

Day After Day - February 1940

Dorothy Day

The Catholic Worker, February 1940, 1, 4.

Summary: Visiting Catholic Worker houses in Baltimore and Philadelphia, she reflects on the part everyone plays in the whole movement and feels a sense of solidarity. Notes how they suffer from the cold in New York. Tells of a visit to the headquarters of the National Maritime Union and their fine reading room. (DDLW #354).

Visiting in Baltimore this month, I felt how necessary it is to emphasize our fellowship in the work. I should have liked to gather together the group on S. Paca St., the twenty-five of them and talk to them about what the whole work is, their part in it; that they are truly playing a part in it, though perhaps they do not see it. They were all busy feeding those who came in while I was there and I had to catch a train to Philadelphia so that there was not time. But on the train I wrote the Aims and Purposes ([page 7](#)) thinking how necessary it was to constantly hold up these aims and purposes for us all.

It is good to think of the men in all the houses who cook, wash dishes, scrub, launder, ministering to others—all of them part of the *Catholic Worker* movement. To try to convey to them the glimpse of the “whole,” this is a hard job. We all see only part. We all see through a glass darkly. Some see more clearly than others. Our joy in the work increases with our vision of the whole. Just as when a man, using his whole body in his work, is in better health than when he uses just head or hand alone. Workers must be scholars and scholars workers, as Peter says.

Heaven is when we see God face to face, when we shall see Him as He is. Now it is only a glimpse, a suggestion of light, of joy, of unity, of completion.

Jim and John

John Doebel and Jim Rogan are running the House of Hospitality, St. Anthony’s House, in Baltimore, on 435 S. Paca. They have been feeding hundreds, three times a day, for months now, men of all races, colors and creeds. John has been working in a radio factory, paying the rent with his salary, also the gas and light. We are persuading him to give up his job and give his full time to the work. He most truly has a vocation for poverty. St. Joseph or St. Anthony will take care of the rent. Jim Rogan has written articles for the *Commonweal* and the *Christian Social Action* and is getting out a good mimeographed bulletin. He puts in full time at the house. It is good when the groups get out these bulletins and send them to each other, building up a sense of solidarity, a realization of the Mystical Body. Besides

getting ideas from one another, we get facts and news, such as that of the new hospice Bishop Hartley started in Columbus which takes in eighty men.

John and Jim put me on the train for Philadelphia, feeding me, giving me a bag of fig newtons for dessert on the train, and paying my fare.

The Cold

It is very cold tonight. There is a cold wind sweeping through the house. Outside the snow is falling. I wonder how they are keeping warm in the other houses, up in Burlington, for instance. There was already snow on the mountains when I was up there in November. Donald and Norman Langlois, one feels, are always ready for any hardship, and no amount of cold can dampen those ardent spirits.

I recall, on a night like this, the story of a saint, who was so filled with a burning love of God that he melted the snow around him, and others were warmed by the flame of his love. A model for all our fellow workers these days. How we fall down on the job of bearing hardships patiently! We are all cold in New York these days. The rooms are cold, my bedroom was forty with a fire in it. The halls are icy. By noon oil stoves have warmed the offices and then it is easier to work. By night the house has so warmed up that it is hard to go to bed, to leave the warmth for the icy sheets.

Most of the time one is glad to be suffering in some small way, to share the sufferings of those one loves, the poor of Christ. At the same time, it is hard to restrain one's shudderings and groanings. By now we all have the grimy look that accompanies winter in the tenements.

Brophy Biography

Down in Washington to speak and spent the night as usual with Anita Brophy. Some months back I spent several nights there and John let me read part of a book he had written about his life in the labor movement. He has not worked on it for some years, what with the turbulent growth of the CIO these last years. But what I read impressed me enormously. It has a sense of leisure about it, the writing is simple and honest. There are unforgettable pictures of life in the Pennsylvania mining regions. Being a Catholic, John has a sense of perspective. His great love for Newman has always impressed me. Of all Catholic writers, Newman has moved him the most, and he is always quoting him to illustrate a point, and if you gave him a chance he'd start reading him aloud to you!

N.M.U. Library

Speaking of labor leaders, Joe Curran has reason to be proud of the latest development at the NMU headquarters this month, Prof. Downey of Fordham University and I, in order to see the new library and reading room built up by the union. Prof. Downey teaches history at Fordham and Labor History at the Labor College held there Monday nights.

It would be good if all those who taught in our Catholic Labor Schools or in the departments of sociology and economics (priest and laymen) would visit this union hall to see what organization is doing along the water front.

The NMU is a good union to study because they have only been in existence for three years, and have had to start out from scratch with a fight on their hands not only with the ship owners but with corrupt union officials who had paralyzed the old union, and with controversy last year within the new union.

In 1936 they occupied a small loft on Eleventh Ave., a dingy little headquarters for a union with a membership which now numbers sixty thousand. Now they have a building down the street which has separate floors for the different divisions, large hiring halls where the men can sit and wait for the dispatcher to call their numbers, offices for the officials and one whole floor of a building which takes up half a block, made over into a reading room and a library which can compete with any college library for dignity and comfort. Right now there are about three thousand books on the shelves and many magazines and pamphlets. Deep easy chairs have been donated by various ships. There are reading lamps, writing tables and ship models made by the men. The department is presided over by Steve Harvey who was formerly Washington representative of the union. (They need more books.)

We visited the various offices, and had a good talk with Curran in his big new office which looks out on two streets. Outside, the river was grey and dull. There was a hint of snow in the air. A big liner was docked, directly across the street. Inside the room looked warm and luxurious, and Joe looked with pride at the big new desk that was being taped preparatory for its glass top. That office, the desk, the library, typified to the men their dignity as organized workers.

I would have been fearful of other things that desk might typify (I had seen too many successful labor leaders become removed from their men) had it not been for the Thanksgiving dinner at which I was a guest. Curran, Smith and other officers of the union presided all day, sharing with the men a feast of real significance.

That day I could not help but think how different was the position of Joseph P. Ryan, head of the longshoremen, who has had a position of trust and power for many years. Where are the hiring halls, the recreation rooms, the library, the communal repasts, the Works of Mercy performed by the prison and hospital delegates, in the longshoremen's union? Are Ryan's offices open to the rank and file? Ryan is more often to be found at the tables of the rich than with his men.

After this issue goes to press I am setting out for the Northwest, visiting Portland, Seattle, Bellingham, Spokane, etc., and then going down to California. Letters addressed to me in New York will be forwarded to me along the route.