

COMMUNICATIONS

A teach-in for parish magazine editors

At the end of the journalistic, 'silly season', comes yet another non-event, the Parish Magazine. Such was the conclusion of '*Lines of Communication*', a teach-in for editors held at Church House, Salisbury, 16th September. The lines of communication have not been severed, it seems they never existed! After refreshments and a perusal of scores of magazines on display, Canon Brookes fired off with a prayer, and then babbled on about *Why Parish Magazines?*

I'll tell you why in one sentence: To show that the Church is the centre of the Parish, is interested in ALL aspects of parish life, and as such is a platform for the opinions of churchman and non-churchman alike.

Does **our** magazine do this? How much of our magazine is of interest to non-churchmen? Is the Vicar's note aimed at wooing outsiders or merely a chatty piece for the converted? No prizes.

'Layman', of Sarum Link fame, a charming laywoman by the name of Miss Joan Barton, pulled no punches. We were all hit hard below the proverbial belt, and sent back to our corners to do our homework. She noted, as we did each other's, our low standards in aim and in production, then gave us the facts about putting together a magazine. Our own John Brown then spoke of his own experience in producing **our** magazine, and how it reaches the pew, if not the Parish. It does however look different each month, even if it is late!

Before the inevitable discussion, a poem was read for us all, entitled, "*Boil it Down.*" What a pity some of the comments aired, and answers given, hadn't been given this treatment! Then we split into groups for yet another non-event, an analysis of two magazines from outside the diocese. What we should have been doing, and what our group actually did, was to discuss all aspects of the ideal Parish Magazine.

So we have our priorities wrong, and the Vicar, the PCC and you, the reader, are all to blame. The Vicar has his pulpit, he shouldn't need the written word to communicate with the *faithful*, he should use it to influence *outsiders*. The PCC should be prepared to absorb a deficit if the Magazine reaches a wider public. And you, dear reader, sit there reading, and let us say the most outrageous things, all of which go unchallenged.

Don't wait to be approached by one of the editors, write him an article on The Festival of Light or The Permissive Society, (if there is such a thing) Euthanasia, local government, anything. Let's stop being so 'Parochial'.

I hope we get a chance again next year, to assess the effect this teach-in has had on our 'lines of communication'.