

Day by Day Account of Editor's Travels Thru West and North

Dorothy Day

The Catholic Worker, December 1935, 1, 2.

Summary: Tells of a long bus trip and talks in New York, Chicago, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Canada. Is impressed with the work of Virgil Michel at St. John's College in Minnesota where he has started a school of social studies—"the theory of the personalist revolution must be studied." (DDLW #295).

** Large Audiences Testify to Widespread Interest in Paper; Campion Groups are Formed. **

Started on a long trek west early on a Sunday morning. The bus was packed and just across from me were two Russians. I know their nationality by the fact that they were breakfasting on black bread soaked in vodka. They poured the liquor carefully on their bread and ate with gusto, and having finished this appetizer, they proceeded to consume smoked salmon on onion rolls and dill pickles. The smell was delightful. (I mean it, too.)

An outstanding example of personal responsibility and hospitality which we found in Rochester was Mrs. L.A. Weider. She lives on the outskirts of the town, in Brighton, and told us with enthusiasm of the hundreds of quarts of berries she picked this summer from her few acres, the jars of beans, etc., she was able to do up.

She has always gone on the principle that what one had, one must share. She has six children, and a few grand children, and she has recently adopted another child. She has gone in for hospitality in a big way, and she hereby invites any and all of the Catholic Workers to stay with her whenever they are in Rochester or passing through.

"Even if I have to sleep on the floor myself," she said, "And many a time I've done it. We've had this house for nine years, but before that we had very little space and we often had to give up our beds to others."

Mrs. Weider is aiming to pay The Catholic Worker a visit in New York and spend all her time cooking for us. Just yesterday, she said, she cooked three

turkeys and a great dinner for a church affair, and she would like nothing better than to arrange a menu for the Catholic Worker community.

Traveled all day from Rochester to Cleveland. The grape country through New York state is beautiful and one rest stop by the side of a brook was memorable for its beauty. There was a delicious silence after the constant noise of travel, and it was a silence only broken by the tinkling of the little stream over pebbles as it made its way through the vineyards.

In Cleveland I was shaken out of my bed by the earthquake. The hotel I put up in right near the bus terminal was a tall narrow one and I was on the top floor. I was awakened by a fearful clattering of the windowpanes, the truly terrible noise of the elevator cables clanging, and the smaller but just as ominous a noise of coat hangers clashing together in the closet. The whole hotel rocked as though it were in a high wind, and from all the rooms terrified occupants rushed out in their night clothes, all the way down into the lobby. If it had not been for the distraction offered by "Out of the Whirlwind" by Wm. Joseph Walsh, an engrossing novel, I should have been hard put to it for the rest of the night to sleep. As it was I stayed up until three reading and then was able to fall asleep. Many of the theatrical people staying in the hotel remained up over night, afraid to go back to bed.

Mass at St. John's cathedral in the morning – All Saints Day.

In Chicago the next night just long enough to sleep, and assist at a six o'clock mass at St. Mary's. The bus left at 7:30 and the trip through the lake country was delightful. I saw cabins chinked with plaster, one of them with the cooking utensils hanging on the outside as in Mexico.

A group of students from the Newman club who make up the Campion Propaganda committee of that section met me late in the evening when we pulled in and put me up over night. I spoke the next morning at St. Paul's Seminary where Mr. Neudecker has long been a Catholic worker. These young men will be priests who have rural parishes all through the north here, and we pray that they will further the rural life movement.

Leaving St. Paul the next morning the rain turned to snow which continued all day, making the roads slippery and skiddy. The bus had to proceed slowly and we enjoyed the stormy trip. A young man sat next to me, Francis Sullivan

by name, who was going out to North Dakota to work on the power lines. We conversed on The Catholic Worker and its aims. The bus took on and let off farmers clad in mackinaws, high boots and pull down caps.

Late at night we arrived at Grand Forks, North Dakota, where Father Arrell met me and took me to the hospital of the Sisters of St. Joseph, where I met with kind hospitality. I spoke the next evening at the town hall, where a dozen Communists enlivened the meeting by many questions, most of them dealing with fascism and the united front. The Newman Club of the University of North Dakota sponsored this meeting, and some of the young men there have formed themselves into a Campion group. Among the seven there is one Philippine boy, which makes twenty-three nationalities among us.

Father Arrell, who teaches ethics in the university, has long done splendid work among the students, circulating weekly leaflets and sponsoring a drama group which puts on a Passion play every year. This year they are going to have two companies, one of them touring the state. Last year seventy people took part, fifteen of them making up a Capella choir. It is a hobby of Father Arrell to collect Passion plays.

Set out at 11:30 o'clock that night to reach Winnipeg at four the next morning, where Mrs. Jordan and daughter, Father Mac-Isaac and Mr. Tonkin, head of the lecture bureau, met me at that early hour. A great deal of distribution of The Catholic Worker has already been done among the workers in this city during the past six months, and a Campion group is formed here for distribution of leaflet and for propaganda work.

While in Winnipeg I was the guest of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, who have done much pioneer work through the Northwest.

St. John's College, in Minnesota, is a most impressive place. The monastery is the largest in the world, sending out missionaries all over the country. I was the guest of Father Virgil Michel there and yesterday morning he showed me all over the place. It started with just a few monks and now they have a tremendous plant. We visited the kitchens, where the German Franciscan nuns take care of the needs of the community and college; the flour mill, where the grain from their own acres is ground; the butcher shop and the herds of steers and pigs, and barns where there are eighty cows; and the Liturgical press, which we make

good use of back in New York. I spoke there to the students, seminarians and faculty, and they want Peter Maurin to come out and spend a week with them.

Social Studies

Father Virgil has started a school of social studies at St. John's which takes up such subjects as war and peace, the state, labor and money. Since, as Lenin says, there can be no revolution without a theory of revolution, we hold it equally true that the theory of the personalist revolution must be studied in order that the ideas may be disseminated all over the country. And men will act according to the way they think and their thinking will be influenced by the teachers who come from St. John's.

St. Benedict's College for Women is just four miles away, and there I met our old friend Bishop Busch and was very happy to see him again. I visited the department where Gothic vestments are made and the sisters promised to contribute to our needs when we have our farming commune started and are able to build a chapel. The sisters here are also very appreciative of the work of Peter Maurin; I was able to promise them a visit from him in February.

Right now I am in Minneapolis, where we have long had many friends. Tomorrow I shall set out for La Crosse, where there is a conference of the editors of college papers and where I will meet David Host from Marquette, who spent a month with us last summer in New York, and Nina Polcyn, who accompanied us to the scene of the Bremen riot and who fled with me down the street when the police were cracking heads in all directions.

Home Again

The above copy was sent back but did not arrive in time for the November issue of the paper.

To complete the story of the trip I talked about The Catholic Worker, its aims and purposes in La Crosse, Milwaukee, Niagara falls, Ottawa and Montreal before arriving back in New York. There were friends everywhere and many of these friends were anxious to associate themselves with the Campion Propaganda Committee and help the paper in the communities in which they lived.

Not the least interesting part of the trip was the bus-riding and the friends made during the long fifteen-hour trips from city to city.

Between Cleveland and Chicago there was a Negro friend who had been raised in St. Mark's parish, New York, and was moving to Chicago, where he had no

friends. “He had been a Catholic,” he said. And that he might still be a Catholic, we passed him on in Chicago to Dr. Falls, our Midwest correspondent.

Then in Canada there was that copper miner on his way through from Saskatchewan to Nova Scotia, and we talked of co-operatives, and the Catholic philosophy of labor, and he asked that the paper be sent to him and to friends back in Winnipeg.