

THE CURATE SERVES THE CHURCH ON THE SHOP FLOOR

A NEWLY-ordained worker priest clocked-on at the Pressed Steel Company's factory shortly before 7.15 a.m. today.



Although he is now "the Rev. Tony" and will wear the clerical collar in church (above), it was as "Bro. Tony"—a member of the Transport and General Workers' Union—that he cycled to work today (below).

There were many standing by to congratulate him—for 26-year-old Tony Williamson was no stranger.

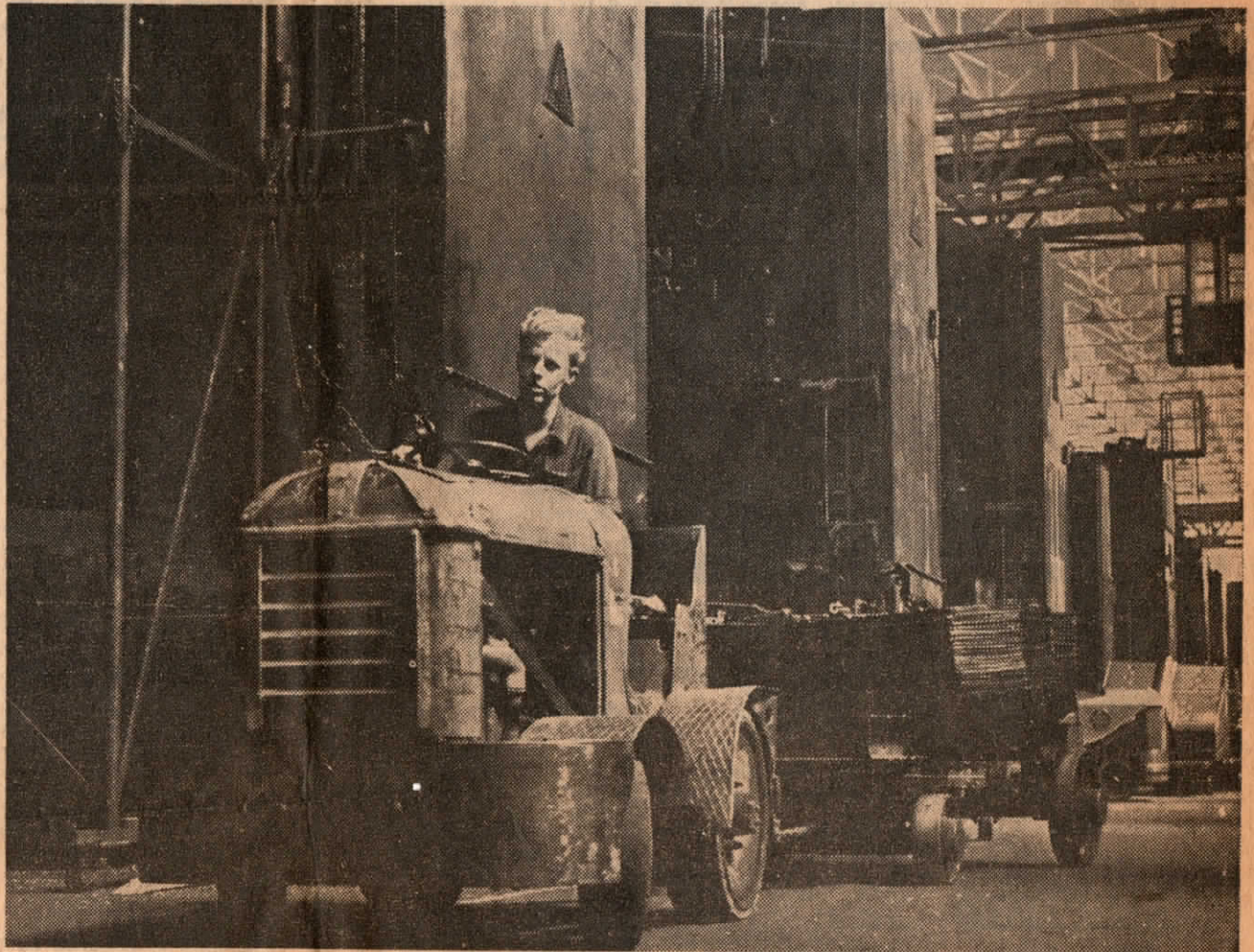
During the past two years he has been working as an industrial tractor driver serving the presses at the factory—but yesterday the Bishop of Oxford, Dr. Harry Carpenter, ordained him as a deacon in Christ Church Cathedral.

As the Rev. Anthony W. Williamson he will be an honorary curate, unpaid, on the Cowley parish staff.

Mr. Williamson—son of a clergyman who has one of the toughest parishes in the country at Stepney—deliberately chose the role of manual worker two years ago when he left Cuddesdon Theological College.

Instead of following the conventional path to the Ministry, he chose the din, the sweat and the manual grind of a car factory.

"I felt," he told me, "that the world of industry was beyond my experience. It is a world which the Church has



After the solemnity of the Christ Church Cathedral ordination service yesterday, it was back to the presses and the sweat of the factory today. Above, Mr. Williamson, driving a tractor, hauls steel plates for the presses. Below, leaving for a canteen meal at mid-day with some of his fellow workers. He is secretary of the canteen committee.

ignored for too long, and I was convinced that I must find out at first hand what effect industry has on the men and women who work in it."

While he was unloading scrap metal outside S building, one of his fellow tractor drivers

**Story by
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told me: "He's a good lad." The sentiment—expressed so simply—was echoed by dozens of others in the press shop.

And his foreman, Mr. Harry Jones, said: "He works very well. The other men get on well with him."

Mr. Williamson, who lives at 26 Dodgson Road, Cowley, is no passive onlooker, merely observing to find material for

Away from the din of the presses, Mr. Williamson sits at home writing a sermon. His wife—a sympathetic critic—takes him a cup of tea and makes a few comments. They see eye to eye about his decision to become a worker-priest and stay in a manual job.



sermons. He takes an active part in the world around him.

A strong trade unionist (a member of the Transport and General Workers Union), he is secretary of the canteen committee and has had experience of negotiations with the management. He is also secretary of the Cowley and Ifley Ward Labour Party.

Delighted with his decision to become a worker priest, the Rev. John Betton, Vicar of Cowley, said: "This should be seen not as a new idea, but as a modern version of a long-standing idea. In the past priests have been farmers, teachers and administrators. I am very pleased that he has been ordained in this way."

It was while he was reading geography at Trinity College, Oxford, that Mr. Williamson decided to go to Cuddesdon. The decision was prompted by experiences in South London during a mission.

"We went from door-to-door

inviting people to attend church. I realised that this was an inadequate way of spreading the Christian faith.

"I knew then that I wanted to be ordained—and knew that somehow the Church had to speak to those outside its present orbit."

Of his work in the factory, he said: "I am not there primarily to get more people into church. So much bad feeling has to be broken down that my major object will be to get rid of popular myths about the Church," he said.

"The impression has been given that the Church was on

the side of the middle classes and the bosses. The Church has got to accept that it has largely failed to appeal to the industrial masses. It has now got to get in touch with industrial life."

Active role

It is because he feels that Christianity must touch all aspects of life, that he has taken an active role in politics.

Only a handful of the men at the factory have tended to sneer at having a priest in their midst. "Most people think it is a good thing for the

Church to have taken this step," he said. "They see that it is not just me involved; that the Bishop of Oxford has ordained me is evidence that the Church as a whole is thinking about the problems of religion in an industrial society."

Mr. Williamson earns about £13 13s. gross each week, being slightly better off than a curate in his first two years.

His wife, Barbara, a Somerville graduate, is expecting a baby in September. She backs up his decision to stay working at the factory as a priest.