



# REVIEW

Issue 44 February 2011

*Movement of Christian Workers*

## A Hard Winter and the Chill is Set to Continue

Everyone agrees that we have just come through the hardest winter in many a long year with record temperature levels below minus 20°C. But are we about to enter even harder economic times?

Recently, Mervyn King the Governor of the Bank of England noted, "that UK wages were stagnant, and coupled with high inflation-this led to the longest decline in the real value of take-home pay in the UK since the 1920s".

The MCW has previously shown here how UK is a highly unequal society with the gap between the rich and the poor greater than at any time since the end of the Second World War.

To make matters worse the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Government has announced the most severe austerity plan since 1922. It intends to take £86bn out of the economy over the next four years by cutting public expenditure. It claims public sector job losses will be replaced by growth in private sector jobs.

Yet the number of long term unemployed has nearly doubled since 2008 to 840,000, with women and young workers disproportionately carrying the burden of unemployment. With five people chasing every vacancy there is a huge jobs deficit.

Young workers will be the hardest hit by unemployment with more than 1 million under 25 year olds currently on the dole and 25% of university graduates have been unable to secure any employment. The decision to cut the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) will no doubt see many more young unemployed workers joining the dole queues.

For working women and men this hard long economic winter is set to continue with no sign of the chill abating.

In this edition we remind ourselves of the importance of the Review of Life Method (See, Judge, Act) as a means of supporting our engagement in the world. This enables us to give witness to the call to renew the face of the earth where human beings, the sons and daughters of God, should be placed at the centre of society's priorities before money and profit.



*School and college students protesting against the cut to EMA Finchley North London November 2010*

## **Modernity a threat or a challenge? A Spirituality of and for the World**

The MCW Annual Conference held in London on 20th November 2010 reinforced the importance of recognizing that we live and experience our spirituality as an active engagement in the world with the women and men around us. In this way we accept the invitation to join in the vision of the Kingdom given to us through the life and practice of Jesus told to us through the Gospels.

The Annual Conference listened to three excellent presentations. David McLoughlin theologian and member of the MCW in Birmingham helped us to explore and renew our vision of the Church. This is one which is not threatened by modernity but rather responds to reality by reading the signs of the times.



Our church recognises God's spirit in the world through the actions of women and men of goodwill. It is inclusive and engaged with others to build the Kingdom of God based on justice and peace.

Marcus Rogers, a member of the MCW in London, reminded us of the model on which the Review of Life is based called the Three Truths, of Faith, Reality and Method.



This model underpins the uniqueness of the Review of Life method, which is not simply a sociological process for analysing society but an active process that starts from our concrete experiences of life and action.

We confront these experiences with the light of the Gospel which deepens our faith-

and enables us to engage again in the world to make a positive difference.

Jim Dearlove, also from the Birmingham MCW group, gave a presentation of his personal experience of the power of the Review of Life and in doing so he was able to present the unique spirituality of the MCW. His presentation follows:

### **The Unique Spirituality of Our Movement**

Some say that the MCW is not prayerful or religious enough, my experience contradicts this. My activism has been as a conscious lay apostle in a trade union, the community, and the credit union movement. Also as an active member of the local MCW group I have been continually challenged, sharpened, sustained and able to develop my faith and activism.

Work has been at the core of my involvement. As a young apprentice in the YCW I joined the union and recruited others. I learned about taking action as well as developing skills and knowledge in the Movement.

I have been fortunate to be in jobs which gave me opportunities to work alongside people and enable their development.

My Credit Union development work for example involved the struggle to empower individuals and communities to have a little more control over their financial affairs.

### **The Church**

I'm not forgetting the Church, the Sacraments or formal prayer.

However, for me they are the culmination of my activism not the beginning.

For many Christians, often led by clerics, The Church is a building, an end in itself and almost a sanctuary from the world.

For me and I think our MCW Movement it's the other way round. The world and our place and actions in it are our living faith where we are called to collaborate in transforming the face of the earth.

We bring these experiences, the positives, the signs of hope, and our challenges to the Eucharist to be blessed and remembered.

I feel very strongly that my life and work in the everyday world is itself holy and prayerful because it is consciously inspired by my faith.

### **Sense of Spirituality**

My sense of spirituality and holiness springs from an understanding of theology that makes a difference in the world rather than simply a catechism listing right thinking and belief. This understanding has developed as a result of at least two things:

Firstly, participating in my local MCW group and using the method within the Review of Life with the other members of the group as this by definition is not an individual activity.

Secondly, preparing for and leading DIY Theology training sessions. These were designed to help MCW members to develop their own ways of thinking about the Old and New Testaments so as to inspire and sustain their activism, their faith and continually sharpen their vision of why they are involved in the world. It also helped to define what values we want our new world to be based on.

Through the DIY Theology it was possible to come to a new understanding of some of the Gospel stories. For example the feeding of the multitude with the act of sharing and its consequences, rather than a creation of more food out of nothing, might in fact be the real miracle. All of this is instrumental in helping me form a new view of a more appropriate spirituality and theology than the one I was brought up with.

### **The Vision**

What is our vision as Christian Workers and where does it come from?

The vision which makes sense to me is the gift we have received from the ancient people of Israel. As we know, the-

Old Testament tells us of Moses who led his people out of slavery.

The theology of Israel then is a theology of liberation and it is empowered by a living memory just as we remember and are empowered during both our Reviews of Life and Eucharistic Celebrations.

Israel, the freed people of God, was called to be a sign of liberation in the world. They were called to be the nation where there was always a place for the Widow, the Orphan and the Stranger, those who were powerless, marginal and excluded.

Israel didn't always live up to its calling. It became like other nations, self-centred, exclusive and nationalistic. Their liberating God all too easily became a God of the successful and the powerful, distant from the poor and powerless.

Prophets appeared who remind them that their memories were failing, they were settling for something less and 'taking their eye off the ball'.

The history of the people of Israel is a history of liberation and the central sacrament of that history is the Passover Feast. Its major purpose is to remember God's liberating act and also remember it in the present by showing and illustrating in very real ways where this liberating God is at work today.



<<<<< continued from page 3

## Jesus

When Jesus begins His public life he tells stories about the Kingdom.

His life and practice was a reminder, in the spirit of the prophets, of what God's people were meant to be and that the Widow, Orphan and Stranger were central in the new world.

Jesus at the beginning of His ministry calls for the renewal of the Jubilee promise, to free people and communities from their debts. Despite usury being seen as sinful, the practice of Jubilee had fallen into disrepair and Jesus calls for his people to be faithful to their tradition and their God so others will see how to create societies which value the most vulnerable without forgetting the rest.

As time goes on Jesus recognises God's liberating spirit at work outside Israel. His encounter with the woman at the well and His astonishing story of the Good Samaritan and in particular the part played by the Levite and the Priest illustrate His develop-

ing consciousness that God's kingdom is for everyone and is to be built everywhere.

Jesus says that everyone who loves God by doing His will and loves their neighbour is holy.

This was quite a challenge to the powers that be because in Jesus' time holiness excluded certain people, certain places, certain times and certain foods. But for Him holiness was about the inclusion of all and in particular those most marginalised. He invites people to see this vision, be part of it, through stories and examples from real life. Once you see the point then there is an invitation to step into the vision, the Kingdom, but if you do you will never be the same again and indeed nothing will be the same again.

Our God is the God of the ordinary and everyday, a God of the world. Our spirituality is inspired and sustained by both this God and our day-to-day engagement in our world. All of this makes sense to me as over the years I have grappled with it and struggled to live it in action.

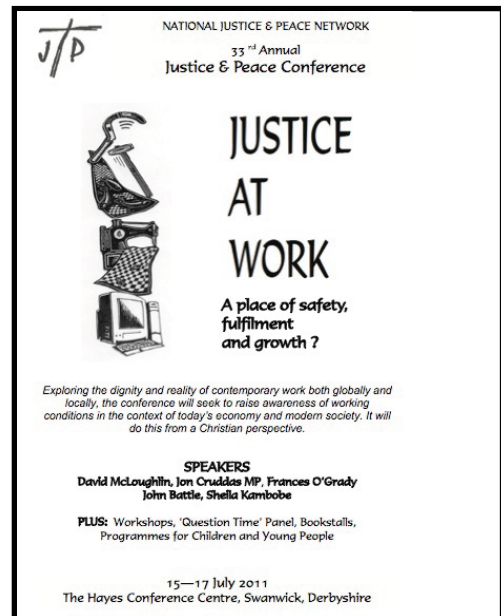
**Jim Dearlove**



WMCW Declaration on the 97th World Day of migrants and refugees:

The globalised economy needs a re-think on migration, to move away from seeing migration as a permanent threat but as an opportunity.....read more.>>>>

<http://www.mmtc-infor.com/m/en.html>



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

**Publisher:** National Executive Committee

**Editor :** Paul Edwards

Movement of Christian Workers, St Joseph's Grove, London, NW4 4TY  
Tel: 020 8203 6290 Email: [mcworkers@aol.com](mailto:mcworkers@aol.com). Website [www.workers.org](http://www.workers.org)