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Working men for ordination?

A STRONG defence of local, working-class ministry, ordained and lay, is contained in a statement on local ministry in urban and industrial areas, issued this week.

It comes from a working party chaired by the Bishop of Stepney and the Bishop of Woolwich, and forms a reply to the ACCM working party report, "The Place of Auxiliary Ministry, Ordained and Lay," of which it is critical.

A cross-section

The authors of this week's comment emphasise that the Church's membership and leadership should properly reflect a cross-section of the population. "At present, in areas like the inner city, it does not."

They re-assert that an indigenous Church, welcoming and using the gifts which others can bring to it, is the norm from the point of view of the New Testament, Church history and dogmatic theology.

They see the possibility of the ordination of local men within the context of a lay movement. Another response to their thinking had been to attempt to bring together small "inner city" groups of laymen from different parishes.

"We do not wish to see dull men ordained." It is essential that clergy should be able to trade in ideas, to think on their feet. We are firmly convinced that there is a great amount of intelligence and ability which has not had the chance to develop under the educational system and within the urban environment of the moment. . . .

"Success in exams is closely tied to social class and parental pressure to achieve well in school. If leadership among working-class Christians is to be encouraged in the reader ministry or in the ordained ministry, we must find some other yardstick than that of written exams or essays.

"We do not ask for *lower* standards but for *appropriate* standards. We would certainly want any candidates for local ministry to be willing to submit themselves to effective training."