

to become leaders in their trade unions. The main aims of the Guild are: a hundred per cent. trade unionism, education on Catholic sociological lines and the application of papal teaching to industrial problems. It is interested in Jocist methods: see, judge and act. Much of the business of these groups, meeting under local spiritual chaplains, is concerned with day-to-day conditions in industry.

The progress of the Guild, devised as it is on such a selective basis, is necessarily, and of set purpose, slow. Limited, meantime, to Glasgow, it numbers now ten groups. Much of its work is concerned with the provision of evening classes in the winter session, week-end schools, lectures, book clubs, the setting up of study groups and the extensive sale of Catholic literature dealing with the problems of industrialism.

In Edinburgh the formation of a central information department was begun in 1942 with the establishment of the Catholic Research Bureau. Much assistance may justifiably be expected from this bureau for Catholic groups in social work.

Small and youthful though it is, the Catholic Workers' Guild has already stirred interest among those whose business it is to note the advent of rivals: the Labour Party, which cannot afford to neglect the potential voting power of the Scottish Catholic; the Communists, who recognise in it their antithesis; and the Masons, ever present, ever active, in every stratum of Scottish society.

For the first time in Scottish industry a serious effort is being made to rouse the supine Catholic and show him what his possibilities for good are in the labour world as a member of a Catholic body organised in his interests. The Catholic Workers' Guild may not achieve the objects for which it was founded. The measure of its success will be proportionate to the support it receives from the main body of Catholic workers. But at least it is a brave effort to give half-a-million Catholics ultimately a voice in the shaping of industrial things to come.

JAMES E. HANDLEY.

THE PLACE OF THE CROFTER.

THE romantic gloss that adheres to the crofter, his homestead and way of life, has given ample target for the shafts of the critics. They point out, with some justice, the poverty and hardship frequently entailed and the ambition of many crofters to send their sons to the cities. With less justice, probably none, they claim greater efficiency for larger units of cultivation. These critics are essentially children of the Industrial Age, as ever overlooking the

more acute destitution that no reform has as yet eradicated from the way of life begotten of their own concepts. They have ever a notion that urban hardship can be eliminated with just a few more rules, regulations and by-laws. Unconsciously, they pay the crofter tribute in recognising that his life is not so easily directed.

We can hardly assess the value of the crofter to a civilised community without considering certain fundamentals. The root of the problem lies at the very quick of the question: is man an individual servant of God, or a servant of society? I do not think this is an over-simplification of the issue. Throughout the world today that same issue is being disputed. Everywhere, peasant societies are the backbone of resistance to authoritarianism and the subjection of man to society as vested in the State.

Although throughout our own country we have still with us small farmers of peasant character, it is only in the north and west of Scotland that there remain anything that could be described as peasant communities. Looking at their history, past and present, it is less remarkable that they should be a dwindling community than that they should continue to exist at all. From the end of the eighteenth century for more than a hundred years they were the victims of deliberate eviction and oppression. What had been started as a political move became an economic one. Legal rights of tenure were brushed aside and the people of island and glen transported across the Atlantic like convicts, or left homeless and starving on their native beaches. Soldiers and warships were brought up to intimidate those who resisted. The defection of the Established Kirk, at the time, left its people without any leadership or defence. Probably the surviving communities owe much to the unprofitable nature of parts of the country that rendered them not worth occupying by the invading sheep-farmers. The same comparative barrenness gave them also a certain hardness that enabled them to maintain existence in thin times. For a time, certainly, it seems they were cowed by an irresistible and incomprehensible oppression. They must possess a remarkably indomitable quality, which eventually enabled them to claim successfully some measure of legal protection, and which is manifest in the traditions and characteristics that they have preserved.

Oppression inevitably leaves its after effects. But there is a more cogent reason why most of the crofting communities still dwindle. We do not always appreciate just how extraordinarily unsympathetic the legislation and administration of a predominantly industrial society is towards those whose lives are intrinsically different. We have to remember that for generations the population of the Highlands and Islands has been seen by Government only as

a nuisance, a people out of step with the times (as the saying goes), requiring occasional, grudgingly given, special attention. A small community, comparatively, they have never been seen as of any importance to the economy of the country. It is true that they can contribute very little in the way of produce to a country that budgets in millions. Their fisheries, once important, can "more economically" be fished by powerful trawlers operating from distant bases and safely protected by vested interests. Their agricultural produce can largely be swamped by imports of cheap food. And there is no way of assessing their exports of man and woman power—that stream of priests, ministers, doctors, sailors, nurses, policemen, fine citizens, who, by their integrity and application have been of untold value in reinforcing industrial society.

Even now there are large and favoured crofts which, with hard work, can support a man and his family. But today, ideally, crofting is an ancillary, background, occupation. As such the crofting community is comparable to the mediaeval burgh, each of whose burghers worked a plot of land, besides applying himself to his own craft. Such of the Western Isles as are at present in any degree flourishing, as Barra and Lewis, have large sea-going populations: merchant sailors who spend the greater part of the year at sea, and the rest on their crofts. But this is only one, not necessarily the most satisfactory, of the possible complementary occupations. Harris, and other parts, have a tradition of handweaving, admirable in its utilisation of a local product and in the artistry it inspires. During the War, a machine-tool workshop, employing about a dozen crofters, was successfully started in one of the smaller islands off the mainland.

It is very difficult to put forward any elaborate policy for the rehabilitation of the Highlands. Chiefly it is difficult because at present the whole trend of the Government's intention is antipathetic. "Export or die", is the amazing slogan by which Britain is to be preserved. It is therefore almost beyond the bounds of possibility that any Government of the immediate future will make the least kind of serious effort to cope with the problems of an area that is outside the industrial ring. Furthermore, just because with crofters one is dealing with individuals, men of freedom and independence, so cut-and-dried, theoretical panaceas are not of much purpose. There is no doubt that much could be done now to sustain the Highland way of life: there is every doubt that it will be done until the real painful necessity of Britain's position is realised.

Reports from Europe tell us of certain vital trends that offset the distress and uncertainty. From all countries we hear of men tilling the land because to them starvation is a real threat. Some of our

own soldiers have sensed a deeper feeling of hope and determination in the stricken lands of the Continent than here, in a victor country, where trades unions and other vested interests maintain a paralysing hold, and, with any amount of work to be done, unemployment mounts steadily.

Even when grave fears are felt over our declining birthrate, and when statistics show that the Highland women have by far the greatest fecundity of any in Britain, the connection between this and a certain way of life, healthy both physically and psychologically, is unlikely to have any effect.

And yet, as I have remarked, there is much that could be done, but it must be done with due respect for the crofters, not in the spirit that has too often characterised the work of well-meaning, but thoroughly bureaucratic officials of the Department of Agriculture. I have heard high officials of the Department say, "The Highlanders are hopeless, they won't co-operate." But it is only a certain type of person who can co-operate with buff forms: and the Department's schemes have always been piecemeal, palliative, and conceived in different terms from those in which the peasant thinks.

A genuine redistribution of industry would certainly promote local preserving and canning of fish and of the soft fruits that flourish in many parts of the Highlands. These provide admirable part time work that, in conjunction with the croft, would afford a good livelihood.

A great improvement in roads, ferries and steamer services is a crying need. Many, if not most, islands are at present worse served by steamers than they were thirty or forty years ago, as a result of monopoly control. Crofters are severely handicapped by exorbitant freights, and by lack of piers. Just at present there is a great effort to promote the growth of healthy seed potatoes, because of the perturbingly high annual loss of potatoes through disease. By far the healthiest potatoes grown in Britain are those grown in the Hebrides. Good prices are offered for crops. But many islanders cannot avail themselves of the opportunity this should give them because of transport difficulties and, of course, for lack of available capital that would enable them to buy tractors and plant needful if they are to till an increased acreage.

A word may be said about electricity, which, with running water, would be a considerable boon in croft houses. There is an illusion, sedulously spread by those who are paid to spread it, that the Highlands are about to be electrified on a generous scale. It is only an illusion. The operations of the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board are about as much intended to help the Highlanders

as to help the natives of Timbuctoo. The Board is primarily concerned with financing engineers and contractors in the construction of large-scale hydro-electric schemes to export power to the industrial areas. As a sop, they have promised some smaller schemes for local purposes. They intend to flood arable land in parts where it is most scanty and valuable, to deflect the natural drainage of rivers, and to despoil much exquisite scenery—which itself is an important commodity as the stimulus to a tourist trade. Any schemes that were intended to serve the Highland people would be carried out on a small scale, far smaller than any of those that attract the promoters of the present schemes. The communities are small, and their requirements can best be met by generating power in modest units.

Besides legislation, there is a constant blare of propaganda exhorting scales of values antipathetic to those of the crofter, deep rooted as those are in Christian civilisation. The better life has become identified with suburban success. Even so, I know many young men and women who only leave the Highlands because there are no reasonable prospects for them here. It is hateful to see them leave, knowing to what cheapjackery they go, and how hard it will be for them to impart to their children the real values of living that they themselves have inherited.

These are values that put no premium on comfort, accepting work and suffering not as something to be legislated against but as essential concomitants to the happiness of living. In the remoter parts, entertainments of any kind are often rare, but when they occur everyone contributes to them, providing song and dance and music with a vigour and freshness amazing to those of us who have dwelt long amongst hardened latter-day hedonists. Good neighbourliness and a friendly interest go together with a proper respect for the individual in a manner that is also decreasingly common.

GEORGE SCOTT MONCRIEFF.

THE ART OF CATHOLIC SCOTLAND TODAY

PETER F. ANSON, in his article "Modern Catholic Architecture in Scotland" (*The Dublin Review*, April, 1937), and in his book "The Catholic Church in Modern Scotland", published in the same year by Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd., has supplied with characteristic clarity and completeness an account of the heritage of ecclesiastical architecture and art upon which the Catholic artist of Scotland has to build. And, as he observes in the closing paragraph of