

# the factory floor

**T**HERE are eight worker - priests in Britain engaged in manual work. One is a shop steward, sacked twice for trade union activities. Another is a city councillor working in the car industry. A third is a former colonial police officer, now an electrician's mate.

Each has chosen to work and earn a living among the working classes.

The Rev. Martyn Grubb, a shop steward, is 35. He lives with his wife, Anne, and their four children in a two bedroomed house in Southall, Middlesex.

He is a driller on piece-work, earning £15 a week at a factory which turns out London buses.

## Unreality

He told me: "I was ordained in September, 1957, but look upon myself now as a worker rather than a clergyman. I think one of the most difficult things about the work of the full-time clergy in a working class parish is a sense of unreality, of not being in contact with the real lives of people."

In the factory the men know he is a priest, and have confidence in him as a union man.

Mr. Grubb is a member of the Amalgamated Engineering Union. He sees trade unionism "as a practical expression of the Gospel in the lives of the workers."

Coming from a middle class background, he went up to Cambridge to train as a personnel manager. After getting married he went into industry as a labourer.



Shop steward Martyn Grubb, a worker-priest at a Southall, Middlesex, engineering factory.

He has been sacked twice for trying to get better working conditions.

"I don't try to spread the Gospel by talking at the work bench," he says. "I do my job and try to understand people. And

the one thing the worker does not get from the Church is understanding.

"What have I achieved? Nothing significant yet, but I have a strong sense of reality, of being in touch in a way the Church is not."

## Brewery

In the East End of London, just below Limehouse Cut, lives the Rev. John Goring Rowe.

He was ordained in 1952. A former police superintendent in British Guiana, where he was born, he now works as an electrician's mate in a brewery.

He is 39, a Labour Party member, and a supporter of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

To him the Church is too bound up with power and possession.

"Ordinary people have a suspicion of all that," he said. "There again, the Church operates from the top and from without.

"As a worker-priest, I try to start at the bottom, working among people and from within.

## Spirit

"I think the essence of worker-priests is that we want to uncover the spirit of the Gospel, which has become obscured. It is from silent growth that each of us tries to fulfil our work."

Mr. Rowe assists at St. Paul's, Bow Common. He is married, has four children, and lives in a communal house with a 35-year-old labourer-gardener, Tom Waldon, and his family.

They share incomes, and have other communal arrangements.

Another worker-priest is 44-year-old Kenneth William Ramsay, of Burntwood Lane, London, S.W.17.

He was ordained in September, 1952, and served as an assistant curate until two years ago, when he went into a factory.

## Faith

After several jobs, he now earns £11 a week as a wire man in a radio factory. Eighteen months ago he got married.

He sometimes takes services at St. Andrew's, Earlsfield, South London, but says, "I find my greatest expression of faith in working."

No unity of policy between these worker-priests is sought, but they meet once a year and they have issued a joint statement of their beliefs.

They derive no income from the Church, only from their own labour.

Their influence is difficult to assess, but if they have a theme, it is to express Christian love by sharing the work and life of working people.

**BY STANLEY JOHN**