

with your fellow Catholic who is in the same position as yourself, and will thus make both of you better able to surmount that difficulty. We have not made it difficult for you to hold your political principles, but, if you are prepared to stand by your Catholic principles, we shall provide you with encouragement and inspiration to do so. That difficulty only exists on the assumption—surely warranted—that you are prepared to stand by your Catholic principles. If you are not prepared to do so, you have, of course, removed the difficulty yourself. What is true of the Catholic inside the Labor Party, is true of the Catholic inside any party, and thus the Federation cannot make it difficult for a Catholic to hold his political opinion.

The principle and policy of the Federation, therefore, is the promotion and defence of Catholic interests, whenever and wherever those interests need promoting or defending, and, so far as they have any relationships to political parties the permeating of those parties, not with Catholicism, but with Catholics. It becomes, therefore, if not essential, at least advisable, that its members should belong to different political organisations as far as it is possible for them as Catholics to do so.

The Need of Organisation.

Another and more fundamental question remains: Does the Church in this country require an organisation? If we examine the condition of Catholicism in those countries where it is publicly organised, as in Germany, Belgium, Holland, and the United States, we shall find that Catholicism fully holds its own; but if we turn to countries like France and Portugal, where Catholicism is not publicly organised we shall find that it can make no headway against its foes. Indeed, French Catholics would appear to be learning to-day that at least half their troubles arose from their lack of unity in front of the enemy, and, antecedently, from their lack of public organisations. Is it a mere coincidence that Catholicism should be successful where Catholicism is publicly organised, and should not be successful where it is not publicly organised? It is the providential lot of the Church to which we belong to find mighty forces always arrayed against her; forces against which her children must defend themselves. Our aim is defence, not defiance; but we must be effectively organised before we can effectively defend. Surely the Education crisis should teach us that it is not wise to wait to train our forces until the crisis comes upon us. We shall be stating the obvious when we say that Catholic interests demand the formation of one organisation which will gather together the Catholic forces for the promotion and defence of those interests, whenever they are unjustifiably attacked by anti-Catholic or non-Catholic forces: an organisation which will unite individuals as well as associations without destroying the individuality of the latter; an organisation which will feed all associations and be fed by them; an organisation which will demand no more from its members than the word catholic demands; an organisation which will know no distinction of party, class or sex; an organisation which will permanently retain that recently awakened spirit which prompted Catholics to act boldly, promptly, and unitedly in the defence of their schools.

The Federation's Action.

This organisation we already possess in the Diocesan Federation and here we propose to examine briefly its constitution and the different ways in which it has rendered service. And first as to its action. In the autumn before Mr. Birrell's Bill passed the Commons, the Catholics of the Salford diocese felt it incumbent upon them to make a protest. At once we felt the advantage of possessing machinery which was merely waiting to be put into motion. A suggestion from our Bishop, a recommendation by the Executive, a decision by the District Committee, and we were at once able to penetrate to every corner of the diocese, and set every parish actively at work through the instrumentality of the branch secretaries. The same advantage was realised, and the same process was followed, when the need arose for demonstrating our sympathy for

our co-religionists in France; when we organised within three days of the decision of the Archbishops and Bishops on the Runciman Bill, a protest meeting in every parish in the diocese and town's meetings in Manchester and Blackburn and had the opinions of those meetings placed directly in the hands of his Majesty's Ministers and Members of the House of Commons; when we took 1500 Lancashire men and women to the Eucharistic Congress in London, and after standing the racket of Rochester Row, brought them all back more convinced of the need for the Federation than ever they were; and when we took many of the same working men and women on the pilgrimage to Rome to familiarise them with that centre of unity which stands at the back of all Federations.

Acting on the information that 'Minorities must suffer,' the Federation has held a watching brief over the voting of the local Members of Parliament in the House of Commons. The Convent Inspection Bill, the Catholic Disabilities Bill, the Accession Declaration Bill, the Secondary School Regulations, the Single School Area Bill, the Mental Deficiency Bill have all claimed our attentive interest and, when necessary, active protest has been made. The Old Age Pensions Act found a ready co-operation in securing the necessary information for the aged Catholic poor. The religious facilities for Catholics in the public Hospitals and Convalescent Homes have been duly safeguarded with excellent results. The Federation have seen to the provision of Catholic chaplains for the Catholic Territorials assembled in camp. Co-operation with the National Vigilance Association and the Pernicious Literature Committee has been established.

A vigilant and active campaign has been effectively maintained with the press and the stage when Catholic interests have demanded it. Branches of the Federation have protested with conspicuous success against the publication of objectionable films in the picture houses; whilst a firm stand has been made against the reports of the Royal Commission on Divorce: notably against some utterances of Dean Welldon's against the position of the Catholic Church in regard to divorce.

The Parochial Spirit.

One of the great obstacles to our progress in the past has been our failure to realise that we have been too parochial. Every Catholic will naturally take a proper pride in his own parish. To preach against that would be like preaching patriotism and forgetting to be patriotic to one's own hearthstone. But pride in one's own parish is consistent with pride in the progress of the Church in another parish. We have acted as if we were oblivious of the existence and welfare of other parishes, and the Church has not gained by such actions. Unity, and the forces which make for unity, have been hampered and impeded by the narrowness of the parochial spirit.

The Federation is breaking down these unfortunate barriers, and there are few delegates whose views have not been broadened and whose opportunities for making the acquaintance of their fellow Catholics have not been increased since the introduction of the movement. One of the most pleasing features of the past and one of the surest guarantees of success in the future is the manner in which priest and layman have differed in opinion without either resenting the right of the other to differ. If we are to present that united front which is so essential to success, we shall do it no less effectively because we have learned in District Committee our lesson of mutual forbearance and mutual goodwill. So far as it was desirable it was inevitable that parochial idols should be overthrown and narrow parochial ideas exploded, but it has been done without that friction and division which timid souls always expect.

It will be remembered that friction has sometimes arisen in the past whenever two or three parishes have been concerned in one electoral area. They have not agreed as to the particular man to whom they shall give their united support. The strong parish has succeeded in forcing its will upon the weaker parishes, and the inevitable resentment has resulted. This has been owing to the absence of an authoritative body which could hold the scales between the parishes concerned.

Didn't it Occur to You Before?

Away from home at Xmas? It will be as dull for them as it is for you if they don't get your photograph in time. It should be a really good one of you so you must go to **GAZE & Co., Hamilton**