

Seattle, Portland, and Points South

Dorothy Day

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Summary: Lists all the people and groups she visited and spoke to in Seattle and Portland, describing their projects to help the poor and the worker. (DDLW #355).

What a mess my notebook gets into while I am travelling! And how hard it is to be doing things on the run. Here I am waiting for Cole Jackman, business agent of the Longshoremen to call for me to take me around the docks of Portland, and snatching at the moment to send back a message for the paper. Even prowling around my notebook is a difficulty. A pile of visiting cards fall out. One of them is the card of a young Communist I am to look up in San Francisco. Her sister is a Catholic in Seattle and an ardent worker in the Legion of Mary. Here is the address of Ford Tuohy's aunt in San Francisco. Ford left his job in Seattle to help show me around the town, and he and his friend John Givins, who fought over in Spain for eighteen months were pretty steady companions.

And here is the card of G. M. Zucco, who is an official of the Bethlehem Steel Company in Seattle at whose house I had dinner and a general free-for-all discussion about the labor movement and race prejudice and *The Catholic Worker*. Right after that dinner I went to a meeting of the colored group in Seattle at the home of Mrs. Bowns, wife of a longshoreman who distributes the paper for us along the docks and puts one on every boat leaving the port. The room was filled and we had one of the best meetings of the trip so far. A white longshoreman of Seattle is distributing the paper for us in the hospitals where he has as his particular Work of Mercy, the visiting of those who are laid up injured in hospitals. There are thirty of them there at the present time. Stevedoring is a hazardous occupation.

Cowboy C. W.

Also in my notebook is a pamphlet, the safety code drawn up by the employers before the big 1934 strike which they used in court cases to prove that they had one, but which the union had a hard time forcing them to live up to.

Turning to the pages devoted to Seattle, I find first the notes I took during my conversation with Bishop Shaughnessy whom I visited as I arrived, and again

just before I left Seattle. He has generously given our group, which is made up of twenty members of a study club, permission to go ahead and start a House of Hospitality and he told me about the work already accomplished in Seattle by the St. Vincent de Paul Society. At this suggestion I visited the Salvage Bureau which has its headquarters in a group of buildings on the property of Peter Empt who wears a ten-gallon black hat and cowboy boots, a holster and revolver and makes his own bullets. He has a ranch on the side as a hobby. He is a generous soul and offers to help us get started in Seattle.

St. Vincent de Paul

The Salvage Bureau puts up and feeds about sixty men and on two occasions I went over and spoke to them about *The Catholic Worker* and the land movement as a way out of unemployment. Sixteen of the men go to the 500 acres around St. Edward's seminary and work there during the day clearing out underbrush, and in the wood yard the men work chopping wood for poor families ministered to by the St. Vincent de Paul

The Bishop also told me about Peter Fitzgerald who is sacristan of the church down near Skid Row, who frequents that thoroughfare to drag the lame, the halt and the blind back to the Church. The Ozanam Home is another project of the Conference which I have not heard of worked out any place else in the United States. There a group of men who have small pensions combine their resources and live together in a cooperative hostel, managed and directed by themselves.

It was due to the public statements of Bishop Shaughnessy that the anti-labor legislation such as passed in Oregon was defeated in the State of Washington. The Bishop takes an active interest in the affairs of the unions in his city.

How to Keep Busy

It was good to see our old friend, Fr. Reinhold, again and convey to him all the messages of the New York group who knew him so well. Stationed at the Cathedral as he is, I could drop in often and pay a visit and tell him of my meetings from day to day. The meetings were full of contrast, ranging from the CIO Industrial Council, the Sacred Heart School, the Seminary, St. Martin's (Benedictine) College, the sodality of Seattle College, luncheon with the editors of the AF of L paper, visits with the various leaders of the labor movement, the Workers Alliance, a visit to Hooverville.

I spoke also to the Newman Club of Washington University and later in the week to all the sociology classes there, to the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women, to the sisters of the Holy Names who teach in all the schools.

And after four and five meetings a day I went to the home of Jane Prouty who was my hostess, and enjoyed the happy hospitality of these friends of the paper.

Andy took two weeks off looking for a job to drive me everywhere, and through them it was possible to cover all the ground I did while in Seattle.

Portland

Visits are all too short, and now I am in Portland, staying with Catherine Temple, who has a little house on the side of Mt. Tabor. I arrived on the eve of the Feast of the Transfiguration, and since the Transfiguration is our parish church on Mott street I felt much at home.

Her front windows look out on Mt. Hood (when not enveloped in Oregon mist, as they call their downpours here), and to one side there is Mt. St. Helens. In the garden out in front peach trees frame the view. Already in February the hepatica, the daffodils, the Japanese quince is in bloom. Back east the snow lies on the ground; they are still frozen fast in winter. Spring must seem far off to them, but here it is with us. I am getting more than my share of spring this year, though we got more than our share of winter at Mott street during January.

Here in Portland there are labor meetings, meetings in schools, visits to union halls, and to Mt. Angel, the Benedictine Monastery, a visit to the crater of Mt. Tabor, the only extinct volcano within a city. There was the funeral of the widow of Senator Lane I attended, paying respect, too, to the memory of one of the willful six who voted against the war back in 1917. There are visits with Munroe Sweetland, secretary of the Oregon Commonwealth Federation, affiliated with the Labor Non-Partisan League, and a power here on the West Coast, and many discussions as to labor legislation and legislation for racial minorities, such as the Negroes and the Filipinos. The latter are members of the Cannery Workers Union, the leadership of which is Communist. And they are nominally all Catholic.

Here in the Northwest the same trouble of unemployment and poverty is present, but there is land and plenty of room on it for the unemployed if they can get a hold of it. There is a survey of the Northwest in this month (March) issue of *Fortune*, and I came across another in an old copy of *Life* for June 5, last year. The Northwest is a region which presents opportunities.

Next week I will be in Spokane, then back here for a few days making almost a three weeks' visit in Portland, and then on to San Francisco. This is a long pilgrimage, and I beg our readers to remember me in their prayers.

Although the population of Oregon is only 10 percent Catholic, the city of Portland has a fine center for the jobless in the Archbishop Blanchet's Shelter, just off Burnside Avenue, which is the Skid Row of the city. Around the corner is Ericson's, which used to have the longest bar in the world, patronized by loggers, and in the neighborhood there are many of the small hotels and missions which make this street so like our Bowery.

The Shelter boasts a large reading room where the men can hang out from ten at night; showers and towels (and they have only lost three in the last two years); a store room where the men park their packs; offices; a chapel beautiful in its warm simplicity, and named the Chapel of Christ the Worker, and a literature and pamphlet center run by the Catholic Truth Society and presided over by Catherine Temple, who visited the New York *Catholic Worker* for three months last year, and who is our representative in Portland. It was good to see the American and the English *Catholic Workers* pasted in a window display when I first visited the place.

Farm Venture

Father John E. Larkin is in charge of the work, and he and two other priests, Father Martin Thielan and Fr. Francis Schaeffers give talks twice a week to the men. When the weather is good, throughout winter and summer they speak from the street corner, with a loud speaker and when it rains there are indoors. Once a year there is a retreat.

The building is owned and thought part of it is at present rented, there are plans afoot to run a breakfast line such as we have in New York and start a dormitory upstairs.

Already Fr. Larkin has inherited a farm of 150 acres from Father Le Martin, an old friend of the CW who dies a few months ago. He used to write to us about this land, suggested the *Catholic Worker* group, when one was formed in Portland, aid in starting a farming commune for the unemployed. The farm is over a hundred miles away, down the coast.

The priests engaged in this work have long been friends of the CW. Father Larkin lunching with us last year at Mott street, and Father Thielen helping in distributing papers during a strike here a few years ago.