

COMMUNITY LEADERS (1) **Rev. F. F. Byatt**

In the five years of his ministry of the two Methodist Churches in Williamstown, Rev. F. F. Byatt, by his energy of character, tolerance, and broad sympathies has exerted a beneficent influence over his fellow citizens—and beyond.

Mr. Byatt arrived in Australia with his parents from England in 1900. His father, Mr. John Byatt, who had served the London County Council schools, was engaged by the Victorian Education Dept. to organise manual training and sloyd work throughout the State Schools. Rev. F. F. Byatt, who grew up in Hawthorn, went to a State School, to the Melb. High School and the University. He studied civil engineering at Queen's College, of which the late Dr. Sugden was then master, and gained his degree.

In 1921 Mr. Byatt went to Malaya where he was Assistant Superintendent of Surveys for the Federated Malay States Government. He soon familiarised himself with the native language, and carried out his duties in Malacca, Juaialips (Pahang) and in Batu Gajah (Perak). Chief objects of the surveys were in connection with water conservation, mining areas, rubber plantations, and other private properties, and the issues of titles.

During the first world war Mr. Byatt had a commission in Australia with the senior cadets, later with the University Rifles and later still with the field engineers. He resigned his commission to enlist in the AIF, spending some months at the Broadmeadows camp as a marching-in sergeant, then sailing with the 13th General Service reinforcements. He was allocated to the 13th Batt. On the signing of the armistice he was immediately drafted into the Education service, returning through America.

He became associated with the Methodist Church in Hawthorn, entering into the youth activities, and becoming a local preacher and Sunday School teacher. He became an officer of the district union of the Christian Endeavour movement, and was later vice-chairman of the Student Christian Movement in the University of Melbourne. Travel in connection with the AIF, and participation in an international student conference in England led to the development of very definite ideas regarding Christian international relationships.

During 1923 he married Miss Katherine Tuck, a teacher, of Wiltshire England, at Wesley Church, Singapore. Mrs. Byatt shared a most interesting life of travel through village and jungle as work parties were regularly visited. Though unable for health reasons to undertake any particular duties in the work of the church, she has been his most devoted partner in all his work. They have a grown-up family for whom home still forms the centre. The oldest son Frank (BOE) is a civil engineer with the M.M.B.W. The second boy, Robert, is a dairy share farmer at Lockington, while the third son, Noel, is doing a medical course at the University. The daughter, Muriel, is now a sister at the Women's Hospital.

In 1925 Mr. Byatt resigned from civil service and entered the ministry, offering for work overseas, where his technical knowledge would be of use in mission stations and educational institutions in the Pacific. He spent 1926 on the staff of the Central Hall, Greenwich, gaining experience in a great city mission, and making international contacts in London. For domestic reasons his plans for overseas mission work were not realised, and he served at Sea Lake, Nathalia and in Hobart and Westbury (Tasmania), where he was a member of the panel for morning service broadcasts. From there in 1941 he came to Essendon where he became Toc H Padre.

Mr. Byatt's sense of urgent need of a basis for international understanding has led him into the wide interests of membership of the Reconstruction Commission of the old League of Nations, and to a foundation member of the Council of Australia - India - Pakistan Association. He is chairman of the

Victorian International Refugee Council as the successor to Professor H. A. Woodruff. His earlier association with interdenominational youth Mr. Byatt regards as essential to the ecumenical outlook for a world unity in fellowship of the churches.

FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCHES.

In addition to the care of the two churches (Electra and John St.) which he considers of paramount importance, he became the leader of International Fellowship in Williamstown. He has been chairman of the local council of churches for two years, during which United Christian Witness weeks were held in the town hall. In 1948 he became chairman of the first branch of World Council of Churches to be formed in Melbourne. He is a member of a number of committees of the Methodist Conference, which he represents on the Council for Christian Education.

Through boyhood friendships made, common to both his State School and Sunday School days, he became keenly interested in movements designed to promote equality of opportunity and social justice for every member of society as the inevitable outcome of the Christian way of life.

Mr. Byatt has found the personal interest in the care of a congregation, with all that that signifies, the most satisfying service to which one can give his life. He takes a particular interest in youth, reflected in his churches, and seen in his work in the two State and the High Schools. He sees three irreducible functionings of the Church:

1. **PUBLIC WORSHIP.**
including participation in the Sacraments and the Preaching of the Word of God.
2. **PASTORAL CARE.**
including home and visitation.
3. **FULL PROGRAMME**
of varied midweek activities, designed to meet the needs of differing age groups, and to liberate skills and attitudes which should in turn be expressed by men and women in every area and interest of the life of society.

Due to the ill-health of Mrs. Byatt, it is probable that when Mr. Byatt's ministry ends here after Easter, the following 12 months will be spent away from parish life in some other form of Christian service.