drawing to itself and intensifying the idealism of the age. Non-Catholic liberals regarded it as a battle between progressive democracy and clerical/Fascist authoritarianism; Communists saw it as a desperate attempt by reactionaries to

forestall the fulfilment of a proletarian revolution; Catholics viewed it as a deadly struggle between Christian civilisation and Communist barbarism. Everywhere vague ideological sympathies were transformed by the conflict into passionate convictions.

Australia was no exception to the rule. News from the war figured prominently in the popular press, which was universally pro-Republican and anti-Franco. It was the Communist Party, however, which took the lead in rallying support for the Republican cause; and for the first time the Party began to make major advances in size and influence. Through its 'front' organisations it began to gain significant numbers of supporters and sympathisers among the middle-class and intelligentsia. Bodies such as 'Food for Spain', the Spanish Relief Fund, and the Council Against War and Fascism, united Communist trade union leaders with non-Catholic clergymen, academics and literary people, in support of the one cause. Furthermore, in the trade unions the Communists sought to use the Spanish issue as a means of coaxing the established Labour left away from its traditional insularity, and of imbuing it with a new sense of solidarity with international working-class movements. No longer could the Communists be dismissed as merely a tiny group of agitators within the industrial movement.

The effect of the Spanish War and of its local ramifications upon Australian Catholic opinion was cataclysmic. All the predictions of previous years of a possible break-down of Western civilisation seemed to be in the process of being realised. In Victoria, where the ideological strength of both Catholicism and

Communism had been greater than in the other States, the reaction was most marked. Dr. Mannix referred to the conflict as 'a stand-up fight between God and the devil, and between Communism and Christianity.'<sup>1</sup> The Advocate was packed with news of the war, and with dramatic forecasts of what it could mean for Australia and for Christian civilisation.

The Victorian Catholic schools naturally reflected this intensified sense of alarm. The 1936 Annual Report for St. Kevin's College referred ominously to 'Godlessness...imposed in the name of righteousness, fetters in the name of freedom, and untold atrocities in the name of humanity and constitutional Government.' Father Hackett, in his Annual Report for Xavier College, warned school-leavers that they were passing out into 'a world more tortured and more upset than anything we have experienced.' The Report for St. Patrick's College, East Melbourne, was almost entirely dedicated to the Spanish War and its effects. It spoke of a 'Satanic Crusade of hatred and destruction' emanating from Russia, and called on Catholics to rally 'to save decency,<sup>2</sup> morality, civilisation.'

As the early months of 1937 passed, and the Spanish conflict entered a critical stage, an unprecedented wave of anti-Communism swept Australian Catholicism. In March this was augmented by the release of the Papal Encyclical Divini Redemptoris.

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<sup>1</sup>

Adv. 12 November 1936, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>

See the 1936 Annuals at the respective Colleges; that of St. Patrick's College, East Melbourne, at the Latrobe Library.

Appearing in the same month as the anti-Nazi Encyclical Mit Brennender Sorge, it was the first major Papal document to be directed entirely against the 'satanic scourge' of International Communism. It represented the completion of the cycle through which Pope Pius XI had been forced to pass since the beginning of his pontificate, evolving from the mild Wilsonian liberal of 1922 into the militant crusader of 1937, rallying the forces of Catholic Christianity to a massive campaign to save civilisation from a resurgent paganism. Unlike most Papal documents, the Encyclical was written in direct and forceful language. It attacked the Communists from every angle, and was particularly blistering in its denunciations of their so-called 'peace' movements. It concluded by placing the onus for the defence of Christendom firmly on the shoulders of the 'stalwarts of Catholic Action'.

The impact of Divini Redemptoris in Australia was extraordinary. As published in pamphlet form by the Australian Catholic Truth Society, its sales far outstripped those of any other A.C.T.S. publication of the decade, and in just over two years had mounted to 87,000. Next in order of best-sellers was a companion pamphlet, The Red Menace in Australia, by Sydney's Father Leo Dalton, M.S.C., which sold over 43,000 copies. Two other of the six most popular A.C.T.S. pamphlets for the period were likewise concerned with the Communist threat: For God and Spain, by Aodh de Blocom (published 30 December 1936, sold 30,000 copies); and A Catechism of Communism for Catholic Youth (unsigned,



published 10 October 1936, sold 25,000 copies).<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, over 100,000 copies were distributed of a leaflet summary of Divini Redemptoris prepared by the Professional Men's Sodality of St. Patrick's College, East Melbourne.<sup>4</sup> Thus the expansion of Australian Communism occasioned by the Spanish War was matched by a massive intensification of Catholic anti-Communism.

Within the Labour movement the first signs of a new Catholic solidarity became evident. In Victoria, moves to obtain official support for the Spanish Republicans were defeated in most major policy-making bodies of both industrial and political Labour, with the fierceness of debate indicating the strength of Catholic feeling on the issue.<sup>5</sup> The Advocate frequently warned of the 'white-anting' of Labour organisations by the Communists, something it had never done previously; and it emphasised the 'duty of every member of the Labour movement in Australia' to oppose 'by every means possible the capture of that movement by Communism.'<sup>6</sup> If Communist strategies succeeded, it maintained, the

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<sup>3</sup> Adv. 6 July 1939, p. 3. A complete set of A.C.T.S. pamphlets is held in the Advocate offices, Melbourne.

<sup>4</sup> By August 1937 'More than 70,000 copies' had been distributed (Adv. 5 August 1937, p. 15); and by the end of 1938 'More than a hundred and forty thousand leaflets on Communism and other evils' had been circulated by the Sodality in Australia and New Zealand - the great majority of them doubtlessly the Divini Redemptoris summary (Sodality report, The Patrician, 1938, Latrobe Library). A copy of the pamphlet ('Sodality Sociology Series 1: Every Catholic Should Know Why the Pope Condemned Atheistic Communism) is in Box 6, Hackett papers, Jesuit Archives.

<sup>5</sup> See Eric M. Andrews, Isolationism and Appeasement, Chapter 4, passim.

<sup>6</sup> Adv. 15 October 1936, Current Comment.



Labour movement would be perverted, 'as European Labour movements have been perverted, to be the instrument of forces hostile to religion and to genuine social reform.'<sup>7</sup>

At Melbourne University also a strong defensive outburst of Catholic militancy occurred. So effective were Catholic voices of protest at various pro-Republican meetings that the Students' Representative Council in October 1936 passed a motion expressing concern that 'certain press reports make it appear that the University has declared itself in sympathy with General Franco',<sup>8</sup> and dissociating itself from 'any such expression of opinion.' The courteous relations which had previously existed between *Campion* men and Labour Club activists became strained; and Newman College displaced the Melbourne University Rifles as the centre of anti-leftist feeling on campus. Niall Brennan, who entered the University and the *Campion* Society in 1937, later recorded that his Catholic faith 'was never endangered, not because of my knowledge but because of the Spanish war.

I knew my team when I arrived at University, and with hardly a thought for Christ I became as militant a Christian crusader with fire-hose and flour-bag as ever marched into the Holy Land.<sup>9</sup>

The *Campion* Society as such did not participate in the controversy. That it refrained from doing so was due above all to Kevin Kelly, who insisted that as it aspired to be a model Catholic

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 22 October 1936, editorial.

<sup>8</sup> Cited in the *Worker's Voice*, 23 October 1936.

<sup>9</sup> Niall Brennan, *A Hoax Called Jones*, p. 36.

Action body, it must abide by the Papal regulations which forbade such bodies from engaging directly in political or pressure-group action.<sup>10</sup> Acting as private individuals, however, Campion men led the anti-Republican cause in Victoria; and no-one was more active in this regard than Kelly himself.

The culmination of the Spanish War dispute in Victoria occurred on the night of Monday 22 March 1937, when the Public Lecture Theatre at Melbourne University was packed to hear two teams debate the motion, 'That the Spanish Government is the ruin of Spain.' This occasion not only revealed the strength of the Catholic case; it gave a foretaste of the ability of Victoria's Catholics to mobilise en masse when they felt that their fundamental values and interests were seriously threatened.

Preceding the Great Debate, as it came to be known, were several weeks of correspondence controversy in the Age, and of challenge and counter-challenge between Campion men and Communists. Eventually agreement had been reached that a debate would take place on neutral ground, the University campus, under the auspices of the University Debating Society. On Kevin Kelly's insistence, the motion to be contested was worded so that it was incumbent on the Catholics only to justify the rebellion in general, and not to support Franco's administration as such.<sup>11</sup> Kelly, Santamaria, and Stan Ingwersen - all leading University debaters - were chosen to

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Interview with Mr. Justice McInerney, August 1967; memorandum, K. T. Kelly to author, 1970.

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Memorandum, K. T. Kelly to author, 1970.

defend the motion. The opposing team was made up of Netti Palmer, a prominent Australian literary figure who had been in Spain at the time the rebellion began; J. W. (Jack) Legge, a third-year Science student and Communist Party member; and Dr. Gerard O'Day, who was well-known as a fiery Communist and ex-Catholic. The latter team had been poorly organised: Legge had been asked to participate at the last moment, and had only agreed to do so because of the insistence of the Debating Society Secretary.<sup>12</sup>

On the Catholic side a great deal of organisation had gone into the affair. The Champions, anticipating Communist attempts to 'stack' the meeting, had passed word through the C.Y.M.S. branch network that the debate was likely to be of major strategic importance to both sides involved, and that it was essential that every available Catholic young man arrive, and arrive early. The response was overwhelming: an audience of 1,500, 'packed to a two-thirds majority by the Catholics',<sup>13</sup> filled the Theatre to more than double its nominal capacity. All seats were taken; the aisles were crammed; and large crowds had to be refused admittance. A squad of police was present to maintain order. Inside, the atmosphere was tense with excitement and apprehension.

There ensued an unforgettable two hours which carried the Catholic team through to a resounding victory. Their case was tightly organised and presented with great dramatic effect. Kelly

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<sup>12</sup>

Interview with Mr. J. W. Legge, 17 June 1972.

<sup>13</sup>

Niall Brennan, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

and Santamaria both gave stirring orations, closely reasoned and well substantiated; and Ingwersen thrilled the audience with his polished delivery, his control of irony, and his magnificent stage presence. The arguments of the first two read better in print;<sup>14</sup> but even so, it was undoubtedly Ingwersen who emerged as the star of the evening.

The opposition speakers fared poorly by comparison. Nettie Palmer, calm and factual, could scarcely be heard; Jack Legge, who was not an experienced debater, was hesitant and lacked force in his presentation; and Dr. O'Day, although a practised tub-  
 orator, was goaded into making a violent attack on the Catholic Church, with the result that the end of his speech was drowned out by 'Hoots and groans'<sup>15</sup> from the audience. The crowd was rowdy, Catholic, and partisan. After Kelly had delivered the final speech the motion was put to the vote, and carried amid 'unparalleled scenes of enthusiasm'. Three cheers were called for Spain, and three for General Franco; and again 'a thousand throats shouted their approbation.'<sup>16</sup>

The ramifications of the Great Spanish War Debate were widespread and long-lasting. A combined effort by Champion men and young Catholic working-class militants from the C.Y.M.S.

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<sup>14</sup>

The only comprehensive contemporary account of the debate is in the Catholic Worker, 3 April 1937. Short reports appeared in the Age, Argus and Herald of 23 March 1937.

<sup>15</sup>

Argus 23 March 1937, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup>

C.W. 3 April 1937.

had given Victorian Catholicism a notable triumph in its first clash with the representatives of its greatest enemy of the age, Communism. Catholic morale had never been higher; and a precedent had been set for concerted pressure-group action in the years ahead.

The left-wing forces at the University, on the other hand, were severely demoralised. Farrago, which at the time was controlled by Labour Club activists, gave only a tiny segment on its back page to a report on the debate, and even then it 'doctored' Dr. O'Day's most controversial statement to make it appear less inflammatory than it was. <sup>17</sup> An acrimonious correspondence controversy on the affair was sustained in the paper for three weeks, and was then cut off. For the remaining two years of the Spanish War Farrago refused to print material on the issue. It was generally felt that too much heat and ill-feeling had already been generated on the campus over Spain; and that, in the words of one correspondent 'it is time we returned to what I had believed were the decencies <sup>18</sup> of University discussion.'

The wave of Catholic popular militancy was not yet ready to subside, however. On 18 April a large Spanish aid meeting in Geelong was attended by co-ordinated cadres of Catholics, the

<sup>17</sup>

Farrago 5 April 1937 quotes O'Day as saying 'no country had ever been ruined for refusing to support Catholicism.' C.W. 3 April gives the pertinent sentence as: 'What country, what nation has not profited by having the Catholics thrown out?' The Argus 23 March 1937, p. 3, records that 'Hoots and groans drowned the end of Dr. O'Day's speech in which he attacked Catholic Christianity.'

<sup>18</sup>

L. A. Moroney in Farrago 20 April 1937.



organisers of which were Father J. H. Cleary and the local Campion/  
<sup>19</sup>  
 C.Y.M.S. activists. The convenors of the meeting had contended  
 that moneys raised would be expended impartially in assisting  
 victims of the war; but the Catholics were disturbed to note that  
 the proposed distributing agency was the English Joint Aid  
 Committee, which they knew operated only in Republican-controlled  
 areas of Spain. Their organised efforts on the evening were aimed  
 solely at ensuring genuine impartiality in the apportioning of  
 funds; and in this, despite determined opposition, they were  
<sup>20</sup>  
 successful. To all outward appearances, the meeting passed  
 without incident. Again, however, the Catholics had felt their  
 own collective strength.

In Ballarat the controversy was conducted much more  
 fiercely. During the early months of 1937 a long correspondence  
 dispute over Spain occurred in the Courier, culminating in a public  
 debate in the Town Hall on the evening of 21 April. Stan Ingwersen  
 travelled down from Melbourne to accompany John J. Sheehan, a  
 prominent local Campion man and C.Y.M.S. debater, in putting the  
 Catholic case, with the motion again being: 'That the present  
 Government is the ruination of Spain.' Their opponents were A. C.  
 Williams and E. J. Rowe, the latter a Communist, one-time C.Y.M.S.  
 debater, and local Trades Hall identity.

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Interview with Father J. H. Cleary, 21 November 1972.

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Ibid.; cf. Adv. 29 April 1937, p. 15; Geelong Advertiser 3 April,  
 19 April 1937.

The debate was almost an exact replica of the Melbourne one. Again the Campion-C.Y.M.S. organisational machinery was set in motion; again the massed forces of the Catholics arrived early, with the doors being opened a half-hour ahead of time to admit them;<sup>21</sup> again Ingwersen stole the limelight. The audience, boisterously Catholic, gave an impatient hearing to Williams and Rowe, although the latter presented his case forcefully. Ingwersen's final call for 'Three cheers for General Franco and the crusaders of Spain' brought forth 'a tremendous response.' Mr. Rowe, according to the Courier, then rose and 'called apparently - he could not be heard - for three cheers for something else - and a mingled storm of cheers and boos was the result.'<sup>22</sup>

Ingwersen's final hour of glory was yet to come. Less than two weeks after the Ballarat debate he travelled to South Australia at the invitation of the Catholic Guild for Social Studies. He was lodged at the Dominican Priory in Adelaide; addressed several Catholic schools; and gave a public lecture in the Australia Hall on 'Spain and the Last Crusade'. On 5 May he organised the disruption of a meeting in the Town Hall which was being sponsored by the Spanish Relief Fund Committee.<sup>23</sup> Five hundred men from assorted Catholic societies assembled at St. Francis'

<sup>21</sup>

Interview with Mr. Joseph Lynch (a Ballarat C.Y.M.S. leader of the time), 9 January 1972.

<sup>22</sup>

Ballarat Courier 22 April 1937, p. 4; cf. Ballarat Mail 23 April, p. 3; Adv. 29 April, p. 15.

<sup>23</sup>

An account of the foundation of the Relief Fund Committee is given in Eric M. Andrews, Isolationism and Appeasement, p. 82.

Church, then marched to the Hall, spread around inside, and maintained such a barrage of questions and interjections that the Lord Mayor was forced to declare the meeting closed prematurely. Some scuffling occurred; and Ingwersen, protected by a body-guard, managed to mount the dais. However, his intention to deliver a short lecture was thwarted by the police, who ordered all present to leave the premises. Subsequently the demonstrators reassembled outside the Hall in King William Street, and sang 'Faith of Our Fathers', the stirring Irish hymn which had become a favoured Catholic battle-song.<sup>24</sup>

By mid-1937 the heat was beginning to leave the Spanish War controversy. Republican supporters were becoming increasingly disheartened by the steady advance of Franco's armies; and further to this, the Australian public was tiring of the constant disputation. Communism, however, was now a force to be reckoned with in this country; and the Catholics were aware that unless they organised themselves more effectively, the Communists could well increase in strength to the point where they represented a real national threat. Thus, not surprisingly, the Spanish War dispute was paralleled by a rapid acceleration in the rate of growth of the Catholic actionist movement.

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During the course of 1936 the Campion Society had

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Interview with Dr. S. Ingwersen, February 1967; cf. Workers' Weekly, 11 May 1937.

continued to expand. At the time the Spanish War was getting under way it had five Central groups, including a Junior Group; nine affiliated suburban groups; and country groups at Wangaratta, Ballarat, Bendigo, Sale and Albury.<sup>25</sup> In Perth, Western Australia, a Champion-type society, the Chesterton Club, had been formed in July, with its foremost figure being Keith Spruhan, editor of the Catholic Record. It conducted four study-groups, and its members were helping to sell the Catholic Worker.<sup>26</sup> In Brisbane, Queensland, a Champion Society centred on the Aquinas Library was founded towards the end of the year, its initiators being John P. Kelly and Arthur S. Hegerty;<sup>27</sup> and in Townsville, several Champion groups were established by a Father D. Twomey.<sup>28</sup>

In Melbourne, the influence of the Champion in the Catholic media was further increased when Father James Murtagh was taken onto the editorial staff of the Advocate in 1936, and Frank Murphy in 1937.<sup>29</sup> During 1936 well-attended lecture series were conducted at the University and at the Central Catholic Library; and the familiar work of lecturing and writing continued unabated. At the Annual General Meeting in August high praise was

<sup>25</sup>

Prelude to Catholic Action, A.C.T.S. No. 718, 10 September 1936, p. 21.

<sup>26</sup>

Michael J. Lane (Perth) to Heffey, 25 November 1936, H/B; Champion A.G.M. report, Adv. 20 August 1936, p. 10; circular, 'The Chesterton Club', Box 9, Hackett papers, Jesuit Archives.

<sup>27</sup>

Champion Q.M. report, Adv. 3 December 1936, p. 23; telephone conversations with Mr. John P. Kelly, 16 March 1974, and Mr. Martin Haley (joined 1937), 15 March 1974.

<sup>28</sup>

Champion Q.M. report, Adv. 3 December 1936, p. 23.

<sup>29</sup>

Telephone conversation with Mr. Frank Murphy, 16 March 1974.

forthcoming from Archbishop Mannix, who declared that he had always had 'the utmost confidence in the society', and that he regarded it as 'the flower and fruit of the Australian Catholic school system.'<sup>30</sup>

In November 1936 Frank Maher resigned as President,<sup>31</sup> and was succeeded by Murray McInerney. Shortly afterwards the Society lost two established members to the priesthood, in Howard Bainbridge, a convert and scholar of liturgy, who left for Belgium to join the Benedictine Monks of Solesmes; and Jack Beasley, a Dux of De La Salle College, Malvern, who entered the Vincentian novitiate in Sydney.<sup>32</sup> Much more tragic was the passing of John Merlo, who died after a short illness on Sunday 6 December 1936. Married and with an infant daughter, Merlo had risen to the position of University lecturer in History at a time when academic appointments were virtually closed to Catholics. The death of this gifted and universally liked personality, an original *Campion* member, cast a shadow of gloom over the Society, and moved Denys Jackson to write an eloquent and touching tribute to him in the Advocate.<sup>33</sup>

With regard to external activities, the Society in September 1936 sought to cut down its correspondence work, and to

<sup>30</sup> Campion A.G.M. report, Adv. 20 August 1936, p. 10.

<sup>31</sup> Campion Q.M. report, Adv. 3 December 1936, p. 23.

<sup>32</sup> Orders of the Day, January 1937, Box 6, Hackett papers.

<sup>33</sup> Adv. 17 December 1936, p. 4.



answer many of the queries commonly put to it, by releasing a twenty-five page pamphlet, Prelude to Catholic Action. Published by the Australian Catholic Truth Society, it was distributed throughout the country via pamphlet racks and paper stalls in Catholic churches. It contained a Foreword by Father W. P. Hackett, S.J.; a short history of the Campion Society; extensive advice on the formation of study-groups; and a detailed syllabus and book-list. Its introductory pages painted a grim picture of the spread of paganism, totalitarianism, and anti-Christian persecution; and they reiterated the Pope's urgent calls for a crusade of Catholic Action to save the Church and civilisation. However, the pamphlet asserted that the immediate task facing Australian Catholicism was that of training leaders and propagating ideas, which was only a prelude to the main campaign:

The real development can only come when the Hierarchy of Australia decides to organise Catholic Action on a national basis...It will come here when the Catholic people have awakened to its importance.

That this 'awakening' was progressing apace was everywhere apparent. As the Spanish War controversy mounted, and the Catholic sense of isolation increased, the Campion Society entered its period of greatest expansion. At the end of 1936 a fifth permanent Central group, the Chesterton Group, was created; and at the beginning of 1937 a record intake of thirty recruits necessitated the formation of three Junior Groups to replace the one previously existing.<sup>34</sup> A series of lunch-hour lectures conducted early in the

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<sup>34</sup>

Orders of the Day, January 1937, Box 6, Hackett papers.

year at the Central Catholic Library proved popular, attracting average audiences of two hundred, 'nearly all young people'. Gerard Heffey spoke on 'Why a Catholic cannot be a Communist'; Frank Misell on 'Fascist and Catholic - Are they the Same?'; Bob Santamaria on 'The Fight for Social Justice - Is the Church Reactionary?'; and others on 'Christianity and Peace', and 'Race Suicide'.<sup>35</sup> Later in the year a lunch-hour<sup>36</sup> lecture series at the University was similarly well supported.

In January two further Campion publications appeared. One was The World Moves On ('Campion Pamphlet No. 1', A.C.T.S. No. 732), which was composed of a series of talks given by Frank Maher on the Catholic Hour. The other was a tiny brochure, The Campion, the contents of which were also printed in the Advocate of 14 January. Intended to attract new members, it played down the intellectual nature of the Society, insisting that the Campion was 'not an organisation of highbrows', and was 'definitely not confined to University students.' It reflected a slight change of emphasis within the Society from the education of intellectuals to the formation of a broader class of young Catholic leaders.

The need for leaders was plentifully apparent in the extraordinary proliferation of study-groups which was taking place. Late in 1936 a Geelong Campion group re-appeared, being sparked into life by the Spanish War dispute. Most of its members were

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Ibid., February 1937, Box 6, Hackett papers.

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Adv. 29 July 1937, p. 12; cf. Campion A.G.M. report, Adv. 19 August 1937, p. 7.

C.Y.M.S. debaters, with the key figures being John Toohey, a convert and Clerk of Courts, and Father James H. Cleary, both of whom were recent arrivals in the city.<sup>37</sup> At Warrnambool in 1937 a Champion group was founded by Brian Harkin, who had been transferred to the district a year before. Other Champion circles appeared at Ararat, Bacchus Marsh, Benalla, Daylesford, Horsham, and Iona.<sup>38</sup> The Melbourne Champion sought to keep in touch with these groups by sending teams of representatives on periodic visits to the rural districts, the first such excursion taking place in June 1937.<sup>39</sup> Outside Victoria, groups were formed at Port Augusta in South Australia,<sup>40</sup> and at Wagga Wagga in southern New South Wales. The Wagga Champion group, like that existing at Albury, operated informally, and consisted predominantly of Catholic professional and semi-professional men.<sup>41</sup>

Two new Catholic societies were also formed during this period as a result of Champion initiative. The first was the Assisian Guild for Catholic teachers, which was founded on 27 September 1936 at a teachers' Retreat organised by the Wangaratta

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Interview with Father J. H. Cleary, 21 November 1971. Two of the members - John Patterson and Roger O'Halloran - had been in the earlier (1934) Geelong Champion group. Among the others (of 1937) were D. P. F. O'Keefe, who frequently wrote for the Catholic Young Man as 'Bonaventura'; and M. J. ('Jock') Travers, a C.Y.M.S. debater and prominent local trade unionist.

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Champion A.G.M. report, Adv. 19 August 1937, p. 7.

39

Ibid.

40

Ibid.

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Members included a medical practitioner, a Dentist, a Solicitor, four school teachers, and a priest (Father B. W. Hayden): Interview with Mr. K. J. Smythe (an original member), 10 November 1971.

Campion group. Its name reflected the venue of its birth, the Franciscan Retreat House, 'La Verna', in Kew.<sup>42</sup> The Guild's main activities came to be the organisation of an annual teachers' Retreat; the establishment of study-groups; the promotion of the Wangaratta Campion teachers' circular, Epistles and Postscripts, and the magazine which succeeded it, Tremendous Trifles; and the encouragement of Catholic teachers to take an active part in the Victorian Teachers' Union.<sup>43</sup> Within three years the Guild had<sup>44</sup> 300 members, 250 of them women.

The second Campion-inspired body to be founded at this time was the Clitherow Society, a women's equivalent of the Campion. It originated in a small study-group of girls, many of them wives and girl-friends of Campion members, which had been established early in 1936.<sup>45</sup> By mid-1937 there were four groups meeting separately; and in July these combined to form the Clitherow Society, taking the name of the Blessed Margaret Clitherow, a contemporary of Edmund Campion who, like he, had been executed during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. A Campion-based Constitution was drawn up; the Archbishop's approval was obtained; and a study-programme with a more literary, less sociological bias than that of the Campions was adopted. The new society expanded rapidly, with study-groups being formed or admitted

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<sup>42</sup>

Epistles and Postscripts, November 1936, Box 6, Hackett papers.

<sup>43</sup>

Ibid., March-December 1936 (excluding July and September issues), Box 6, Hackett papers.

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Assisian Guild A.G.M. report, Adv. 24 August 1939, p. 7.

<sup>45</sup>

Interview with Mrs. W. B. V. Knowles (ne Dorothy Baldwin), 16 February 1972.



to affiliation from several Melbourne suburbs and some country centres.<sup>46</sup>

Another organisation which was founded in 1937, and which was subsequently to be of importance to the Catholic Action movement, was the Catholic Boys' Legion. In 1934 Archbishop Mannix had expressed concern at the lack of Catholic associations for boys who had left school but who were under 16, the minimum age for C.Y.M.S. membership.<sup>47</sup> Subsequently Catholic boys' clubs had appeared in various parishes; and about the beginning of 1937 several of these, incorporating some 400 members, united in a loose federation,<sup>48</sup> the Catholic Boys' Legion. The convenor and controller of this body was Father J. Lanigan, a gaunt, restless, Irish-born curate in his late 'thirties who disliked parish work. The main function of the Legion's Committee was arranging an annual Australian Rules football competition; and for this reason an ex-A Grade player in the Victorian Football League, David Nelson, was chosen as President. Nelson was the leading figure in the Clifton Hill C.Y.M.S.; the associated C.Y.M.S./Campion discussion group; and the Clifton Hill Catholic boys' club. A Champion enthusiast,<sup>49</sup> he sought to give the Legion a Catholic Action orientation; however,

<sup>46</sup>

Orders of the Day, July/August, October 1937, January 1938, Box 6, Lockett papers.

<sup>47</sup>

See 1934 C.Y.M.S. Annual Report, Catholic Young Man, December 1934, M.A.A.

<sup>48</sup>

Its existence was announced by Dave Nelson in a letter in the Advocate, 18 February 1937, p. 21.

<sup>49</sup>

Ibid.



Lanigan, who had no interest in Catholic Action, was impatient of his suggestions in this regard. He was able nevertheless to run his Clifton Hill boys' club along Jocist lines.<sup>50</sup>

Since the C.B.L. was almost entirely sport-orientated, a smaller but complementary organisation was brought into being in mid-1937 to cater for the intellectual interests of the same 14-18 year age group. This was the Catholic Youth Movement, a discussion group federation, the founder of which was the parish priest of West Melbourne, Father J. J. Norris, a veteran Catholic activist of the Austral Light era. Within eighteen months of its establishment the Youth Movement had spread to ten parishes, and had seventeen discussion groups operating.<sup>51</sup>

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This great upsurge of Catholic actionism, engendered as it was by the Spanish War furore, had one characteristic which worried senior Campion men, and that was an excessive preoccupation with Communism. The Campions, and the Catholic Worker, had always presented Capitalism and Communism as twin evils; and they had promoted Catholic social philosophy as a viable and constructive ideological alternative to both. In July 1937 Murray McInerney, writing in the first issue of Tremendous Trifles, the unofficial organ of the Assisian Guild, warned that if Catholics wished to

<sup>50</sup>

Interview with Mr. D. Nelson, 22 November 1971.

<sup>51</sup>

See C.Y.M. Annual Conference report, Adv. 3 November 1938, p. 23.

avert 'an Australian reproduction of the Spanish tragedy', they would have to stop being merely negative and anti-Communist:

We will have to be positive - to go further and present ...ways and means whereby the present social injustice can be ended and 'a better economic order' set up in its place.<sup>52</sup>

In November Ted Hennessy made a similar observation at the Annual Communion Breakfast of the North-East Catholic Debating and Sports Association. Qualifying sentiments expressed by preceding speakers, he warned that although 'the Catholic Church's crusade has been stated to be against Communism', it was preferable to say 'that its crusade was for social justice.'<sup>53</sup>

Yet despite a certain negative bias, the general movement forged ahead. Letters directed to the Campion Society poured into the Central Catholic Library, requesting book-lists, study-syllabi, and advice of all kinds on the operation of study-groups. Enquiries came from all parts of Australia, and from as far away as New Zealand. In mid-1937 the Society was forced to hire rooms in the Perpetual Trustee Building in Queen Street, and to pay a member, W. Gordon Long, secretary of the Thomas a'Beckett Group, to work there three afternoons per week replying to correspondence.<sup>54</sup>

The Champions knew, however, that this could only serve as a temporary measure. In May Kevin Kelly, writing in the Advocate

<sup>52</sup>

Tremendous Trifles, July 1937. Copy in the possession of Mr. Justice McInerney.

<sup>53</sup>

Adv. 18 November 1937, p. 24.

<sup>54</sup>

Memorandum, Mr. Justice McInerney to author, September 1967; cf. Campion A.G.H. report, Adv. 19 August 1937, p. 7.

as 'Campionus', warned that if Catholic Action in Australia were not soon established on a formal basis, and backed by substantial resources, 'the whole movement may be put back for ten years.'<sup>55</sup> A month later Frank Maher publicly called attention to the 'great need for some central secretariat' to 'direct and inspire' the Catholic Action movement.<sup>56</sup>

Finally, on 5 July,<sup>57</sup> a group of senior Campions visited Dr. Mannix and gave him their assessment of the situation. They requested him to seek the establishment of a National Secretariat of Catholic Action as a matter of urgency. The Archbishop was agreeable; and further, since the Hierarchy of Australia and New Zealand was due to meet in Plenary Council in September, he asked the Campions to prepare a detailed memorandum which he could present there. Subsequently a Memorandum Committee was appointed, consisting of Frank Maher, Murray McInerney, Kevin Kelly, Denys Jackson, Ken Mitchell, and Gordon Long; and regular drafting sessions were held in rooms at Xavier College provided by Father Hackett. The completed document, running to 15,000 words, was presented to Dr. Mannix shortly before his departure for Sydney for the Council.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> 'The Crux of Catholic Action', Adv. 20 May 1937, p. 7.

<sup>56</sup> Adv. 24 June 1937, p. 42. Speech at Catholic Men's Club luncheon.

<sup>57</sup> Date from 1937 diary of Mr. Justice McInerney.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Mr. Justice McInerney, August 1967.

The assembled Hierarchy accepted the general recommendations of the Campion Memorandum, and on 13 September 1937 formally inaugurated Catholic Action for Australia and New Zealand. An Episcopal Sub-Committee was appointed to establish in Melbourne an Australian National Secretariat of Catholic Action, and to oversee its operations. Archbishop Mannix was made Chairman of the Sub-Committee; Archbishop Simonds of Hobart became its Secretary; and Coadjutor Archbishop Gilroy of Sydney and Bishop Gleeson of Maitland were its remaining members.

For the Victorian Campion Society this decision by the Hierarchy represented the high-point of six-and-a-half years of sustained effort. Australian Catholic Action, hitherto an unofficial movement relying on amateur enterprise, had now entered upon a new and more professional phase of its development.

CHAPTER 10

THE FIRST YEAR OF THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL SECRETARIAT OF CATHOLIC ACTION, 1938

The first year of formal Catholic Action in Australia was the year of Hitler's Anschluss and of Munich, a year during which the outbreak of another world war grew to appear an ever more likely possibility. The Australian Catholic press, which from the Abyssinian war until the Sudetenland crisis had been insistent that Australia should not become involved in another European war, by the closing months of 1938 was beginning to waver in this stance. Appalled by the brutality of Hitler, and alarmed at the bellicosity of the Japanese in China,<sup>1</sup> the Advocate in October made its first call for an increased Australian defence preparedness;<sup>2</sup> and it urged Catholic young men to join the militia.<sup>3</sup> Apprehension at the course of world events had already moved Kevin Kelly and other Champion men during 1938 to enlist in the Melbourne University Rifles or other units of the Citizen Forces.<sup>4</sup>

As world attention swung away from Spain, where Franco's forces were advancing steadily, and focused on Central Europe, the anti-Communist campaign among Australian Catholics began to decline

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<sup>1</sup> See Adv. 29 September 1938, 'Sulla'; 8 December, editorial.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 20 October 1938, editorial.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 12 January 1939, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Memorandum, K. T. Kelly to author, September 1967.



in intensity. Corresponding with this, the Catholic actionist movement steadied down to a less dramatic, more stable rate of growth than during the critical first twelve months of the Spanish War. It was against this more settled emotional background that the Australian National Secretariat of Catholic Action began its operations.

Preceding the actual opening of the Secretariat were four months of planning and organisation by the Episcopal Sub-Committee on Catholic Action. The basis for the Sub-Committee's policy thinking was provided by the Campion Memorandum which had been presented to the Plenary Council. However, the major recommendations of the Memorandum were not accepted before a serious clash of opinion, with far-reaching consequences, had occurred between the episcopal representatives of Melbourne and Sydney.

The Campion Memorandum had presented the Secretariat's primary duties as falling into two main categories, corresponding to two 'crises' facing 'the thinking Catholic layman in Australia today.' The first was 'a crisis within the ranks of unorganised Catholic Action'; the second 'a crisis among the working classes, fraught with grave danger to Catholics.'

To deal with the second matter first: the document warned that everywhere Trade Unions were 'steadily coming under the control of the Communists', and were 'adopting proposals, platforms, and policies to which a Catholic may be unable in

conscience to pay allegiance.' Since resignation from Unions would in many cases result in loss of employment, it was imperative that Catholic workers be educated with a view to their 'preventing a Communist or pagan capture of unionism in Australia'. The Secretariat would see to this task; it would maintain a surveillance on Communist and Communist-controlled organisations; and it would prepare and distribute reports on Communist activities and tactics.

With regard to the solution of the first 'crisis', the Memorandum was decidedly optimistic. The Catholic actionist movement was as yet unorganised; but the experiences of past years had shown that among the laity there existed 'an eagerness to participate in the apostolate of Catholic Action.' As the structural basis for Australian Catholic Action the Memorandum recommended the Belgian/French 'Jocist' model, in which the overall movement was sub-divided according to: '1) age 2) sex 3) locality of parish 4) trade or profession 5) some definite activity'. These divisions, the Memorandum maintained, corresponded with the 'natural social groupings' which determined most people's interests and spheres of influence.<sup>5</sup>

Conflict arose, however, when Archbishop Gilroy sought the immediate implementation of an entirely different plan of organisation, based on Italian Catholic Action. His scheme, presumably taken from Goodman's A Handbook of Catholic Action,

<sup>5</sup>

Draft of Campion Memorandum I, September 1937, in possession of Mr. Justice McInerney.

envisaged the adoption of the parish as the basic organisational unit, with lesser divisions separating men's and women's, younger and older people's movements. No provision was made for the factory or occupational 'cell', such as was fundamental to Jocist Catholic Action. Furthermore, implementing the Italian structure would have meant placing control tightly in the hands of parish priests, and above them of individual bishops. The Jocist movement, on the other hand, was designed to function semi-autonomously, with minimum dependence on the parish, and with episcopal direction being exercised only in matters of broad strategy. Of the two forms of Catholic Action, the Jocist had much the greater potential to respond effectively to the Papal call for the organisation of a mass social movement to Christianise the modern industrial milieu.

Dr. Mannix passed Archbishop Gilroy's submission on to the Champions and asked them to write a commentary on it. This second Champion memorandum was brief and highly critical. It asserted that the Italian structure was unsuitable for Australia; and further, that its immediate establishment would be most unwise 'because few priests (if any) in Australia are sufficiently familiar with the varieties of Catholic Action abroad to be able to organize official Catholic Action or even a nucleus of Catholic Action in each diocese, and even less in each parish.' The Champions were particularly disturbed at Dr. Gilroy's proposal that 'as a general principle all organizing Secretaries should be priests'. They pointed out that this was scarcely in accord 'with the Holy Father's expressed views on Catholic Action, and his

repeated insistence on lay leadership.<sup>6</sup>

As it was, the Campion objections carried the day, and the Episcopal Sub-Committee decided to adhere to the recommendations of the original Memorandum and to base Australian Catholic Action on the Belgian/French model. Sydney thereupon withdrew from the Sub-Committee, and announced that it intended to establish its own archdiocesan Catholic Action network independently of the national movement. The letter of resignation emphasised the possibility of the National Secretariat's operations infringing on the bishops' rights to autonomy of jurisdiction within their own dioceses. Sydney was not prepared to court this risk.<sup>7</sup>

Shortly after this Dr. Mannix asked the Campions to prepare him a final memorandum, clarifying some of their original proposals, and formally recommending two of their number as Director and Assistant Director of the Secretariat. This was duly done.

This third memorandum sought to define, among other things, the precise relationship of the Secretariat to Catholic organised activity within the Trade Unions. It emphasised that the Secretariat 'cannot undertake direct political action among unionists or control the policy or tactics of Catholic groups of Unionists.' It could only operate by 'collecting workers together

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Draft of Campion Memorandum II, in possession of Mr. Justice McInerney.

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Interview with Mr. B. A. Santamaria, 14 September 1971.

in small groups and giving them a sound general training in Catholic social principles...

Out of these trained workers will soon arise groups in individual unions.../but/ The Bureau cannot do more than train militants; it must scrupulously avoid politics and can only indirectly direct group tactics.<sup>8</sup>

The task of finding two permanent officers for the Secretariat proved more difficult than had been expected. The Directorship presented no problems, with Frank Maher accepting the position, and then being formally recommended to the Episcopal Sub-Committee on the basis of his high academic accomplishments, and his distinguished record as founder and President of the Campion Society.<sup>9</sup>

However, the obvious choice for Assistant Director, Kevin Kelly, declined to accept the post. After further deliberations among the Campion leaders the position fell to Bob Santamaria.<sup>10</sup> His citation to the bishops mentioned that he had completed 'an exceptionally brilliant honours course in History and Economics'; that he had won the Wyselaskie Scholarship in Constitutional History; and that he had been a member of 'several Intervarsity Debating Teams.' The foundation of the Catholic Worker had been 'due mainly to his energy'; and he had 'appeared with outstanding success at Public Debates against

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Draft of Campion Memorandum III, in possession of Mr. Justice McInerney.

9

Ibid.

10

Interviews with Mr. B. A. Santamaria, Mr. K. T. Kelly, and Mr. Justice McInerney.



Communism at the University.' Furthermore,

He has been in close touch with Labour leaders in Victoria and has made a close study of Australian working class conditions. An active member of the Champion Society for many years, he speaks and writes Italian and French fluently and is an excellent writer and speaker.

The memorandum recommended annual salaries of £520 for the Director, and £260 for the Assistant Director. <sup>11</sup>

These nominations, and the proposed salaries, were accepted by the Episcopal Sub-Committee. An Ecclesiastical Assistant was appointed in Father William Keane, S.J., Professor of Philosophy at the Jesuit Seminary at Watsonia, and a notable scholar of Catholic social thought. <sup>12</sup> A suite of offices, previously Frank Maher's law apartments, was rented in the Bank of New South Wales Building at 368 Collins Street. All was now in readiness for the Secretariat to begin its operations.

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The Australian National Secretariat of Catholic Action officially opened its doors on Monday 24 January 1938. <sup>13</sup> Occupying

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Campion Memorandum III. Father William Keane in an address in June 1938 (Adv. 16 June 1938, p. 7) implied that the Assistant Directorship was a part-time position. This, according to Mr. Santamaria and all other sources, was not the case.

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See, for instance, W. Keane, 'Catholics and Reconstruction', Australasian Catholic Record, January 1932. See also papers on social questions in Keane's papers, Jesuit Archives.

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Mr. Santamaria recalls this as the official opening date. The Secretariat had begun operating informally prior to this: see Archbishop Simonds' statement in the Advocate, 20 January 1938, p. 9.

the premises were Maher, Santamaria, and female office assistance. Later in the year Gerard McLaughlin, a Campion man and Catholic Worker Committee member, was also taken onto the staff, primarily as a business manager.

The responsibility which the Secretariat (ANSCA) had assumed was a formidable one. It had been established to initiate, and to co-ordinate the development of, a multi-faceted, Australia-wide Catholic Action complex. The vastness of the continent put the detailed work of organisation beyond its resources; and yet initially the Directors could call on the assistance of only a handful of contacts outside Victoria. Furthermore, they were well aware that they possessed no real power other than that to advise and inform. All authority over Catholic Action within each diocese resided with the incumbent bishop; and the effectiveness of the Secretariat would depend on the good-will, enthusiasm and leadership qualities of a multitude of individual bishops, priests and laymen.

The Secretariat expected eventually to have in operation a network of Catholic Action movements, differentiated according to age and sex, and further divided into class/occupational groupings for: the urban working class; the rural workers; the middle-class; the professions; and the schools. <sup>14</sup> Before anything ambitious could be achieved, however, a substantial

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These were the standard Jocist divisions. For a diagrammatic representation of ANSCA's scheme, see the Report of the Australian National Secretariat of Catholic Action to December 31st, 1940, of which there is a copy in Box 11, Father Jeremiah Murphy papers, Jesuit Archives.

body of leaders had to be found and trained; and as a first step in this direction, ANSCA set about encouraging the extension of the existing undifferentiated study-group movement. From the study-groups would arise the militants who would make up the leadership cadres for the future vocational movements.

Within Victoria the work of ANSCA was much facilitated by the assistance of the Champion Society. Indeed, for some time the distinction between the two bodies was purely nominal. Early in 1938 Denys Jackson and Kevin Kelly toured New Zealand, sharing twenty-four talks on Catholic Action, and establishing lasting links between the movements in the two countries. In June, at the invitation of Brian Harkin, a group of Champions made a lecturing sojourn to Warrnambool; and in September a number of them addressed five meetings, including one which filled the parish hall, during a weekend at Benalla.

The Ballarat Champion Society, meanwhile, had become the centre of a network of Champion groups scattered throughout the South-West. It was selling 400 pamphlets and 1,000 Catholic

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See 'Catholic Action Formation in the C.Y.M.S.', Adv. 24 March 1938, p. 7; W. Keane, S.J., 'Address to the Clergy of the Melbourne Archdiocese', 7 June 1938, Keane papers, Jesuit Archives (printed, slightly abbreviated, in Adv. 16 June 1938, p. 7).

16

Orders of the Day, April 1938, H/B.

17

Ibid., July 1938, H/B.

18

Ibid., October 1938, H/B; cf. Adv. 29 September 1938, p. 5.

19

There were Champion groups at Ararat, Hamilton, Horsham, and Stawell (C.W. 2 July 1938).

Workers every month;<sup>20</sup> was conducting monthly lectures in St. Patrick's Hall; and was regularly giving talks in surrounding towns.<sup>21</sup> One of its members, John Larkins, was appointed official Catholic Action Organiser for the diocese by Bishop Foley.<sup>22</sup> The Geelong Campion group was similarly flourishing, and had 'commandeered a page of the parish gazette' to propagate its views.<sup>23</sup>

The Clitherow Society also played its part in assisting ANSCA. As a consequence of the absence in Victoria of any other young women's Catholic actionist movement, it found itself inundated by previously isolated study-groups seeking affiliation.<sup>24</sup> At the beginning of 1938, six months after its foundation, the Society accommodated to the dominant interests of its members by altering its study-programmes, giving them a less academic and more life-situation slant than previously.<sup>25</sup> Towards the end of the year, with the help of the Secretariat, it launched a bright, newsy magazine, Torchlight, which featured film reviews, fashions, recipes, general chatter, and some articles of a more intellectual kind.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>

Adv. 10 November 1938, p. 28; 25 August, p. 27.

<sup>22</sup>

Ibid., 9 June 1938, p. 22.

<sup>23</sup>

Orders of the Day, August 1938, H/B.

<sup>24</sup>

Interview with Mr. W. B. V. Knowles, 16 February 1972. The Society was only loosely centralised until early 1938, when ANSCA encouraged it to develop as a more effective middle-class girls' movement.

<sup>25</sup>

Orders of the Day, January 1938, Box 6, Hackett papers.

<sup>26</sup>

See Torchlight, January (No. 3), March (No. 5), July (No. 9) 1939, M.A.A.



At this stage, however, the Clitherow Society was too inexperienced to serve as the nucleus of a young women's Catholic Action movement; and so ANSCA turned its attentions to the Sydney-based Grail. In August 1938 three 'Ladies of the Grail' travelled down to Melbourne at the invitation of the Secretariat, and conducted a week-long women's leadership training course. Fifty young ladies from a variety of Catholic organisations attended.<sup>27</sup> This marked the effective beginning of the women's Catholic Action movement in Victoria.

In other respects also the general movement in Victoria was progressing to the Secretariat's satisfaction. With regard to the clergy, by May 1938 some priests' study-groups already existed in Melbourne, and were 'functioning excellently';<sup>28</sup> and at Corpus Christi College, Werribee, students' groups continued to operate.<sup>29</sup> At the Franciscan Seminary at Box Hill the students' journal, The Troubadour, reflected a lively interest in Catholic Action, Catholic social thought, and Bellocian/Campion-style medieval romanticism.<sup>30</sup> At the Catholic schools the situation was equally encouraging, with 'very valuable results' accruing from several conferences held during the year between ANSCA and the

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Adv. 1 September 1938, p. 5.

28

Maher to Bishop Dwyer (Wagga Wagga), 23 May 1938, ANSCA files, National Civic Council offices, Hawthorn, Victoria.

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See John Connellan (Secretary of the Conversion of Australia Movement, Corpus Christi College) to Father Aubrey Goodman, M.S.C., Goodman papers, Sacred Heart Monastery, Kensington, N.S.W.

30

See back-copies of The Troubadour (began September 1937) at the Franciscan Seminary, Box Hill, Victoria.



schools' principals.<sup>31</sup>

An obvious need of ANSCA was for publicity outlets, so that it could disseminate information and reading material among the ever-proliferating study-groups. The Advocate was helpful in this regard, featuring a Secretariat page from July onwards; and the Catholic Hour made time available for ANSCA broadcasting.<sup>32</sup> The Australian Catholic Truth Society published three ANSCA/Campion-produced pamphlets during 1938: For Social Justice (10 February); What to Read: Booklists for Discussion Groups (30 May); and Frank Maher's The Catholic Revival (30 July). Furthermore, in order to prepare more advanced material for circulation, Kevin Kelly spent a considerable amount of time in the Secretariat's offices translating articles and texts which had been received from France and Belgium.<sup>33</sup> The most important works received were Pierre Bayart's L'Action Catholique Specialisee (re-published as Specialised Catholic Action, 1940), and Lelotte's Four Realiser L'Action Catholique (re-published as Fundamental Principles of Catholic Action, 1940).<sup>34</sup>

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The task facing ANSCA in respect of the other five Australian States was much more difficult. In many dioceses the

<sup>31</sup> C.W. 5 November 1938; cf. Keane, 'Address to the Clergy', 7 June 1938; cf. letter by Frank Maher in Adv. 4 August 1938, p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> ANSCA Report, 31 December 1940, p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Mr. B. A. Santamaria, 14 September 1971.

<sup>34</sup> ANSCA Report, 31 December 1940, p. 5.

Catholic actionist movement had scarcely begun; and yet initially there was little the Secretariat could do other than send out information and seek to expand its network of contacts. As a first step it asked all bishops to appoint Diocesan Organisers of Catholic Action through whom it could have its official dealings. By the end of 1938 these had been appointed in all the Australian archdioceses (excluding Sydney), and in thirteen of the twenty-four dioceses. Only five Organisers were laymen; <sup>35</sup> and none was a full-time appointee. Most appear to have been priests on diocesan administrative staffs, and thus, from ANSCA's point of view, were well placed to exert a wide influence. Informal links were maintained with the movement in New Zealand.

Once Diocesan Organisers had been appointed, the Secretariat sought through them to stimulate the formation of discussion groups in every parish. As an assistance, it supplied study-programmes and reading lists. Furthermore, in order to build up a reserve of suitably educated clergy, an indispensable requirement of Catholic Action, it encouraged the establishment <sup>36</sup> of study-groups of priests, 'particularly young priests'. Towards the end of 1938 it arranged for parish priests in all States to receive a brochure, together with a cover-letter from their respective bishops, in which were set out a rationale for

<sup>35</sup>

See the Victorian Catholic Directory, 1939. The five were: Ken Mitchell (Melbourne); John Larkins (Ballarat); Harold M. Regan (Armidale); John P. Kelly (Brisbane); and K. Byrne (Perth).

<sup>36</sup>

Maher to Bishop Dwyer, 23 May 1938, ANSCA files.

Catholic Action and guidelines on how to form study-groups.<sup>37</sup>

As a further means of extending its influence in its vast domain, ANSCA sponsored a series of inter-State visits by its representatives. In February Bob Santamaria took part in a National Eucharistic Congress at Newcastle;<sup>38</sup> and in July he and Davern Wright travelled around Tasmania.<sup>39</sup> In September Frank Maher visited several dioceses in New South Wales and Queensland;<sup>40</sup> and in December he made a special tour of the Southern New South Wales dioceses of Wagga Wagga and Goulburn.<sup>41</sup>

The Secretariat also sponsored three tours by internationally-known Catholic publicists. In March the Reverend Dr. Arthur Ryan, of Belfast University (U.S.A.), was brought out to give a number of talks on social questions, with these being well supported. In May a leading English Catholic novelist, Father Owen Dudley, made a lecture-tour. His talks packed to overflowing,<sup>42</sup> among other venues, the Melbourne Town Hall,<sup>43</sup> the Sydney Town Hall,<sup>44</sup> and the Great Hall at Sydney University. Later in the

<sup>37</sup>

See brochure and associated literature, ANSCA files.

<sup>38</sup>

Adv. 17 February 1938, p. 7.

<sup>39</sup>

Orders of the Day August 1938, H/B.

<sup>40</sup>

Adv. 8 September 1938, p. 23.

<sup>41</sup>

Ibid., 8 December 1938, p. 2.

<sup>42</sup>

Ibid., 26 May 1938, p. 11.

<sup>43</sup>

C.P. 23 June 1938.

<sup>44</sup>

Ibid.

year an extensive tour was undertaken by Paul McGuire, founder of the Catholic Guild for Social Studies. Then aged thirty-five, McGuire was second only to Frank Sheed as Australia's internationally best-known Catholic layman. He was a regular contributor to English and American Catholic periodicals; and in 1938 and 1939 he made two separate lecture-tours of the United States, one under the auspices of Sheed & Ward, the other sponsored by the Knights of Columbus.<sup>45</sup> He was also co-editor with John Fitzsimons, an American priest, of Restoring All Things: A Guide to Catholic Action, which was published in January 1939 by Sheed & Ward, and which was the most comprehensive and scholarly English-language study of the development of Catholic Action to have appeared to that date.

All these tours were confined to the Eastern States, a fact which indicates the geographic limits of ANSCA's effective field of operations. Because of distance, the South Australian and Western Australian Catholic Action movements had little contact with Melbourne. In the former State, the Catholic Guild for Social Studies, with its nineteen study-groups, virtually monopolised the movement. By the end of 1938 the local Catholic Action Organiser, Father Dunne (editor of the Southern Cross), had been able to discover only nine groups outside the Guild, four of which were attached to the C.Y.M.S.<sup>46</sup>

While ANSCA's preliminary work of stimulating the formation of study-groups was going ahead, the first tentative

<sup>45</sup> See information sheet on McGuire, c. September 1938, ANSCA files.

<sup>46</sup> Dunne noted, however, that the Legion of Mary had 19 Praesidia in the archdiocese: Dunne to Maher, 20 January 1939, ANSCA files.

moves were being made towards the establishment of vocational movements. Early results were particularly encouraging in the rural sphere. During the first half of 1938 Father James Cleary and the Geelong Campions founded a successful Catholic rural group in Cleary's parish of Drysdale, twelve miles from Geelong.<sup>47</sup>

Another was founded at the same time in the North-East by Ted Hennessy and the Wangaratta Campions.<sup>48</sup> A major source of inspiration for these ventures was a book which had become very popular in Campion circles, Belloc's romantically ruralistic An Essay on the Restoration of Property (1936). In South Australia, the Guild for Social Studies had for years been experimenting with rural groups; and soundings conducted by ANSCA during the second half of 1938 indicated that there was room for the movement to expand into the other States.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, the general response was sufficiently encouraging for ANSCA late in the year to moot the idea of launching a national Catholic rural paper. Ted Hennessy indicated his willingness to edit such a periodical if it were founded.<sup>50</sup>

Attempts to establish pilot groups for a Catholic workers' movement did not prove so successful. Bob Santamaria was given charge of this field; and early in 1938 he sought,

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<sup>47</sup>

Interview with Father J. H. Cleary, 21 November 1971; Keane, 'Address to the Clergy', 7 June 1938.

<sup>48</sup>

Keane, 'Address to the Clergy', 7 June 1938, speaks of the existence of two Catholic rural groups 'at opposite ends of the State', but does not give their exact location.

<sup>49</sup>

See Maher to Paul McGuire, 3 October 1938; Bishop Hayes (Rockhampton) to Maher, 12 October 1938; John P. Kelly to Maher, 14 December 1938; H. M. Regan to Maher, 5 January 1939, ANSCA files.

<sup>50</sup>

Maher to McGuire, 3 October 1938, ANSCA files.



through Father B. W. Hayden, the Wagga Wagga Diocesan Organiser, to have specialised workers' groups set up in Wagga, or in the nearby railways' workshop centre of Junee. Santamaria had 'plenty of material prepared for such groups';<sup>51</sup> but it seems that nothing came of the endeavour, nor of subsequent attempts to establish workers' groups elsewhere.<sup>52</sup> However, the Secretariat did receive 'repeated calls for guidance' from within 'certain industrial organisations', and was able to respond effectively 'thanks to much volunteer assistance from priests and laymen and laywomen.'<sup>53</sup> Whatever the nature of these limited successes, so little progress was made in forming workers' study-groups that early in 1939 Santamaria transferred his main attentions from the industrial to the more promising rural sphere, and became head of ANSCA's 'Rural Department'.<sup>54</sup>

In some other areas also the Secretariat was unable in its first year to make satisfactory headway towards realising its original ambitions. The Campion Memorandum to the Plenary Council had proposed that the Secretariat investigate and report on Communist activities; yet ANSCA's time and energies were so occupied in organisational matters that it was unable to do this.

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Maher to Bishop Dwyer, 23 May 1938, ANSCA files; cf. Keane, 'Address to the Clergy', 7 June 1938.

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See B. A. Santamaria, 'The Education of Catholic Workers', *Adv.* 15 September 1938, p. 23.

53

Keane, 'Address to the Clergy', 7 June 1938. I suspect that this deliberately obscure passage refers to the distribution of anti-Communist literature, probably at certain Trade Union meetings.

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See Orders of the Day, April 1939, H/B.

It had been expected that it would issue a monthly bulletin for study-groups;<sup>55</sup> but during 1938 no such publication appeared. The Memorandum had further suggested 'Co-operation with non-Catholic bodies which think correctly about Divorce Reform, Euthanasia or Cremation Agitation etc.'; and shortly after its foundation ANSCA had moved in this direction by requesting Diocesan Organisers to draw up lists 'of about sixty or seventy of the more prominent non-Catholics in the Diocese including ministers of religion, local politicians and leaders in civic life, to whom C.T.S.<sup>56</sup> pamphlets could be sent.' However, this project also was shelved.

Another ANSCA scheme which was begun, then put aside, was that of preparing detailed analyses of Australian social problems. In February 1938 six sub-committees were appointed doubtlessly from among the (Campions) to examine and report on, severally, the Basic Wage; Child Endowment; Housing; Agricultural Problems; the Vocational Control of Industry; and the Money Question.<sup>57</sup> Although only one Report, that on Child Endowment,<sup>58</sup> appears to have been completed, this exercise presaged the ANSCA-prepared Social Justice Statements which from 1940 were issued annually by the Australian Hierarchy.

In addition to matters directly pertaining to Catholic

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<sup>55</sup> See Campion Memorandum I, in possession of Mr. Justice McInerney.

<sup>56</sup> Maher to Bishop Dwyer, 23 May 1938, ANSCA files.

<sup>57</sup> C.W. 2 April 1938.

<sup>58</sup> There is a copy of this Report, dated 20 July 1939, in the papers of Father William Keane, Jesuit Archives. The Committee which produced it consisted of Murray McInerney and Gerald McDonald. They received much assistance from Herbert M. Cremean, M.L.A., State Deputy Leader of the Labor Party, to whom they were referred by Bob Santamaria: Interview with Mr. Gerald McDonald, May 1970.

Action, the Secretariat during its first twelve months undertook a number of less specific activities. In mid-year the passage of the Federal National Insurance Bill seemed to necessitate the amalgamation of all the existing Catholic benefit societies, and the bishops ordered ANSCA to arrange this. Its efforts, although time-consuming, came to nothing, as the Act was allowed to lapse because of its Constitutional invalidity.<sup>59</sup> The Secretariat also helped organise Catholic support for tighter anti-pornography laws;<sup>60</sup> and, at episcopal request, it assisted the Commonwealth Government in immigration schemes designed to bring out British orphans in one instance, and German and Austrian political refugees in another.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, Bob Santamaria took a personal interest in the welfare of Italian migrants already settled in Australia, and actively promoted measures designed to strengthen their sense of communal and religious identity.<sup>62</sup>

At the end of 1938 the National Secretariat could look back on a year of solid, if unspectacular, progress. It had developed a national network of important episcopal, clerical, and lay contacts; it had had Catholic Action Organisers appointed in

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ANSCA Report, 31 December 1940, p. 2.

60

Ibid., p. 3.

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See correspondence, section 'Immigration', ANSCA files.

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Santamaria sought through the Diocesan Organisers to promote the sales of a Melbourne-produced Italian language newspaper edited by Father H. Modotti, S.J., L'Angello della Famiglia. See H. M. Regan to Maher, 5 January 1939; cf. Report of Federal Conference of Catholic Action Organisers, February 1939, resolution No. 21, Adv. 27 April 1939, p. 26. Note also B. A. Santamaria, 'The Italian Problem in Australia', Australasian Catholic Record, October 1939.

most dioceses; and it had begun to build up its nuclei of leaders for the future vocationally-based movements. Its plans having thus far unfolded smoothly, it could proceed with confidence towards its ultimate goal of mobilising the Australian Catholic laity in a sustained campaign to transform Australian Society.

## CHAPTER 11

THE PROGRESS OF CATHOLIC LAY ACTION IN SYDNEY, 1936-39

At the time the National Secretariat of Catholic Action in Melbourne was getting into its stride, the breakaway Catholic Action movement in Sydney was making a faltering start. The play of forces which determined its early development can be appreciated by tracing through the progress of Sydney lay activism from the beginning of the Spanish War era.

By comparison with Melbourne, the Spanish War controversy in Sydney was subdued. There was no Great Debate, no fierce ideological skirmishing, no surge of popular militancy. At Sydney University, pro-Republican lectures were featured occasionally by the Student Christian Movement, the Freethought Society, or the Socialist Club (successor to the Labour Club); but even these elicited merely routine academic interest from the students.<sup>1</sup> There was no Catholic intellectual presence on the campus, although the Campion Society was inordinately proud that some of its members asked critical questions of speakers at 'opposition' meetings.<sup>2</sup> The most adventurous actions undertaken by Sydney Campions during the dispute occurred early in 1937, when Des O'Connor, Damien Parer and Ted Burke 'infiltrated' a Communist youth camp at Katoomba, and surreptitiously distributed copies of the A.C.T.S. pamphlet For God

<sup>1</sup> See Honi Soit 5 May, 13 May, 19 May, 30 June 1937.

<sup>2</sup> C.W. 3 July 1937; Desmond O'Connor, 'The Apostolate of the Laity', Catholic Fireside November 1937, p. 8; summary of events mentioned in The Campion, issues for 1938, recounted in The Campion, June 1950, copy in the possession of Mr. L. G. O'Sullivan, Canberra.



and Spain; and later that year, when O'Connor and Harry Sivertsen<sup>3</sup> did the same at a Workers' Educational Alliance camp.

The Catholic Press, unlike the Advocate, gave little space to news from Spain. However, it showed a much heightened concern at the expansion of Communism in Australia; and this reaction was evident also in other sectors of Sydney Catholicism. In October 1936 the Catholic Evidence Guild (hitherto the Catholic Speakers) decided to include Communism among its topics for pitch-lectures. Deferring to the fact that it had long previously been forbidden to speak on social questions, it asserted casuistically that Communism 'was now virtually a "religion"',<sup>4</sup> and that it therefore came 'within the scope of apologetics.'<sup>4</sup> In mid-1937 the Guild celebrated the release of Divini Redemptoris by conducting a lecture-series in the (K.S.C.-owned) Austral Salon on the theme, 'Atheistic Communism and World Peace'. This proved so successful that after the initial seven talks had been<sup>5</sup> completed, an extra four were added in response to public demand.

Archbishop Kelly, his aged mind remote from the issues of the moment, had nothing significant to say on either Spain or Communism. However, Coadjutor Archbishop Gilroy, although himself not accustomed to commenting on social questions, warned in September 1937 that 'The plague of Communism is eating into the very vitals of our society.' He saw the remedy to the situation in

<sup>3</sup> Interviews with Father Desmond O'Connor, S. J., 1 April 1972; Messrs. R. H. Sivertsen, E. H. Burke, and Dr. G. K. Hickson, 11 April 1972.

<sup>4</sup> C.P. 22 October 1936, p. 25.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 2 September 1937, p. 25; Eugene Weber (Master of the Sydney C.E.G.) to Archbishop Kelly, 28 July 1937, box 'Evidence', S.A.A.

6

Catholic Action. Even the Sydney Catholic schools, for the first time in the decade, began to interpret their roles in a world context. The 1936 Annual for St. Joseph's College, Hunter's Hill, pointed to 'the world's chaotic situation', and called for an enthusiastic response to the Pope's calls for Catholic Action. The 1936 Annual Report of Waverley College spoke similarly of a world 'Permeated...with militant materialism, held in the dread grip of shameless irreligion'; and it maintained that 'Perhaps at no period in the history of Catholic education' had the inculcation of sound principles into the minds of the young been more urgently required. At St. Aloysius' College, Milson's Point, during 1937 a sodality of senior pupils was given a series of lectures on Communism; and most of the members made a study of Divini Redemtoris.<sup>7</sup>

In Sydney as in Melbourne, the sense of crisis among Catholics occasioned by the Spanish War resulted in an unprecedented surge of interest in the Campion Society. In the two years between its foundation and Easter of 1936 the Sydney Campion had quietly grown to five groups;<sup>8</sup> and during the remaining months of 1936 it gained two new branches, one at Newcastle and one at St. John's College at Sydney University.<sup>9</sup> In 1937, the crucial year of the

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<sup>6</sup> C.P. 16 September 1937, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> See the 1936 and 1937 Annuals at the respective Colleges.

<sup>8</sup> Vive La Penetration (Sydney Campion broadsheet) Nos. 1 and 2, Easter period, 1936, Box 6, Hackett papers, Jesuit Archives.

<sup>9</sup> J.J.M., 'Cowards and Half-Catholics', St. John's College Annual, 1936, copy held at the College; Adv. 3 December 1936, p. 23.

Spanish controversy, so great an influx of new members occurred that the Society almost doubled in size, gaining six new Sydney groups and others in the Newcastle area.<sup>10</sup> The following year there were a dozen Sydney branches, and groups at Lithgow, Goulburn and Queanbeyan.<sup>11</sup>

The outside work of the Sydney Campion Society also indicated that it had found a new acceptability in the archdiocese. The Society's first venture into external activities had occurred in November 1935, when Des O'Connor had written an article for the Catholic Fireside on 'Sane Censorship'. Campion articles regularly appeared in the magazine thereafter; and in 1937 a Campion member, Brian T. Doyle, an individualistic young Arts graduate, was appointed editor of the Fireside.<sup>12</sup> During 1937 the Campions gave twelve lectures as part of a mission to non-Catholics; they addressed various parish groups; they took catechetical classes at Sydney Boys' High School;<sup>13</sup> and they increased the Sydney sales of the Catholic Worker to 14,000.<sup>14</sup> One person who appreciated the work they were doing gave them £150 with which to buy books.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup>

C.P. 1 July 1937, p. 7; C.F. November 1937, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup>

'The Campion in Retrospect', The Campion, June 1950.

<sup>12</sup>

Doyle is mentioned as editor in the November 1937 issue of the Catholic Fireside.

<sup>13</sup>

Desmond O'Connor in C.F. November 1937, p. 8; 'The Campion in Retrospect', The Campion, June 1950.

<sup>14</sup>

'The Campion in Retrospect'.

<sup>15</sup>

Orders of the Day, January 1937, Box 6, Hackett papers.

By mid-1937 the Sydney Campions had gained sufficient confidence to seek Archbishop Kelly's official episcopal approval for their Society. The old man had been unaware of the Campion's existence; but as he received a favourable report from Archbishop Mannix, who chanced to be visiting Sydney at the time; and as he had known and respected Des O'Connor's father, on 12 June he gave it his blessing. He intimated his desire to appoint as chaplain a certain trusted Monsignor (in Campion eyes, one of his anti-intellectual clerical strongmen); but the Campions, who had anticipated difficulties in this regard, persuaded him to accept instead their nominee, Father Joseph Bowers, a gentle and well-read ex-Manly Professor.<sup>16</sup>

Yet however much it prospered in its own terms, the Sydney Campion Society did not exert an influence in any way comparable to that of its Melbourne parent society. Whereas the Melbourne Campion had established a presence in all key points of influence in the Victorian Church, the other was as yet an obscure association on the periphery of Sydney Catholicism. It had no voice in the Catholic schools, on the Catholic radio station 2SM, in the Catholic Press or the Freeman's Journal, or in Manly Seminary. Its thought had not permeated the most important N.S.W. lay organisation, the Knights of the Southern Cross, as that of the Melbourne Campions had permeated the Victorian C.Y.M.S.; and it was insignificant as a force at Sydney University. It did not

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16

Interview with Father Desmond O'Connor, 8 February 1967; 'The Campion in Retrospect'. Regarding the nomination of Father Bowers as chaplain, see also footnote 39.



enjoy the patronage of Archbishop Kelly or of anyone close to him; and it was unknown, disregarded, or disdained among the parish clergy.<sup>17</sup>

Further to this, the Sydney Campion was but a shadow of the Melbourne Society in intellectual vigour, imaginative drive, and quality of leadership. It had its share of intellectually gifted members;<sup>18</sup> but these were never bonded together into a cohesive leadership group. Campion articles were featured frequently in the Catholic Fireside; but they were generally sober dissertations on immediate issues, and lacked the vitality and romanticism of Melbourne Campion writings. Moreover, the majority of the Campion's Fireside essays during 1936 and 1937 were written by Des O'Connor and Patrick Moran, which suggests that the other intellectually more able members were disinclined to do anything more demanding than attend their group meetings. This helps explain why, by the end of the decade, the Sydney Campion leadership was made up almost entirely of non-University men.

On the positive side, the Sydney Campions appear to have had a closer rapport with the everyday Catholicism of those around them than had their more brilliant, more elitist, more glamourised Melbourne comrades. They cultivated a sound spirituality, with the

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Interview with Father Desmond O'Connor, 8 February 1967.

18

Cyril Walsh was to become a Justice of the Australian High Court; Patrick Moran is now a Professor of Statistics; and the 1937 N.S.W. Rhodes Scholar, Terry Glasheen, was a member of the St. John's College Campion group - Orders of the Day, January 1938, Box 6, Hackett papers.



result that by the end of 1937 five of their number had left to study for the priesthood,<sup>19</sup> to be followed early in 1938 by Des O'Connor himself, who entered the Jesuits. Furthermore, the Sydney Society appealed to a more representative section of the Catholic young men than did the Central groups of the Melbourne body. Its very popularity was a source of embarrassment; and in 1938 Damien Parer was complaining that certain 'misguided enthusiasts' were seemingly trying to introduce into its ranks 'every male between the ages of 17 and 30'.<sup>20</sup> In fact, the Sydney Campion appears to have catered for the intelligent rather than the intelligentsia, and thus to have served a function more akin to that of the Victorian C.Y.M.S. Legion than to that of the Melbourne Campion Society. In this lay both its strength and its weakness: it was broadly-based; but it had little influence outside its own ranks.

In 1936 another European-orientated Catholic actionist movement, in many ways similar to the Campion Society, made its appearance in Sydney, in 'the Grail'. This was an intensely apostolic girls' movement which had originated in Holland in 1922. In that year Father James van Ginniken, S.J., Professor of Philology at the Catholic University of Nijmegen, had founded three Lay Institutes (organisations akin to Religious Orders) to perform Catholic Action work. In 1929 one of these bodies, the 'Women of Nazareth', had been asked by the Bishop of Haarlem to

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<sup>19</sup>

C.F. November 1937, p. 18.

<sup>20</sup>

The Campion, August 1938, cited in The Campion, May-June 1952, copy in possession of Mr. L. G. O'Sullivan, Canberra.

see to the establishment of Catholic Action among the women and girls of his diocese. The girls' movement which had subsequently been formed was known as the Grail; and within four years it had spread all over Holland, and to Germany and England.

Seeking to match the popularity of the Communist, Nazi and Fascist movements which were making such headway among the youth of Europe at the time, the Grail set out to introduce into the lives of young people new dimensions of purpose, romance and comradeship, all integrated within a Christian vision of reality. It specialised in magnificent dramatic spectacles, and also organised folk-dancing, singing, hiking, film-making, and courses of all kinds, ranging from foreign languages to First Aid. In 1932 two hundred Grail girls from Holland demonstrated their colourful, highly choreographed form of drama at the Dublin International Eucharistic Congress; and in 1936 1,200 of them took part in a dramatisation of Francis Thompson's 'The Hound of Heaven' in London's Royal Albert Hall.

One prelate who was present at the 1932 Dublin Eucharistic Congress, and who was greatly impressed by the Grail, was Bishop James Dwyer of Wagga Wagga. Upon returning to Australia he began campaigning among his fellow bishops to have the movement

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21

Lydivine van Kersbergen, The Grail, A.C.T.S. No. 742, 10 May 1937; Father William Keane, S.J., A History of the Grail, a duplicated chronology, Keane papers, Jesuit Archives.

invited here;<sup>22</sup> and in September 1936 his efforts were crowned with success when five Ladies of the Grail, led by Dr. Lydivine van Kersbergen,<sup>23</sup> arrived in Sydney. Archbishop Kelly gave them an impressive welcome; and he mobilised his Sydney Catholic 'establishment' - Monsignors, doctors, lawyers, businessmen, Ministers and ex-Ministers of State, and leaders of lay societies - to form an Establishment Committee to acquire a residence suitable for the Grail Headquarters.<sup>24</sup> A house at Springwood in the Blue Mountains was donated in December 1936;<sup>25</sup> and the following March a permanent training-house was opened. This was a one-time Jesuit novitiate, 'Loyola', a mansion set in spacious grounds in the fashionable Sydney suburb of Greenwich.<sup>26</sup>

During 1937 the Ladies of the Grail concentrated on establishing contacts among the clergy, the religious, and the laity, and on finding girls with the attributes to become leaders in their movement. Their operations began in earnest in January 1938, when thirty-seven girls from all the mainland States and from New Zealand underwent an eight-day training programme.<sup>27</sup> During the

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22

On 20 September 1934 he spoke on 'The Grail Movement' at Sancta Sophia College at Sydney University: see Helen Baydell to Father Aubrey Goodman, 13 September 1934, Goodman papers, Sacred Heart Monastery, Kensington, N.S.W.

23

C.P. 1 October 1936, p. 21. The others were Misses Bridget Huizinga, Frances van der Schot, Patricia Willenborg, and Judith Bowman.

24

Adv. 25 March 1937, p. 11.

25

Keane, A History of the Grail, Keane papers.

26

Ibid.

27

C.P. 13 January 1938, p. 15.

succeeding twelve months their activities in Sydney were prolific.<sup>28</sup>  
 They formed suburban branches; established a Drama Group;<sup>29</sup>  
 conducted a Folk-Dance Festival;<sup>30</sup> and formed a Campcraft Group.<sup>31</sup>  
 Grail lecture-series were conducted on Preparations for Marriage;<sup>31</sup>  
 on the Foreign Missions;<sup>32</sup> and on 'The Qualities Expected of a  
 Leader'.<sup>33</sup> A Grail Film Group sponsored a popular series of talks  
 on cinematography, which included among its speakers some leading  
 personalities of the Australian movie-film industry.<sup>34</sup> The purpose  
 of it all was to involve young Catholics, men as well as women, in  
 a way of life which was gay, productive, and diversified, yet  
 integrally Christian.

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In September 1937, when the Plenary Council launched Australian Catholic Action, the Sydney Hierarchy had at its disposal only the Campion Society and the Grail as potential bases for an archdiocesan Catholic Action movement. The Association of Catholic Action, for all its work in the State schools and other spheres, had little knowledge of Catholic Action, and no appreciable

<sup>28</sup>

Ibid., 9 June 1938, p. 7.

<sup>29</sup>

Ibid., 16 June 1938, p. 19.

<sup>30</sup>

Ibid., 4 August 1938, p. 21.

<sup>31</sup>

Ibid., 27 October 1938, p. 21.

<sup>32</sup>

Ibid., 15 September 1938, p. 18.

<sup>33</sup>

Ibid., 4 August 1938, p. 21.

<sup>34</sup>

Ibid., 18 August 1938, p. 21.



experience of operating study-circles. The Catholic Debating Societies' Union, with its thirty-odd city branches,<sup>35</sup> had given rise to the occasional discussion group;<sup>36</sup> but it had shown no inclination to broaden the formal scope of its operations beyond the organisation of debating competitions. The Knights of the Southern Cross had not ventured into the field of apostolic action; and the expertise of the tiny Catholic Evidence Guild did not extend beyond apologetics and elementary Catholic social philosophy.<sup>37</sup>

The situation of Sydney Catholic actionism being thus backward, the archdiocese would have carried little weight with ANSCA had it remained within the national Catholic Action movement. Archbishop Gilroy's belated attempt within the Episcopal Sub-Committee to have Australian Catholic Action formed along Italian, rather than Franco/Belgian, lines, was a sign of Sydney's unease at being committed to a course of action which it little understood, and could not hope significantly to influence. Italian Catholic Action was more congenial to Sydney ways of thought: Father Goodman's book gave an outline of what it involved; and Archbishops Kelly and Gilroy, both Rome-trained, favoured the degree of localised episcopal control which it allowed. When Dr. Gilroy's proposal was rejected, Sydney had chosed to withdraw from the Sub-Committee's

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C.F. January 1935, p. 2, tells that the C.D.S.U. then had 30 city and 12 country affiliated societies; C.F. June 1938, p. 25, speaks of 29 city groups, with country work being 'much neglected'.

36

See C.F. August 1934, p. 22; June 1935, p. 20; October 1935, p. 22; February 1936, p. 30.

37

The Guild's continuing doubt as to its right to speak on social questions was noted by Dr. Eris O'Brien in his speech to its 1938 A.G.M.: see C.P. 12 May 1938, p. 13.



jurisdiction rather than take passage in a movement in which the navigating, piloting and steering would inevitably have been done by Melbourne, and by Melbourne laymen at that.

Early in 1938 Archbishop Kelly instituted, as the controlling body for Sydney Catholic Action, the 'Secretariat of the Lay Apostolate'.<sup>38</sup> However, he had difficulty in finding a Director. By virtue of his long-standing administrative policy, the position had to fall not merely to a priest, but to a secular priest. The secular clergy were subject to his direct authority; whereas members of Religious Orders could only be controlled by him indirectly, through the Superiors of their Orders. Yet of those Sydney priests who had shown any interest in Catholic Action, virtually all were Orders men: Fathers Aubrey Goodman, Patrick Ryan, Leo Dalton, and Eric Dignam were members of the Sacred Heart Order; and Fathers Richard Murphy and Noel Hehir were Jesuits. The last three mentioned had been associated with the Champion Society. Father Joseph Bowers, the Champion chaplain, was the only secular priest who had figured in the early Sydney Catholic actionist movement.<sup>39</sup> The Manly-trained clergy had been conspicuous for their almost total disinterest in the lay apostolate movement: it seems that the Manly way of thought contained no

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38

The earliest reference I have found to the Sydney Secretariat is in the C.P. 7 April 1938, p. 13.

39

It was because they were aware of the Archbishop's policy that the Sydney Champions had asked Father Bowers to accept nomination for their chaplaincy, rather than Father Richard Murphy, who was a more obvious choice: Interview with Father Desmond O'Connor, S.J., 8 February 1967.

provision for lay initiative within the Church.

Eventually Dr. Kelly settled the Directorship of the Secretariat of the Lay Apostolate on the Reverend Dr. Eris O'Brien. A distinguished Australian historian and a notable figure in the Manly movement, Dr. O'Brien had studied at Manly College and at Louvain in Belgium. He was a gentle person, a respected intellectual, and as good a man for the position as any other of the secular clergy of the archdiocese. He had not, however, any prior knowledge of Catholic Action.

In May of 1938 Sydney Catholic Action was set in motion with the issuing by Archbishop Kelly of a Directive to his priests, instructing them to form study-groups in all parishes. The lay members were to be selected on the basis of their 'genuine holiness, seriousness of purpose, zeal and the desire to equip themselves in order to become apostles among their fellow-men.' Apologetics and 'social science' would constitute the main areas of study. The priest was to 'keep the discussion on right lines, encourage members to express their opinions and to become proficient in argument, and...solve difficulties connected with Catholic teaching.' He should, furthermore, ensure that members attended to their religious duties, and 'endeavour to imbue them with a truly supernatural spirit and outlook.' Apart from this, he was to 'remain as far as possible in the background, unobtrusively<sup>40</sup> guiding and encouraging free discussion among members.'

Thus Sydney Catholic Action was launched on a grand scale. In response to the Archbishop's decree, discussion groups sprang up everywhere. They appeared not just in units, but in twos and threes per parish: three were formed in each of the parishes of Belmore, Ashbury, and Tempe;<sup>41</sup> and several at Burwood Heights.<sup>42</sup> Dr. O'Brien travelled from suburb to suburb addressing gatherings of parishioners, and groups mushroomed in his wake. After he had spoken at Newtown seven discussion groups were formed from among sixty parishioners, all of whom, the Catholic Press assured its readers, were 'just the right type to undertake the work of the Lay Apostolate.'<sup>43</sup> Two groups were founded within the Catholic Club,<sup>44</sup> and several within the Caledonian Catholic Association.<sup>45</sup> All Catholic secondary schools' principals were instructed to establish Evidence Guilds among their pupils.<sup>46</sup>

The Catholic Debating Societies' Union, entering into the spirit of the campaign, resolved to set up discussion groups in connection with each of its metropolitan branches. Furthermore, Archbishop Gilroy donated a trophy to the Union to be presented to the author of the best study-paper on 'The Existence of God'.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 18 August 1938, p. 21.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 15 September 1938, p. 18.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 22 September 1938, p. 18.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 6 October 1938, p. 21.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 1 September 1938, p. 17.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 26 May 1938, p. 18.

<sup>47</sup> C.F. September 1938, p. 12.

The Secretariat, for its part, was exultant at the general enthusiasm shown for Catholic Action. By mid-August it was confident that soon none of the 118 parishes in the archdiocese would be without at least one discussion group.<sup>48</sup>

Yet for all its popularity, the movement lacked stable foundations. No provision had been made for the training of leaders. Indeed, it was expected that groups would spontaneously generate leaders of sterling quality, 'trained in faith and morals, resolute, courageous, reliable and studious.' Any group which lacked such an outstanding personality was advised to appoint as chairman the best educated member, or failing that,<sup>49</sup> the one who was most popular.

Although the groups were expected to study apologetics and Catholic social philosophy, no general syllabus was published until 25 August.<sup>50</sup> From 26 May to 4 August weekly hints by Father Goodman on how groups should operate were published in the Catholic Press. For reading matter there was Dr. Sheehan's Apologetics and Christian Doctrine; there was Goodman's A Handbook of Catholic Action; there were pamphlets of the English, American and Australian Catholic Truth Societies on sale in most churches; and, for the intellectually fastidious, there was the Southern Cross Library. However, the Secretariat directed that the study-

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48

C.P. 18 August 1938, p. 21.

49

Ibid., 7 July 1938, p. 19.

50

Ibid., 25 August 1938, p. 18.

syllabus in the Melbourne Campion pamphlet, Prelude to Catholic  
<sup>51</sup>  
Action, was not to be used.

The Campion Society and the Grail did what they could to assist the Secretariat. The Campions helped set up discussion groups; they gave talks when required;<sup>52</sup> and they staffed a 'Catholic News Service'.<sup>53</sup> In June the Society allowed the Secretariat to act as nominal sponsor of a highly successful Winter School which it conducted at St. Ignatius' College, Riverview, on the theme of 'Social Justice'.<sup>54</sup> In September it helped organise a Lay Apostolate Boys' Camp; and Damien Parer, a photographic enthusiast,<sup>55</sup> took movie films there. The Grail also assisted in the formation of discussion groups; and the leadership lectures which it conducted in August were opened to all who wished to attend.

The Association of Catholic Action had been dissolved by Archbishop Kelly at the time the Secretariat of the Lay Apostolate was founded,<sup>56</sup> apparently in order to avert confusion over the names and roles of the two bodies. However, the component

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51

Ibid., 19 May 1938, p. 21. The Campion pamphlet was presumably geared to an intellectual level above that desired by Sydney; it had an historical/cultural emphasis, which Sydney Catholic Action did not; and it gave no attention to apologetics.

52

Ibid., 7 July 1938, p. 19.

53

Ibid., 11 August 1938, p. 21.

54

Ibid., 19 May 1938, p. 21.

55

Ibid., 6 October 1938, p. 18.

56

Interview with Mr. T. J. Purcell, 28 March 1972.



parts of the Association continued to function under the direct control of the Secretariat. The Catholic Evidence Guild contributed to the general movement by conducting a lecture-series, which began in August, on 'The Church and Politics'.<sup>57</sup>

No amount of outside assistance, however, and no quantity of directives from the offices at 28 O'Connell Street, were sufficient to shore up the vast, unwieldy structure of discussion groups which the Secretariat had thrown together with such innocent abandon. About the middle of October the inevitable topple began; and within a couple of months something in the vicinity of 130 groups had dwindled to a figure in the region of thirty.<sup>58</sup> The first indication that all was not well came on 20 October, when the regular Lay Apostolate section failed to appear in the Catholic Press. There followed six months of press silence, during which time the Secretariat sought to salvage what it could from the wreckage of its first year's efforts, and, the wiser for its experience, prepared to build anew.

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The second phase of Sydney Catholic Action began with the release on 15 April, 1939, by Archbishop Kelly, of a new set of Regulations.<sup>59</sup> These foreshadowed a number of significant

<sup>57</sup>

C.P. 11 August 1938, p. 21.

<sup>58</sup>

The collapse is notorious; the figures are approximate, as recollected by Mr. B. A. Santamaria, interview 14 September 1971.

<sup>59</sup>

C.P. 4 May 1939, p. 18; 18 May, p. 18.

changes in the organisation and operation of Catholic Action in the archdiocese. The overall structure of the movement was to be conformed more closely to the Italian model. A network of Parochial Councils and Parochial Unions was to be set up, the former to supervise the parish Catholic Action groups; the latter to oversee all other kinds of organised lay activity.<sup>60</sup> It is doubtful if these proposed structural changes were implemented, at least during 1939;<sup>61</sup> however, if they had been, their effect would have been more tightly to centralise control over all parish lay associations in the hands of the parish priests.

An intended re-formation of the groups themselves was announced, although, surprisingly, the changes in this case were to follow Jocist rather than Italian lines. The general discussion groups of the previous year were to be displaced by specialised groups, akin to those favoured by Melbourne, which would be constituted not only according to divisions of age and sex, but according to class/vocational groupings, 'in order to allow members to discover and solve the peculiar problems of their own environments in which their field of action lies.'<sup>62</sup> Again, however, it appears that the proposed alterations, which had probably been suggested by Father Aubrey Goodman,<sup>63</sup> were not actually effected.

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<sup>60</sup>

Ibid., 4 May 1939, p. 18.

<sup>61</sup>

There is no further mention of Parochial Unions or Parochial Councils in the Catholic Press for 1939.

<sup>62</sup>

Archbishop Kelly's Regulations, cited C.P. 18 May 1939, p. 18.

<sup>63</sup>

Goodman had previously written on the Jocists for the Brisbane Catholic Leader: see Father R. H. Thompson (editor) to Goodman, 22 April 1938, Goodman papers, Sacred Heart Monastery, Kensington.

Significantly, the Archbishop's Regulations also advised priests that, rather than seek a hasty proliferation of groups, they should 'concentrate on a few, the members of which can be trained to become leaders of others later on.'<sup>64</sup> Obviously, many lessons had been learned as a result of the previous year's fiasco.

The Sydney Diocesan Secretariat of Catholic Action, as it now called itself, began in April to build a firm basis for its future operations by conducting regular lectures for leaders.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, realising that priests also needed to be educated, it launched a priests' Catholic Action bulletin under the editorship of a Vincentian priest, Dr. R. Duggan;<sup>66</sup> and it established priests' study-groups, three of which were operational in the second half of the year.<sup>67</sup>

The internal structure of the Secretariat was rationalised, with more responsibility being delegated. In mid-year a committee under Father J. F. McCosker was formed to plan the development of a general male youth movement.<sup>68</sup> Three Departments, under the control of priests, were established within

<sup>64</sup>

C.P. 18 May 1939, p. 18.

<sup>65</sup>

Ibid., 4 May 1939, p. 18.

<sup>66</sup>

Ibid., 7 September 1939, p. 20.

<sup>67</sup>

A priests' study-group at Drummoyne studied theological and pastoral problems; one at Earlwood studied the Liturgy of the Mass; and one at Brighton-le-Sands investigated the formation of Catholic Action leaders: see memorandum, 'Priests' Catholic Action Discussion Groups', section 'Priests', ANSCA files.

<sup>68</sup>

C.P. 7 September 1939, p. 20.

the Secretariat; and eleven smaller sections, equivalent to standing committees, were instituted to supervise various facets of the overall movement, with most of their presidents being members of the <sup>69</sup>Campion Society. Yet despite this utilisation of <sup>69</sup>Campion manpower, policy control was kept firmly in clerical hands. The inner executive of the Secretariat consisted of seven priests, but only one layman, R. H. (Harry) Sivertsen, the Secretary of the <sup>69</sup>Campion Society. Eventually Sivertsen ceased to attend the executive's meetings, having become disgruntled at its compulsive preferment of priests over laymen for authoritative <sup>70</sup>positions in the movement.

On the intellectual front also the Secretariat showed an improved understanding of the task confronting it. The discussion groups were still expected to devote half their time to apologetics; however, to assist them in this regard, weekly study-notes were published in the Catholic Press by Dr. Patrick Ryan, M.S.C., whose conversance with the neo-scholastic movement fitted him well for the task. Accompanying these were 'social science' study-notes condensed from lectures for group-leaders given by the Reverend Dr. Edward J. O'Donnell, the then-editor of the Australasian Catholic Record. O'Donnell's notes began on 4 May with a series on 'The Totalitarian State', which dealt mainly with the aims and strategies of International Communism; and they proceeded from 27 July with a further series on the

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<sup>69</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>

Interview with Mr. R. H. Sivertsen, 11 April 1972.

positive implications of Catholic social philosophy. For the first time, a systematic attempt was being made in Sydney to educate the Catholic people in the social teachings of the Church.

This second phase of Catholic Action in Sydney had been in progress less than six months when the War broke out, and the degree of success which it achieved in that short period is difficult to estimate. Unfortunately, the statistics put out by the Secretariat appear to be unreliable. In May of 1939, when the new drive was just beginning, it was claimed that 1,800 people were involved in the movement;<sup>71</sup> and in September the number of discussion groups was put at 'between two and three hundred'.<sup>72</sup> Melbourne, with immeasurably greater resources in terms of experience and leadership reserves, was then boasting only a little over a hundred groups;<sup>73</sup> and so it seems probable that the Sydney figures were exaggerated. The Sydney Secretariat apparently included all new groups and members in its progressive totals, but neglected to make deductions for the large number of failures. It had thus built up a phantom army in its record books. From this distance in time, however, it is not possible to estimate the size of its substantive forces.

Judged by other criteria than the purely statistical, the actual and potential efficacy of Sydney Catholic Action would

<sup>71</sup>  
C.P. 4 May 1939, p. 18.

<sup>72</sup>  
C.F. September 1939, p. 31.

<sup>73</sup>  
Adv. 24 August 1939, p. 23.



appear to have been rather limited. The study of Catholic social thought was encouraged; but unlike in Victoria or South Australia, this did not give rise to any significant movement of Catholic social idealism. Some of the reasons for this are readily discernable. In Melbourne the new Catholic idealism had been fired initially not by the study of raw social philosophy, but by the complementary study of the imaginatively more appealing historical and sociological works of the English Catholic Literary Revival. The Sydney Secretariat's study programmes, however, lacked imaginative content; they did not draw at all on the popular writings of the English Catholic Revival; and they did not cultivate an historical awareness, such as could otherwise have given a greater sense of relevancy to the examination of abstract social principles.

Furthermore, whereas Melbourne Catholic Action capitalised on the energy and idealism of youth, the Sydney movement was characteristically older, more staid, and more clerical in complexion. It exercised little of the romantic appeal which in Melbourne captivated the Catholic University student, the young worker, the young priest, and the intelligent secondary-school pupil. In Sydney the Catholic schools, the seminaries, and the Catholic media, displayed none of the Catholic Action consciousness which had so invigorated their Melbourne counterparts. Thus even where the spirit of crusading zeal did gingerly break the surface, it was faced with the formidable task of sustaining itself without nourishment from its religio/social milieu. For Catholic Action, Sydney Catholicism proved an arid and inhospitable environment.

The Sydney Church was simply not ready for Catholic Action. Intellectually and psychologically, it still lived in a nineteenth-century context where the main enemies of the Faith were Protestantism and Rationalism, not in the twentieth century where the threat to Christianity came from Secularism and Totalitarianism. It armed the faithful with traditional apologetics, but perceived only dimly the need for Catholic social idealism. It feared and shunned the University, where the battles for the mind of the modern world were being fought; it sheltered its people in a defensive enclave, when the Papacy was calling for an offensive to re-Christianise Western civilisation. Catholic Action had been introduced into Sydney as a duty; it persisted as a superfluity, its purpose ill-understood, its inherent world-view unassimilated into the established Catholic framework of thought.

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In order to discover the true strength of the Sydney Catholic tradition it is necessary to look elsewhere than in the fields of apostolic and intellectual endeavour. Indeed, it was in the basic areas of pastoral and pedagogical work that the most significant development of Sydney Catholic lay activism took place during the 'thirties. It seems that lay bodies which functioned primarily as parish pastoral-assistance organisations were able to grow without difficulty, as they could be integrated into the Sydney Church structure without disturbing existing ways of thought, and without upsetting established lay-clerical power relationships.

The most powerful and the most productive Catholic lay association in New South Wales remained the Order of Knights of the Southern Cross. Having proved its worth in the 'twenties, this body early in the 'thirties was encouraged by Archbishop Kelly 'to initiate, but not necessarily to carry to fruition... various forms of Catholic action activities.'<sup>74</sup> It had been diligent in carrying out this mandate. Between 1933 and 1939 it had been directly or indirectly responsible for the formation of a multitude of Catholic occupational Guilds and other organisations: the Medical Guild of St. Luke (1933); a Postal Workers' Guild (1935); the Policemen's Guild of St. Christopher (1936); a Railways' Employees' Guild (1937); a Transport Workers' Guild; a Water Board Employees' Guild; a Chemists' Guild; a Catholic Luncheon Club; and a Catholic Film Council.<sup>75</sup> The primary function of most of the Guilds was to collect small monthly donations from their members to assist the Foreign Missions, or to fund bursaries for priest trainees. They were in no sense industrial pressure-groups; and they had no similarity to the specialised workers' Catholic Action groups which ANSCA had been attempting (unsuccessfully) to bring into being.

A much more important pastoral-type organisation which rose to prominence during the decade, and which owed its prosperity in large measure to the assistance of the Knights, was the Holy

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<sup>74</sup>

W. Ross to Archbishop Gilroy, 17 June 1938, box 'Evidence', S.A.A.

<sup>75</sup>

Ibid.; Advance Australia, March 1969, p. 13; Interview with Mr. P. L. Cantwell, 12 April 1939; various telephone interviews.

Name Society. Tracing its origins to a Papal-sponsored anti-blasphemy movement propagated by the Dominicans among thirteenth-century Crusaders, this Society had first reached Australia in 1921, and in 1925 had been endorsed by a gathering of bishops at Wagga Wagga.<sup>76</sup> Its primary function was to bring the men of each parish together as a body for Mass and evening devotions on one Sunday of each month. A small cadre of leaders (Prefects) arranged for personal approaches to be made to Catholic men who appeared to be lapsing in their religious duties, or who needed help in any way. Occasional diocesan rallies were held to give members a sense of mass solidarity.

The Holy Name experienced its period of greatest growth during the mid- to late 'thirties, the boom period for so many Catholic societies. It claimed 51,000 Australian members at the end of 1937;<sup>77</sup> and 100,000 a year later.<sup>78</sup> It was strongly supported in all four Queensland dioceses, and in the N.S.W. dioceses of Sydney, Lismore, Goulburn, and Wagga Wagga.<sup>79</sup> In 1937 the Sydney parish Holy Name Societies came together in a Diocesan Union, the first President of which was one of the

<sup>76</sup>

W. V. McEvoy, The Holy Name Society, A.C.T.S. No. 766, 10 January 1938.

<sup>77</sup>

Ibid. (figure as of 21 November 1937).

<sup>78</sup>

Adv. 17 November 1938, p. 3.

<sup>79</sup>

Apart from Melbourne and Sydney, the only Australian dioceses with over 1,000 members in November 1937 were: Brisbane (5,000); Townsville (2,000); Toowoomba (2,000); Rockhampton (2,000); Goulburn (3,000); Lismore (3,000); Wagga Wagga (2,000); and Sandhurst (1,000): W. V. McEvoy, op. cit.

most distinguished members of the Knights of the Southern Cross,<sup>80</sup>  
 Dr. Horace H. Nowland. Significantly, at this stage the Holy  
 Name Society had 20,000 members in Sydney, compared with only<sup>81</sup>  
 5,000 in Melbourne.

There were other lay associations also which found  
 Sydney a more fruitful field of operation than Melbourne. The  
 St. Vincent de Paul Society, the most extensive charitable  
 organisation in the world, had first come to Australia via Sydney  
 in 1881; and it remained much stronger in that city than in the  
 Victorian Capital.<sup>82</sup> Again, there was no Melbourne equivalent of  
 the Sydney Catechists' Guild (the Guild of St. Joseph), lineal  
 successor to the Association of Catholic Action, which by mid-  
 1939 had over 300 catechists giving religious instruction to  
 9,000 Catholic children in State schools.<sup>83</sup> By the end of 1939  
 these figures had further increased as a result of the Guild's  
 having taken over the catechetical groups previously conducted by<sup>84</sup>  
 the Theresian Society.

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C.P. 16 September 1937, p. 27. The 'Nowland Scholarship', a  
 travel-scholarship for University postgraduate studies, is today  
 awarded annually by the N.S.W. Knights of the Southern Cross.

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W. V. McEvoy, *op. cit.*

82

Sydney in 1928 had 92 S.V.d.P. Conferences, and the rest of N.S.W.  
 36; Melbourne had 46, and the rest of Victoria 5. The Australian-  
 New Zealand total was 320 Conferences and 4,600 members: see  
 'Society of St. Vincent de Paul: Its Australian History', C.P.  
 13 September 1928, p. 66.

83

*Ibid.*, 4 May 1939, p. 18.

84

*Ibid.*, 9 November 1939, p. 18.



Thus while the decade saw the development of vigorous intellectual and apostolic lay movements within Victorian Catholicism, it also witnessed a major expansion of more fundamental, pastoral-type lay associations in Sydney. This distinction accorded closely with the differences in personality and outlook between Archbishops Mannix and Kelly. It also indicated that, while the era had a catalytic effect on lay activism in both regions, the direction of development in each case was consonant with the pre-established traditions and dispositions of the respective Churches.

## CHAPTER 12

THE PASSING OF THE DECADE

The year 1939 marked the end of the Depression era, and saw the final plummet of Western Europe into World War II. After Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia in March war appeared inevitable; and dread of the coming conflagration overwhelmed any sense of relief which might otherwise have been felt at the passing of a torrid decade. In Victoria, Archbishop Mannix insisted that there was still hope for peace; but the Advocate, while echoing his sentiments, discarded altogether its previous policy of opposition to Australian military participation in overseas conflicts.<sup>2</sup> Alone of the Catholic papers, the Catholic Worker maintained an isolationist stance until mid-year, asserting that, unless the people voted otherwise in a referendum, Australia should not be committed to following Britain into a European war.<sup>3</sup> However, Bob Santamaria, who was no longer involved with the Catholic Worker, concurred with the more common viewpoint that non-involvement as a practical option was simply not open to Australia: 'If a European war breaks out, it will be a war which will involve the whole world.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Adv. 6 April 1939, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Adv. 20 April 1939, editorial; cf. Eric M. Andrews, Isolationism and Appeasement, Chapter 8, passim.

<sup>3</sup> C.W. 6 May 1939.

<sup>4</sup> Address to 28 May Peace Rally, Adv. 1 June 1939, p. 2.

From the Papacy came calls for a world-wide Catholic peace campaign; and in response the Australian National Secretariat of Catholic Action began organising Australia-wide demonstrations of support. These culminated in several large peace rallies on 28 May, Pentecost Sunday. In Queensland there were mass gatherings; and in Adelaide a Catholic peace meeting filled the Town Hall to overflowing.<sup>5</sup> In the Wagga Wagga diocese of New South Wales a<sup>6</sup> peace petition was signed by 5,000 Catholics.

Easily the most impressive demonstration, however, was the giant Peace Rally which packed sixty thousand people into Melbourne's great Exhibition Building. Among the impressive array of guests were Archbishop Mannix; Mr. Robert Gordon Menzies, the Prime Minister of Australia; Mr. A. A. Dunstan, the Premier of Victoria; and Cr. A. W. Cole, the Lord Mayor of Melbourne. The meeting endorsed unanimously a motion put by Bob Santamaria, and seconded by Denys Jackson, calling on the Federal Government to do all it could to help avert 'another world catastrophe, the end of which would be the doom of European civilisation'. This was accepted by Mr. Menzies on behalf of the Government. He spoke eloquently on the need for universal good-will; and he explained that, although a non-Catholic, he was attending the gathering in order that 'the movement for peace should have the full moral authority of the community.'<sup>7</sup> The following morning a cablegram

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<sup>5</sup>  
Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>6</sup>  
Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>7</sup>  
Ibid., p. 5.

was sent to the Pope on behalf of Archbishop Mannix, informing  
 him of the success of the Peace Rally.<sup>8</sup>

The Pope who received this message was not, however, the same Pope as had so resolutely guided the Church through the turbulent decade which was now approaching its end. Pope Pius XI, born Achilles Ratti, had died after a short illness on 10 February 1939. He had been the outspoken foe of all the great evils of the age: of unrestrained Capitalism, of Fascism, of Nazism, of International Communism. He had promoted Christian social principles and Catholic Action with untiring insistence. The grief which accompanied his death was more than the sentiment of mere convention; and in Australia, Denys Jackson mourned his passing in one of his finest editorials:

We, the children of his household, are pierced with a sharp sword of sorrow, a numbing pain of loss...He was our fearless leader, inspiring us with courage, strength, and tenacity, filling us with loyalty, faith and hope, in a chaotic world. He is dead, and our sorrow the world does not realise.<sup>9</sup>

Pius XI was succeeded by Eugenio Pacelli, his Secretary of State, as Pius XII. The new Pope embarked on a pontificate during which the forces threatening the Church and Western civilisation were to become less diverse in kind, but no less fearsome in power, than during the reign of his predecessor.

Meanwhile, the Australian National Secretariat of Catholic Action pushed forward steadily towards its pre-set goals.

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<sup>8</sup>

Copy of cable, A.M. 29 May 1939, Mannix papers, M.A.A.

<sup>9</sup>

Adv. 16 February 1939, editorial.

It began its programme for 1939 by holding an eight-day Federal Conference of Catholic Action Organisers from all States of Australia and from New Zealand, which began on 20 February. The Conference broke no new ground, with most of its resolutions simply endorsing or reinforcing policies previously formulated by ANSCA. It served an important function, however, in that it brought together all the key operatives of Australian Catholic Action, and enabled the relationships between them to be consolidated on a personal basis.

A few of the decisions of the Conference did call for slight alterations or refinements of ANSCA's plans and procedures. One resolution suggested that historical topics be excluded from the basic first-year study-courses, thus requiring the Secretariat to break away from standard Campion Society approaches. Instead, the life-situation 'enquiry method' (or 'enquete') was to be favoured, with study centring on the problems which members encountered in their everyday milieu. Other recommendations resulted in the establishment of an ANSCA Bulletin for Leaders in August;<sup>10</sup> and in the foundation of an ANSCA Publications Department in mid-year.<sup>11</sup> A further motion called for a 'Social Justice Information Bureau' to be set up in the diocese of Maitland, which incorporated the Newcastle industrial area. The Bureau was to disseminate material dealing with Catholic social principles,

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Adv. 31 August 1939, p. 23.

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Orders of the Day, June 1939, H/B.



'with particular reference to...the mining industry.'<sup>12</sup>

The general work of the National Secretariat was facilitated by the creation at the beginning of 1939 of an independent Melbourne Diocesan Secretariat of Catholic Action, to oversee the detailed development of the movement in the Melbourne archdiocese. Initially the D.S.C.A. existed only on a skeletal basis, under the control of its Irish-born Ecclesiastical Assistant, Father T. O'Sullivan. However, in April the positions of Director and Honorary Assistant were filled by Ken Mitchell and Alban Pisani, the current Presidents of the Campion Society and the Assisian Guild respectively.<sup>13</sup> The Diocesan Secretariat was the nominal patron of the Melbourne Peace Rally of 28 May; and it did in fact try to mount a further Catholic peace campaign in August and September, before the outbreak of war caused its efforts to be cut short.<sup>14</sup>

ANSCA remained preoccupied during 1939 with what was essentially the preliminary stage of Australian Catholic Action. Apart from the May peace demonstrations, the only one of its enterprises to excite public interest was a lecture-tour by the English Catholic writer, Dr. Halliday Sutherland, which it sponsored, and which began in October. The main part of the

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See the resolutions of the Conference, Adv. 27 April 1939, p. 26; cf. draft resolutions (differing slightly in detail), 8 March 1939, ANSCA files.

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Interview with Mr. Ken Mitchell, May 1970; Adv. 10 August 1939, p. 7.

14

See Adv. 31 August-14 September 1939, pp. 23.

Secretariat's energies continued to go into preparing the ground for the future specialised Catholic Action movements; and here it met with varying degrees of success.

The most productive area of ANSCA's operations proved to be, somewhat surprisingly, that occupied by the rural movement. By June of 1939 'at least thirty' Catholic rural groups were functioning in Australia, six of them in the Wagga Wagga diocese, and a large proportion of the remainder in Victoria.<sup>15</sup> Their rapid proliferation was reminiscent of that of the C.Y.M.S. rural branches earlier in the decade. In July a tour of N.S.W. and Queensland by Bob Santamaria, as Director of ANSCA's Rural Department, revealed the beginnings of the rural group movement in the dioceses of Goulburn, Lismore, Maitland, Toowoomba, Rockhampton, and Townsville. Where Santamaria had expected to be addressing small meetings of twenty-odd farmers at his various stopping-places, he was 'amazed to find in each diocese anything from fifty to seventy or eighty.'<sup>16</sup> In June a national Catholic rural monthly, Rural Life, was launched under the editorship of Ted Hennessy.

It would appear that ANSCA's Catholic rural group movement had tapped a large, but hitherto unsuspected, reservoir of need. Few Catholics were numbered among the large land-holders; and the small farmers had been among the first to suffer and the last to recover from the Depression. They had shown little sense

<sup>15</sup>  
Ibid., 22 June 1939, p. 7.

<sup>16</sup>  
Ibid., 10 August 1939, p. 7.

of class solidarity, and had individually fought the harsh battle for survival on their impoverished holdings. In the Catholic rural movement they found a source of collective strength and of ideological reinforcement such as the ordinary parish structure could not provide. The movement, on the one hand, stressed the material benefits which could accrue from mutual assistance programmes and co-operative business ventures; and on the other, it idealised, Belloc-style, the potentialities of small land-ownership for the living of a fully Christian life.<sup>17</sup> Rural Life, which had a practical rather than a romantic emphasis, contained much useful information on land management and on the establishment of co-operatives.<sup>18</sup>

In other sectors of its activities ANSCA did not find the going so easy. One major obstacle which it encountered was the Legion of Mary, a multi-purpose organisation which, since its foundation in Dublin in 1921, had spread all over the English-speaking world. It had reached Melbourne in 1932;<sup>19</sup> and by May of 1938 in Victoria had sold 5,000 copies of its Handbook alone.<sup>20</sup> During 1938 its Victorian membership 'practically doubled';<sup>21</sup> and a two-day Retreat which it conducted for its members in January

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<sup>17</sup>

For the aims of the early Catholic rural movement, see Adv. 22 June 1939, p. 7; Rural Life September 1939.

<sup>18</sup>

Back-copies of Rural Life are held at the National Catholic Rural Movement headquarters, Hawthorn, Victoria.

<sup>19</sup>

Adv. 26 January 1933, p. 9.

<sup>20</sup>

Ibid., 26 May 1938, p. 20.

<sup>21</sup>

Ibid., 2 February 1939, p. 32.

1939 was the largest such ever to have been seen in Melbourne. <sup>22</sup>

From ANSCA's point of view, the problem with the Legion was its explicit ambition to make its parish branches ('Praesidia') the organisational bases for every category of Catholic lay activity, including Catholic Action. <sup>23</sup> Yet the Legion was of its nature unassimilable into the proposed structure of Australian Catholic Action, except as an 'auxiliary' organisation assisting from outside the movement proper. This was so because ANSCA's plan called for vocationally stratified movements, whereas the Legion mingled Catholics of all classes and all vocations. ANSCA regarded Catholic Action as a difficult and highly specialised apostolate; yet the Legion, by dint of the range and diversity of its interests, could not hope to give it more than superficial attention. Furthermore, the Legion's Handbook reveals that it had none but the most elementary kind of intellectual consciousness; and that its conception of Catholic Action was tied to the simple needs of the Irish parish, not to the Papal campaign to re-Christianise the pagan industrial society of Europe. However, refusing to recognise its own limitations, it persisted in its set course; and ANSCA was disturbed to note that it was continually establishing branches 'among young boys, girls, men and women in <sup>24</sup> which it is often directly competing with Catholic Action bodies'. Eventually the Secretariat formally requested the Hierarchy to

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Ibid.

23

See Official Handbook of the Legion of Mary, Concilium Legionis Mariae, Melbourne, 1939, p. 22.

24

ANSCA Report, 31 December 1940, p. 14.

make an authoritative ruling defining and limiting the Legion's sphere of activity.<sup>25</sup>

Other and more serious difficulties were encountered when ANSCA sought to launch a Young Christian Workers' Movement, which was to be an Australian equivalent of the Belgian/French Jeunesse Ouvriere Chretienne (or J.O.C.). This plan, which had been endorsed by the February Conference of Catholic Action Organisers, involved the establishment of a single national Catholic Action movement for young working-class males in the 14-25 year age group. The architect of the scheme was Kevin Kelly, who in November 1939 was appointed by the Belgian J.O.C. Headquarters as the official Australian representative of the world Jocist movement.<sup>26</sup> The trouble arose from the fact that in Victoria the field of organised Catholic youth activity was already occupied by two well-functioning bodies, the Catholic Boys' Legion and the Catholic Young Men's Society.

Kelly's plan envisaged the eventual dissolution of both these existing organisations, and the assimilation of their membership and their functions into the Y.C.W. His reasons for this were set out in an A.C.T.S. pamphlet which he edited, Young Christian Workers (31 July 1939), wherein he equated the C.Y.M.S. with a Belgian Catholic youth organisation which had been taken over and re-constituted by the Jocists. The implication of the

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<sup>25</sup>

Ibid., pp. 14, 16-17.

<sup>26</sup>

Adv. 16 November 1939, p. 23.



analogy was that the C.Y.M.S. could not be made into an effective Catholic Action body without being totally re-formed, as it was too sport- and socially-orientated; too inward-looking and implicitly defensive; and too set in its traditions and structures, to serve as an efficient vehicle of the militant social apostolate.<sup>27</sup> However, it was essential, in the view of Kelly and of ANSCA, that the proposed Y.C.W. take over, firstly, the best potential leaders from within the C.B.L. and the C.Y.M.S.; and at a later date, the mass working-class membership of both. It needed the leaders to make up its trained, militant elite; and it needed the masses in order to become a popular movement in its own right, capable of transforming society from the factory floor upwards. The Y.C.W., by its very nature, had to displace or take over the other two bodies before it could hope to prosper.

During 1937 Kelly had gained a firm foot-hold within the Catholic Boys' Legion. Dave Nelson, the President, proved a valuable ally; and he in turn transmitted an enthusiasm for Jocist methods to Father Francis Lombard, a recently-ordained curate who operated a Catholic boys' club in the parish of Northcote.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, a J.O.C. 'ginger group' of Kelly's colleagues had been working systematically within the Legion to promote the Jocist scheme.<sup>29</sup>

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K. T. Kelly (editor), Young Christian Workers, A.C.T.S. No. 822, 31 July 1939, pp. 4-5.

28

Interview with Mr. D. Nelson, 22 November 1971. Lombard eventually became the driving force behind the Australian Y.C.W.

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Private memorandum of Kevin Kelly, 1 June 1938, quoted in memorandum, K. T. Kelly to author, 12 March 1972. The 'ginger group' (propaganda group) consisted of Kelly, Father James Murtagh, Eric Nilan, Tom Hogan, and Des Curran.

In 1938, as a result of their efforts, 'nearly all' the members of the Boys' Legion Committee came to agree 'that discussion groups along JOC lines should be established in each boys' club'. However, this proved too much for Father Lanigan, who at the end of May dismissed all the lay members from the Committee, and forbade the J.O.C. prayer to be used in meetings of associated clubs.<sup>30</sup>

Lanigan regarded the Legion as his own creation, and as his by rights to command. His own vision of its functions did not extend beyond sporting and social activities; and he had apparently come to suspect that the Catholic Action enthusiasts were conspiring to take effective control of the organisation away from him. His purge of the Committee did not eradicate the Jocist influence within the Legion, but it did greatly restrict it.

In the short term, the C.B.L. setback was a major blow to Kelly's Y.C.W. plans. An alternative source of access to the 14-18 year age group existed in the Catholic Youth Movement, and in an organisation which succeeded it, the 'League of Catholic Youth'. The latter was an explicitly Catholic Action body which was formally inaugurated on 26 February 1939 'to combine and co-ordinate over fifty groups of Catholic young men and women, hitherto carrying on their activities independently.'<sup>31</sup> However, while these discussion group federations could furnish the Y.C.W. with some of its leaders, they could not provide it with a mass

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Ibid.

31

Adv. 9 February 1939, p. 7; 2 March, pp. 2-3.

basis. Only the C.B.L. and the C.Y.M.S. could do that.

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The C.Y.M.S., for its part, had no intention of going into extinction, whatever the desires of ANSCA. It had received fair warning of the forthcoming challenge to its existence in a C.Y.M.S./Campion correspondence controversy which had broken out in the Advocate in December 1936. The issue of contention was whether or not the C.Y.M.S. could become an integral part of Australian Catholic Action when that movement was formally inaugurated. Campion writers asserted that the Young Men's Society was inherently unsuitable as a framework for a Catholic Action organisation; C.Y.M.S. supporters insisted that this was not the case.<sup>32</sup>

To the C.Y.M.S. leaders the controversy revealed that, in the Campion perspective, their Society was expendable. Adding to the danger was the fact that the established C.Y.M.S./Campion joint discussion groups tended to regard themselves simply as Campion branches.<sup>33</sup> Clearly, if the Young Men's Society was to

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See Adv. 17 December 1936-18 February 1937. The Campion correspondents signed themselves 'Senex', 'Juvenis', 'Graduate', 'Zebra', and 'Prayer, Study, Action'. The C.Y.M.S. supporters were 'Pro Deo et Patria' (Michael Hynes), 'Layman', and 'C.Y.M.'. Mr. Michael F. Hynes (Interview, 23 November 1971) recalls that, apart from himself, J. L. Cremean and Father Murtagh wrote in support of the C.Y.M.S.

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The Clifton Hill joint discussion group certainly looked upon itself as a Campion group: Interview with Mr. D. Nelson, 22 November 1971.

survive as a vital movement, it would have to construct its own study-group network, and break all dependence on the Campion Society in this regard.

Already, in August 1936,<sup>34</sup> a C.Y.M.S. Catholic Action Sub-Committee had been formed to report on the Society's potential role in the lay apostolate movement. Now, in consequence of both the Campion challenge and the Spanish War dispute, its deliberations acquired a new significance and a new note of urgency. The branches were combed for suitable study-group leaders; and in mid-1937, at a meeting of 'thirty or forty enthusiasts', the 'C.Y.M.S. Legion'<sup>35</sup> was brought into being.

The primary functions of the Legion were to encourage the establishment of study-groups in association with existing C.Y.M.S. branches, and to see to the training of their leaders. Standish Michael Keon, an outstanding C.Y.M.S. athlete and debater,<sup>36</sup> was appointed its Secretary. By March 1938 the Legion had study-groups operating in connection with twenty-four of the forty metropolitan C.Y.M.S. branches, and with six of the sixty country branches, at a time when total Society membership was in

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<sup>34</sup> Date given in 1937 C.Y.M.S. Annual Report, Catholic Young Man, January 1938 (a copy was among C.Y.M.S. papers, subsequently lost, which in 1967 were held in the Cathedral Hall, Fitzroy).

<sup>35</sup> Adv. 24 March 1938, p. 7.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 25 August 1938, p. 30. In 1938 Keon and J. L. Cremean led the C.Y.M.S. debating teams to a record string of successes at the Ballarat South Street Eisteddfod, the foremost debating and public speaking competition in the State: Adv. 27 October 1938, p. 31.

the vicinity of 5,000.<sup>37</sup> The success of the groups is attested to by the fact that eighteen months later their numbers in Melbourne remained unchanged.<sup>38</sup>

ANSCA was pleased at the progress of the C.Y.M.S. Legion,<sup>39</sup> seeing it as an excellent source of future Y.C.W. leaders. Furthermore, Kevin Kelly and other Champions assisted it by giving lectures when called upon.<sup>40</sup> They obviously failed to recognise it as a potential threat to their long-term plans.

In mid-1938 the C.Y.M.S. found a further important source of strength in the matter of Catholic Action in Father A. M. Crofts, an Irish Dominican who arrived in Australia at that time. Crofts came from a country where the C.Y.M.S. was the official Catholic Action organisation for young men; and further to that, he himself had written one of the leading English-language texts on the social apostolate, Catholic Social Action (1936). He subsequently became a staunch ally of the Victorian C.Y.M.S. in its determination to be integrated into, but not extinguished by, the formal Catholic Action movement.

The inevitable clash between the C.Y.M.S. and ANSCA

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 24 March 1938, p. 7. Legion membership is given as 250.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 24 August 1939, p. 23, gives 24 Melbourne Legion groups and 200 members.

<sup>39</sup> ANSCA or a Champion associate apparently wrote an article very favourable to the Legion, 'Catholic Action Formation in the C.Y.M.S.', in the Adv. 24 March 1938, p. 7.

<sup>40</sup> See Adv. 3 February 1938, p. 23; 28 July, p. 30; 11 August, p. 30; 6 October, p. 30.



finally came in mid-1939. The Secretariat, having decided that the time had arrived 'to draw out the best members <sup>41</sup> of the C.Y.M.S./ and to make them into the nucleus of a J.O.C. type of Movement', invited the C.Y.M.S. General President, D. S. Sherriff, and the <sup>42</sup> General Secretary, R. E. Hodgkinson, to attend at its offices. The Directors assumed that neither these two, nor the Board of Management, would have any objection to handing over their best Legion men to ANSCA, to be trained as leaders for a movement which was intended eventually to replace the Young Men's Society. The naivety of this assumption reflected the long-standing inability of the Campion leaders to recognise the other Society as being anything more unique, or more important, than a debating and sporting union. Needless to say, ANSCA's request was politely but firmly refused. The Secretariat was at last forced to acknowledge, belatedly and somewhat grudgingly, that the C.Y.M.S. 'gave one of the best examples of the loyalty which an organisation, despite methods which even its <sup>43</sup> members admit to be imperfect, can arouse in those same members.'

This decisive rebuff forced ANSCA to shelve for the time being its schemes for an Australian Y.C.W. Archbishop Mannix was consulted on the dispute, but, having for twenty-six years maintained a relationship of mutual respect and loyalty with his

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<sup>41</sup>

ANSCA Report, 31 December 1940, p. 10.

<sup>42</sup>

Interview with Mr. D. S. Sherriff, 26 November 1971.

<sup>43</sup>

ANSCA Report, 31 December 1940, p. 10.

Young Men's Society,<sup>44</sup> he was not prepared now to sanction its dissolution. ANSCA had no option but to revise its plans, and to allow for two young men's Catholic Action movements being formed in Victoria, one based on the C.B.L. for boys of 14-18 years, and the other on the C.Y.M.S. for those aged 18-30.<sup>45</sup>

After this matter had been settled, and with the assistance of Father Crofts, the C.Y.M.S. began re-drafting its Constitution into a form consonant with the juridical requirements regulating Catholic Action organisations, using as its model the Irish C.Y.M.S. Constitution.<sup>46</sup> When the revision was completed early the following year, it received a provisional mandate from Archbishop Mannix to function as a Catholic Action body. Thus the perpetuation was assured of a Society which constituted one of the most powerful, popular and productive elements in the Victorian Catholic tradition.

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Ironically, at the time the C.Y.M.S. was achieving its victory over ANSCA, the organisation to which Australian Catholic Action owed its inception, the Campion Society, was in a state of

<sup>44</sup>

Dr. Mannix's first public appearance after his arrival in Australia, the day following his landing, was at the C.Y.M.S. Annual Picnic at Mentone. He reputedly never missed a C.Y.M.S. Annual Communion Breakfast unless he was away from Melbourne.

<sup>45</sup>

See ANSCA Report, 31 December 1940, pp. 8-9.

<sup>46</sup>

Interview with Mr. D. S. Sherriff, 26 November 1971.

decline. For the best part of a decade it had stood unchallenged in the forefront of Victorian Catholicism, infusing into it new vigour and new ways of thought, and rallying all to the banner of Catholic Action. Now the very magnitude of its own success was proving to be its downfall. Most of the Campion's outside work of lecturing and organising had gradually been taken over by ANSCA, its direct offspring. Furthermore, the new Catholic intellectualism which the Society had propagated throughout Victoria had been absorbed to the point of saturation. The vital new insights of 1931 had become the common wisdom of 1939; the intellectual trails blazed by the Campions had become well-used thoroughfares. Ideas as such were now less in demand than their translation into action. The Campion Society was faced with the threat of redundancy.

Internal changes had also played their part in dissipating the Society's creative impulse. Most of the Campion's achievements during the decade can be traced back to the initiatives of a small internal elite, which had changed little in composition since the days of the First Group. Now, however, the 'patriarchs' of the Society - men such as Maher, McInerney, Heffey, Jackson and Kelly - were fully occupied in other fields of the apostolate: in the Catholic Worker; in ANSCA; in the infant Jocist movement; in the Catholic media. Furthermore, the majority of them were married and had growing families. During the course of 1938 most of the 'Old Guard', as they had come to be called, had deliberately faded from the Campion scene, leaving the leadership in the hands of younger men. The final signal of their passing was the formation on 10 August 1939 of the 'Campion Institute', a kind of Campion

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Old Boys' Association.

The new generation of Campion leaders was rather 'lightweight' compared with the old, and displayed little of the drive and imaginative vigour which had originally carried the Society to prominence. The general deterioration began to impinge on the consciousness of members about the end of 1938, with Orders of the Day lamenting in November that 'we have quite definitely lost our position of pre-eminence. The real enthusiasm for Catholic Action comes from other quarters.' During 1939 the Society's traditional self-confidence was displaced by an introverted and self-critical spirit, coupled with a nostalgia for the days of glory which were now recognised to be in the past:

To have been in the Campion in those years is something of which any man might well be very proud and grateful.<sup>48</sup>

In April 1939 one member warned that the Society had 'come to the parting of the ways'. It had to choose 'nothing less than its part in the drama of Catholic Action, and its choice and what immediately follows will result in either greater glory or the grave.'<sup>49</sup>

The immediate future, however, brought the Society neither glory nor extinction, but merely a deepening languor. The old suburban study-groups, once nine in number, seem to have all disappeared, presumably being absorbed into the C.Y.M.S.

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Adv. 17 August 1939, p. 30.

48

John Moloney, 'The First Division', Orders of the Day, 30 October 1939, H/B.

49

'E.S.M.' (E. S. Madden), 'Campion at the Crossroads', Orders of the Day, 28 April 1939, H/B.

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 Legion. The country Campion branches were occupied with the Catholic rural movement, or with other schemes associated with ANSCA, and now had few contacts with the Melbourne Campion. Even the Central groups had lost support, with there being six functioning in August 1939, where once there had been eight. Total metropolitan membership stood at about sixty. 51

The Society now began to recede towards its natural home-ground, the University, and to see its role as simply that which it had set itself at the very beginning: namely, to provide a three-year course in Catholic thought and history for undergraduates. Even in this modest ambition, however, it met with frustrations, as it was no longer able to monopolise the field of Catholic intellectual activism at the University. Other Catholic discussion groups were operating on the campus during 1939; and in 1940 the Newman Society, after a brief internal struggle, decided to sponsor the University Catholic actionist movement. 52 It variously absorbed or established ten study-groups; 53 and in so doing, further constricted the Campion Society's scope of activity.

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Adv. 24 August 1939, p. 23. A year previously the Society was claiming twelve Melbourne groups (Central and suburban) and 120-150 members: Adv. 25 August 1938, p. 5.

51

Ibid., 24 August 1939, p. 23.

52

The Newman traditionalists wanted the Society to remain an essentially social body; the Catholic Action enthusiasts wished it to be involved in Catholic Action: Interview with Mrs. Loretta Kerley (ne Archer), 14 November 1971 (Loretta Archer was leader of the Girls' Catholic Action Group at the University in 1939: see Adv. 10 August 1939, p. 7).

53

ANSCA Report, 31 December 1940, p. 13.



ANSCA did its best to find the *Campion* a new role. It suggested that the Society drop 'the purely "discussion-group outlook"', and that it re-build itself as a general Catholic Action movement for the young middle-class - for those young Catholic men 'who are definitely not of the working class milieu and yet do not go on to the University.' The *Campions* were not enthusiastic, however; and ANSCA was forced to report that it was 'doubtful whether they are able or willing to undertake the considerable organising work required.'<sup>54</sup>

With the outbreak of the Second World War the curtains were finally drawn on the *Campion* era of Victorian Catholic history. On that third day of September when Australia's committal to the conflict was announced, the Society was at Xavier College in the midst of its first Spring School. Even in its hey-day it had rarely, if ever, mustered such a large and impressive assemblage of friends and supporters. Among the 193 participants were Archbishop Mannix; Father J. Meagher, Australian Provincial of the Jesuits; Mr. F. J. Corder, leading Catholic intellectual and activist of the pre-*Campion* era; Michael Chamberlin, ex-C.Y.M.S. General President and founder of the Victorian Knights of the Southern Cross; Fathers Hackett and Murtagh; Frank Maher and Bob Santamaria; and a substantial representation of the total nine-year membership of the Society. The theme of the School was 'Property for the People'; and the weekend was counted an unqualified success.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>

Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>55</sup>

Adv. 7 September 1939, p. 5.

Thus the 1939 Spring School served as a fitting last bow for the Campion Society, bringing together in one final display of comraderie a major proportion of those who had figured prominently in the drama of Victorian Catholicism in the nineteen-thirties. As the gathering broke up, the Red Decade was flickering its last, and other fires were searing the skies of Europe. The young men dispersed, and prepared to go to war; and the Campion Society dwindled into obscurity.

## CONCLUSION

During the War years the Australian National Secretariat of Catholic Action established the network of specialised Catholic Action movements towards which it had all along been aiming. In 1940 it brought into being the National Catholic Rural Movement, the League of St. Joseph (later the National Catholic Workers' Movement), and the Young Catholic Students' Movement. In 1941, with the help of the Grail, it formed the National Catholic Girls' Movement; and in 1942 the Young Christian Workers' Movement was founded, replacing the Catholic Boys' Legion. A number of Catholic Guilds for the various professions were adopted as auxiliary organisations to the Catholic Action movement.

The second major duty which ANSCA had originally been given, namely, to initiate a concerted Catholic anti-Communist drive, proved more difficult to effect. The League of St. Joseph made little progress in forming adult workers' Catholic Action groups; <sup>1</sup> and even had the League prospered, there is no guarantee that its members would have behaved as ANSCA anticipated they would, and have spontaneously coalesced outside the Catholic Action movement to form autonomous anti-Communist industrial pressure-groups. This aspect of Catholic Action theory may well have been justified in Europe, where a natural (though unofficial)

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<sup>1</sup> The N.C.W.M. was directed by Mr. Ken Mitchell, Director of the Melbourne Diocesan Secretariat of Catholic Action. It never grew to 'more than a dozen parish groups': James G. Hurtagh, Tom Truman's Catholic Action and Politics, A.C.T.S. No. 1359, 20 May 1961, p. 14; also interview with Mr. K. W. Mitchell, May 1970.

progression existed from the Catholic Action associations into the established Catholic political parties and trade unions.<sup>2</sup> In Australia, however, no Catholic industrial/political organisations were operative; and yet, as the War years advanced, the power of the Communists in the trade unions increased dramatically. Furthermore, the Catholics appeared to be the only group in the community with the capacity to organise effective counter-action.

The first moves to unite Catholic workers to fight the Communists were spontaneous and widely scattered. Isolated Catholic-based workers' groups existed in Melbourne from 1938,<sup>3</sup> and in Ballarat, Ararat, Launceston, Toowoomba, Adelaide and Newcastle<sup>4</sup> by the close of 1940. In Broken Hill a group was founded;<sup>5</sup> and in Sydney Father Paddy Ryan, M.S.C., and certain Catholic Labour leaders,<sup>6</sup> began to assemble the nucleus of a Catholic anti-Communist movement.

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It is noteworthy in this regard that the formation in 1919 of the Italian Catholic party, the Partito Popolare, had a debilitating effect on the Italian Catholic Action movement, with the latter finding that 'the enthusiasm of many of its best members' was being transferred to the new party: Rev. J. Carroll-Abbing, 'Catholic Action in Italy', in John Fitzsimons and Paul McGuire (ed.), Restoring All Things: A Guide to Catholic Action, p. 117.

3

In 1938, at the suggestion of Mr. Arthur Calwell, Mr. Frank Keating formed an anti-Communist group in the Melbourne Boilermakers' Union; and in 1939, again in consultation with Calwell, he sought to encourage the formation of other such groups in other Unions: Interview with Mr. Frank Keating, February 1967.

4

ANSCA Report, 31 December 1940, pp. 11-12.

5

B. A. Santamaria, The Price of Freedom: The Movement - After Ten Years (Melbourne, 1966), p. 29; cf. Robert Murray, The Split: Australian Labor in the Fifties (Melbourne, 1970), p. 46.

6

In 1940 or 1941 Dr. Ryan and Mr. James Ormonde, a prominent Catholic Labor politician, approached the Sydney Champion Society through its General Secretary, Mr. R. H. Sivertsen, with the



Finally, in mid-1942, as the situation in the Unions became increasingly grave, Bob Santamaria was approached by a number of Catholic and non-Catholic labour leaders with an urgent request that he help to form a secret, centrally co-ordinated Catholic anti-Communist organisation. Archbishop Mannix was approached, gave his consent, and promised financial support; Catholic Union activists were located through their parish priests; and on 14 August 1942 the first meeting was held of the anonymous association which later became known as 'The Movement'.<sup>7</sup>

On 19 September 1945 an Extraordinary Meeting of the Australian Catholic Hierarchy granted this body a mandate (now accepted as having been un-Canonical) to function as an official, although non-Catholic Action, Church 'lay apostolate' organisation.<sup>8</sup> In this way The Movement gained the best of two worlds: it enjoyed all the prestige, facilities, and episcopal support of Catholic Action; but it was impeded by none of the Canonical regulations which so tightly defined and restricted the operations of official Catholic Action associations.

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request that it make its organisation available to them to be used as part of an anti-Communist movement. Their request was refused by the Campion Council, on the grounds that direct political or pressure-group action was not a proper function of the Society: Interview with Mr. R. H. Sivertsen, 11 April 1972.

7

Santamaria, op. cit., p. 30.

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For a detached account of how this Hierarchical mandate came to be given, and of eventual differences in its interpretation which arose between Melbourne and Sydney, see Paul Joseph Duffy, Catholic Judgements on the Origins and Growth of the Australian Labor Party Dispute 1954-1961 (unpublished M.A. thesis, Melbourne University, 1967), particularly pp. 32-37, 120-28, 404-05.



The pre-War Campion leaders were predominantly, although<sup>9</sup> by no means unanimously, anti-Movement from the beginning. Their headquarters was now the Catholic Worker office; and they were informed of the new organisation by the Worker's manager, Frank Keating, who had been in it at its inception and for a few months afterwards.<sup>10</sup> They feared that the end result of The Movement would be an anti-Catholic backlash akin to that unleashed a generation before by the ill-fated Australian Catholic Federation; and that, when this happened, the Catholic Action movement, and even the established Catholic influence in politics, would be imperilled. In this, as in most other matters, their opinion leader remained<sup>11</sup> Kevin Kelly, then a Navy lieutenant, who for much of the War was based at Naval Intelligence Headquarters in Melbourne.

The first-generation Campions, however, were no longer in the mainstream of Victorian Catholic activism. Their remaining voice-piece, the Catholic Worker, was still popular; but it met competition in The Movement's organ, Freedom (later News Weekly), and its sales gradually declined. In April 1955, following the Labor Party 'Split', it issued a policy-statement which incurred the displeasure of Archbishop Mannix, who let it be known among his parish priests that he preferred they no longer allow its sale

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Mr. L. G. O'Sullivan frequently lunched at the Catholic Worker office while in Melbourne on Army service in August-September 1942. He can recall that a strong, almost melodramatic, dread of The Movement was existent among the group there even at that early stage: Interview with Mr. L. G. O'Sullivan, 9 November 1971.

10

Interview with Mr. Frank Keating, February 1967.

11

Interviews with Mr. Justice McInerney, 10 August 1967; Mr. Frank Keating, February 1967.

outside their churches. Its monthly circulation immediately plummeted from 26,000 to 13,000,<sup>12</sup> and then sank to below 5,000. It is still being published; but in form, policy, and management personnel it is now unrecognisably different from what it was in its first twenty years of existence.

Some members of the pre-War *Campion Society* remain active today as Catholic publicists, or have only ceased writing in recent years. They include, in Victoria, Denys Jackson, Frank Murphy, the late Father James Murtagh, Niall Brennan, and Bob Santamaria; and in other States, Brian T. Doyle, Martin Haley, Alf. Schmude, and Father Desmond O'Connor, S.J.

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The Catholic Young Men's Society, meanwhile, in the immediate post-War period had risen to the peak of its prosperity. At the end of 1948 its membership stood at an all-time high;<sup>13</sup> and, as one past General President has noted, the leadership lists of the Victorian branch of the Australian Labor Party had come to read 'like an Honour-Roll of the H.A.C.B.S. [Hibernian Society/ or the Young Men's Society.'<sup>14</sup> The Society's value as a training-school for public life had never been more evident.

<sup>12</sup>

C.W. November 1955, cited in Paul Duffy, *op. cit.*, p. 300. Paul Ormonde, *The Movement* (Melbourne, 1972), p. 87, gives the immediate sales drop as from 35,000 to 'less than 15,000'.

<sup>13</sup>

1948 C.Y.M.S. Annual Report, original in the possession of Mr. A. C. Hodgkinson, photocopy in M.A.A.

<sup>14</sup>

Interview with Mr. J. F. Moore, 15 February 1972. Moore (General President 1925) and F. P. McManus (General President 1929) had

Yet, for the C.Y.M.S., the writing was already on the wall. The enthusiasm of the younger clergy, and of the teachers in the Catholic schools, was now overwhelmingly directed towards the Y.C.W.; and the Young Men's Society was regarded by many as an obstruction to Catholic Action. C.Y.M.S. leaders found that their welcome had cooled at Corpus Christi College, Werribee;<sup>15</sup> and they were well aware that Melbourne's new Coadjutor Archbishop, Dr. Justin Simonds, was a champion of the Y.C.W. and no friend of theirs. A further, distinctively Victorian, twist was given to the situation when the Y.C.W. first obtained permission to participate in the C.Y.M.S. (over-18 years) Australian Rules football tournament; then, after a time, broke away and began its own competition. In this way the Society lost its monopoly of the State's most popular form of recreational activity for Catholic young men. Moreover, the new (1940) Constitution decentralised control within the C.Y.M.S., weakened the power of the Board of Management, and thus reduced the Society's cohesion and its value as a source of competitive leadership training.<sup>16</sup>

constituted the Society's all-time most successful debating team; and both were on the Victorian A.L.P. Executive during the first half of the 1950s. At that time ex-C.Y.M.S. men among Victorian A.L.P. parliamentarians included: Federal: W. M. Bourke, W. G. Bryson, J. L. Cremean, S. M. Keon, J. M. Mullens, E. W. Peters; State: W. P. Barry, P. L. Coleman, T. Hayes, C. Murphy, F. R. Scully, J. J. Sheehan. That they were not all Movement men, and did not constitute a recognisable faction, is evident from Robert Murray, op. cit., particularly p. 136.

<sup>15</sup>

Interview with Mr. D. S. Sherriff, 26 November 1971.

<sup>16</sup>

It is noteworthy in this regard that whereas in the Society's first fifty years, from 1892 to 1941, only two General Presidents had been elected to second terms of office (J. J. Liston, 1895 and 1897; and J. F. Foley, 1926 and 1928), in the ten years from 1942 there were only four General Presidents all told, two of whom had dual terms of office (P. T. Collins, 1942-43; and C. H. Stock, 1947-48), and two, three-year terms (C. P. McNamara, 1944-46; and B. R. Meagher, 1949-51): see lists of C.Y.M.S. Presidents, M.A.A.

When, in the early 'fifties, the inevitable decline began, it was both rapid and irreversible. With recruiting choked at its source, the Catholic schools, membership dropped sharply. Where branches did not exist, they would not be established; where they lapsed, they would be replaced by Y.C.W. groups. By 1955 it was apparent that the C.Y.M.S. was no longer a major factor in the Catholic life of the State. Today it survives, scarcely noticed, as a minor coalition of Catholic sporting interests.

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The Victorian Campion Society, for its part, emerged from the War period as a small, quiescent, entirely Melbourne-based study-club. Over the following decade it fluctuated in size from one to three or four groups, drawing a trickle of recruits from the Catholic schools and the University. Although displaying little imagination or intellectual vigour, it sustained a sedentary existence on the same Chesterbellocian-Dawsonian fare as of old. Revitalisation attempts in the years 1947-49 failed, essentially because the initiatives came from elder Campions, the 'Campion Institute' men, rather than from the current members. One such effort consisted in the formation in mid-1948 of a Campion Society of Australia, loosely uniting Melbourne and Sydney, which up to the end of 1949 produced a quarterly magazine. Almost all the Melbourne articles in this publication, however, were written by pre-War Campions, or by outside contributors.



In the early 'fifties the Society accepted an offer of a meeting-room in one of The Movement's operational centres, and subsequently drifted into Bob Santamaria's orbit. Most of the members were initially amenable to this development, finding a welcome sense of purpose and usefulness in their new role as an unofficial intellectual adjunct to The Movement. Soon, however, a number of them developed a distaste for the earthy, ruthless world of industrial politics in which they now found themselves: they tired of attending turbulent Union meetings; of writing speeches for politicians; of giving Movement-orientated radio talks. In mid-1953 a group of dissenters broke away from the main body, and attempted (unsuccessfully) to return to the old, congenial study-group ways. The central organisation continued to function in unison with The Movement until 1955. In that year, as a result of the great Labor Party 'Split', the Victorian Catholic community was thrown into the midst of a furious political conflict, and racked internally by bitterness and recrimination. In an atmosphere thus soured, no movement based on light-hearted youthful idealism could long survive; and the  
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 Champion Society went into abeyance. Various attempts have since been made to revive it, but none has succeeded.

The Sydney Champion, although lacking the spectacular early history of the Melbourne Society, was able to extend its productive life much longer. During the War its cohesion was

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For this account of the final years of the Victorian Champion Society I am indebted primarily to Father Maurice Keating, O.P., who at the time in question was a layman and a member of the 'breakaway' Champion group.



maintained by the efforts of J. W. (Bill) Hives, its Secretary for most of that time, who kept in correspondence contact with the members serving overseas. With the coming of peace its groups multiplied, and some of its members played an active part in the formation of Catholic credit unions, housing co-operatives, and other such ventures.<sup>19</sup> It remained strictly independent of The Movement. In the early 'fifties a decline began; but, thanks to the recruiting work of Bill Hives, it was kept alive. Only in the early 'seventies did the Sydney Champion finally cease to function.

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A quarter of a century now lies between the observer and the close of the period with which this study has been concerned. Yet, while the imprint of the 'thirties is still stamped deep in the thought and social habits of our times, it would be folly for me at this juncture to attempt to trace the influence of the movements which I have studied through to the present day. In Church and nation alike, the interim has seen much ebb and flow, much new birth and new growth; and the drama of our times will reveal itself only to the labours of future scholarship.

My primary aim in this thesis has been to reveal how

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Interview with Mr. L. G. O'Sullivan (a past President of the Sydney Champion Society), 9 November 1971.

the Catholic Church in Australia was able to adapt, in its thought and its institutions, to meet the challenges of a decade of extraordinary social, political and intellectual disruption. I have, I trust, left the reader with an enhanced appreciation of the sociology, the inner dynamics, and the recent history of Australian Catholicism. I hope that my efforts will inspire, or assist with, other research projects into associated fields of Australian social, religious and intellectual history.

Whatever ultimate verdicts are reached on the nature and effects of the Australian Catholic upsurge of the 'thirties, there can be little doubt that they will be in large measure verdicts on the Victorian Campion Society. In the context in which it operated, this body was unquestionably the most remarkable phenomenon of the era. For some eight years, from 1931 to 1938, it exerted an influence unparalleled by that of any other Catholic lay association in Australia's history. Indeed, it is doubtful if anywhere in the world there existed an entirely lay-led organisation which could boast a comparable record of achievement. It introduced into the Australian Church a new intellectual consciousness, a new vitality, and, in Catholic Action, a new means of social extension. When eventually it faded away, it left behind a rising generation of young Catholic leaders to whom the Faith of their Fathers was neither a tribal rite nor a Sunday duty, but a dynamic force in the affairs of mankind, and the fundamental integrating principle of reality.

Yet, despite its accomplishments, the Campion Society

appears now as the singular child of an unusual era. For all its assertive intellectuality, its bequest to posterity in terms of genuine scholarship has been slight. It channelled into Australian Catholicism new streams of Western European thought, but it failed to integrate these with established native traditions of social and religious thinking. It emphasised European history, but ignored Australian history; it eulogised Christian culture, but itself made no notable contributions to the national culture, whether creatively or in the form of criticism. Much of its vision, much of its dynamism, much of its expansive outlook, have passed into the Catholic tradition of Victoria; yet the foundation of learning on which that vision and that outlook were based, never very solid, has all but disappeared. If the Campion Society is to leave any permanent impress on the systematised thought of Australian Catholicism, it will be made through the medium of those who proceed with the work of Christian sociological speculation and investigation which the Campions pioneered.

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The only clear evidence I have found of any Campion consciousness of an emerging Australian Catholic tradition is in an article by Kevin Kelly in the 1933 Annual for De La Salle College, Malvern, wherein he sees the Campion movement as contributing to 'the spontaneous growth of a national Catholicism, as distinctive as that of France or of Ireland'.

21

Australian history never figured significantly in Campion writings or speeches. The study-syllabus in Prelude to Catholic Action (A.C.T.S. No. 718, 10 September 1936) contained no Australian section; although a later Campion-produced pamphlet, What to Read (A.C.T.S. No. 781, 30 May 1938), featured a quite substantial Australiana selection. Despite this imbalance, shortly after the War two significant works on Australian Catholic history by Campion men were published, in Father James Murtagh's Australia: The Catholic Chapter (1946); and Frank Murphy's Daniel Mannix (1948).

The members of the pre-War Campion Society are today, in the main, well established in their various professions, with many of them having attained positions of distinction in the community. Most continue to play an active part in the life of the Church; and, although they have long since ceased to meet together formally, they remain united by powerful bonds of fellowship. They take pride in having made their own signal contribution to the development of Catholic Christianity in this land; and, virtually to a man, they speak of the Campion as one of the high-points of their lives. Now as then, they see the ultimate significance of their deeds as lying not in the eye of History, but in that of Eternity; and they persevere in the hope that their final destiny will be that which their Master has reserved for His good and faithful servants.

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven (Ecclesiastes 3:1).



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- Campion Society Memoranda to the Episcopal Sub-Committee on Catholic Action (draft copies, three in number), September-December 1937, in the possession of Mr. Justice M. V. McInerney, Melbourne.
- Campion Society records, 1931-39, held by Messrs. Heffey & Butler, Solicitors, of Lonsdale Street, Melbourne.
- Catholic Evidence Guild (Melbourne) minute-book, June 1934-March 1943 (with some notes from later years), in the Melbourne Archdiocesan Archives.
- Catholic Evidence material, Sydney: Assorted correspondence, minutes, and reports, relating to Catholic Evidence work in Sydney, 1924 ff., box 'Evidence', Sydney Archdiocesan Archives.
- Catholic Young Men's Society Annual Reports, 1913-29, 1931, plus post-1940 material, held in Celtic Club, Melbourne.
- Catholic Young Men's Society 1892 Annual Report; lists of C.Y.M.S. General Presidents and General Secretaries; and other documents, preserved (severally) by Messrs. J. D. Coyne and A. C. Hodgkinson. This material, in original or in photocopy, has now been deposited by these gentlemen with the M.A.A.
- Guilds, Catholic, Sydney: Material relating to the various occupational Guilds formed in Sydney from the nineteen-thirties, in the S.A.A.
- Newman Society Convention papers, 1934, consisting primarily of constitutions, histories, and correspondence from Catholic intellectual and University societies from all States, preserved by Mr. Justice Kevin Anderson, and recently deposited by him with the M.A.A.
- North-East Catholic Debating and Sports Association, Constitution and Rules; and Fernvale Retreat souvenir pamphlets, 1934, 36, 37, 40 and 41, in the possession of Mr. A. D. Seaton, Albury.
- Papers of Fathers Aubrey Goodman and Patrick Ryan, selections from which were made available to me at the Sacred Heart Fathers' Monastery, Kensington, N.S.W.



Papers of Fathers Matthew Egan, William Hackett, William Keane, William Lockington, Jeremiah Murphy, Richard Murphy, and Albert Power, in Jesuit Archives, Jesuit Provincialate, Melbourne. Hackett's papers contain much Campion Society and Assisian Guild material which cannot be found elsewhere; and of particular note among Father Jeremiah Murphy's papers is a copy (duplicated and cardboard covered) of the Report of the Australian National Secretariat of Catholic Action to December 31st, 1940.

Seminary Students' Journals, internal, for:

Corpus Christi College, Werribee (bi-yearly, handwritten, begins 1923. Back-copies were held at the College).

Franciscan Seminary, Box Hill, Victoria (The Troubadour, monthly, duplicated, begins September 1937, back-copies held at the Seminary).

Jesuit Seminary, Watsonia (The Canisian, quarterly, duplicated, begins August 1937, back-copies held at Campion Hall, Kew).

## B. PUBLISHED PRIMARY SOURCE MATERIAL

### 1. Newspapers and Magazines:

Advance Australia, organ of the Knights of the Southern Cross, Golden Jubilee issue, March 1969, copy held in M.A.A.

Advocate

Annals, Sacred Heart Fathers' popular monthly, back-copies held at the Sacred Heart Monastery, Kensington, N.S.W.

Australasian Catholic Record

Austral Light

Australia: A Review of the Month

Catholic Magazine

Catholic Young Man: the first two volumes of this magazine, covering the period September 1933-August 1935, have recently been deposited with the M.A.A. by Mr. Michael F. Hynes.

Catholic Fireside

Catholic Worker

The Catholic Federation Magazine and Official Organ of the N.S.W. Catholic Debating Societies' Union

Catholic PressFarragoHoni SoitManly

Messenger of the Sacred Heart, Jesuit popular monthly, back-copies of which were held at Messenger House, Richmond, Victoria.

Torchlight, Melbourne Clitherow Society monthly, early copies of which (Nos. 3, 5, 9, 12, January-October 1939) have recently been deposited with the M.A.A. by Mrs. W. B. V. Knowles.

I referred selectively to other periodicals where my researches required, among them being the Melbourne Age, Argus and Herald; the Geelong Advertiser; the Ballarat Courier and Mail; the Communist Workers' Voice; the Catholic Tribune and Freeman's Journal; and the Victorian Catholic Directory.

## 2. Catholic School and College Annuals:

Victoria:

Assumption College, Kilmore

De La Salle College, Malvern

Newman College, Melbourne University

St. Kevin's College, Toorak (Annuals published only 1935, 1936)

St. Patrick's College, Ballarat

St. Patrick's College, East Melbourne (a set of The Patrician is held in the Latrobe Library, Melbourne)

Xavier College, Kew

Sydney:

Lewisham Christian Brothers' College

St. Aloysius' College, Milsons Point

St. Ignatius' College, Riverview

St. John's College, Sydney University (College set incomplete; others loaned to me by the late Justice Sir Cyril Walsh)

St. Joseph's College, Hunters Hill

Maverley Christian Brothers' College

### 3. Other Publications:

- Australian Catholic Truth Society pamphlets, a complete set of which is held in the Advocate offices, Melbourne.
- Benedictine Monks of Solesmes (ed.), The Lay Apostolate: Papal Teachings (Daughters of St. Paul, Boston, Massachusetts, 1960): selections from Papal documents.
- Cardijn, Joseph, Laymen into Action (Y.C.W., Melbourne, 1964).
- Design for Democrats, 'by 25 Men' ('The Catholic Worker', Melbourne, 1944): a selection of extracts from the Catholic Worker.
- Freemantle, Anne, The Papal Encyclicals in their Historical Context (The New American Library, N.Y., 1960): a selection of extracts from Papal Encyclicals, with commentary.
- Gilson, Etienne (ed.), The Church Speaks to the Modern World: The Social Teachings of Leo XIII (Doubleday, N.Y., 1961): the complete texts of the most important Encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII, with commentary.
- Goodman, A. J. A Handbook of Catholic Action (Annals Office, Kensington, N.S.W., third edition, 1955).
- Martindale, C. C. The Risen Sun (Sheed & Ward, London, 1929).
- " " Athens, Argentine, Australia (Sheed & Ward, London, 1935). In these books Martindale writes of his visits to Australia, 1928 and 1934.
- The National Eucharistic Congress (Advocate Press, Melbourne, 1936): official commemorative volume of the 1934 Melbourne Eucharistic Congress.

C. INTERVIEWS

People who were involved in the movements which I have studied, and whom I have interviewed, include:

Melbourne & Environs

Adams, Judge Arthur  
 Anderson, Mr. Justice Kevin  
 Brennan, Niall  
 Butler, Tom  
 Calwell, the late Arthur A., M.H.R.  
 Chamberlin, the late Sir Michael  
 Cleary, Father J. H.  
 Coyne, J. D.  
 Downey, John (T)<sup>+</sup>  
 Gerrard, A. L.  
 Heffey, C. G.  
 Heffey, Father John  
 Hodgkinson, A. C.  
 Hynes, M. F.  
 Ingwersen, the late Dr. Stanislaus  
 Jackson, D. G. M.  
 Keating, the late Frank  
 Kelly, K. T.  
 Kerley, Mrs. J. C.  
 Knowles, Mrs. W. B. V.  
 Legge, J. W.  
 McCristal, Father J., O.F.M.  
 McDermott, Kevin  
 McDonald, Gerald  
 McInerney, Mr. Justice M. V.  
 McManus, Senator F. P.  
 Meere, J. F.  
 Mitchell, K. W.  
 Murphy, Frank  
 Murtagh, the late Father J. G.  
 Nelson, David  
 O'Connor, Father Bernard  
 Pisani, Alban (T)  
 Santamaria, B. A.  
 Sherriff, D. S.  
 Slattery, Ronald  
 Triado, Raymond  
 Maher, F. K.  
Geelong  
 O'Halloran, Roger (T)

Ballarat

Bongiorno, John  
 Lynch, Joseph  
 McInerney, Monsignor James

Bungaree

Linane, Father T.

Bendigo

Stewart, Bishop Bernard

Nagambie

Downey, Father  
 Shanahan, the late Father

Wangaratta

Findlay, William  
 McSwiney, Arthur  
 Milne, Robert

Wodonga

Bowman, Monsignor T.

Albury

Seaton, A. D.

Canberra

Arkwright, F. J.  
 Early, L. N.  
 Keating, Father Maurice, O.P.  
 O'Sullivan, L. G.  
 Sawyer, Professor Geoffrey  
 Sherry, Gerard  
 Smyth, K. J. (T)

Sydney

Burke, E. H.  
 Cantwell, P. L.  
 Crennan, Monsignor G.  
 Ford, Father Patrick  
 Hickson, Dr. G. K.  
 Huizinga, Miss Bridget  
 O'Brien, the late Archbishop Eris  
 O'Connor, Father Desmond, S.J.  
 Purcell, T. J.  
 Schmude, A. J.  
 Sivertsen, R. H.  
 Walsh, the late Justice Sir Cyril

Brisbane

Haley, Martin (T)  
 Kelly, J. P. (T)

<sup>+</sup>(T) = Telephone interview only.



## D. SECONDARY SOURCES

I have here included only those publications which have had some direct bearing on this thesis. I have excluded the many works of the English Catholic Literary Revival, texts on European history, theses and articles which have cumulatively, but not individually, influenced my studies.

### 1. General Background:

Daniel-Rops, H. A Fight for God 1870-1939 tr. John Warrington (Dent & Sons, London, 1966).

Fitzsimons, John, and McGuire, Paul (ed.) Restoring All Things: A Guide to Catholic Action (Sheed & Ward, London, 1939).

Fogarty, Michael P. Christian Democracy in Western Europe 1820-1953 (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1957).

Hales, E. E. Y. The Catholic Church in the Modern World: A Survey from the French Revolution to the Present (Doubleday, N.Y., 1960).

Hughes, Philip A Short History of the Catholic Church (Burns & Oates, London, 1967).

Troeltsch, Ernst The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches tr. Clive Myon (2 Vols., Allen & Unwin, London, 1931).

### 2. Australian Works:

Andrews, E. M. Isolationism and Appeasement in Australia: Reactions to the European Crises 1935-1939 (A.N.U. Press, Canberra, 1970). This book gives particular attention to Catholic press attitudes, but its treatment of them is superficial and frequently inaccurate. I have already dealt (pp. 80-81, ft.) with one of Mr. Andrews' main contentions. I will here add simply that his suspicions (pp. 89, 135), for which he apparently has no evidence, that the Campion Society was involved in labour movement politics in 1937, and in other pressure-group activities in 1938, are without foundation. At no stage did the Campion Society engage in activities of this kind.



- Brennan, Niall Dr. Mannix (Rigby, Adelaide, 1964).
- " " A Hoax Called Jones (Sheed & Ward, London, 1962).
- Clark, C. Manning A Short History of Australia (Heinemann, London, new edition, 1969).
- Cooksey, Robert (ed.) The Great Depression in Australia (Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 1972).
- Davidson, Alistair The Communist Party of Australia (Hoover Institute Press, Stanford, California, 1969).
- Fogarty, Ronald Catholic Education in Australia, 1806-1950 (2 Vols., M.U.P., 1957).
- Ford, Patrick Cardinal Moran and the A.L.P. (M.U.P., 1966).
- Greenwood, Gordon Australia: A Social and Political History (Angus & Robertson, Australia, 1965).
- Louis, L. J., and Turner, Ian (ed.) The Depression of the 1930s (Cassell, Australia, 1970).
- McMahon, J. T. College, Campus, Cloister (University of Western Australia Press, 1969).
- Murphy, Frank Daniel Mannix (Polding Press, Melbourne, new ed., 1972).
- Murray, Robert The Split: Australian Labor in the Fifties (Cheshire, Melbourne, 1970).
- Murtagh, James G. Australia: The Catholic Chapter (Angus & Robertson, revised ed., 1959).
- O'Farrell, Patrick The Catholic Church in Australia: A Short History, 1788-1967 (Nelson, Australia, 1968).
- Ormonde, Paul The Movement (Nelson, Australia, 1972).
- Santamaria, B. A. The Price of Freedom: The Movement - After Ten Years (Hawthorn Press, Melbourne, 1966).
- Truman, Tom Catholic Action and Politics (Georgian House, Melbourne, revised ed., 1960).

### 3. Articles in Periodicals:

- Greening, W. A. 'The Mannix Thesis in Catholic Secondary Education in Victoria', in Melbourne Studies in Education 1961-62, ed. E. L. French (M.U.P., 1964).

Hamilton, Celia 'Catholic Interests and the Labor Party: Organised Catholic Action in Victoria and New South Wales, 1910-1916', in Historical Studies of Australia and New Zealand, November 1959.

4. Unpublished Theses:

Brown, Robert J. 'The Catholic Federation of New South Wales 1912-1923: With Particular Reference to the Democratic Party 1919-1925', Economics IV Thesis, Sydney University, 1954.

Close, Cecily E. 'The Organisation of the Catholic Laity in Victoria, 1911-1930', M.A. Thesis, Melbourne University, 1972.

Duffy, Paul Joseph 'Catholic Judgements on the Origin and Growth of the Australian Labor Party Dispute 1954-1961', M.A. Thesis, Melbourne University, 1967.

Treston, K. 'The Australian Reaction to the Spanish Civil War', M.A. Honours Thesis, Sydney University, 1966.