



REVIEW

Issue 43 October 2010

Who will the cuts hit hardest?

At a time of very significant public sector spending cuts it is interesting to note that research undertaken by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) shows that these cuts are falling more heavily on those with low incomes than other groups. The IFS is Britain's leading independent institute on public finances and tax and has no party political affiliation. Further details can be found at <http://www.ifs.org.uk>

Another recent report entitled 'Keeping the Plates Spinning' (<http://consumerfocus.org.uk>) on payday lending illustrates that those with few or no alternatives always pay more interest than those with greater means. Payday lending comprises of a small loan (£100 - £1,000) advanced until the next payday (usually a month). Charges are fixed at a fee per £100 and loans can generally be extended each month by paying this fee or can be repaid in full. According to Consumer Focus, which commissioned the report, the number of people using payday loans has quadrupled in the last four years to 1.2 million with £1 billion lent in 2009 alone by around seven major companies. It noted average annual percentage rates of 2,500%.

It is disturbing to know that we live in a society where the poorer you are the more you pay for goods and services. Of course this means that the wealthy pay less. These disparities cover the cost of credit, banking, energy bills, telephone and many other areas of life.

The other concern with regard to cuts in public services is that it is the most disadvantaged areas and communities which rely on the resources and services generated by public sector investment. These are areas with a relatively small private sector. Any recent prosperity and most job creation have come from increases in public expenditure. It is optimistic in the extreme to think that places such as Liverpool and Middlesbrough will be able to replace lost public sector funded jobs with new employment opportunities in the private sector.

The Pope's recent visit to our country reminded us that our faith teaches us to value every person

regardless of their status or material wealth. Recent findings show that the gap between rich and poor is wider than ever. Some people are paying extortionate rates of interest for small loans and suffering real deprivation because of cuts. In the face of such contradiction we all have a responsibility to do what we can to build a society in which every person matters in reality not just in theory.

An important part of the MCW's mission is to discern the signs of the times, reflect on them in the light of Gospel values and challenge both our members and all people and organisations of good will to engage in relevant actions to make a difference in order to promote social justice. The need for such concern and action is now more important than ever.

**You are all invited to the
MCW National Day
Conference
incorporating the AGM
on
Saturday 20th November 2010
from
10.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m.
A light lunch will be provided
at
St Joseph's Pastoral Centre,
off St Joseph's Grove, Hendon,
London NW4 4TY**

**The theme of the National Day
Conference, beginning at 1.00 p.m. is**

**The Unique Spirituality
of Our Movement**

To book a place and lunch please phone
MCW HQ on 020 8203 6290 or email
mcworkers@aol.com

Resist, Hope, Together let's choose Life

During three sunny days in Poitiers over the Pentecost weekend (22-24 May 2010) 750 delegates representing 15,000 members of the Action Catholique Ouvrière (ACO) of France exchanged their experiences of life. Confronted by their faith in the liberating message of Christ's gospel they committed themselves to continue to 'Resist' the attacks on the poorest and most vulnerable members of French society in order to give hope to the world.



'In a world where money is the king, where anything can be bought and sold, we have to listen to the cry of men and women, to the

silence of the machines created by factory closures, to the voice of working people who are losing their jobs, to the migrant workers who are being ejected from our country. When we hear and listen to these cries, are they not the cries of love from Christ for the whole of humanity that is manifesting itself.'

These powerful words were contained in the final conclusions of the ACO National Meeting, and on hearing them I felt they had some resonance here in our own country today.

This is not my first experience of the ACO National meeting and it is always a moving experience to meet again old friends and to make new ones. It is amazing that in a country where there is a clear separation between the Church and the state, what the French proudly call a lay society, that there are so many members of the ACO who are actively engaged in trades unions, politics and community groups who value the review of life where they can confront the reality of the world by a deepening of their faith in order to sustain their social engagement.



As the ACO celebrates its 60th anniversary its message was clear, it believes that to Resist brings Hope. We have to resist a liberalism that sacrifices women and men in the name of money. Together we can resist with women and men of good will who want to construct a more just society. Together we can change the political climate to be at the service of the common good. ***"I know that God believes in you, and he never ceases to tell us that he will be with us until the end of time, so, yes let's hope in God who takes the side of the humiliated. He offers us a way of life where everyone has his or her place, where everyone has his or her dignity as a son or daughter of God. Yes, the ACO is foolish enough to believe, to hope and to dream that this future is possible, because we believe that life is invaluable"***.

With these concluding words of the National meeting it reminded me of our raison d'être as the French would say, and why we in the MCW are committed to the importance of our international dimension that we live through our membership of the World Movement of Christian Workers.

And the MCW too is foolish enough to believe and to dream that a new future of justice is possible.

Together we can do this.

WMCW International Solidarity with Haiti



All the national movements affiliated to the World Movement of Christian Workers have responded positively, quickly and with enormous generosity to the call from the International Council to launch a campaign of solidarity for the support of the Movement in Haiti. Members and supporters of the English and Welsh MCW have also responded to this call raising over £1,000.

The aim of the solidarity campaign has been to enable the Movement of Christian Workers (ACO) of Haiti to have the means to rebuild itself. The money will provide a programme of education and training for leaders so that the reconstruction of Haiti is in the hands of Haitians themselves and not foreign leaders no matter how well meaning their intentions. In September

a small delegation of members of the movement in the Dominican Republic visited the leaders of the Haitian movement to make an assessment of the situation and to agree a plan of action for the reconstruction of the movement.

Before Christmas a training session based on the review of life method will be held in the Dominican Republic for the current and new leaders of the Haitian ACO. It is thanks to the international solidarity campaign that this will be possible. The intention is to collaborate with the YCW in the Dominican Republic and Haiti in the education, formation and training of leaders. This will enable them to live their faith through a concrete engagement in the political and community groups that will need to take responsibility for the reconstruction of Haiti.



Leaders of the Haiti and Dominican Republic movements



Movement of Christian Workers

Virtualplater.org.uk a new resource for Catholic Social Teaching

In 2009 the Plater Fund Trustees allocated a grant to a joint project involving Newman University College, Liverpool Hope University Department of Theology and Religious Studies, St Mary's University College School of Theology, Philosophy and History, Leeds Trinity Centre for Social Justice, and Heythrop College Pastoral and Social Studies Department. The aim of the project was to produce a programme that is of clear use to the Catholic Higher Education Sector but also to Catholic Activist Movements and Justice and Peace Networks and, if possible, of service to the wider Church. The aim is for it to be so constructed that while it can be followed for credit at undergraduate level it could also be appropriately studied more locally in diocesan, deanery, or even parish groups.

The MCW were present at the launch of the Virtualplater.org.uk website.



The views expressed by contributors to MCW Review do not necessarily represent the views of the MCW

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