

Day by Day / The Rural Life Conference

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The Catholic Worker, November 1935, 3.

Summary: Describes a trip to a meeting of the Catholic Rural Life Conference and hopes the movement will revolutionize Catholic thought in America as Lenin's did in Russia. Notes the Catholic Worker's support of such means as adult education, study clubs, forming co-operatives, and propagandizing. (DDLW #294).

In reading the life of Lenin written by his widow, we were very much impressed some time ago at her account of what she terms a memorable meeting which was held in Paris one Sunday afternoon. Lenin had been living in exile all over Europe and gathering groups together wherever he could. It was just before the Russian revolution, and the meeting that took place was made up of some *forty people*.

We thought of that meeting of the people who were so soon to revolutionize a huge country and influence the thought of the entire world, while we attended the meeting last month of the Rural Life Conference in Rochester, New York. Considering the size of most gatherings, religious and political, that meeting was small. There were probably under a thousand people there, but among those people were leaders of Catholic thought in America, and their findings and the work which will result from those findings will probably, over a greater space of time perhaps, do much to revolutionize Catholic thought in America.

Selections from the printed speeches that were available are reproduced elsewhere in this issue of THE CATHOLIC WORKER which is dedicated to rural life and cooperatives. Soon all the speeches delivered at the conference will be available in printed form, and will make a valuable pamphlet on the rural life movement among Catholics in America.

One of the speeches which was not available was that of Father James J. Tompkins, parish priest of Reserve Mines, Nova Scotia. He told of the co-operative movement in Nova Scotia, how it began with adult education and study clubs and proceeded to the actual work of establishing consumers' and producers' co-operatives.

Father Tompkins is an old friend of THE CATHOLIC WORKER and we recall the time when he visited New York a year ago, and he and Peter Maurin started a conversation at two o'clock in the afternoon which proceeded for twelve hours. It is true that it was interrupted by a meeting that evening (it was on a Sunday and Peter was due at a gathering in Brooklyn) but Father Tompkins was so interested in the talk he and Peter were having that he proceeded to the meeting with his guest and they returned afterward to continue discussing until early the following morning.

In his talk at the Rural Life Conference, Father Tompkins called attention to the article, "Bourgeois Colleges" which appeared in the October Issue of THE CATHOLIC WORKER.

Unfortunately the program was prepared too early to include a talk by Peter Maurin, but in addition to many discussions with the leaders of the movement, he was able to hold several meetings after the conference. He also spoke to Nazareth College where the Sisters of St. Joseph teach.

Dan Connolly, one of the Catholic workers from New York, got to the conference by hitchhiking and returned to New York on a truck, the ride being arranged by members of the Campion Propaganda Committee of Rochester.

The latter committee which entertained the members of the Catholic Worker staff while they were in Rochester, has just been recently formed. There are four members now, all of them extremely active, distributing the paper, speaking before schools and organizations, and organizing study clubs throughout the diocese which will deal with sociological problems.

The Committee is made up of John Lennon, Martin Rooney, Barry Wilson and John Fox. Anyone in Rochester who wishes to participate in the work can get in touch with them through the Columbus Civic Center.

Summary: Includes reflections on life of Lenin as related by his wife. Tells a little of the Sept. 1935 of the Rural Life Conference in Rochester, New York. Day writes of Father James J. Tompkins of Reserve Mines, Nova Scotia, and his cooperative movements there. She relates more than 12-hour discussion the year before, which Fr. Tompkins had with Peter Maurin. Relates founding members of Campion Propaganda Committee of Rochester, including John Lennon, Martin Rooney, Barry Wilson, and John Fox.