

OBITER

Y.C.W. SEMINARISTS' SUMMER SCHOOL

The seventh annual Seminarists' Summer School was held last September at Campion House, Osterley, to study the principles and methods of the Young Christian Worker movement in England. Besides representatives of the English Seminaries in this country and in Rome, there were priests and students from France, Germany, Spain, Belgium, Australia, India and Indo-China, as well as a number of religious.

The pattern of each day was to devote the mornings to lectures and discussions, the afternoons to visiting factories, and the evenings to being present at local Y.C.W. meetings. It was possible to see that the Y.C.W. is an authentic lay apostolate, not a substitute for the apostolate of the priest; and yet it cannot function without the close guidance of the priest. In fact the lack of priests able or willing to act as chaplains to Y.C.W. groups is a principal limiting factor in the spread of the movement in England. During this Summer School by far the most impressive part was the direct evidence of the workers actually meeting to make their Gospel Enquiry and Social Enquiry, seeing, judging and acting on their particular problems, and doing so in such a way as to convince the Seminarists—the future chaplains—that the work of the Y.C.W. is immensely worth while and urgently necessary if Christianity is to make any penetration into the world of the factory worker. The visits to factories not only revealed the setting of that apostolate, but brought home the fact that our industrial life is often in contradiction to Christianity and even to humanity, and it was easy to see the truth and its fearful implications of the judgment sometimes made by factory managers that their best workers are the mentally deficient; where no human act is called for, the exercise of mind and will is a handicap. For the Catholic worker, however, there are moral issues in the factories at times calling for heroic courage and no less for clear enlightenment about moral principles. The Y.C.W. is potentially a great instrument of the apostolate but one which needs to be delicately adjusted. There is always the danger that a preoccupation with problems of social justice may degenerate into a partisan spirit unless it is constantly vitalised by a charity which is universal in its scope. In addressing the Y.C.W. at the final meeting of the Summer School the Apostolic Delegate urged the need for great moderation, 'keeping unity of spirit in the bond of peace'.

S.P.