

BLACKFRIARS

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EDITORIAL

DURING the last month one of the meetings of most importance was that of the Catholic Social Guild in Oxford. The summer-school is a centre for many of those laity who have taken to heart the words of the Pope, that they should carefully study the principles of social doctrine in order to propose to the Catholic body and through them to the nation a plan of action. Of all countries in the world England alone seems to have no definite scheme of recovery. Government has not presented Parliament with any general policy, indeed it has asserted that general schemes are a mistake.

It must indeed be recognised that public expenditure on many of the proposed schemes would be mischievous, since the future upkeep of these works would involve the country in annual payments beyond its means. But that does not prove that all schemes are wrong, but only that the schemes need careful deliberation before being carried on. Certainly the great reclamation of the Pontine Marshes, now being proceeded with in Italy, is likely to increase the work and the productive wealth of the country, as well as provide agricultural holdings for a thrifty and hard-working peasantry. Such schemes will leave no legacy of ill. The Soviets with their plans are no doubt ill-advised; not in having a plan, but in having one totally at variance with the traditions, the genius, and the productive nature of the Russias. Mussolini's plan enriches the consumer as well as increasing production. The

Soviets increase production but do not increase the purchasing power of the peasantry.

It is certain that the Soviets are realising this themselves. The successful future of Russia demands its re-entry into the Western group of nations. It will re-enter by way of Rome. Whatever else the immediate future holds in store for it, it will include an application to the Holy See on the part of the Soviets for guidance in the idealising of labour. Catholic culture alone holds out any hopes to the worker of being able to show the dignity of toil. The modernist here and elsewhere is preaching the value of leisure. By her religious orders the Catholic Church has steadily preached the value of work. Paganism to-day exalts leisure, thinking it to be at hand. Catholicism exalts work, knowing that no civilisation can escape work and endure. Russia has discovered this. The Soviets are realistic. They have never been ashamed of admitting their errors. It will not be long before we hear of their acceptance of the Catholic cultural ideals though not yet of the Catholic faith.

In England, where we are all afraid of thinking, where the statesman, the scientist, the divine, and the *Times* newspaper all tell us they distrust logic, the Social Guild has an enormous task ahead of it. It has to provoke Catholics to thought. It has also to instruct them in the principles that should govern social action. It has even (since it is the only body amongst us that takes the trouble to study these questions) to provide us with some tentative solutions of the present distress that we can ourselves digest, discuss, and support. We have therefore only one criticism to make of it, namely that it is not provocative enough.

Its summer-school was indeed provocative, so its members assert. Let it proclaim ever more vigorously the Pope's doctrine. That is the most sure, the most aggressive, and the most sane way of securing our peace. Our press seems too muffled; its notes are neither distinctive nor provocative. More than that is needed if the revolution is to be averted, says the Pope. Let the Social Guild continue its work, unafraid. The future will be its best defence.