

The Problem.

The problem before the Federation was: How to preserve the authority of the general movement without interfering unduly with the autonomy of the branch? We decided that in cases of friction the delegates of the branch or branches concerned should be associated with the executive for that particular purpose; they could debate and decide, but the common decision was to be binding upon all concerned; we have thus set up a body which can speak with authority, one whose decision will be more readily accepted by the branches because they themselves have helped to arrive at the decision.

Turning to the organisation, we begin with the branch. The branch area is so-extensive with the parochial area. Every Catholic in the parish, over sixteen years of age, is eligible for membership and no further qualification is asked than is implied by the word Catholic. It is at the branch meeting that the members exercise their right to discuss every rule of the Federation and express their opinion upon it before it becomes law, and the name of every official in the movement must be submitted to them before he can be elected. They elect the six delegates who, together with the rector or his clerical nominee, will represent them on the District Committee, and every Catholic representative or member of a governing body who desires Catholic support must first receive the approval of the branch. In this way are recognised the responsibilities and privileges of every parishioner. The branch is authorised to affiliate to itself, in accordance with the regulations provided by the Federation, every other Catholic association in the parish. By this means the branch becomes the common meeting ground for the individuals and associations in the parish, and thus becomes a great centre of unity and source of support. It is the business of the branch to take a survey of the parish, claiming a vote for every parishioner who is entitled to vote and securing registration of it, collecting the subscriptions of those parishioners who are Federationists and urging non-Federationists to join the movement. It carries on the work of the Literary and Debating Section by holding lectures, debates, etc., and distributes Catholic literature in a cheap and popular form. It organises the Catholic trade unionists in its own area and acts as local agent for the District Executive for all purposes.

The District Committee.

We will ask our listeners to accompany the branch delegates to the District Committee, which meets monthly, with an area co-extensive with the Deanery, and in the case of Manchester and Salford includes all branches in the Deaneries of Manchester and Salford District. It consists of the rectors and laymen and laywomen representing the branches, and knows no distinction of class, party, or sex. Its sole passport is: A Catholic elected by Catholics. It is the legislative body, asserting its right under the Bishop to be supreme in Federation matters, and possesses the power of affiliating Catholic associations whose areas are co-extensive with its own.

The Executive.

The District Committee administers its affairs through an Executive, meeting monthly and composed of its own officials plus the Chairman of permanent sub-committees and the Registration agents of Registration sub-committees together with clergy and laity elected from its own body: the proportion of clergy to laity, right through the Federation, always being as one is to three.

The District Committee delegates different branches of its work to sub-committees, meeting monthly, which are as follows:—The Education Sub-Committee consists of six parents, six school managers, six representatives of local authorities, all elected from the District Committee, and six teachers elected from the Catholic Teachers' Guild. It is necessary to note the representative character of that Committee. Eighteen of its members are by training and practical experience familiar with the working of the education machinery through which the attacks on the Catholics schools are

made. Thus the committee brings the Catholic parent into closer contact with the teacher and the manager, it creates in him greater interest in Education affairs, with the result that his influence will be felt more frequently in those affairs, in the formation of the education authority and the exercise of his inalienable rights. The need of this committee will not be removed by the settlement of the Education question. Those familiar with Irish affairs will be aware that the spirit in which Irish laws are administered is often quite as evil as the laws themselves; similarly in Education matters we must always be prepared for difficulties of administration. For our part we found our best justification of the existence of this committee in the statement which was presented through one of its chief spokesmen to the District Committee upon the occasion of the introduction of the McKenna Bill and we would ask from what source, before the existence of the Federation, could the parent have been placed in full possession of all the facts about the Bill 24 hours after it had been introduced?

Sub-Committees.

The Registration Sub-Committees are three in number: Manchester, Salford, and Eccles, each possessing its own Registration Agent, attending the Revision Courts. It is responsible for the efficient registration of every Catholic voter in the area, and, at times of election, controls the machinery by which the will of the District Committee is carried into effect. It supervises, through its Divisional Captain, the registration work in each branch, and in many cases its workers assist in enrolling members and collecting subscriptions. These Committees are composed of two delegates from each Branch, and this Committee—like other Committees—expects those delegates to represent particularly its own department of registration in each branch. It is the work of this Committee to provide Branches with all the literature and information which they require in connection with registration, and to co-ordinate the work of the Branches at Headquarters. The importance of this Committee cannot be exaggerated, as it is the medium by which the activities of the Federation are focussed, when necessary, at the Ballot Box. One of the advantages of this work being performed by the Federation lies in the fact that the knowledge of registration possessed by a particular branch is thus placed at the disposal of the whole movement.

The Future of Confederation.

We have met together under the auspices of the Plymouth Congress to emphasize our united belief in Confederation, and the Salford Federation will always assist every endeavor in that direction. It believes in the confederating of all federations and the affiliation of all associations, because it believes that wherever general apathy prevails, every federation and association must suffer, whilst a confederation which will stimulate general interest among Catholics must have a beneficial effect upon every federation and association. This is not the time, nor, perhaps, are we the men, neither is it the business of any one man to outline the Federation's future. It is sufficient to say that its possibilities are unbounded. Whilst present-day Federationists must allow the movement to have sufficient freedom to adapt itself to the needs of the Church as they arise, they must also steer it carefully down a purely Catholic channel, never allowing it to deviate a hair's breadth from those Catholic principles which it has been called upon to advocate and defend, never allowing it to outrage its own spirit of true democracy by refusing to hearken to the responsible voices of those who alone can make Federation and Confederation possible. The Federation can become a great moral agency, and there are many in the movement, priests and laymen, who have waited too long for the Federation to be easily deterred by any difficulties which might present themselves—priests and laymen who are prepared to give of their best in building up a successful Catholic organisation.

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