

to discover in one another not enemies and rivals but separated brothers with a common heritage to which they have brought their own human enrichments.

COLUMBA RYAN, O.P.

II. CATHOLIC SOCIAL WORKERS, AT NIJMEGEN

The Tenth World Congress of the Catholic International Union for Social Service was held at Nijmegen from August 23rd to 31st 1963. Preparations for the Congress had continued over the preceding two years, so that it was with long-stretched but eager anticipation that the participants arrived at Nijmegen on the Friday. The Congress opened on the Saturday morning with a splendid gathering of social workers and administrators, and teachers in schools of social work from forty-two nations. A telegram of good wishes was received from the Holy Father, to whom the Congress united in sending a message of affection and loyal greetings. The Dutch hierarchy, Government and the Municipality of Nijmegen were represented on the platform and welcomed by Professor Georges Hahn, the President of C.I.U.S.S.

The theme of the Congress was 'Social Service and Human Equilibrium' and an impressive programme had been planned to view this subject from many angles. Eight lectures were given in the plenary sessions and participants were divided into twelve main study groups, to work on the different aspects of the contribution social work could make to human equilibrium. These aspects fell into three main categories: social work and the problems of rapidly developing countries; social work and personal equilibrium; and the problems of specialised social work. As there were about 1200 participants, each main group had to be divided into sub-groups to facilitate discussion. The work of preparing material had been allotted to various different national groups. The British Guild of Catholic Professional Social Workers, which is affiliated to C.I.U.S.S., had been responsible for the material on medical social work, and Miss Z. T. Butrym, an English medical social worker and lecturer in social casework in the Applied Social Studies course at the London School of Economics, was leader for the study group on medical social work. A small but active group of Guild members were at the Congress and were spread among several different study groups, as well as the medical social work group.

The preparation and organisation of an international congress of this size is a formidable task. The Dutch Committee of C.I.U.S.S. are to be warmly congratulated on the way they accepted this challenge and saw it through. The language problem alone would have baffled a less enthusiastic and multilingual group than the Dutch. We were told that, although English and French were to have been the working languages (and were to a certain extent), the Dutch members had pleaded to widen the language range so as to make it possible for a more truly international group to meet together. Simultaneous translation into five languages (Dutch, French, English, Spanish and German) was provided

for all the plenary sessions, and official interpreters as well as able volunteers from among the participants were available for the group discussions. In addition to this formal programme there were many meetings and reunions of different groups of social workers who found common ground to meet, sharing a medium of communication through a shared language or professional interest. Nor was entertainment forgotten. There was an official reception by the City authorities, a concert on Sunday, a day free for excursions to see other parts of Holland, several social evenings and dinners, both for the social workers and school of social work sections. To crown and complete the Congress, Solemn High Mass was offered on the opening and closing days.

Inevitably, a review of the Congress at this stage must be more of the nature of personal impressions than a considered assessment of the quality of its achievements and its place in a series of notable Congresses held by C.I.U.S.S. since its foundation. The eight lectures of the plenary sessions will be translated into five languages and published by C.I.U.S.S. later. Serious and critical evaluation of their value in the development of social work thinking must wait till they can be read and studied at length. Even when delivered in one's own language, they were too full and intensive to do justice to in a review without seeing the text, too.

However, some general and tentative comment may not be out of place. All the lecturers were learned and eminent in their different fields. They were deeply concerned with the particular aspects of social service and human equilibrium which were the subject of their respective papers. They were well aware that social work and the principles on which it is based have an important contribution, both in the development of the community and the personal fulfilment of the individual. But some aspects of the general theme of the Congress presented a more difficult task than others. This was particularly evident where the fields in which the contribution of social work was less defined, because of either the magnitude of the field or its rapid development. Social work is essentially related to problems and problems are related to specific situations in life and society. It was therefore difficult for the lecturers to define with precision the role of social work where change and development in a country or community were moving rapidly on all fronts, too rapidly often for scientific study to keep pace with, or were overflowing in worldwide proportions. Judging by the final reports to the plenary session, this essential need to define the field in which social work is to function before evaluating the role it can play, affected the study groups too. Those which had a well charted field such as the different specialised branches of social work were able to define more clearly the contribution of social work, its limitations and its possible future development.

Professor Hahn, in his very thoughtful opening lecture, showed a deep awareness of this problem. He defined equilibrium as a dynamic force and not merely a process of adjustment. He reminded us that there are multiple realities in human needs and that total equilibrium is impossible. This, however, did not absolve social work from the responsibility not only to observe and study

human equilibrium, but to engage with active commitment in helping to achieve it in some measure. Dr Leemans, chairman of the Dutch committee, in his summing up, stressed too the necessity to see both the limitations and the possibilities of social work. At all times it would have to know when to withdraw and to let social institutions develop and function on their own. Thus at both beginning and end the need for a framework of reference for the social services and the contribution of social work was suggested. It is not surprising that sometimes the magnitude of the subject and the mass of material available overflowed any boundaries. Some valuable preliminary thinking was done and the need for further serious study demonstrated.

For C.I.U.S.S. itself, this Tenth Congress was in many ways a milestone. At the general meetings the voting representatives elected a new bureau and adopted some amendments to the constitution, which followed logically on its development and consolidation. But it was also a time for saying goodbye to a number of officers who have been pioneers and will be sadly missed. Professor Georges Hahn announced his intention to retire from the President's office. He was elected in 1958 to succeed Mlle Maria Baers, the Founder and first President of C.I.U.S.S., on her retirement. For five years he has given unsparingly of his wisdom and time and he will not be easily replaced. The Presidents of both the section for schools of social work and the section for social workers (Mlle Naegelen, France, and Miss Evelyn White, England) are retiring and the schools of social work section is losing its Secretary (Fraulein C. Boehle, Germany) as well. Both these presidents were first presidents of their sections and have put in much good work in consolidating their sections. But the retirement of the General Secretary, Mlle de Vuyst (Belgium), truly marks the end of an epoch. Mlle de Vuyst had worked with Mlle Baers from the beginning. They had shared the problems and hard work of those early days, as well as later successes, and both had nurtured the growth of C.I.U.S.S. with loving care and unsparing devotion. The congress united in its heartfelt thanks to all these retiring officers, but saying goodbye to Mlle de Vuyst had a very special poignancy.

One of the greatest values of any large international gathering lies in the informal contacts made and the friendships renewed. The week in Nijmegen was rich in these. However much our temperaments, experiences and contributions as social workers differed, there prevailed a great feeling of unity. This was not only the professional unity of social workers sharing a common goal and tasks, but a deeper and more far-reaching unity born of our shared Christian faith. It found its roots and its crowning expression in the Masses at the beginning and end of the Congress. In St Canisius Church social workers from many countries, of varying cultures and with many languages united in the sacrifice of the Mass. We understood each other in this and spoke as one in the Latin dialogue of the Mass. Each too had some part in a vernacular language he or she knew, as the Epistle was read in Dutch, the Gospel in English and the sermon was preached in French. For many this will be the most abiding experience of a memorable week.

ELIZABETH GLOYNE