

# Short Trip To Near-by C. W. Groups

Dorothy Day

*The Catholic Worker*, October 1940, 1, 2.

*Summary: Admires the work of Ade Bethune's "folk school" in Newport, Rhode Island, calling it "one of the most interesting cells of the Catholic Worker." Describes the work of nearby Catholic Worker farms. Gives a talk where she stresses that the evils in the world are not inevitable, are not from God but from man's misuse of free will. (DDLW #367).*

September. I visit Ade Bethune at Newport on my way up to Boston and Upton to speak. Ade has a house now across the street from the studio, and there is a real craft school up here. It is cold and clear out, after a day of heavy rain. We went to Mass at the Cenacle and after breakfast, Fr. Woods and John Cort came to the studio, and while we sat cutting up rags for hooked rugs, we discussed war, conscription, labor unions. It is hard not to be over-vigorous and even exhausting in opposing others in what we consider false and harmful convictions.

We had a delicious lunch of potatoes, baked dressing and tomatoes, brown bread and tea. Ade and one of her apprentices live on \$1.50 a week each for food.

## Basic Culture

Here are the beginnings of a real craft college, the "folk school" that Peter is always talking about. Mr. Benson is taking apprentices and so is Ade. Ade and her crowd are doing book covers, wood cuts, book plates, engravings, wood carvings and many other things. They have decorated the walls of their studio and the house across the street and have built benches and beds. Ade has designed a most ingenious bed with drawers in the bottom, a compartment for blankets and a sail cloth top which suffices in summer but which needs a mattress in winter.

There is a good library in the studio and there is a good selection of recorded music, so that classes this year include folk dancing as well as metaphysics which one of the professors from the Priory teaches once a week.

Here surrounding Ade is one of the most interesting cells of The Catholic Worker. It is close to the Portsmouth Priory (our Fr. Woods is there who spent his summer at the farm at Easton) so the ideals of the Benedictines prevail.

This group has close contact with other CW groups too. Ade travels a good deal (in spite of her teaching one day a week at the Priory) so she has been able to decorate as well as speak at most of the CW houses. Representatives of other houses have visited the Newport

cell and there are occasional meetings of all the New England friends at St. Benedict's farm, Upton, Mass.

Although the works of mercy are performed individually by the persons making up the group, there is no breadline nor hospice, the emphasis is placed on the craft school idea. Since their finances are not exhausted by spending everything for food, there is some money for paint and tools and everything presents a scrubbed and industrious air.

## **Boston Report**

Last night the Boston group held a meeting at Pius Eleventh hall, which is behind the cooperative book store of the same name. Clare McGrath is in charge of the store, which sponsors a series of lectures on Saturday afternoons. There was a good crowd and a friendly one. I spoke on Peace and Conscientious Objection. There are so many who hate war and who are opposed to peacetime conscription who do not know what they can do, who have no sense of united effort, and who will sit back and accept with resignation the evils which are imposed upon us. This is not working for God's will to be done on earth as it is in Heaven. This is accepting the evils in the world as inevitable and looking toward Heaven as a haven, a "pie in the sky" attitude. God did not make the evils, but man in his misuse of his free will.

The Boston work is going along well. Jane Marra is to a great extent recovered and can be at the house every day. Harry Dunne is in charge of the house and aside from small usual upsets, things are going well. They are broke of course, so the money collected at the meeting came in most handy.

## **St. Benedict's Farm**

For the first time I slept in the Magees' house at the Upton farm. It is made from an old school house for which they paid fifty dollars, and three of the rooms are finished. Much work remains to be done, of course. We talked about the building, the price of lumber, the cost of cattle feed, the idea of community, the conflict of authority and freedom, and then to bed early. Katherine Ahearn of the Boston group had come out with me and we got off the Boston-Worcester bus at Westboro and walked to Upton where we got a cab to the farm. Katherine stayed up in the community house with Marion and Bill Roche. Their little house is half finished, but the work of getting in the potatoes and corn is holding up the building. The cellar is already full of potatoes and apples.

The next day there was a meeting which lasted all afternoon. About two hundred people came and we sat out in a meadow near the house and Father Wood, Ade Bethune and I talked. I drove back that night with them to Providence.

## **Our Lady of the Moor**

Another new farming commune twenty minutes from Providence, but in the Fall River diocese. Mary Benson is the prime mover in the enterprise and at present there is one Negro family

living there, but prospects of two more and two white families. The man of the family is a red cap in Providence and the wife carries on the business of the farm. There are two children. They are educated people, the man with a knowledge of languages. The wife's grandfather went to Yale, her brother to Howard. Susanne, the wife, describes herself as "small but mighty," and she is doing mighty things on the farm. The house had to be rebuilt, one floor taken down and an additional room built on. A carpenter goes out every Sunday, works with them and shows them the work to do during the week. There are only ten acres but the cost was only \$450. They are studying rammed-earth, stone, and wood houses, and the book on the "Mary Arnold Houses" at Nova Scotia is proving most useful. Peters' "House of Field Stone" is also one of their text books. One of the projects for the fall is to build a little stone chapel and with the help of all their friends, a donkey to drag the field stone, and sledges, they hope to get the foundation in before frost. There is a goat on the farm, and a kid, and three rabbits. There is a good well, and pear, apple, plum and peach trees. Although the little farm is on a dirt road, two miles away from the highway, there are plenty of passersby to take the papers and pamphlets which they have in the rack which hangs on a tree by the roadside. (They were much cheered by Carmen's story of the Illinois farm.)