

An abstract painting on the left side of the cover. It features a central figure, possibly a person, rendered in white and light blue, positioned within a circular shape. The background of this section is a mix of deep blue and magenta/purple, with visible brushstrokes and a textured appearance. The overall composition suggests a person emerging from or being part of a larger, swirling mass.

MAKING MONDAY, THE BEST DAY OF THE WEEK

HANDBOOK FOR INITIATION TEAMS

HUGH O'SULLIVAN

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About the Author

Hugh O'Sullivan an Australian diocesan priest, first came into contact with the YCW as a young priest in the parish of Hectorville, Adelaide. In the mid 60's Hectorville was full of migrants, mostly factory workers and apprentices. It was the beginning of Hugh's lifelong commitment to young workers and the YCW.

He was Adelaide diocesan chaplain for seven years before becoming national chaplain in 1977. For ten years he worked part-time and then full-time rebuilding the YCW in various dioceses of Australia. *The Clatter of Wooden Clogs* was written during this period and promotes the necessity and place of the YCW in today's changing world.

In 1989 Hugh was elected to work for the Asia Pacific office of the IYCW, based in Hong Kong. For the next six years he travelled extensively in Asia, developing YCW in the very diverse contexts of the region.

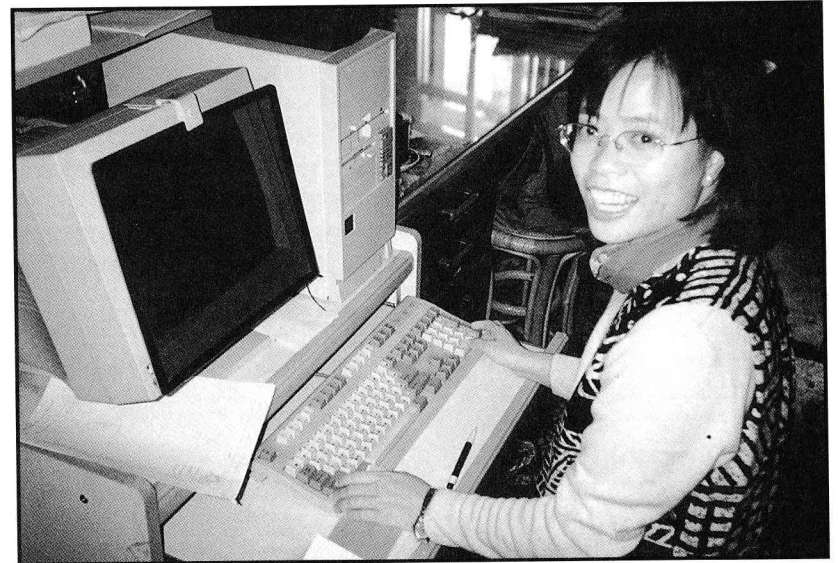
Making Monday the Best Day of the Week draws on his wealth of experience and offers a practical resource for initiating young workers to YCW today. Shortly after returning to his home diocese of Adelaide, Hugh was diagnosed with bone cancer. Hugh died on 18 May 1997.

Following the steps of Cardinal Cardijn, the founder of the YCW, Hugh was fired by his belief in the sacred mission and vocation of each young worker, and spent his life that young workers should know this also. Hugh is remembered with love by countless young workers throughout Asia and the Pacific.

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INTRODUCTION



Taiwan

Introducing the YCW

The Young Christian Workers Movement (YCW) is an international lay organisation of young workers that is run and organised by young workers for young workers. The central focus of the movement is 'work life'. Why did the YCW choose 'work life' as their principal focus?

Because a good work life can and should offer independence, freedom and promise to young workers. It should be a means for them to participate, contribute and achieve. It should offer identity, a link to society and a means for collective collaborative activity. In a word, our work was destined to be a central influence in our human fulfillment and dignity.

Unfortunately human work means none of these things to many young workers. Instead, the present day organisation of work often results in poverty, rejection, oppression, slavery, hunger, boredom and many other evils.

So what can we do about that? It is not just a material problem - it is also a spiritual problem. People who are downtrodden, rejected and isolated find it difficult to contribute meaningfully and achieve fulfillment.

Through the YCW, many young workers throughout the world enter into an enthusiastic commitment to struggle for freedom, and independence. Believing in their own dignity and worth they fight for a way to live that totally - and to find a way to cooperate with others that they also may achieve this ideal.

In doing this they strive to follow Christ in **their** world rather than in the world of the church. It is a secular world they live in - a world that they must share with so many others of different faiths and no faith. Their problems are human problems that all share - no matter what faith - and all are called and purposed to have a role in shaping and reshaping them.

INTRODUCTION

Introducing this handbook

The purpose of this handbook is to provide a resource to assist in the work of initiating new YCW groups in the Asia Pacific region of the International YCW (IYCW). Such a book must talk to many persons of various languages, religions, and work experiences. It must cater also to YCW leaders of vast experience but little English language - and to leaders who will meet the YCW for the first time through these pages.

All of these various needs made it difficult to decide on what to write and how to write. What should be included in the plan and how detailed should it be? We have tried to solve these problems by producing two complementary books.

Handbook for Worker Groups is addressed to the young workers who will be forming the new group. It begins with a couple of articles of introduction but is mainly an agenda and program of meetings that initiate the group to the YCW movement.

Handbook for Initiation Teams is addressed principally to the leader who takes the initiative to start a new group. The program suggests that they do not work alone but co-opt a small team to work together. Background reading to better understand the YCW is also included.

It is our hope that those who use these handbooks will do so with moderation and common sense - neither following the program as a strict blue print, nor changing and modifying it in such a way that it is no longer a YCW program.

HOW TO START A GROUP



Hong Kong

A Letter to the Leader

Dear friend,

I am writing to you because I hear that you have taken on the responsibility of starting a new YCW group. It is an exciting and difficult work that can result in spectacular success but can also result in dismal failure. As with most things, success is much more likely when there is good planning and a good method.

This book aims at outlining a plan to assist you in the task of initiating a new group. You will note that we have divided up the work of initiation into five steps. Each of these steps has concrete aims and concrete action to be taken. At the end of the process the new group should be an independent, active member movement of the YCW.

However there is a long journey and much work to be done before this is achieved. My own belief is that the degree of success achieved will depend largely on how well you and your initiation team carry out your work. That is why I would like to say right now, at the beginning, that it is worthwhile to spend all the time necessary to prepare before you begin to bring young workers together. YCW has many experiences that we can learn from:

- *A YCW leader tried to start a group in a hurry. Only a very few young workers joined. The group was too small and too insecure and so had difficulties in achieving success.*

- *A YCW leader tried to start a group alone. She was unable to do the preparation and follow up work well - and there was no one to evaluate and plan with. The result was that the new group lost its way and the members lost heart.*
- *A YCW leader began enthusiastically to contact young workers to ask them if they would like to join a new group. People were interested but the weeks went by and there was no follow up. When finally the leader was ready to start the meetings he found that the young workers were no longer interested.*

In this book we have tried to set out a method to assist leaders in planning and carrying out the initiation of YCW groups. It is not an easy task. We hope that it will be of use to leaders with very different experiences.

Some will be long term leaders of the YCW, while others will be aiming at starting their first group. Some will come from different cultures and languages - where English will be very much a second language. Some will have little experience in reading books.

So what should be included in such a plan? How detailed should it be? We tried to solve the problem by including:

- *An outline of the steps of the journey to initiate a YCW group.*
- *A summary of the main works to be done in each of these steps.*
- *Resources that the initiating team may find useful as further reading, to deepen their understanding of the work of the YCW.*

The YCW should be a home for young workers, - it should be their community - a community that supports, encourages and challenges them. It should be a place where they can be themselves and where they can celebrate their lives and have fun. It should never be run by too rigid a method. The good leader will have a clear method but will be open to adapt to what is happening in the group.

One Step at a Time

Like most good things in life, the YCW is not something that can be achieved right away. To be successful it is important to follow the steps and progress slowly. The method set out here is not the only way to initiate a YCW community, but it is a method that has proved to be effective in the past. The ideas presented should be used as a guide and adapted to the situations faced in different countries.

Step 1. Preparation, the study stage

If you wanted to erect a new building you would probably begin in this way. Firstly you would decide on a plan for the new building that would fulfill your special needs. Secondly you would organise a building team, ensure that they understood the plan clearly and commission them to work until the building was completed. This is also the first step of the method we use to begin a YCW group.

Step 2. Making friends, the contact stage

In this stage the team begins to meet young workers and to talk to them about the plan to start a YCW community. They try to make a friendly contact, and to offer an opportunity for those interested to come along and find out more. Those who show some interest are invited to 'come and see what YCW is about' at an Introductory Meeting.

Step 3. Forming a community

The new group begins to meet regularly. For this stage we have a plan of eight weekly meetings. By following this program the group becomes a group of friends who begin to share about their lives. They grow in trust and confidence, start to take action, and learn something of the YCW method. One of the group is chosen to lead the meeting for the following week.

Step 4. Getting organised

The time has come for the group to take over responsibility for their YCW community - to elect leaders and to appoint an activity committee. This second eight-week period is a time of learning the YCW method of ROLWA (Review of Life and Worker Action) more deeply. It is a time also of preparation for the first YCW activity. (Refer to the *Handbook for Worker Groups* for suggested Meeting Plans, for steps 3 and 4).

Step 5. Moving into the community

No YCW group should ever become isolated. There are three main areas of responsibility that we should look at in this stage.

The new group should officially register as a new YCW group with the coordinating YCW body in the diocese or nation.

The new group belongs also to the area they live and work in. They must find ways to deepen their analysis and become more involved in the issues affecting that community.

The new group should reach out to other young workers in the area to involve them in YCW action and activities and to build friendship and solidarity.

The Study Stage



Indonesia

You want to start a new YCW group and you are about to get started. What are the important things to do in this preparation or study stage?

1. Clarifying your objectives

- Spend some time quietly reflecting on the importance of what you are undertaking.
- Try to clarify the most important things you wish to achieve by starting the YCW so that you will be able to give a clear and simple answer to those who ask you questions.
- Take opportunities to speak to people with YCW experience, and to read any articles you find helpful in deepening your understanding.

2. Recruiting your team

- Make a careful choice of two or three people to assist you as members of the initiation team. A good team could consist of three or four people who agree to take joint responsibility for the new group in its initial stages.
- Try to ensure that they understand fully what they will be asked to do before they make their final decision to agree to do this work.
- Team members should commit themselves to persevering in this work for some time. The new group should be fully independent after six months of meetings. Perhaps team members should all commit themselves for a minimum of six months. What do you think?

3. Building a united team

- The team should meet on a number of occasions to build team spirit, friendship and especially to clarify their objectives.
- It is very important that team members reach an understanding and agreement on questions about what is essential to the YCW and what is not YCW method and orientation.

4. Collecting facts

- Team members should spend some time gathering facts and statistics about the area for example the numbers of young workers, numbers of unemployed, where young people work. This helps the team to build a picture of the young workers' life and it introduces them to local resources and agencies.
- The team should begin to progressively build up a list of young workers in the area. There are many means of getting these names - parish lists, school lists, talking to families etc.

5. Making some important decisions

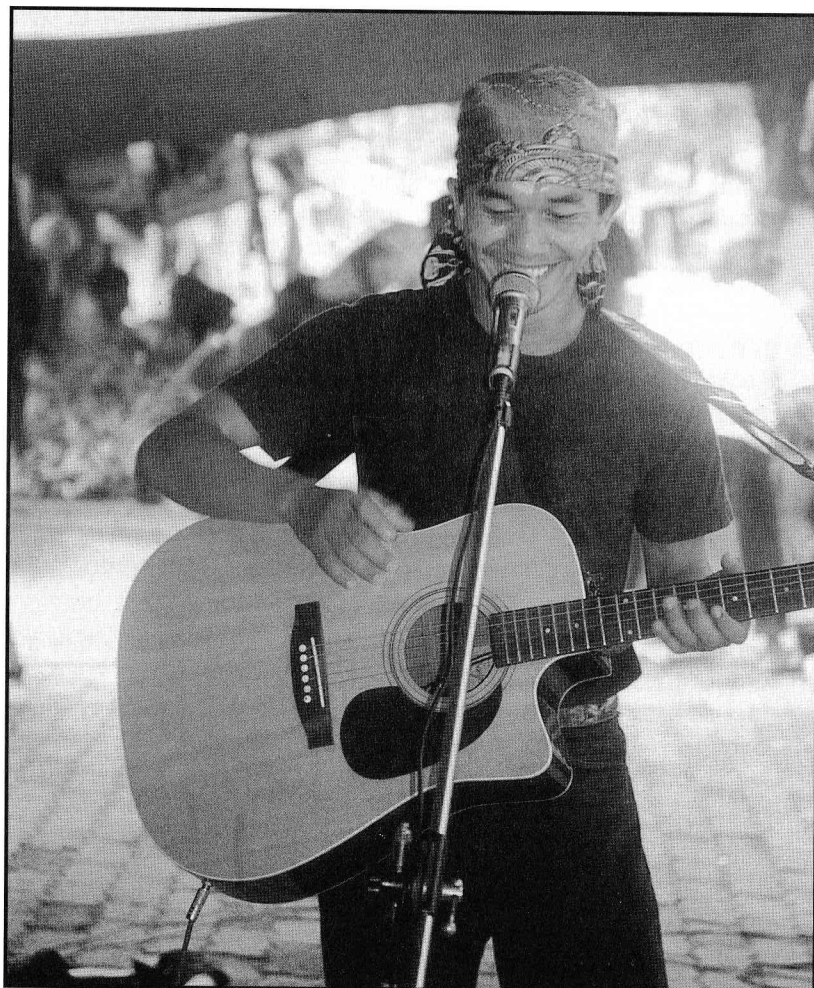
- What sort of group will we start; a parish group, a category group, a neighbourhood group, or a workplace group?
- How shall we advertise the group and who should we officially inform?

If we are starting a parish group, then the parish council should be consulted and informed. If we are starting a group in a neighbourhood area or a colony, perhaps the local leader of that community should be consulted.

But if we are starting a workplace group in a factory, perhaps we should make plans to ensure that news of the group does not get out. Such news could endanger the life of some young workers.

- Where shall the new group meet? It should be a place where the group feels comfortable, with sufficient chairs and, if possible, facilities for making or providing some drinks. It should be quiet enough so that all can hear what is said in the meeting.
- Is it possible that another group could be started in a neighbouring area at the same time? The YCW is a young workers' movement. Your new group will in time have its own local leaders. They will want to meet other YCW leaders. It will be most useful if there are other new YCW groups around the area. It would be worthwhile to talk about your plans to neighbouring parishes and see if it is possible that they could join in and start a group at the same time.

The Contact Stage



Thailand

THE CONTACT STAGE

In this stage we aim at contacting, making friends, and arousing the interest of the young workers that we hope might join the new group. We want to discover young people who will be the worker leaders of the future. We want to invite them to a introductory meeting where they can learn more about the YCW and decide if they would like to become active members of the movement.

As we prepare we remember Cardijn's challenging words:

"We must have faith in the value of the poor; in the capacity of every young worker to accept responsibility and take effective action. I dare to demand from you this unconditional faith."

Method for the contact stage

1. Finalising a list of names

Probably (after all the work done in the 'Study Stage') you now have quite a list of young workers or groupings of young workers. For example: you may have found out that many young workers are working in the rubber plantations, that many migrant workers are living in one particular area of the town and that there are many children working at the local fire cracker factory. You will have to decide on your priorities. Which of these groupings will you begin with?

It is no easy task to make these decisions. Some teams will opt to work with the group they know best or the group that will be easiest to organise. Some teams will try to mix too many groups of young workers in one group. While there is no right answer to such problems, it is important that the team face them and make a clear decision.

2. Preparing for contact work

The only successful method I know of contacting young workers is by visiting them and talking to them. Posters in the neighbourhood centre, or notices read in the Church on Sundays will **inform** people that a group is about to start. However if we want members, we must

THE CONTACT STAGE

go out and knock on doors. If we prepare well we will probably find that it is a very fulfilling work.

How do you prepare? I know of three ways that are valuable means.

- Firstly it is good if you can warn people that they might be visited. This can be done in a parish, for example, by a pulpit notice and perhaps a request by the parish priest that people welcome the visitor.
- Secondly clarify your motivation in visiting. The aims of the visitation are:

To make a friend. You have not come to sell anything but rather to ask questions and listen.

To inform them that a YCW group is going to be started.

To tell them a little about the YCW if they are interested.

To motivate them to come along to the introductory meeting.

- Thirdly, YCW leaders preparing for contact work often do a role play. Two take the part of the visitors, and one, the part of the person being visited. They try to act out what might happen. It is fun and a good means of preparing for this work. Why not give it a try?

3. Start contacting young workers

The contact visit should not be long and especially our explanations should not be long. We are only asking people to come and have a look. If they like what they see we hope they will return. We are not asking them to agree to join for life but just to come to the introductory meeting and see if they would be interested to come again.

The contact stage should not continue for an extended time. If the preparation is well done, the contacts will probably be able to be made in a couple of weeks at the maximum. Most young workers like to see action. As soon as there are enough interested to come along, organise the Introductory Meeting.

THE CONTACT STAGE

4. The introductory meeting

The aim of the introductory meeting is to give interested young workers a chance to see what the YCW is like before they agree to join. Young workers want to find out who else is interested enough to come and what they are like. They would like to hear in a group what the YCW is all about and to see what others think about this. In a word they want to evaluate whether it is a good thing to join or not.

The agenda should be friendly and informative, giving people a chance to meet and share with the others who have come along. It is not possible to present the YCW very adequately at such a meeting and it is better not to try. Instead some key ideas should be presented giving emphasis to making people welcome and respected.

An example of an agenda that has been used for the introductory meeting.

1. Welcome everybody. Get them to introduce themselves one by one, saying where they live, went to school and what they are doing now.
2. Conclude this section with a comment: What we do during our ordinary day, what happens there, and the relationship we have with the people there is very important to ourselves but we often think it would not be interesting to others. In the YCW we spend a lot of time discussing what we do in our ordinary life because we recognise that it is an area of great importance to us personally, as well as the place that we are called to serve God and our community.
3. Get people to split up into pairs with someone they don't know well and to tell one another about their families - how many in the family, how old they are, what they do etc.
4. Conclude this section with another comment. Our families are very important to us and we to them, but we often drift along without recognising our need to be actively involved there. This is also an area of importance in the YCW.

THE CONTACT STAGE

5. One of the leaders gives a talk on what the YCW has meant to them in their own life.
6. The other leader tells how the YCW would be organised in this group - the use of the program - the need to get two of those present to prepare and lead the first meeting on the following week.
7. Find out who of those present would be prepared to come back next week and try the YCW. Organise for two of them to lead that meeting and arrange a time to prepare the meeting with them.
8. Drinks/Snack.

Forming a Community

The 'Forming a Community' stage is the first eight weeks of the new group. Each week they have a meeting. Different members take turns in running each meeting. The eighth meeting is an evaluation meeting of the group.

What are the main things to be achieved during this stage?

1. To build friendship and trust among the members of this new group - the foundation for them becoming a true community.
2. To get the members into the 'habit' of coming to a regular meeting. Perhaps some may decide not to continue, perhaps some will invite other friends along to join. Anyway at the end of eight weeks you will have a good idea of those who seem interested.
3. To provide an opportunity for the members to learn the basics of what the YCW is about and the methods used to achieve its aims. This learning is achieved by action, not by study or talks.
4. To give different members the opportunity to lead a meeting or take minutes. This prepares members to elect the persons they want to be chairperson, secretary and treasurer at the ninth meeting.

What is the work of the team during this stage?

Preparing the meetings

It is important that the members, from the very beginning, realise that this is their meeting and that they are responsible. So it is good if one of them can lead each meeting. They will, of course, need help to prepare the meeting. For the first couple of meetings it is a good idea if the team member leads the first part of the meeting and the new member/leader leads the enquiry, general business etc.

What does this mean in practice? It means that one of the team will need to make an appointment to meet with the member who will be leading the next meeting during the week. The two of them should go through the meeting and work out what needs to be done. And after the meeting, perhaps during the week, they should meet to evaluate how the meeting went and how their work of leadership could improve.

Follow up of members

When a group is just starting, it is important that the team try to meet up with the members between meetings. It often happens that a new member feels a bit shy at first. They easily make an excuse not to come and we have lost that member. So team members should organise to follow up the members regularly for the first few weeks.

The group will be much more successful if the members do some preparation work. For example; they could read the questions from the enquiry section and think about them. Also they could try to ask some of their co-workers what they think about these issues. Then at the meeting they will have plenty to say and will be able to speak with authority and confidence. Team members should try to motivate members to do this.

At the meetings

It is important that team members do participate in the meeting and not just sit listening like judges - but mostly they should be the ones who say the least. They should listen carefully to what is being said and be able to affirm and reflect with members when they talk to them outside the meeting.

We should be constantly aware that the YCW is not a meeting. It is a community of young workers. We must ensure that the meetings do not become too business-like and that there is a time for being youthful and enjoying things together. There are many ways to promote this and different ways in different cultures.

For example:

The group could share a meal before the meeting, or go out for a drink and supper after the meeting.

The group might organise one night when there is no meeting but the group goes out together to enjoy something social.

Team meetings

This work of the team is vitally important for a good start in the formation of the members. It should be well planned, evaluated and coordinated. And so it is necessary that there be a number of team meetings to do this work. Perhaps you could decide to have meetings after the first, fourth and seventh meetings.

What sorts of questions would you have on the agenda? Perhaps this list may help.

- *Preparation of meetings: The preparation of the chairperson for each meeting, is this going well? Who shows potential as a future chairperson for the group? Does the team person responsible have any difficulty with the preparation and evaluation of each meeting?*
- *Follow up of members: How is this work going? Are we getting a regular attendance at meetings? What are the problems and difficulties? What are the results of our action in following up*

members? How do members prepare for meetings? Are they talking to co-workers? Do they understand and participate in the Review of Happenings? Is there action taking place? Is there a good spirit in the group?

- *At the meetings: How do we participate in the meetings? What are our problems and difficulties? Is the group too rigid or too disorganised? Does the group recreate together? Should we motivate them to do something social together?*
- *Preparation for Meeting 9 and the election of officers.*

Important notes for leaders and groups

You will note that *Making Monday the Best Day of the Week: Handbook for Worker Groups*, suggests meeting programs for the first 14 weeks. Each meeting has a planned agenda and way of running the meeting. Many groups will find this helpful as a means.

It is important that groups do not try to follow this rigidly. For example: It might happen at one meeting that a group gets very interested in talking about one leader's situation in the 'Review of Happenings' section. It might be better to continue discussing this and forget the 'Enquiry' section for that week.

Again it might happen that the group want to plan a social night out as a group and so do not have time to complete a meeting. The group should be flexible and able to allow these sorts of initiatives.

UNDERSTANDING THE YCW



Sri Lanka

YCW Began Long Ago...

The YCW began in Europe but a very different Europe from the Europe of today. The first world war had just ended and everything was in a bit of a mess. Buildings were in ruins. People who had been soldiers were returning home. Life had to start again.

It is important to remember that this was also the period that history books call the 'Industrial Revolution'. James Watt had only recently invented the steam engine and people were learning quickly how this could be used for manufacturing goods in factories.

What a change this was! People used to work in small workshops using only hand-held tools. When they made something they had to sell it themselves. But now there were machines. These machines could work so quickly and they never had to sleep. Workers did not own the goods they made. Instead they were paid wages for their labour. Owners of small workshops found that they could not compete with these new factories. So the workshops closed down and the owners went to work in the factories. With the war over and everybody coming home, there was a great demand for new products. It was a great opportunity for those with money to start up newer and bigger factories.

Perhaps the people most hurt by this situation were the young workers. They had grown up in a world of war and fighting. Now they had to find work in a cut-throat world of competition. With little education and no training in a trade they had to accept whatever jobs

were available. And so, from their homes in villages and provinces, they came to the cities to find work in the factories.

The factory owners made great use of this cheap labour. The hours of work were very long, the wages were very low, and living and working conditions were very bad. It was little wonder that many workers soon lost any sense of their dignity as persons, or of responsibility for looking out for the welfare of others.

A young Catholic priest called Joseph Cardijn was very aware of all this. He had grown up in a working class family and so knew well the problems of workers. Also he had become very interested and concerned about young workers in particular. Even before the war he had begun to get them to unite and face their problems. Now he began in earnest to start the YCW movement.

Where Cardijn came from

Imagine for a moment the background of Cardijn. He was born into a worker family, his father was coachman for a large house, his mother a domestic worker. Later his father became a seller of coal, delivering coal in a hand truck from railway trucks to homes. His mother set up a small coffee shop in the front room of their home.

He had two elder sisters, Jeanne and Marie, and two younger brothers, Victor and Charles. His parents expected that he would leave school when he was fourteen. He would then go to work in a factory and help his parents with his wages. But Cardijn had decided that he wanted to be a priest.

That decision changed his life. In later years he would often talk about it and reflect on what might have been if he had gone instead to work in the factory. In his first holiday home from the seminary he saw the changes in his old school friends who were now working in factories. It seemed to him that they had lost their ideals and even their humanity, they had become bitter and cynical. Because he was studying to be a priest they looked on him as the enemy.

"How could this change be explained, I kept on asking myself. It isn't that there is anything intrinsically evil in the working class itself. Anyway it is a better class than many

others. I realised that it was caused by the environment of their work. This was my first revelation about the real facts of young workers' lives.

From that moment onwards I was haunted, haunted for life by the call: to save the working class. I could see that endless procession of young people, thirteen or fourteen years old, forced to leave school to work in corrupt conditions. After a few months of this they were unrecognisable. They were being fed an entirely false idea of work, of girls, of dates, of love, of marriage."

How he began the YCW

Cardijn became a priest in 1906. He spent a year doing further studies at university. Then he taught at a school for five years. In 1913 he went to work in a parish and began to organise young workers there. But the war came in 1914 and interrupted that work.

When the war was over Cardijn was put in charge of all social work in Brussels. His first thoughts were for the young workers. How would he help them with their problems? There were many possible methods that he could use:

- *He could organise a social action group of educated influential adults to study the terrible problems of working youth. This group could then mount a campaign to pressure employers to improve working conditions and stop child labour.*
- *He could organise a service and education organisation for young workers. This organisation could provide personal development courses, further education and facilities to allow workers to relax and find entertainment in a Christian atmosphere.*
- *He could organise a Catholic youth club for young workers. This organisation could provide religious and moral training and help young workers to become integrated into the life of the parish in its various works.*

Cardijn did not choose any of these methods. It is important to reflect on this if you want to understand the YCW well. It was not that he did not think of these methods. He thought about them but decided that they were not sufficient to tackle the problem of working youth. Cardijn rejected these three methods for two reasons:

*They did not tackle the root causes of the problem.
They did not respect sufficiently the dignity, abilities or vocation of the young workers.*

How Cardijn solved this problem

Cardijn believed that the solution to this problem must lie in the hands of the young workers themselves. The best and most important forms of dignity, freedom, liberation and participation are not things given to us by others. They are gifts that we possess only by using and exercising them. He said: "No one can do this for young workers - just as no-one can do their eating for them."

That is why the YCW he founded is not primarily an organisation, or a meeting, or a pious association, or even an education program. The YCW is a movement - a community of young workers, that is organised and run by themselves. In this community they form each other, support each other, help each other, love each other and together build a new world.

They have meetings, they run education programs, they discuss their faith and beliefs and they organise services. All these things are run by themselves and start from the situations they are facing in their daily life. But the most important part of the YCW is that members take action; daily action in their lives. They do not let life happen to them, they make it happen. These actions form them as leaders and build a new person and a new world.

That is why the YCW has been so very successful. It has mobilised hundreds of thousands of young workers. It has been called the most significant movement of the Catholic Church in this century. Onlookers watching its many activities, the dedication and sacrifices of its leaders and the transformation it brings to young workers' lives call it "the school-house not made with bricks."

Do We Still Need YCW?



Hong Kong

Every organisation has a purpose

The YCW is best known for its famous methodology, summarised by the words 'See-Judge-Act'. This method of education and formation has been copied and adapted by all sorts of groups all over the world. A consequence of this is that many know the YCW only because of its methodology. They do not know the reason why the YCW was formed or what is its essential direction or orientation.

Every organisation is started for a reason. For example: Imagine the case of a man who loves the beauty of trees and knows about their value in cleaning the air and producing oxygen. Then one day he sees a row of magnificent trees destroyed, bulldozed and carted away in trucks, in order to make the street wider for motor cars. It seems to him that individuals are selfishly demolishing what really belongs to the whole community. So he starts an organisation to defend the trees.

The YCW also was started for a reason. Its founder, Joseph Cardijn, had a great vision and enthusiasm - not about trees but about people and especially people as workers. His ideas about the dignity and significance of human work were radically different from what he could see happening at that time. He formed the YCW to confront that contradiction.

Let us look a little more closely at that contradiction; the contrast between the ideal of what human work should be and the misery and pain that it often is.

What work could be ...

From the objective point of view, human work has transformed the world. The first humans lived as hunters and gatherers wandering over the earth. But they progressed to become farmers and herders. Living in small communities they began to divide tasks and to specialise in skills. They learnt to use wood, stone and eventually iron for their tools. They invented ways to read and write. They formed governments and made laws.

And then came the invention of the first steam engine and the industrial revolution. After the steam engine came the petrol engine and then the electric engine. Entrepreneurs utilized these inventions to mechanise manufacturing and to revolutionise transport by train, car and then aeroplane. Electronics, radio, TV followed to again change the face of civilisation.

Such activity is something of enormous significance in human history. It is an activity that likens humans to God the Creator.

From the subjective point of view also, human work is an essential part of a meaningful life. Everybody needs money to survive - and more money to be able to live decently. But acquiring money is not the only reason for working. Most workers expect more from their work than simply material benefits.

For example we crave the self respect that comes from being self supporting and the fulfillment that comes from being able to support those we love. We long for opportunities to express personal ability, to show creativity and initiative. At work we can cooperate and share companionship with co-workers. Work gives a structure to our day and our life. It gives a feeling of competence. It enhances self esteem. Work is crucial to our whole identity as a person. "Without work, all life goes rotten," wrote Albert Camus.

When we look at work in this way we can see what human work could and should be.

But there is a contradiction...

Cardijn saw that what really was happening was in terrible contradiction to this vision. What was happening was the appalling misery of the life of the workers in the early days of the industrial revolution; workers forced to leave home and migrate to industrial cities, living in dirty crowded slums, working long days in unsafe and difficult conditions, with no dignity and no rights, living and working like slaves.

The YCW was born from that contradiction

The YCW was born as a movement of young workers for young workers. Its work is centred on the period Monday to Saturday. It is a movement of lay people concerned with lay life. Its action is worker action in worker life. Its aim is to fight to achieve for every worker the dignity and fulfillment that is their right in their daily work. If you want to achieve a successful YCW it is essential that you understand this.

But is YCW still relevant today?

Two hundred years have passed since the beginning of the industrial revolution. We live today in a vastly changed world. Is the YCW still relevant? Is there still a contradiction between Cardijn's vision of work and the way work is being organised? What does the working week mean in the life of the young workers of Asia and the Pacific today?

For a fortunate few, work life is a real fulfillment. The workplace is a co-operative of friends and work-mates. They are continually learning new skills. Work gives them the means to participate and contribute to society, and it rewards them with wages sufficient to live decently.

For the vast majority of young workers in Asia-Pacific however the working week is not so interesting or rewarding.

The unemployed say...

"For me the working week means another six days of standing around idly, searching in vain for decent, secure employment, and accepting wretched jobs for paltry payment. It means an isolated life on the edge of society, banned from contributing or participating, and cursed by lack of esteem and the financial inability to live like others."

A migrant worker says...

"I was forced to leave my village and later my country in order to find work. This means I am now far from my husband and three little

children. I work as a domestic worker. It is a lonely and isolated job that I do only because I must make some money so that my family can live and get an education."

An informal sector worker explains...

"I used to clean shoes when I first came as a child to this city. Now I have a rickshaw and pedal passengers around the city. There are many of us informal sector workers in this city - selling cigarettes, delivering milk on bicycles, running small stalls, pedaling rickshaws or cleaning shoes."

"Back home, in the province, many young workers are daily wage workers on agricultural estates. They plant the rice, weed it and harvest it. They are rubber tappers, pickers of tea leaves and timber workers. Others work in small factories or workshops - making tools, cracking cashew nuts, making soap, spinning cotton, weaving mats. Most workers in this sector have to fight every day to earn enough money just to survive."

The case of child workers...

Countless children who should be attending school and playing with their friends are forced to work. There are 44 million child workers in India alone. Many are bonded labourers, as young as four years old, sold as slaves by their parents. They work up to 18 hours a day and are paid nothing but two bowls of plain rice. Others work in restaurants, small work shops or as agricultural workers.

And in industrialised countries...

"Many young workers in my country work in factories, offices, shops and business enterprises. Technology and automation are affecting their work life. Much work has become de-skilled. Many lose jobs and many face insecure employment. New techniques of management add worry, busyness and competition to work. Workers become individualistic. Often work specialisation makes work boring, repetitive and meaningless."

These are common realities faced every day in our region. For many young workers 'work' is a bad word - a negative reality. It signifies hardships and hunger, worry and insecurity, oppression and injustice. Is this the vision we hope young workers will have of human work?

The last 200 years or so have been years of exciting and rapid development of science and technology. Swayed by these triumphs we have built a system of production that ravishes nature and mutilates workers. The problems of pollution and depletion of non renewable resources are daily more evident. The shocking poverty and misery of workers in third world countries is obvious for those with eyes to see.

What is not so clear is the price that is also being paid in the erosion of non physical values. A materialist world places little value on spiritual values. The question, "What does work do to the worker?" is almost never asked. Yet it could be argued that this is the most important question. The present organisation of work, demanding mass migration of workers, for example, is destroying families, communities and cultures. Is this an acceptable price to pay?

There are millions of young workers in the Asia-Pacific region suffering poverty and want. There are millions more who are controlled and oppressed in ways that make it difficult for them to live the deepest meaning of their lives. Pope John Paul has said that the central cause of all this unhappiness is centred in the way we have organised work.

These are the challenges of the YCW. These matters are the subject and the essence of what the YCW is about. The real purpose of the YCW is to organise young workers to face these situations and to solve their problems.

The YCW Solution

There are many possible solutions

Young workers face many problems and many organisations have been set up to help them. Let us look more closely at some of the solutions they offer. This will help us to understand better the specific solution of the YCW.

Providing for the victims

Some charitable organisations work this way. When someone is in trouble, they come to their aid like the good Samaritan in the Gospel. They provide for their wants and so solve their problem.

For example: Young women in one Asian country migrated from villages to work in factories in the city. No provision was made for their accommodation and the wages were so low that they could not pay for adequate accommodation. The result was that they were forced to live in crowded rooms, often ten girls to one little room. So a charitable organisation decided to build a hostel to accommodate them properly.

Helping the victims escape

Some organisations work this way. They see some people in trouble perhaps facing a situation that is oppressive and inhumane. So they organise for them to escape from this oppression.

THE YCW SOLUTION

For example: Many young workers are employed in a work situation where both wages and conditions are so bad that they cannot live with dignity. If these workers had further education and more skills perhaps they could get a better job. So an organisation decided to set up courses to educate them and help them acquire new skills - and a new job.

Protesting to authorities

Some organisations work this way. They see people in trouble and recognise that this is unjust. They organise a group to protest this injustice, a social justice group.

For example: Many brick kiln workers in one Asian country are employed as bonded labourers. They receive no money as wages, but are only given survival supplies. The employer is using them as slaves and demanding work from children and old people in the family as well. So an organisation has set up a group of lawyers and community workers to build community awareness of this problem and to protest to the government to make laws to stop these abuses.

The YCW solution

In essence the YCW is not a problem solving group. It does not begin with a problem but with a person. The YCW believes that there is a unique dignity and role in being a young worker. It aims to accompany young workers in discovering and living out this dignity and role.

What do these words 'dignity' and 'worth' mean? A building, like the Taj Mahal, also has dignity and worth. The difference is this - a person's dignity and worth is lived or personalised by their action. Most people will spend most of their lives as a worker. What sort of action can they take to make 'being a worker' a unique, worthwhile, dignified and fulfilling way to live? What does it mean to be a 'good worker'?

It, of course, means much more than negative things like 'not stealing', 'not wasting the boss's time' or 'not being uncharitable to fellow workers'.

THE YCW SOLUTION

Let us take the example of a young worker working in the free trade zone in Sri Lanka. Her wages are unjustly low, her working conditions unsafe and she is forced to live in a crowded shed. This is an unjust and oppressive situation that must be addressed. However the YCW does not begin action by building a dormitory, or helping her to 'escape' to a better job, or even by organising a social justice group to protest these abuses.

Rather our point of entry is by motivating her to take up her responsibility to confront this situation. This is her world and her life and she must play her part. As Cardijn says, "No one can do it instead of her just as no one can do the eating for her. She is indispensable".

She has the right and the responsibility to be a free and active participant in society, to formulate opinions and to work to achieve change. The YCW will try to accompany, challenge and support her in achieving these things.

We do this with a special point of view that is based on our convictions about the worth of every person, the dignity of work, and the purposefulness of life. This point of view is inspired and challenged by the teachings and values of Christ as portrayed in the Gospels.

The worth of every person

Cardijn so often said: "A young worker is worth more than all the gold in the world." Gold has worth because it is beautiful and can be exchanged for money. The dignity and worth of a person is something higher than that. A person is alive, free, able to make decisions and to take action. A person is someone who can truly make a difference by his or her action in daily life. This sort of dignity cannot be bought or sold with gold or money.

The dignity of human work

The work of every young worker has a dignity because it is their special contribution to the world. They have creativity and skills and they contribute these in the hope of achieving good for themselves and others. Work is the most significant way of participating and collaborating in society. Young workers want to do something worthwhile and fulfilling and they want the respect and esteem of others for what they do.

But society considers some work to be lowly and servile. As a result the wages and conditions of these workers are very bad. For example; in Pakistan many young people must work as sanitation workers. It is a very dirty job involving cleaning streets and sewers. The wages and working conditions are deplorable. And society looks down on sanitation workers as being the lowest of the low.

Let us look at this in another way. Sanitation workers are health workers. There is probably no work more valuable in preventing disease and sickness than the work of the sanitation worker. If the sanitation workers were to go on strike they would bring the country to a halt.

Societies pay the doctors very well and they are highly respected members of the community. Why is it that the sanitation worker is so lowly regarded? If society decided to dress sanitation workers in a clean uniform every day and to pay them the same salary as a doctor, perhaps people would compete to get this job.

To find a solution to the problems of workers we need to work not only for the dignity of the worker but also that society grows in awareness and respect for the dignity and value of all human work.

The purpose of life

Was this world planned or did it happen by accident? Is there a meaning and purpose for my life? These are questions that men and women have always asked. One thing we know from experience; when a person takes on some project and devotes their life to it, their whole life changes. They will suffer difficulties and hardships gladly, if

only they can progress their project. Their lives become lives of purpose, sacrifice and commitment.

When Scott, the great explorer of the Antarctic, lay dying in his tent surrounded by a world of snow and blizzards, he wrote a letter to his loved ones at home. "What lots of things I have to tell you," he wrote. "How much better it has been to be toiling and achieving than lounging in too great luxury at home." Scott suffered terrible hardships, but he had a goal that overshadowed the daily struggle and gave meaning to his suffering.

The YCW believes that there is a reason for every person's life, that we all have a personal, unique mission to fulfill on earth. Not many will be called to do a work like Scott. Most of us lead ordinary lives and it is in our ordinary lives that we must find our mission.

What does that mean in practice? We often feel that the directions of ordinary life are already decided, so we just drift along, living within these guidelines, "doing what everybody else does." The YCW asks young workers to reflect about what they do each day; getting up in the morning, having breakfast with the family, going to work and meeting others on the way. Then the hours of work, the work that is done there, the wages and condition, the relations between co-workers, the lunch-time break.

In everything that happens in our life we have an opportunity to make a difference or to do nothing. YCW believes that in these everyday happenings we have not only an opportunity but a responsibility. We have a personal mission to play our part and to build a better world.

What this implies:

The YCW is a movement for young workers, organised and run by young workers. Others may, and must, help but they cannot take the place of the young workers. This is their affair.

The YCW begins with the ordinary everyday life of young workers, the site of their responsibility and mission. In YCW gatherings we discuss the situations facing young workers - and challenge them in the light of our convictions - about

the worth of every person, the dignity of work and the purpose and meaning of life.

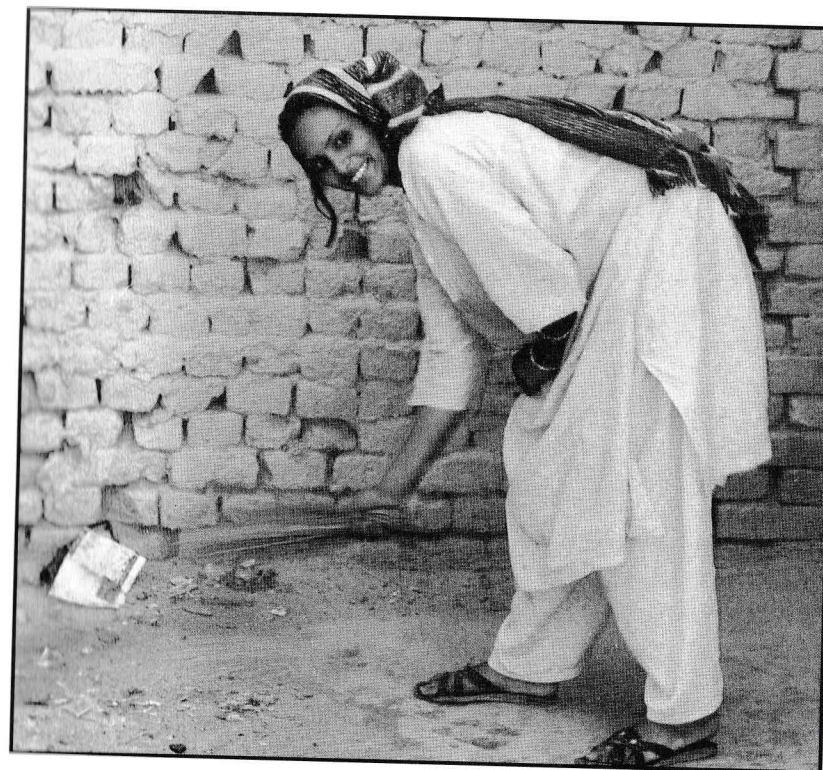
The YCW is proud to profess its Christian character. We acknowledge that Christ was a trail-blazer whose vision and values were declared in the real life situation of workers in his time. His vision and values are not only an inspiration, but a challenge, to us today.

As a result of their reflections, YCWs will take worker action, personal action and collective action. Sometimes it will be action fighting for justice, challenging authorities. Sometimes it will be personal action of change, for we acknowledge that sometimes we are part of the very ill we wish to fight.

YCWs are proud to be workers and members of the working class. We do not wish to escape from that class, nor do we ask charity. Rather we fight for justice; for the right of all workers to live a fully human life.

The YCW is proud to belong to the wider Workers' Movement and acknowledges its responsibilities towards that movement. That is why we define our specific task as 'the task of education'. Through our method of action and reflection we will form leaders with analysis, skills and commitment to remain worker leaders for life.

YCW MOVEMENT CHARACTERISTICS



Pakistan

A Workers' Movement

The English language has a phrase to describe things that are not comparable. It says that they are 'like chalk and cheese'. You cannot mix chalk and cheese - and if you did it would not make a very tasty meal.

Suppose then we bring together a rubber tapper from India, a factory worker from Indonesia, and an insurance clerk from New Zealand. It would seem that their work situations are 'like chalk and cheese'. How could they sit together to discuss their problems as workers? What is the basis of their unity?

These questions are important for two reasons.

- *We need to be clear about the orientation of the YCW; what it aims to achieve and what sort of action it takes.*
- *We also need to be clear about whether this orientation and action excludes some young workers from belonging to the YCW and, if not what is the basis for unity among workers who face such different situations.*

In Cardijn's time

It is worthwhile to firstly look at how different today's situation is from the situation in Cardijn's time. The industrial revolution was a time of great change. Before the workers used to work in small family

workshops. Now suddenly these small workshops were closed and in their place were large factories.

Before, workers knew well and often lived in the same house as their employer. Now the employer was a rich man, remote from the workers. He employed so many workers that he did not even know their names. Before workers were artisans. They were known by their trade and accepted and esteemed in their villages. Now they were just a mob, newly arrived in the city, living in shanty houses, with nothing to offer but their labour.

There was a name given to this new large group of workers - these people who left their villages and came to sell their labour for wages in the factories. They were called the 'working class'. The problem they all shared was called the 'worker problem'.

As time passed, workers realised that they could not fight these problems alone. They united to struggle for their rights. This is how the first unions were born. Immediately there was opposition. Unions were suppressed. The army and the police were called out. Workers were imprisoned, deported, shot at and killed. The general name given to all these groups struggling for workers rights was the 'worker movement'.

Cardijn frequently spoke about 'the working class', 'the worker problem' and 'the worker movement'. He said we must understand that these three things do exist. He insisted that this had nothing to do with communism or socialism. That these three things existed before communism and exist now independently of communism.

In Asia Pacific countries

In newly industrialised countries

Many young workers in Asia understand the workers' situation in Cardijn's time very well. It is exactly their own situation today.

In Sri Lanka there are large zones set apart for factories. Young women leave their villages to come and work in these factories. They work long hours frantically serving machines. They sleep in crowded

sheds without proper water or toilet facilities. Similar conditions exist in many other countries.

And when workers unite to demand human conditions and wages, they too experience opposition and oppression. Young workers in Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia and other countries know the experience of harassment by army and police as they stand on a strike line. They have experienced fear as they see their leaders kidnapped, tortured and killed.

In less industrialised countries

There are many other countries for example India, Pakistan and Bangladesh where factory work does not employ a large percentage of young workers.

In these countries many young workers are unemployed. They suffer hunger, misery and a life of frustration. Others try to make a living as entrepreneurs. For example they sit on the roadways selling handkerchiefs, or set up a business delivering milk on a bicycle. These people are not wage earners but are they workers?

Many agricultural workers work for landlords. They do not own any land. They are paid mainly with a small share in the rice harvest. Brick kiln workers are bonded labourers working only for survival supplies. Can we call them workers?

In post industrialised countries

Many factories have moved to countries where labour is cheaper. In those that remain manufacturing has become more specialised. Workers need more education and skills. The result is that there is great stress and competition among workers to upgrade their skills.

The loss of manufacturing industries has led to much unemployment. Many young workers are doing part-time or casual work. These workers often must work while others play, and, because they are casuals, they work with different people every day. This has caused isolation.

Because of the pressure on the job market, many workers feel insecure at their work. They start to live only for today and find it

difficult to commit themselves to any long term project. This leads to individualism and competition.

In some countries and languages the word 'worker' is used for factory workers only. And so, in these countries many young workers no longer identify themselves as workers. Can we say that they are still a part of the working class?

It is these so different work situations that pose questions for the YCW. What, today, do we mean when we say that we are a workers movement? What is it that unites us? A common situation, or a common vision, or both?

A common situation

The industrial revolution put a lot of power into the hands of a few people, the new entrepreneurs who set up factories. Because of 'Economic liberalism' (which said wages and conditions of workers could only be determined by market forces) this was power without responsibility. This opened the doors to allow the problems of wages and conditions experienced by the workers of that time.

As time went by, machines grew bigger and more powerful - and more expensive. The numbers of people working for wages increased. The firms grew larger becoming first national monopolies and then trans-national corporations. This put even more power into the hands of even fewer people and still without a philosophy that demanded true responsibility.

It has reached the stage where those who make decisions are so remote from those who suffer them that they are often unaware of the results of their work. Alexander Cockburn wrote in a 1984 issue of *'The Nation'*:

"Every time Paul Volcker (Chairman of Federal Reserve Board) puts the prime rate of interest up 1 point, \$4.5 billion is added immediately to the Third World debt. He might as well take several thousand Asian babies into a field and machine gun them. But (at least as far as I know) Volcker is not personally a murderer."

In his valuable book, *'Good Work'*, Mr E.F. Schumacher says that there are four main characteristics of modern industrial society

which, in the light of the Gospels, must be considered four great and grievous ills:

- *Its vastly complicated nature.*
- *Its continuous stimulation of, and reliance on, the lethal sins of greed, envy and avarice.*
- *Its destruction of the content and dignity of most forms of work.*
- *Its authoritarian character, owing to organisation in excessively large units.*

Following Cardijn and Pope John Paul II, the YCW believes that the organisation of human work is the essential key to the whole social question. It is the root cause of the problems of young workers from Nepal to New Zealand, from Pakistan to Fiji. The YCW is committed to struggle for a solution to this worker problem.

This is the first reason why we say that we are a 'workers' movement'. YCWs face very different situations but they share a common problem, a common analysis, and a common commitment to find a solution to this problem.

A common vision

Human beings need to work. We are born with needs that will only be supplied if we work for them. Our creative instincts lead us to take hold of things around us and transform them. As social beings we need to contribute and participate for the common good. We have gifts and abilities which we need to share, not only for the benefit of others, but also to grow ourselves. All of these things are the achievements of human work.

Work is so central to our dignity and our fulfillment as persons that it seems impossible to imagine a truly human life without it. The fact that the way work is presently organised makes it difficult to achieve these things does not excuse us from struggling to achieve a life of good and meaningful work.

Every young worker is a unique person with a unique life, gifts and possibilities. Every person makes their own special contribution to the world. It seems that, in the order of things, each was created with

A WORKERS' MOVEMENT

a purpose; a special purpose that makes us different from others, a mission to fulfill. The YCW believes that this is so. This is why we place so much importance on what we do with our lives. YCWs meet to reflect on their work life, to understand more deeply their possibilities and their responsibilities in work. They challenge one another to take action in work life. This is the second reason why we say that we are a workers' movement. No matter what work they do, or even if they are unemployed, YCWs have a common vision about the significance of work and their mission to be involved. They review their situations in their meetings, and they take action in work life.

Who can belong to the YCW ?

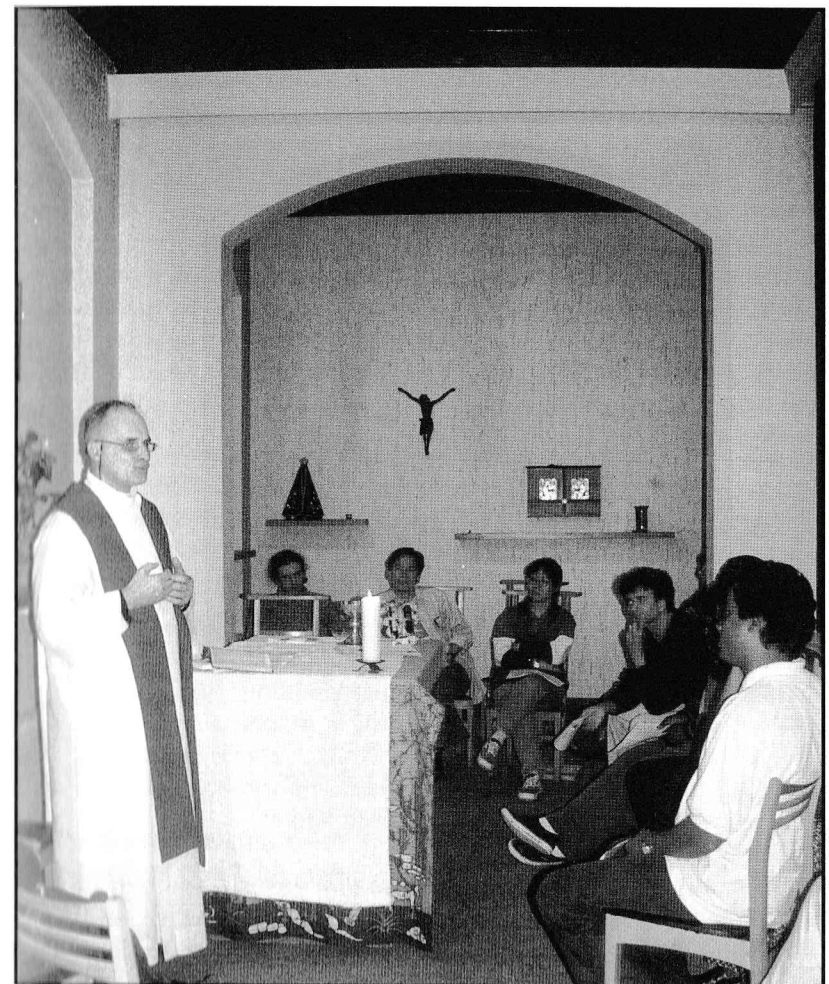
Nobody is excluded from the YCW because of the position they hold in society or because of the work they do. If they accept the orientation and vision and are willing to work for the aims of the YCW, then they are welcome.

The YCW will always have centre its interest on the person - the young worker member. It will study and enquire about the situations they face in their life and about how each young worker is involved or 'engaged' in action in life. The YCW will always operate from a belief in the dignity, worth and enormous potential of each young worker and from a belief that each was created for a purpose - that each does have a mission in life. In summary the YCW will always view its members as 'workers'. People active and involved in life. People whose action is unique and necessary for the good of the world.

The YCW will also remember its vision that the way that human work is organised is a key factor in the whole social question. It will spend time enquiring about and studying the organisation of work. It will study deeply the enormous changes coming through technology and new methods of organisation especially in post industrialised countries. And it will continually update its analysis about work, workers and worker organisation.

Finally the YCW will always have a special interest and concern for the poorest and most oppressed of workers. They are the people most affected by the system. That is why they will have a priority in all our work.

A Christian Movement



Asia is not a Christian continent. In some Asian countries less than 1% of the people are Christians. How, then, can the YCW (which claims to be a movement for all young workers) also be a 'Christian' movement? Is it a movement of evangelisation inviting membership of non-Christians with the aim of converting them? Or is it perhaps a movement that only calls itself Christian but in reality gives so little regard to Christ that it does not merit the name Christian?

We must be clear in saying that the YCW is not an evangelising movement in the sense of aiming to convert non-Christians to join the Catholic religion. The primary characteristic of the YCW is that it is a worker movement. Its sphere of action is the world of work. It begins with the worker situation rather than with dogmas or beliefs. The Christian characteristic of the YCW, we believe, belongs more to the realm of vision, orientation and motivation than to the area of fundamental objectives.

How then does the YCW live out its Christian characteristic in an Asian, non-Christian context? The question could be answered in many ways. I would like to answer it by pointing out several themes widely used in Asia Pacific YCW. These themes have a special meaning and relevance because of our Asian context and because of some characteristics that are definitively Asian.

Respect and esteem for Jesus

Jesus Christ is, of course, a person rather than a religion. He was born into a poor worker family and, as the Gospels tell us. He gradually grew in wisdom and strength. He lived in a specific political, social, cultural and economic context and this affected him. He clearly recognised that his mission was a response to these things. The Gospels are clear that he continually spoke about life, took examples from life, and explained his truths through parables from life. He is not an unapproachable or alien figure.

YCWs are often very moved to realise that Jesus spent the whole of his life as a young worker. He was only 33 years old when he died. In many special ways he truly was 'one like us'. He worked as a carpenter for many years. He faced worker problems and took clear options.

He had a method as well as a vision. He was not just a politician with a cause, or a teacher with a set of truths. Instead, he seemed to need and he certainly worked, to achieve love and solidarity. Read the Gospels as a young worker and you can find in him one who could be hero or leader.

And when it came to the end, He died as he had lived. To mention only a few things: he wept over Jerusalem, stopped off to visit his friends Mary and Martha, drove the mercenary dealers from the temple, organised a last supper with his friends, pleaded for their support in the garden. He got help from Simon to carry the Cross, and finally he forgave the thief who hung beside him. It is possible to love such a person.

This respect and esteem for Jesus gets a unique flavouring and impetus from a distinctive Asian characteristic - their sense of history and their depth of history. Asia is, and perceives itself as being, very old. They respect age and believe that age is the time of wisdom. They respect and revere their ancestors. They easily recognise Jesus as one of the ancients and a wisdom figure. They approach the Bible and the Gospels with reverence and candour.

This attitude can be compared with Western societies who tend to view the aged as weak and frail people who come from a primitive past when there were no computers or even TVs. Their stories, therefore, may be interesting or even occasionally thrilling but they are of no special value for learning to cope with the problems of the present.

I have sat in a group of Buddhist young women talking about their struggle in the union and one of them will point at the crucifix on the wall and say, "Tell us again the story of how he died." All of them stop talking to listen. And when I have finished another will say, "Tell us the story about when he met the prostitute."

Details greatly interest them. "How old was Jesus then?" they ask. So Jesus was only thirty years old, a poor young worker who slept in the streets, surrounded by his gang of fisherman friends, when he confronted Mary Magdalen. He was not an older man wrapped in a clean white garb with a halo around his head. He fitted into that

crowd. He truly was "one like us in all things but sin" - and that is important. That means he can be imitated. It means he can be loved.

Such stories, they seem to believe, belong in the world and are revelations of a great wisdom, they are about spiritual things. But such stories, they also seem to believe, are a bit like poetry. They say more than can be put into words and there is no one definitive way to interpret them. It reminds me of what St Thomas said "We cannot say what God is - we can only say what God is not." No human words can measure God.

This non-Christian following of Jesus is not something superstitious or confined to the 'simple'. Some of the greatest Hindu intellectuals define themselves as 'Hindu Christians'. Many Muslims recognise Jesus as a great prophet. It is based on who Jesus is (as revealed by the goodness and wisdom of what he said and did) rather than who he is as the Son of God. It is coloured by the traditional respect for the goodness and wisdom of the ancients, and the belief that they possessed deep truths and wisdom that are more important than modern inventions.

The deepest meaning of life

When we talk about the meaning of life we are talking also about the things that motivate people; the things that give meaning to life, the things that people will strive to attain. This is a subject of great interest to psychologists who want to understand human behaviour, to advertisers who have things to sell, and to employers who want to motivate employees to work. Not unnaturally there have been many books written on the subject.

Perhaps the most famous way of presenting a picture of what motivates people is the 'pyramid' attributed widely to Abraham Maslow. The pyramid depicts a hierarchy of human needs - from the physiological to self actualisation needs. The thought is that people start from the 'lowest' needs at the base of the pyramid and progress upwards. As they progress upwards they may be willing to forego 'lower' needs to attain the higher. e.g. A person may be willing to forego needs for sleep (physiological) to attain self actualisation needs.

The 'pyramid' has value as a simple schematic method of presenting human needs. As a schema of human motivation, however, the pyramid has many limitations. It is too simplistic and it ends in an apex as though self actualisation is the summit of human motives. It gives no room for the higher aspirations of human life.

At the basis of all human motivation is the desire to be happy. A hungry person is not a happy person but food alone will not provide the answer. As Schumacher has said "To progress in the quest for happiness we need to move higher, to develop our highest faculties, to gain knowledge of the higher and highest things and, if possible, to 'see God'. If we move lower and develop only our lower faculties which we share with the animals, then we make ourselves deeply unhappy, even to the point of despair."

Western society finds it more difficult to be comfortable with these concepts as matters of truth. Following Descartes (the 'father of modern philosophy') they consider religious truths and spiritual concepts to belong to the area of 'beliefs' not truths. Following Mechanism, they claim that the 'good' is identified with the 'useful'.

This, however is not characteristic of Asian society. In Asian society there is a sense of religiousness or spirituality, a religious outlook on life. Life is not only what appears on the surface. Life has a meaning and a purpose. Things in life are symbolic. They have their own meaning but point also to deeper meanings. Something that has this character of symbol in large measure has a truth more important than historical or scientific truth and is respected as such.

I was in the state of Kerala, India for the period of the Onam holidays. I asked them what is the meaning of these holidays. "Oh," they said happily, "Onam is a myth - just a story but it has a deep meaning for us. We, Keralites, love Onam." I asked them to tell me the story and this is what I remember.

There was once a king in these lands who was a great and wise man. He ruled his subjects with wisdom and justice. No corruption was seen in the land and people were given knowledge of all that was happening quite openly. This, in India, was a paradise and the subjects were happy and contented. The king, however, was so

successful and his people so happy that the other kings were jealous and wanted to get rid of him.

They went to the Lord of Creation and asked his help. The Lord of Creation agreed to help them. He appeared to Onam in the form of a small Brahmin boy. The Brahmins are the highest caste in India and it is said that an appeal from a Brahmin boy must be obeyed. The boy asked Onam for as much land as he could measure in three steps and Onam agreed.

Immediately the boy increased in stature till he was bigger than the largest mountain. He took one step and he measured out all the earth. He took another step and measured out all the heavens. There was now no place to make his third promised step - so Onam bowed his head and told him to make the step there and push him down to the nether world. But, before this happened, he asked to be allowed once each year to return and see his former subjects.

So each year the people from Kerala travel home to feast and celebrate. What? A myth? Yes, but something much more than a myth. Onam and his story are a symbol and hold deep truths about values and how to live. It is not a concern that the story is not historical. It is true in a deeper way. It opens the veil between appearances and the deepest meaning of life. It is in some way a religious story.

Western society tends to view stories in another way. Sometimes you will see a crowd streaming out of a theatre with tears streaming down their faces. "Oh it is so sad," they say. But if you see the film you find that it is not really so sad and that, in fact, the tears begin with the happy ending. Such stories are usually about human values. The situation faced in the film strikes a chord in the hearts of the viewer. The tears come not from the situation of the people in the film so much as from the personal experience of 'what this means to me'.

Western society tends to define these tears and this experience as pleasure. "It is a great film. You will enjoy it very much." Asian society on the other hand defines their stories as truth or wisdom. A good story teller is not an entertainer. They are a wisdom figure who opens the door between material things and the deepest meaning of life.

The redemption of work

The term 'redemption' has been chosen in preference to 'liberation' for a reason. Liberation can mean simply getting rid of an oppressive system. Redemption includes a struggle to restore the true dignity of work. It is a theme that is of great significance in the bible.

The first book of the bible shows us an experience and vision of 'good work'. God is presented as a worker - creating the world. At the end of His week's work, the bible says, God rested from his labour.

"On the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation." Gen. 2: 2-3

Note that the word 'work' is repeated three times to give it importance and to present God's work as a model for human work. God works freely, expressing Himself in the world. It is a work that produces something worthwhile. Seeing what He has done God says: "This is good." His work is a source of enjoyment and contentment. And then when the work is successfully completed "God rested."

The second book of the bible shows us a different experience of work. One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on the heavy work with which they were burdened - and this is what he saw:

"The Egyptians set taskmasters over the people of Israel to afflict them with heavy burdens.. They made them serve with rigour, and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field; in all their work they made them serve with rigour. ...

The same day Pharaoh gave orders to the taskmasters: You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks. Let them go and gather straw for themselves. But the number of bricks that they made heretofore you shall not lessen...So the people scattered abroad throughout the land to gather straw. The taskmasters were urgent, saying: Complete your work, your daily task, as when there was straw. Then the foremen

A CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT

of the people of Israel were beaten and were asked: Why have you not done all your task of making bricks today?"
Ex. 5:6-8, 12-14^a

What is it that has made this work a burden and a cause of suffering? Firstly this work is imposed and endured. It is not a chosen work. Secondly there is too much work - a burden too great for the worker's physical and spiritual strength. This causes stress, bitterness and anxiety. Thirdly the work is of no benefit to the workers but only to Pharaoh.

"Then the Lord said to Moses: I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and I have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them...Come I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring forth my people out of Egypt."
Ex:3:7-10

It is because of the work situation that God intervened. Note that God is the active person. He says, "I have seen, I have heard, I know, I have come down". The workers are no more on their own in their problems. Liberation has begun. Read on and you will find that the liberation was not instantaneous. God sent Moses - there were many, many set backs and difficulties. It was a struggle.

Over the years the telling of that story changed. When the Jews were in exile and worried about their future as a people they told the story as though God came to liberate people because they were Jews. But the people were not all Jews, some of them were poor, landless, Egyptians (the Hebrews). Read the story and it is clear; it was not a nationalist struggle, but a class struggle.

This story, so central to the whole bible, has great significance for us in Asia. All Asian nations are class divided; wealth and education are not well distributed. Structures of dominance and oppression are our situation. Even in the more 'developed' countries we experience imposed work, stress of too much work, and the indignity of working for things we do not own and things we are not proud to achieve. We are familiar with the problems of migrant refugee workers, oppressive foremen, landless farm workers, discrimination against women etc.

A CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT

It is with these same situations that the bible begins. In the struggle against this the people came across a God different from the gods of kings, landlords and generals who delighted to live in huge temples and elaborate grand liturgies. When the people began to struggle they discovered a God on the side of the poor and oppressed.

The story of the methodology of that struggle for liberation or salvation is developed throughout the bible. It has its fulfillment when Jesus came as the new Moses. What were the situations in Jesus' time that really offended him? Do they have relevance to Asia and YCW in Asia today? We look at these questions in the next chapter.

Jesus in His Time



Indonesia

JESUS IN HIS TIME

Long, long ago, in the village of Nazareth in Galilee, a woman called Mary gave birth to a child and called him Jesus. This child was destined to become very famous, famous enough in his lifetime, but even more famous after his death. Today millions of Christians throughout the world recognise him, not just as man but as God.

They say that he was fully a man but also fully God. Just how he could be both is, a mystery that none of us can adequately explain. However, it means that Jesus grew and developed just like other humans in stature and wisdom.

In this chapter we want to try to understand, about the society Jesus lived in. What, from a human point of view, influenced him to commit himself to action in his world? What did he want to change? What were his values? What was his vision and how did he go about implementing this? In doing this we hope to learn about how we, as YCWs, can build and understand our own vision and methodology.

Politics in Jesus' society

The Romans were the supreme political power in Palestine. They had won this position by conquering the country. However the Romans were a bit like the IMF and the World Bank. They wanted to be in control, but they were willing to leave the implementation of their plans in the hands of others. So they left Herod in charge in Galilee. They also employed Jews to gather taxes for them.

The Romans also allowed the Jews to keep their political/religious system. In Jerusalem the council of elders was called the Sanhedrin. It was a powerful body economically and so the rich fought for a place on it. Most of the members were Sadducees. The Sadducees were a sort of political party of rich merchants and landowners who only accepted part of the bible and who kept on friendly terms with the Romans.

Finally there were the Zealots - a small group who hated Roman control and did not see that much was being done to overcome the problem. They were an underground, guerilla movement who believed that the answer was to overthrow the powers by force. Perhaps they were a bit like many radical left wing movements of today. People recognised that they understood and were concerned

with the true problems of the people but not everyone could agree with their solution.

It seems that Palestinian politics was subject to international control, motivated by struggles for power and money, and no stranger to corruption and bribery. These are big problems for a people who claim that God is their King and ruler. Jesus grew up seeing these things and listening to the comments and arguments of the people. As a young worker he suffered because of the political problems.

Economics in Jesus' society

Jesus, came from Galilee, a rural region in the North of Palestine. The richest people in Galilee were the landlords who owned big properties and were often absent, living it up in Jerusalem. Next came the small landholders who lived in villages and worked on their land. Then came the fishermen who lived on the fish they caught. Finally there were the poor: landless labourers, daily wage earners, small artisans, slaves and the unemployed. Jesus, Mary and Joseph belonged to this class.

That Jesus thought that the poor, really were poor and that they had a problem, can easily be seen by reading the Gospels. Their poverty was worsened by the taxes that they had to pay both to Rome and to the Temple. There were also many Jewish schemes used by the rich and powerful to extort money from the poor, and many of them centred around the Temple. In his years of teaching Jesus often spoke about these problems. On one occasion he overturned the merchants' tables and drove them out of the temple with a whip. The problems of the poor concerned Jesus greatly. He identified with the poor, he lived as a poor man for so many years. He wanted to change such an unjust society.

Culture in Jesus' society

We should not forget that many of the Jews that lived in Jesus country were people who had been taken into captivity in Babylon and had only recently returned. Though they set up the temple again and tried hard to rebuild all the old customs. It was not easy. The area was now under the influence of the Greek culture; an unrestrained, pleasure seeking culture.

The most fanatical of the reformers were the Scribes and the Pharisees who were rather well-off people from the middle class and fundamentalists. They not only demanded that every little law be fulfilled but they also added many laws that were impossible for the poor to keep. It became nearly impossible for a poor Jew to be also a faithful Jew.

Now Jesus came from a poor family. No doubt it worried him to see that so many people were forgetting God and living selfish lives but it is certain that he did not agree with the laws and hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees. We have only to read the 23rd chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel to be assured of that.

The Scribes' and Pharisees' religious and cultural views also oppressed some groups in the society - like the Samaritans (who were outcasts because they had married non-Jews), the sick and handicapped (they were viewed as being punished by God), and the poor (who were 'unclean' because they could not follow all the Pharisees' rules).

These people were mostly materially poor, but their situation was worsened because they were alienated, degraded and excluded from society. They were people without dignity because they were abandoned. They formed a large part of the people Jesus was interested in. Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." I think he was talking about the people who are looked down on, culturally oppressed, and discriminated against.

How this relates to Asian societies today

I imagine that most YCWs of Asia can understand well and identify with the situations and the thoughts of Jesus when he reflected about the troubles affecting his people. Jesus' country had been conquered by the Romans and was not allowed political freedom. Asian countries have escaped colonisation only to fall to the economic domination of other countries. The IMF and World Bank are among the powers used to deny them political freedom today.

Economically Jesus' country was oppressed by foreign rulers and foreign taxes and at home by unscrupulous, greedy land-owners and absentee landlords. Asian countries also know the terrible

consequences of crippling international debts. And on the home front they know the power and damage done by landholders, landlords and by the unscrupulous village money lenders.

Jesus and his friends knew also the humiliating and demeaning power of the Scribes and Pharisees who used their power to discriminate and oppress. Asian countries know the problems of caste, dowry, bonded labour, discrimination against women etc.

These were the problems that Jesus knew, had experienced and had heard people talking about all his life. When he thought about the things that he would like to see changed, the things that he would like to commit his life to achieving, then he recalled these problems of his people.

That is why, at the beginning of his ministry, Jesus came to the synagogue at Nazareth, his home town and proclaimed what he was about to do:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring glad tidings to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty
to captives and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord."* Luke 4: 18-19

Jesus' solution and methodology

We know from the Gospels the problems that affected Jesus and made him angry. We know that he worked to bring about change in these matters. The next important questions to ask are:

What was his solution to such problems?

What was his method of organising to achieve this solution?

We must remember Jesus' astonishing birth. His mother was a virgin who was told of her pregnancy by an angel. The angel also mentioned that Mary's kinswoman Elizabeth would have a son. It seemed that these two young men, Jesus and John the Baptist, were destined to have an important role in the liberation of God's people. No doubt Mary and Elizabeth, often discussed what this would mean

and, in time they must also have told their sons about what the angel had said.

I imagine Jesus and John, as teenagers, discussed what this meant and what they should do. They came, anyway, to two very different conclusions. John went off into the wilderness to a monastery to spend time alone with God. Jesus stayed on in the village, living as a young worker, a daily wage earner and so one of the poor.

Eventually John knew that the time had come to begin his mission. Probably he would have talked to Jesus about it. How different these two were. John was a fireball and an enthusiast. He wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather girdle around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. He came out of the wilderness of the desert as an ascetic and the people regarded him with awe and respect.

He came with a message that a time of judgement was coming and that people had to prepare by repenting their sins and be baptised to a new life. They were to stop hoarding their riches and share with the poor and they had to stop unjust practices in their work. He said that one mightier than him "one whose sandal I am not worthy to carry" would follow him. The people flocked to him to be baptised.

And then Jesus also came. He came as one of the sinners to be baptised. Matthew's Gospel tells us: "John would have prevented him saying, 'I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?' But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now'...." (Mt 3, 14-15) When Jesus came up from that baptism the heavens opened and he heard God's voice. He went immediately to the desert to make final preparations for his mission.

For forty days he prayed and fasted. He had already spent 30 years preparing for his mission by living and experiencing the situations of his people. His mission would be a response to what he had seen. He would be a liberator and saviour for his people. But how would he go about this work?

The devil came with temptations. He offered Jesus three means - money, power and prestige. He said in effect: "You can liberate your people by giving them material things, or by using power or

popularity." These, of course were not Jesus' values or the values of his Kingdom but, equally importantly, the use of such means was not his method.

Let us reflect on this more. When Jesus came, he could have come as a member of a rich family, a king or powerful man. He could have chosen to be a highly popular figure. Instead he came as a defenseless child, to the poorest of families, in a very small and troubled country. For 30 years he lived as one of us, a young worker in a daily wage job. His cousin John chose to join a monastery and prepare for his mission there, Jesus remained an ordinary worker.

When he began his mission many would not listen to him because he was so ordinary. "Is not this the carpenter?" they said, "Where did he get all this?" He continued to identify with the people. People murmured, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast? Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" Even John, in prison, sent a message asking, "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?"

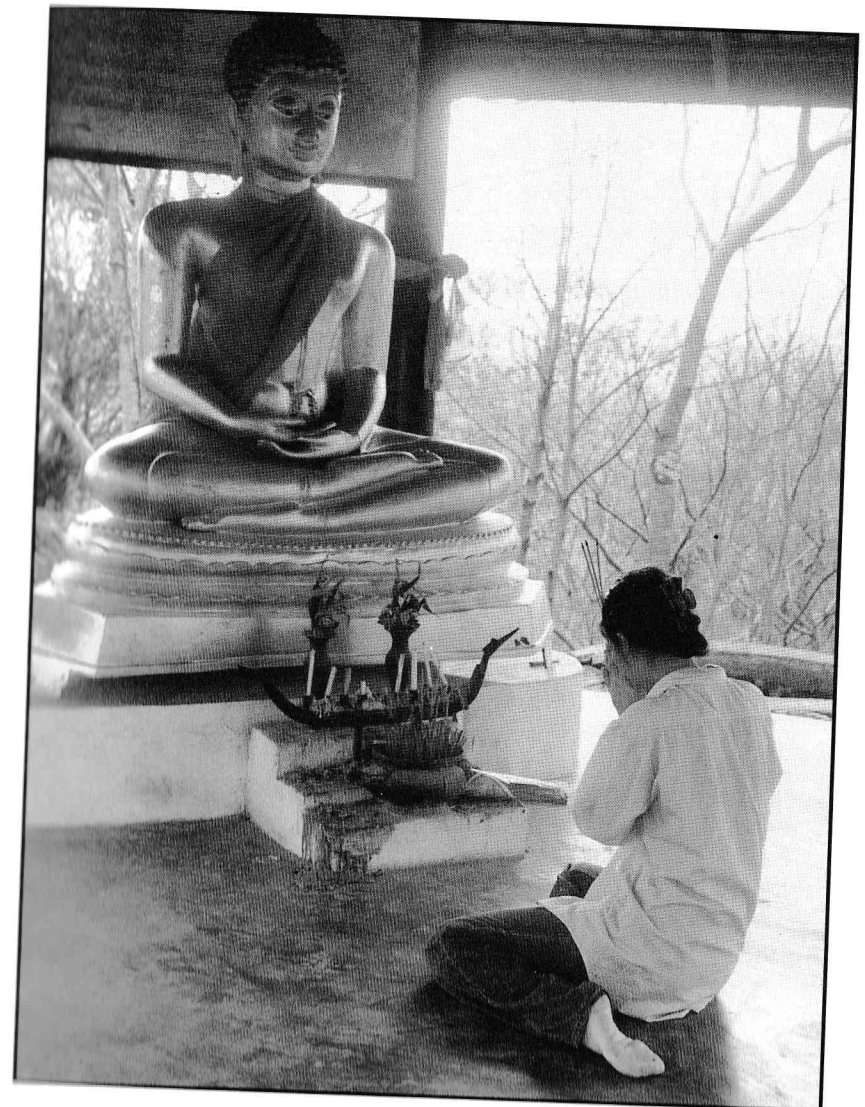
It is very clear, from everything he did, that Jesus did not aim to liberate the people on his own by some sudden miracle. It doesn't work that way. Liberation is also a personal thing. It has to be accepted into your life. Jesus worked by calling people to choose to follow him and he would call them to assist him in the work.

Conclusion

YCW leaders, and especially those involved in the work of initiation, should read and reflect often on the mission of Jesus. Jesus' mission was centred in the problems and daily secular reality of the poor people who were his neighbours and co-workers. His mission was defined as a call to take up action to bring justice, dignity and liberation from the oppression they were suffering. He believed that there had to be an answer and that the answer like the problem, began in the lives of ordinary people.

Jesus went through the *Study Stage* and *Contact Stage* and when he got his community he went through the formation process of *Forming a Community* - then *Getting Organised* and finally *Moving out into the World*.

INITIATING THE YCW



Don't Skip the Study Stage

Introduction

Do you have been asked to take on the responsibility for initiating a new YCW group? It is an exciting challenge and the temptation is to get active immediately. Experience tells that success is more likely, however, if you begin by doing the preparation work well. So give yourself space to think, to plan and also to make decisions about recruiting a team to assist you in the work.

To start a new YCW group is an important work that could have big effects on the lives of many people. It is also a work that will involve and commit you over a six months period. So it is important that the work be successful. Success, of course, depends on many things and not all of these are controllable. There are three important aims to be achieved in this preparation or study stage.

Recruiting a team

The first thing to do is to recruit a small team to work together in starting the YCW. For example, if the group is to be set up in a parish, the team could consist of a YCW leader, a priest of the parish and a couple of young workers from the parish. If we want to start a group in a factory, the team might consist of one or two YCW leaders and one or two workers from the factory.

There are many people involved in achieving most worthwhile projects. A sporting team, for example, needs selectors, coaches,

DON'T SKIP THE STUDY STAGE

administrators, and supporters as well as players. All have their part to play. It is important that all are recognised and given scope to be involved. It is important that all work together as a team.

When it comes to initiating a new YCW group, it is helpful to spend some time with pencil and paper thinking about what you are planning to do and reflecting quietly on how to achieve it. If you decide to work with a team you will need to clarify a number of questions.

What do you mean by a 'team'?

What are the advantages of working with a team?

Who do you want to have in the team?

What do you expect them to do?

How will you ensure that all work together?

What sort of team should we have to start a YCW group?

The team should be a small group of people who are willing to be responsible for the new group. This means that they should support one another, work together, and accept the successes and failures that come. It does not mean that they will all do the same work or even all take equal responsibility.

For example, as a YCW leader you know that there is a lot of work to be done, in contacting young workers, and that there is a real skill in being able to communicate with them about the YCW. You would hope therefore to have some other good YCW leader to help you with the work and to support you in the hard times.

To be successful the new group will also need support and assistance of the parish, a place to meet, and the aid of local knowledge. That is why it is important that the parish priest or parish workers be represented on the team. Most parish priests, parish workers, and parish councils are concerned with the problems facing young workers in the parish. Most will enthusiastically support and encourage initiatives to support them. Naturally they like to be consulted and informed, and in some way to be a part of what is happening.

DON'T SKIP THE STUDY STAGE

The advantages of working in a team

When a group works together as a team they each bring different ideas and talents. A good leader is one who can recognise the special talents of others and find a way for those talents and gifts to be shared. You will discover that the joys of success are increased, not lessened, by being shared within a team. And if your team is successful then all members will also gain great experience and formation in how to start a group.

If you have ever tried to light a campfire or a barbecue you will know that it is almost impossible to light a fire with only one stick. Fire blazes up only in places where two or more sticks touch. So also if you pull one fiercely burning stick out of the fire and hold it up as a torch, very quickly the flame dies. Why is this? It is because fire is a communal thing, it is a group action.

There is something very important here for all of us to learn. The YCW has a saying, "A good leader never acts alone". We do our best to teach this to the new members of every group. We should also show it to them by the way that we organise the initiation of their group. It is a great advantage when the new YCW group can get started with the support and understanding of many in the community.

What are the difficulties of this team approach?

This idea of starting YCW groups by recruiting a team is not always successful. I recall one YCW leader who spent a lot of time organising her team. She reported that there were many difficulties in finding a time when all could meet, and when they did meet there was a lot of talking but little action. For this leader the team approach was one big headache.

Another leader made big efforts to get the parish priest on the team but faced many difficulties because of this. The priest had little understanding of the YCW but had his own ideas of what he wanted the youth of the parish to do. He wanted them to discuss the Bible not their life. He wanted them to take action in the parish not in their workplace.

It is good to reflect on these difficulties before you start so that you can plan a way to overcome them. Perhaps the best method is to set clear goals before you begin the work.

Setting clear goals

When you get your team together, the first thing to do will be to discuss and agree on the goals you wish to achieve. This may not be an easy task. So before you get the team together it is important that you sit down with pencil and paper to reflect and plan.

Who should set the goals?

As initiator and leader it is natural that you should have some firm ideas about what sort of group you want. There will be some things that you will regard as essential for a YCW group. You must be clear on what these are.

On the other hand it is essential that you respect every member of your team. They have ideas and talents, and they will want to express them. Probably compromises will have to be made.

Why is it so important to fix clear goals?

If you can begin with a clear understanding and agreement about the goals of the YCW it will solve many problems. Sometimes a parish feels the need to organise 'something for youth' and only agrees to having the YCW because it is a means. They have not made any study of what is specific and essential to the YCW.

What is specific and essential for a YCW group?

It is not easy to answer this because the YCW should always adapt and be based on the needs of the members. From my own experience I believe that the following are important considerations.

The YCW is a movement of young workers

It has a special commitment to workers based on a belief in the dignity of work and the worker. It is not aimed at supporting secondary students or even tertiary students. This means that it is young workers who are working or unemployed that we will invite to join.

This is not, of course, an inflexible rule. There are many students who are part-time workers. Work pressure forces many to spend extra years at school in order to acquire a job. Some students have joined YCW while still at school and have found in the YCW a good foundation for future working life.

The YCW is a worker movement

Its centre of interest is the lay life of its members, in the workplace and in the society. It aims to organise and form workers to initiate action in their own life situations. This means that the YCW must be run and organised by young workers themselves. It means that their action will be worker action in their daily life.

Again this is not an inflexible rule. YCW groups have always found time to support parish activities as a group and also to organise activities to support other groups. They should not, however, be continually pressured to undertake this sort of work at the expense of their primary responsibility.

The fundamental and essential method of the YCW is the Review of Life and Worker Action - ROLWA

It is, of course, organised and achieved in different ways by different communities but it remains the most important

means of the movement. This means that ROLWA will be given priority always in the meetings of the group.

Uniting the team in action

Let us suppose that you are really clear in what you want to achieve, and that you have recruited a team that you feel will be able to assist and collaborate in this work. How should you go about getting the team active and united?

It is important that the team meet on a number of occasions and that these meetings be well prepared and structured. This will set the tone and standard of how the team takes on their work and it will bring clarity and unity. Each meeting should also be a progressive step in action to get the group started. Each meeting should end with all team members committed to a clear action.

So what should take place at these meetings?

1. Building friendship and respect

In the meetings we should take time to share about ourselves, who we are what we do. We should also share about our motivation for taking on this work, what we hope to achieve etc. The team is not just a group who take on a task, they should become friends and co-workers in doing something worthwhile to make the world a better place.

2. Study and sharing about young workers situations

The YCW is not something fixed and immovable. It must be adapted to suit the needs and priority concerns of its members. The team should study the situations facing the young workers that they are going to try to organise. It is difficult to attract young workers if you do not understand their situation.

As a result of this study, the team will decide what sort of group should be started. At present, in the Asia Pacific region, we have four main types of groups: Parish groups, Workplace groups, Neighbourhood groups and Category groups.

3. Study and sharing about YCW orientation and method

It is very important that there be unity in these matters. There are a number of articles about the YCW in this book. Perhaps you could discuss one article or some pages of an article. This helps the team to clarify their ideas and methods and to deepen their understanding but it also ensures that differences do not arise causing confusion to the new members.

When the new group begins to meet there will be little time for team meetings and much need for the team to be aware and prepared for what is ahead. It is important that the team be reading ahead and that there be a sharing of their ideas about future responsibilities.

4. Action planning and evaluation

There are a number of things that should be accomplished during this 'study stage'. The plans to achieve these things could be distributed over three or four meetings of the team and follow-up and evaluation of the work could be done at the next meeting.

The things that should be done include:

- Team to read and discuss some key articles about the YCW.
- Find statistics on youth and youth problems of the area.
- Meet and talk with other agencies and resources involved in young worker issues in the area.
- Build a list of names and addresses of young workers in the area.
- Make decisions on what sort of group will be set up.
- Find a suitable place to meet.
- Advertising of the group to be organised and done.

Example agenda for the first meeting

Preparation

Ask all the team to read the chapter "How the YCW began" before coming to the meeting.

Opening of meeting

Building friendship and respect

Introduce yourself - and ask each person to introduce themselves and to talk about how they came to take on this work and what are their hopes.

Study and sharing about young workers situations

Talk about the situation that faced workers in the Industrial Revolution (Cardijn's time) and its effects on young workers. Ask team members to share about what they see are the most important situations affecting young workers today.

Study and sharing about YCW orientation and method

Ask team members to share what they feel was most significant about Cardijn's answer to the problems of his day. Read together "What is specific and essential to the YCW" (refer to p.71). Discuss.

Action planning and evaluation

- Plan what we will read before next meeting to deepen our understanding of the YCW
- Organise one member of the team to lead this part of the next meeting.
- Begin the work of getting a list of names and addresses of young workers.
- Begin work of going out to meet other agencies and resources for young workers in the area. What can we learn from them about the problems facing young workers in the area?

Methods of Organisation



India

There are many ways to organise young workers

Before you start a YCW group you should first reflect about what sort of group will best serve your people. The YCW is a very flexible organisation. There is no one method that will cover all situations. Always remember that our starting point is the situations that the young workers are facing.

The YCW aims at helping young workers to discover the deepest meaning of life by confronting these situations. Our aim is not simply to start a group but to initiate and form some young worker leaders. It is a longer term aim demanding a six to eight months commitment.

The first task of the initiating team is to study the situations of young workers in the area. The group we form will, hopefully, be a response to these things. Perhaps young workers in your city or parish are all pretty much alike. There are no obvious divisions among them and they all seem to share the same kinds of lifestyle and problems. And so you may decide to start a general group for young workers and to form a community of them. There are many such YCW groups but this method will not be suitable in many other situations.

For example: Thousands of Filipino young women come to Hong Kong to work as domestic workers. They have borrowed money for their ticket and for the employing agent's fees. They must first work to repay this loan and to earn enough for their ticket back home.

If, for any reason, their employment is terminated, they are in great trouble. They must return immediately to the Philippines but they have no money. Many try to remain and to get another job but they are illegal migrants hiding from the police.

These workers work six days a week. Most of them are required to 'live-in' with their employers and to be constantly available. Many have serious work problems. There are labour laws outlining their rights but it is difficult for one young foreign worker to stand for her rights against her employer.

On Sundays thousands of these workers meet in Statue Square. They sit in groups, eating packed lunches, writing home or just talking. It is their one day off and they are lonely and wanting other young company. How would you organise these young workers? Could their situations be effectively addressed in a general group with other Hong Kong young workers?

In Pakistan cities many Christians live in 'Christian colonies'. This means they all live together in small slum houses within a predominantly Muslim city. They are poorer than their Muslim neighbours and they suffer discrimination because of being Christians. At school they were not allowed to drink from the same cups as their Muslim friends. Now they are refused service in many shops and excluded from many forms of employment. Most young men work as sanitation workers, operate petrol pumps, white-wash walls or they are unemployed.

How can we organise an effective YCW in such a society? Will we organise only Christians - or will we try to form a mixed group of Muslims as well? Should we try to organise all young workers in a colony or would it be more effective to organise a group of, for example, sanitation workers?

I recall visiting a village in South India where there are many young Dalit women. Culture and tradition decree that they must not leave home to look for work but there is no work in the village. So, many of them take on work rolling 'beedie cigarettes'. The agent supplies tobacco and 'beedie leaf'. The girls meet under a tree to sit on the ground, rolling cigarettes in leaf and tying them with cotton thread. There is no difficulty in organising these young women to 'meet' for they meet every day at the water well and under the tree where they work.

Compare this situation with that of the Chinese migrant workers working in factories in Macau. They work ten hours a day, six days a week and then must do overtime after work and on Sundays. One girl was ten months in Macau and had not had even one day off. The YCW group starts meeting at 9.30pm on Sunday evenings and even then some arrive late after work. The initiator of a YCW group in the Indian village has a very different task from the person trying to organise a YCW in Macau.

These are the things we need to know about the area. Perhaps in one area there are a lot of factories. The workers are young migrants from the provinces who live in dormitories. It may be effective to start a parish YCW and try to attract some of these girls to come along. It may be more effective to try to make friends with one of these young migrants and motivate her to start a group in the factory.

The second task of the team is to decide on what sort of group will best fill the needs of the young workers in the area.

In the Asia Pacific region we have four main types of groups. They have been developed because of different needs.

- Parish groups
- Neighbourhood groups
- Category groups
- Workplace groups

Parish groups

Many parishes feel a responsibility to be involved with post school youth and with worker issues. The YCW offers a means to achieve these aims.

The parish group is made up of a group of young worker leaders. They meet every week to review their life and plan worker action. Sometimes a parish group of leaders will also form another larger group of members within the parish. This second group will be part of their responsibility as a YCW group.

The parish group can face difficulties if it is seen as a parish youth group with many duties to perform in the parish. Sometimes also parish groups come under pressure to spend most of their time studying the bible. The YCW is motivated by Gospel values - but it is not a bible study group.

Neighbourhood groups

There are circumstances where it is better to build a neighbourhood group than a parish group

For example: If a community is torn apart for some reason - religious or racial or whatever - it may not be very effective to start a group that caters only for Catholics, or for migrants.

Sometimes the biggest problem is a community problem. It can be only solved by uniting all the young workers of that community. A parish group will not be a practical solution.

In many parts of our region, Christians are a very small minority. A parish group can be a great support to young Christian workers. It may be the only place where they can discuss their values and beliefs openly. But it may stop non-Christians from joining the group.

Do we want non-Christians in the YCW?

The YCW began as a response to the worker problem and the effects this was having on young workers. It proposed a different vision - a vision of how work could be organised more justly and a vision of how young workers could and should live. This vision is based on the vision proclaimed by Christ, a vision that was meant for all peoples.

There have always been non-practicing Christians and non-Christians in the YCW. As early as 1938 Protestants and Anglicans joined the YCW. Then animists in Africa, young Jews during World War II, then Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims.

The YCW in Asia once approached a famous Cardinal asking for support to employ a full-time worker for the extension of YCW. The Cardinal said: "I will support the employment of two fulltimers but one of them must be a Christian and the other a Muslim. There can be no answer to workers' problems in this country by setting up a separatist group."

The result is that today there are countries where there are non-Christians in the YCW. However, in other countries, this is discouraged or forbidden by the local bishops.

Integration does not mean compromise

There are difficulties in starting YCW as a neighbourhood group; a group that is open to all young workers of the neighbourhood.

It can mean that the group is united only in the self centred aim of improving their economic situation. This, of course, is not the YCW.

It can mean that the group is looked on with suspicion by some that it will be seen as a means of trying to convert people to the Catholic faith.

It can mean that the group will have difficulty in getting support from the Church.

If you think of starting a neighbourhood group you will need to study these matters - and organise to prevent these difficulties from undermining your work.

Category groups

The category group is another successful means of organising the YCW. A category group is made up of members from one work sector. For example: they may be all workers in electronic factories, or all nurses, or all migrant workers or all unemployed workers.

Category groups have one obvious advantage. The members share a common life situation. When they meet they will very naturally share experiences. The members will easily understand one another's situations. They can more easily organise common action.

Forming category groups also has its dangers and difficulties. The group may talk only about their common situation. They may come to regard the group as a place where this is the only thing discussed. If a member changes their life situation there is a difficulty in how to continue to belong to the group. If you think of starting a category group you will need to study these things and make plans. The way a group starts is often the way that it will continue.

Workplace groups

In some countries there are large numbers of young workers working together in the same factory. They work long hours in the factory. Often they also live close to the factory, in slums or dormitories or high rise buildings. In such situations the YCW often organises groups in the workplace. Like category groups these groups have the advantage that members share the same life situation. They understand one another's situation easily. They can cooperate with one another in action in the workplace.

Workplace groups also share the difficulties of category groups. In many countries the YCW has a large role in the formation of trade unions in the workplace. The YCW leaders are naturally elected to the union leadership. There is a difficulty in working out where the YCW ends its work and the union begins. The YCW leaders can become so involved in the work of union negotiation that the work of formation is neglected.

Once again, if you decide to start a group in the workplace, study first these problems and have a clear idea on the direction to take.

In Conclusion...

There is no right way or universally better way to do this work. Every case is different. I challenge you to study your situation and to make the decisions on what sort of YCW to form - what situations it will primarily address - what basis it will have for coming together. I challenge you not to just take the easy way but to choose the most fitting way.

The YCW is not a youth club, it is a young workers' movement. Our aim is not simply to start another group, or to "do something for the youth in the area", or to involve the youth in the parish. Believing, as we do, in the unique purpose and possibility of each young worker's life, we want to accompany them in their important struggle; to view their life with enthusiasm, to see the possibilities of how their life can make a difference, and to inspire and motivate them to participate, become involved and take action. We want to form them as leaders with convictions and skills to take their place in life.

Stories from Many Countries



International

STORIES FROM MANY COUNTRIES

A pioneer of the YCW

The essence of the YCW is that it should be an imaginative response to the situations facing it's young worker members. Cardijn would never allow that he was the sole founder of the YCW. He believed that the YCW had continually to be founded and refounded in every situation. There are great stories of young workers who built and founded the YCW in every country and from every era of the YCW.

Alex Ericx was a young Belgian YCW member at the beginning of the second world war when the YCW was very young. He left school at the age of 13 and got a job building watch towers in trees to be used by the army. He had to work from 7am to 7pm six days per week. When this job was finished he was unemployed and eventually took an apprenticeship. It was in the apprenticeship school that he met and joined the YCW.

I eventually he decided to start a YCW group in his own parish. He went to the parish priest to ask permission. The priest said, "But there are no young workers in this parish". Alex did not argue but together with some friends he began an enquiry on young workers in the parish. They filled a book with names, addresses, age, place of work. Alex can still show you that book together with notes written on the back of German army orders papers.

After this Alex went back to the parish priest to ask again. The priest said, "But I have already told you, there are no young workers in this parish". Alex then showed him the book and the priest agreed to give permission but would not give the help of a chaplain or a room to meet. The group began meeting in summer under a tree. When winter came they met in a glass house but they found it very cold - sitting on a wheelbarrow or a brick wall.

At the age of 20, Alex was asked to work full-time for the YCW with the factory groups (category groups). He went to the most industrialised area, looked for and worked for three months in one and then another factory. He tried to get work as a maintenance man because then, with hammer in hand, he could easily move around

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the factory. He would tell the YCWs, "Today we will eat our bread together."

Alex will tell you also about the work of extending YCW on the trains. It seems that workers of every age had to travel a lot to work and mostly they travelled on the train. Many would travel one or two hours per day. The trains were cold and there was little light on them. And so the YCW took on the work of extending the YCW and organising meetings on the trains. The members would organise to be on the same train and would have their weekly meeting as they travelled to work. Many actions were planned, and many leaders formed in this imaginative way.

A factory group

The next example is of a workplace group in the Philippines. It is of particular interest to note that this YCW did not begin by starting a group and having meetings. The work began by making friends with the workers and discussing their work problems. The regular YCW meetings developed as the action developed.

"I began working in a garment factory in Manila which produces ladies' underwear such as panties, nighties, bras, blouses etc. Its products are for export to Europe and especially France. There are 74 workers in the factory - mainly women aged 16 to 50. In peak times (e.g. before Christmas) as many as 50 extra workers are hired as contract labourers.

There were many problems in my workplace but nobody dared to speak about them for fear of being reprimanded or terminated. For example most workers received P/22 (US\$2.60) per day. Workers had no benefits, even the most basic ones. If you got sick or had an accident there was no compensation.

Workers were forced to work overtime even on holidays. If they refused, they were suspended. Quotas were set up and if you did not make your quota you had to work overtime for no pay.

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There were many strict laws that did not respect the worker's dignity - for example timed and limited minutes for going to the toilet. Also we had inspection every time we entered or left the company's premises. We had to show our bras and panties to the guard on duty. Also workers wanting favours from supervisors at work (e.g. to go home to visit when parents were sick) were asked for sexual favours in return.

I thought that these problems were too difficult to change. Also I didn't really care so much. I accepted that this was the system. As long as I had a job and was earning some money this was the most important thing. But the hardships made me think sometimes - especially after long days of work and overtime. My life seemed like a robots, but we are not machines. We do have limitations.

I used to talk about this sometimes with my friends, but we thought that we could do nothing about it. We thought that this is our fate and we just had to have patience. Then the day came when my friend invited me to go with her to meet another girl who was a YCW organiser. I asked another friend and the three of us had a meeting with this organiser.

It was good to talk with someone else about the situation and we were able to list many things that made us discontented. The YCW girl told us about legal rights as workers and gave us hope that we could initiate action for change in our workplace.

Other meetings followed. At these meetings we started to share more about our personal lives, about our aspirations, about how to start sharing our plans with our co-workers. Slowly we came to understand what the YCW was doing. Then finally five of us officially started a YCW group.

Our immediate tasks were:

- To reach out to more workers and make them aware of the situation in the workplace through individual and group sharing.
- To encourage them to attend education/formation training to deepen their knowledge about the situation and know their rights as workers.

- To initiate action by forming a workers' organisation that would fight for our demands in the workplace.

We had to work with great care and secrecy so that the management did not find out. We used many methods: discussion during break times, visitation to the workers' houses, and social gatherings to build worker solidarity.

We continued the process learned in the YCW (See, Judge, Act). Education and formation seminars were launched to help worker awareness. Among those given were: Basic orientation course, Declaration of Principles, Introductory course for the workers, and Genuine Trade Unionism. Prospective leaders were given special courses such as: Union administration, Speaker's Leadership Training, and other skills formation.

Then somehow the management found out what we were doing. The five of us were questioned and asked to resign. We were harassed and rotated in the workplace. Finally we were suspended. But the work continued until finally we were able to process the legal papers and register our union with the Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE).

Then our new union formally approached the management with our demands. Our first demands were that they recognise our union and that they reinstate the five leaders who were suspended. After several attempts to discuss the matter, the workers took action: wearing black protest ribbons, wearing placards with our demands on them, and boycotting overtime work. Finally the management agreed.

While this struggle of the workers was going on, we five were, at the same time, developing our YCW group, mainly with the younger more active workers. We call this wider YCW group a YCW Chapter. The members of our Chapter were a visible and audible part in the course of the struggle launched at the factory level.

It is important to note that while we took an active leadership role in the forming of the union, the union itself is different from the YCW. The union is made up of all the workers, and it takes its essential place in representing the workers. The YCW takes a wider view. Our

central point is the young workers as persons, and we try to build a community that forms and supports one another in all aspects of life.

There were many results of our action:

- For myself, my self centred attitude was changed into a communitarian, collective way of life. My conservative attitudes were transformed into a progressive thinking and practice. Instead of being shy, I became vocal and participated. Instead of being passive, I took militant action. Instead of indulging in self pity, I began to share and take collective action. And I found a way to practise my faith in my daily living.
- There was a big change in our workplace. We formed solidarity and unity as a group. The workers attitudes to work and to one another were changed
- Many economic demands were realised. Wages were increased to the Government minimum wage, sick and vacation leaves were granted (15 days each with pay). Maternity leave was extended from 30 to 45 days etc.
- The workers awareness of their rights and their dignity as persons and workers was increased."

A group started by a priest

The next example is of a parish group started by a priest. He had a basic understanding of the YCW, he believed in young workers, and he was prepared to give them the freedom to organise themselves.

"When I first became a priest I was involved with the YCW in the parish. I remember all that we did then and it was a good time for me. I felt that the YCW was a very good movement and seemed able to motivate young workers in a way that nothing else could. Anyway I lost contact with the YCW for many years. The Bishop gave me other work to do and I did not have the chance to do much about young workers.

Two years ago I returned to parish work. I came to St Francis' Church as Parish Priest. This was my first appointment as parish priest and I set out to try to do my best to make it a success. One of

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the things I wanted to do was to start a YCW group. But there were many other things happening in the parish and lots of people to meet, so I set about learning about the parish first.

The first year passed quickly. I met a number of young workers while I was visiting homes in the parish. I guess I mentally 'chose' some of them as possible YCW members. I rang up the YCW office and spoke to one of the fulltimers about my hopes for a group but somehow we did not get around to doing anything.

Then one day I met the full-time worker and we had a discussion about the YCW. She told me that in their planning they would not be able to do any work in St. Francis Parish for the next 12 months. I asked her if she would agree for me to try to get a group started myself. She was very pleased about that and encouraged me to go ahead.

I made a list of young workers who I thought might be interested and determined that I would write them a letter of invitation to a introductory meeting. Every time I tried to write the letter I finished up throwing it into the rubbish bin.

One night after throwing another attempted letter into the rubbish bin, I took up the phone and rang one of the young workers on the list. I invited him to come around for a drink and a snack the following Sunday evening. He seemed surprised and not sure what I wanted him to do but he agreed to come. I thought, "Well that was easy", and rang another. Within an hour or so I had nine acceptances.

On Sunday evening I cleared the Parish House and put in extra chairs. I bought some drinks and some nuts and chips and I got a parishioner to make some cake and biscuits. I got some reasonable music going and waited to meet my guests.

I think they all came. We met one another and had a drink and a snack and listened to the music and talked. Then I turned the music off and started to talk about the idea of having a YCW. It was all pretty easy really. I wanted to make them feel at home and welcome. I particularly wanted them to feel that I was interested in their everyday world and their thoughts and actions there - that I could

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and would talk about these things as an equal without trying to preach or convert them.

That, after all is the spirit of the YCW; the respect for the person, the belief (and so the interest) in how they are living their everyday lives, the recognition of the freedom and the responsibility of every person to choose how they live their unique gift of life.

Anyway it worked that time. We decided to meet again in two weeks and to officially start the YCW. They elected two of the group to meet with me during the week and plan how we would run the meeting. And those two young people ran the meeting very well when we met the next time.

That all happened nearly a year ago. Now you can say that we do have a YCW group in the parish. It hasn't all been easy. Some of the original members have dropped out and the president of the group is a new member. But the group is great and they are really taking on great actions in their work life. It is an inspiration to me and I would recommend any priest to give it a try."

A parish YCW group

In this next example two Australian YCW leaders took on the work of extending the YCW into a new parish. They explain how they did this.

"The YCW Diocesan Team wanted to get a group going in a parish where there were a lot of young workers and many unemployed young workers. We were asked to take on this responsibility and this is how we did it.

The study stage

We drafted a letter and sent it to the priests of the parish. The letter said

Dear Father:

Our names are Jim and Helen. The YCW Diocesan Team has asked us to approach you with the idea of starting a YCW group in your parish. As you know the YCW is a movement that aims to form and support young workers in their lives as young Christian workers.

We will telephone you next week to organise an appointment with you and the other priests of the parish to discuss the idea. The things we want to discuss are:

- Why we are doing this. What the YCW means to us.*
- How we would start the group - and what assistance we would need.*
- What we would be prepared to do over the first four to six months of meeting and the role of the chaplain in this*
- The support we are prepared to give the group after this time*

Yours sincerely,

Signed Jim and Helen.

A week later we rang the parish and asked for an appointment. The parish priest seemed a little bit unsure but he agreed to see us.

We found the two priests and the parish sister waiting for us. We sat down and started to talk about the YCW. Helen was great in telling them what the YCW had done for her and I could see that she impressed them with that. They asked a lot of questions and I could see that time was running out so I asked them what they thought about having a YCW in the parish.

The parish priest started to talk about all the things presently planned in the parish. He said we should wait for six to nine months. I told him that we might not be available ourselves then and so we began to talk about what starting the YCW would demand of the parish staff.

We told them that we would need a place to meet and the names and addresses of young workers in the parish. These names could be got by getting a list of school leavers in the past three years from the secondary schools.

We said that we would do the visiting and get the group started and that we would attend all meetings for at least six months. It was agreed that the assistant priest would get us the list of names.

Well we finally got that list of names after a number of reminder phone calls to the parish. So, one Sunday afternoon, Helen and I went down to the parish house with the list of names and a road map. We looked up each address in the map and wrote down the co-ordinates (e.g. Map 21, M6) alongside each address.

Then we rewrote that names and addresses putting the people in groups - we put all the Map 21, M6 together and put Map 21, M5's next to them. This would make the work of visiting easier.

The Parish Priest came in as we were finishing. He looked at our names and told us some that he knew were at university, and some he knew who had left the parish - so we crossed all these off our list. He told us some he believed would be good leaders - and we put a tick next to them.

On Wednesday night that week I went around to the parish house with a written notice and I asked the Parish Priest if he would put it in the parish bulletin. The notice said:

PLEASE NOTE: Efforts are being made to start a YCW in the parish. Over the next few weeks young workers of the parish will be visited by members of the YCW. You are asked to make them welcome.

On Saturday night, Helen and I decided to go to Mass in that parish to see how many young people were there. The parish priest saw us. He not only read out our notice, but he also asked us to stand up and introduced us to the people.

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After Mass quite a few adults came up and told us how they used to be in the YCW and wished us well. We thought this was good and so we decided to go to the main Mass next day, where we went through it all again.

The contact stage

Well we went out a couple of nights that week with little success. Then we went out Saturday afternoon and Sunday afternoon and had two good days. We had about 20 who said they were interested in coming.

I must say something about the work of visitation. Helen and I had decided that we had four clear aims in visiting each person. Our aims were

- To make a friend of the person - most important.
- To inform them that a YCW was going to be started in the parish.
- To tell them a bit about what the YCW is like.
- To motivate them to come at least for the Information Meeting.

On Thursday night after work I went around to the parish house with a copy of our invitation typed on paper with the YCW letterhead. I asked the Parish Priest if we could use the photocopier to make up 25 copies. Well he read the invitation and copied them for me - then he gave me envelopes and stamps to send them as well.

The invitation said:

**YOU ARE INVITED TO A GET TOGETHER OF YOUNG
PEOPLE OF ST MARY'S PARISH NEXT MONDAY 18TH
AUGUST AT 7.30 PM AT THE PARISH HALL**

The YCW has a number of groups meeting in this area. Some people have expressed interest in getting a group going also in St Mary's Parish.

The purpose of Monday's meeting is to bring together a number of young workers to talk about how this could be achieved.

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So this invitation is to ask you to come along and see who these people are, find out what the YCW is about, and decide if you would be interested in joining them.

The YCW is a Christian movement of young workers and unemployed people, run by themselves, and concerned about the issues these people face in their ordinary everyday lives. It offers the friendship of a local community of young people, plus the opportunity of friendship and involvement with groups all round our city, our country and indeed the world.

So take this opportunity to come along and have a look. It costs nothing to have a look and there is no obligation.

Signed Jim and Helen

The introductory meeting

On Monday night 18th August, Helen and I got to the parish hall early. We had brought tea, coffee, milk, sugar and some biscuits. We got the urn going and boiled water. We turned on all the lights and started the tape recorder going with some good music and plenty of volume. One of the priests came in to wish us well and said that he would try to call back before the end of the meeting.

At 7.30pm there were only four people there with a couple standing around outside. So we gave them all a cup of coffee and introduced them to one another. By 8.15pm there were 11 of us counting Helen and me - so we got started.

Yes it was a lot of work and not always easy but I really enjoyed it. I get a lot of satisfaction in thinking about that group, and in meeting their leaders now and hearing about what they are doing. I learned a lot also. It was great working with Mary. I think it was she who really won over the priests in the beginning. They really respected us.

I think it was because we had an organised plan and because we were committed and ready to work hard. Neither of them became really involved with the group but they were always ready to defend us and to help us when we needed things. This really helped the group.

A neighbourhood group

The YCW faces new problems in the post industrialised countries of our region. As industrial development progresses it often happens that young workers suffer less hunger and poverty, and less material oppression. Instead they face new problems of control, individualism, isolation and stress. They feel powerless and often will not readily join action groups like the YCW.

This poses a new challenge to the YCW. It is of no value to say that young workers today will not join YCW, or that they are not interested in YCW action and meetings. As followers of Cardijn we have to reinvent the YCW to meet the needs and the problems of young workers today. We have to adapt our method to answer their situations.

Our next story tells of a neighbourhood group begun in a new area in Japan, a group that has achieved remarkable success despite these problems. Perhaps such a story can spark our imaginations and result in effective planning in our own areas.

"Our group began in 1989 when the new priest invited three young people from the area to come together for meetings at his house. We did not know about the YCW and we were not told much about it. We did not know why this new priest was so enthusiastic about our group. We did not know what to do in the group. The priest told us only one thing - that this group is necessary for our growth.

One important factor of our success is that we have always focused on one most important thing, and that this is the emphasis of all that we do, until we change the focus. During the first year the focus was to widen the group.

We were all made to be very sensitive about inviting new persons to the group. This was the most important work. We were not very good at this work, we were not outgoing people, but we did our best. When a new person came, they were treated with great welcome and included in everything. They were given the opportunity to stimulate what was talked about at the group.

It was only in the process of evaluating our work that we came to see the meaning of what was being achieved. At first we only felt a sense of duty or loyalty to our chaplain, but this developed. We became autonomous in our orientation and we widened our view.

We would meet every Tuesday. The focus of our meeting was widening our group. So we would talk about our contacts and their situations and problems. We would talk about our weaknesses in contacting, our shyness and selfishness. Soon we were making an analysis of society and our action was centred on our own life. This is how we evolved or developed ROLWA.

By this time we were involved in organising activities also, activities to recruit and involve others. Sometimes this work took over from ROLWA. So we made a decision to have only ROLWA on Tuesdays. By this time there were ten in the group, seven young workers, one priest, one Sister and one adult collaborator (a married man who works as a truck driver).

Then, in mid 1990, our chaplain went away for six months. It was a crucial time for the group. The leaders had to take the responsibility. The absence of Father made the group feel unstable, they were a bit lost but the members cooperated, discussed a lot and overcame this problem. Eventually this absence bore fruit, the group became more autonomous and responsible.

In 1991 the group increased to 22 young workers and three collaborators. We began to invite young workers by mailing and handing out flyers and talking to youth after Mass. We published articles about the YCW in the diocesan newspaper.

By 1993 the group had increased to 33 young workers. The focus of our action also changed. The focus now was on two points; the growth of each member and getting to know well the new persons in the group. We decided also to extend the YCW to South Osaka. Now also we began to hold bigger activities: a Christmas party (attended by more than 70 youth), a beer-party (held in an open air place on the top floor of a department store), and many training/study days. The members were very busy with all these activities. However they always continued their ROLWA, discussing about their lives and evaluating their work.

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By 1994 the group had become very large. We decided to divide the Leaders group into four groups doing ROLWA. There were many difficulties - it is not easy to divide into groups. There was a lot of conflict in the group but it finally achieved even greater unity. At the same time there were so many contacts to work with - and much work to be done in organising activities and training sessions. It was the leaders that took responsibility for it all.

A Message From ASPAC

The 90's have been a period of rebuilding the YCW in many countries. For this reason Hugh O'Sullivan, Chaplain of the ASPAC Team began a resource to assist in that initiation process. *Making Monday the Best Day of the Week* was completed upon his return to Australia in '96. It has been written from the dedicated life experience of the author and presents different experiences of YCW developed by young workers from the '60s to the '90s.

We have outlined a method for developing the YCW, but it must be adapted according to your own experiences. The YCW belongs to the young workers and is continually being reinvented by them, according to their situation, and their needs. We must believe in the immense capabilities of the young workers to take up this challenge.

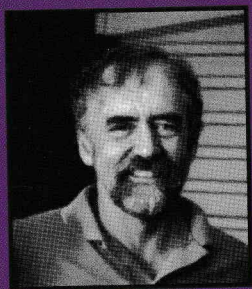
At the same time young workers need assistance and ongoing reflection to understand their task. We are indebted to the Chaplains, lay collaborators and leaders committed to support the process of initiation. When we witness the tremendous changes the YCW brings in the lives of young workers and their environments, it is worth all the difficulties and trials of the process.

We wish you every encouragement in your efforts to build the YCW.

The YCW is an international organisation that aims to conscientise young workers and develop their leadership potential. The movement is run by and for young people of working age. Young workers are invited to build communities of their own and to take constructive action to change their own lives and the society in which they live.

Making Monday the Best Day of the Week - For Initiation Teams, is a guide for all leaders, chaplains and lay persons wanting to build the YCW today. In addition to practical advice, it offers insights into the orientation of the movement and the necessity of a method to form young adults, integrating faith and daily life.

This book gathers the experiences of YCW leaders in initiating young workers into YCW communities and actions throughout the different realities of Asia and the Pacific.



Hugh O'Sullivan, an Australian diocesan priest, has worked for over 20 years with young workers and the YCW. In 1989 he moved to Hong Kong and spent six years travelling extensively in Asia and the Pacific, working to build YCW in the very diverse contexts of the region.

IYCW Asia Pacific