

Day After Day - March 1935

By Dorothy Day

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Summary: Thoughts on Molly Maguires, labor organizing, a visit to the Cathedral in Toronto, the activities of young Communists, and the work of Catherine de Hueck. (DDLW #286).

At a friend's house this evening we met the grandchild of a saloon-keeper who had been hanged as a Molly Maguire in the days when unionization in the coal fields was just beginning down in Pennsylvania. Not long ago we read an article in the Herald Tribune magazine section which told how the U.S. Bureau of Mines had worked to protect the lives of miners by inspections and enforcing safety laws and the installation of safety devices. There was not a word in that article of the work the Molly Maguires did in protesting against hazardous working conditions, long hours, child labor and such wages that the textile industries grew up in mine regions to exploit the labor of the women and girls of miners who had to go to work because the men of the family were not paid enough to support them.

The Molly Maguires took to violence, and thus brought discredit on the labor movement. But woe to those men who drove them to violence. Those mine owners themselves are guilty in the sight of God for the murders perpetrated by the miners in the vicious fight for bare subsistence.

All that the public generally hears about these early labor troubles is what he reads in dime novels about the Pinkerton boys and how they broke up the organization.

We went up to Toronto this month on the invitation of Dr. Muckle, rector of the Cathedral, and spent a very enjoyable week. In illustrations of the idea of individual responsibility, he told me a story of a tinsmith working ten hours a day for \$44 a month, who sent money to different organizations to further their work, and gave all his spare time to his work as lay apostle.

The archbishop's palace in Toronto is a well-used place. We went there for dinner one night, and it is a good, bare place, anything but luxurious, with many rooms given over to meetings, discussion groups, workers' clubs, and offices. There was even a working-girls' club, where the young women were having a St. Valentine's Day party, cooking in the kitchen, which was attached to the clubrooms, and dancing to a radio afterward.

Speaking of church suppers, one of our young Communist relatives came in to see us the other day and talked of the unit dinner being given, cooked by the Ladies' Auxiliary. Also, together with all other members of the Communist party, he had been commissioned to sell chances on a five-dollar gold piece—the chance book looked dearly familiar. Also he had a book of stamps to be sold for the underground fund the Communist party is gathering together with the expectation that in the near future the party will be suppressed. All the younger members of the party look upon this prospect with joy. To work underground—to carry on secret propaganda and publishing and distributing “underground”—what fun! Even selling chances becomes an exciting adventure. We are very much opposed to giving them all this pleasure.

Friendship House, where we visited in Toronto, is a place much like our own offices here in New York. The atmosphere is very much the same, though their place is cleaner and quieter. The group which is running the place under the direction of Catherine de Hueck is engaged in propaganda activities among the children and workers in one of the poorest districts of Toronto, bringing the thought of the church to those who up to the present time have only been reached by Communists.

There are two connected houses which have been converted into reading rooms and dining rooms, and upstairs on one side there is a hospice for men and on the other for women. Plans are under way to open another house for boys, putting it under the protection of St. John Bosco. The other two houses are called St. Joseph's house and St. Teresa's house.

Right now mimeographed leaflets like those put out by THE CATHOLIC WORKER are being distributed throughout the city.

This very active group of workers has been distributing two thousand copies of THE CATHOLIC WORKER every month, but now the order has been increased to four thousand.