

## MILITANT YOUTH IN ACTION

By Herman Martens, C.I.C.M.

**Y**OU have no doubt heard something about the Y.C.W.—the Young Christian Workers' Movement. You may have heard how it came to the rescue of tens of thousands of young workers in Belgium since its formation there in 1925 and how it spread rapidly to France and from there to 52 other nations of the world.

Y.C.W. members in Europe were key men in the resistance movements in occupied countries during the war. Its members brought relief to co-prisoners in German concentration camps. The Y.C.W. in France and Bel-

gium has been the inspiring force in preventing communist domination of those countries since the war.

Perhaps you have heard of these things and wondered if they could be true. If you doubt them, you are, so to speak, still on the outside.

The Y.C.W. is a mass-movement for all young workers between the ages of 14 and 25 living in cities and large towns.

In the Y.C.W. we concern ourselves with *all* young workers. We are not a movement of nice, good fellows, keeping apart from the rest. We do not fear to soil ourselves by contact with the less fortunate chaps who are a bit cruder, who are "less respectable," who perhaps don't go to Mass regularly. We are not Pharisees, we do not "thank God that we are not as other men." Our great ambition is to bring these fellows particularly into the Y.C.W. It removes the workers of 14 to 25 from their isolation and enrolls them in a powerful mass organization.

This organization is their school, where by practical methods of the inquiry system, they

A few years after his arrival in the Philippines, the author has laid down the foundation of the Young Christian Workers Movement, also known as the Jocist, in the parish of Paco, Manila. So encouraging were the results of his first efforts that he is now ready to induct the third group of candidates into the movement. Another Belgian Father is at present engaged in establishing another branch among the miners in Baguio. —Eds.

study the solution that Christianity offers for all the positive problems they may meet in the whole of their daily life; a school too, where they learn to influence and conquer to their ideal the whole environment in which they live, and the whole crowd of young workers among whom their life is spent.

The Y.C.W. does not train boys to keep off the streets. It trains them to go on to the streets and into the workshops to carry out an apostolate among their fellow workers. The Y.C.W. is not only a training school, but is also a *social service*.

Persons holding some responsibility towards youth often make a mistake of thinking they have done their duty by merely teaching them the right sort of ideals and conduct. It is not enough. Teaching is only half the task, for it is also necessary to help them by every possible means to translate teaching into action. It is no use telling young workers not to spend their evenings hanging around lampposts, unless we also provide some alternative occupation for them.

The problems of youth cannot be solved by any organization which is content to be a training school and nothing more.

In the first place, if the young worker is to make the best of his possibilities, he needs certain institutions to help him; but

many of these are lacking in society today.

In the second place, there already exist institutions which, far from helping the individual to attain perfection, are on the contrary an obstacle to it. The influence of the cinema is normally in favor of money, selfishness and "a good time"; the values it preaches or assumes are not those which build up a strong or great character. The ultimate aim of the Y.C.W. must be to suppress institutions which are entirely harmful, and to reform others in a Christian spirit.

In the third place, society already provides some, excellent social services which the young worker does not make sufficient use of, through failing to realize the help they could afford him. Thus the Y.C.W. educates its members to see the value to themselves of these institutions.

Among the services normally provided by the Y.C.W. are the following:

(a) Sections try to prepare schoolboys for their working life by organizing special meetings, visits to factories and finding suitable jobs.

(b) The Y.C.W. prepares its members for service in the Armed Forces, keeps contact with them there and publishes articles in its own and other papers on their problems.

(c) It assists those out of work

to find jobs.

(d) It educates the worker by articles, films, photographs and other publications to appreciate the need for hygiene, prevention of industrial accidents, technical education, etc.

(e) In each locality it undertakes a service for sick young workers.

(f) It provides a review of current films.

(g) It advises members on matters of industrial legislation.

(h) It issues publications on the movement itself; on the situation and needs of the young workers at any given moment, as seen from the inquiries of the movement.

The Y.C.W. is also a *representative body*. Youth must have a voice to gain its rights. That voice comes through unity. The Y.C.W. is a representative body of young workers striving to implant in the Philippines the principles of Christ's honesty, justice and charity. Even going further, the worldwide Y.C.W. (this organization is now existing in 68 different countries) is a representative body throughout the world. Pope Pius XII is most anxious for an international worldwide movement. He said: "I want for the future of the Church a very strong international organization of young Christian workers in every country."

The Y.C.W. stands outside all party groupings. Fully under-

standing the duty the young worker owes his country, it believes he will best fulfill it at this stage by preparing himself to play his full part later on as a Christian member of his family, his profession and his country.

"Above politics" is a principle of the Y.C.W. With this qualification it labors to build a more human and Christian industrial system, to restore to the working class a sense of its own dignity, to render it healthier in body and soul and consequently, more contented and happy.

The Y.C.W. wants to make thousands upon thousands of militant lay-missionaries, young working boys and girls who are the representatives of the Church in their working environment.

The Y.C.W. looks forward to "A New World through a New Youth," a youth that shall be "proud, pure, joyful and conquering."

Its members are already proud at being chosen by God as champions of this new crusade; pure, not merely of body, but with the moral purity their apostolate demands; joyful, because through their movement a new dawn shines, and because already it is a reality; conquering, because they are ready to sacrifice everything they have and are, so as to conquer the modern world and lay it at the feet of Christ.