

Maurin's Program

Dorothy Day

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Summary: Outlines Peter Maurin's three step program of social reconstruction (round table discussions, houses of hospitality, farm colonies) led by the laity working out the principles in the Popes' encyclicals on social justice. (DDLW #266).

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FRANCES PERKINS, Secretary of Labor, says that she is grateful for every plan which is sent in suggesting a method of reconstruction. Like the government, THE CATHOLIC WORKER is interested in hearing what the Catholic layman has to say. It offers itself as a mouthpiece and it pledges its cooperation in the working out of the principles in the Popes' encyclicals on social justice.

We believe that there are many groups of Catholic men and women throughout the country who are organizing in study groups and who would like some way to communicate with one another. There, are many platforms and programs and it is not the intention of the paper to embrace any one of these but to give space to all.

Peter Maurin (whose name we misspelled in the last issue) has his program which is embodied in his contributions this month. Because his program is specific and definite he thinks it better to withdraw his name from the editorial board and continue his contact with the paper as a contributor. "As an editor," he says, "it will be assumed that I sponsor or advocate any reform suggested in the pages of THE CATHOLIC WORKER. I would rather definitely sign my own work, letting it be understood what I stand for.

"My program stands for three things. Round Table Discussions, and I hope to hold the first at the Manhattan Lyceum the last Sunday of June. Why the Manhattan Lyceum? Yes, I know that it is the place usually chosen by the Communists and radicals for their meetings. But it is cheap. We can have a hall holding 150 people for eight hours for ten dollars. I have paid a deposit of three. I have no more money now but I hope to beg the rest. I hope everybody will come to this meeting. I want Communists, radicals, priests and laity. I want everyone to set forth his views. I want the clarification of thought.

“The next step in the program is houses of hospitality. In the Middle Ages it was an obligation of the bishops to provide houses of hospitality or hospices for the wayfarer. They are especially necessary now, and necessary to my program as half-way houses. I am hoping that some one will donate a house, rent free, for six months so that a start may be made. A priest will be at the head of it and men gathered through our round table discussions will be recruited to work in the houses cooperatively and eventually be sent out to farm colonies or agronomic universities. Which comes to the third step in my program. People will have to go back to the land. The machine has displaced labor, the cities are overcrowded. The land will have to take care of them.

“I am not saying that my program is for everyone, it is for those who choose to embrace it. I am not opposed to private property with responsibility. But those who own private property should never forget that it is a trust.”