

CABBAGES AND KINGS

Who doesn't need it?

MINDFUL that Switzerland has managed for donkey's years to keep out of other people's wars, I had the idea that the Swiss loved everybody, especially one another.

But not so, says Debora Kupferschmid (32), who was at the bench telling me that it took a visit to Northern Ireland, where she was thrown together with two other Swiss, to give her a better understanding of her compatriots.

"We have a situation in Switzerland where we live with each other but don't love each other," she said. "We have four languages and I come from a German-speaking part. Others in the same canton speak French and each group considers itself moderate, reasonable, understanding, friendly and good.

But given the opportunity to exchange views in Ireland, the three Swiss found that they weren't so reasonable or understanding as they thought.

And it strikes me that if the Swiss need better understanding of each other, who doesn't?

Debora works at the Moral Re-Armament conference centre at Caux near Geneva and does the catering for the summer conferences that go on

there from June to September. She is one of the MRA's 1500 full-time workers who don't get paid: they rely on gifts from their friends to keep them going.

It was friends who saw to it that Debora could attend the MRA jamboree at the University this week, which is being attended by hundreds of delegates from more than a score of countries. The talks include such vital subjects as Creating a New Society, Food and Famine, Human Nature and the Environment, and A Better Way Than Violence.

Doing something

With this Swiss miss on her visit to the bench to give me details of the happenings on the campus was Mary Lean, of England, who recently graduated at Oxford and who, while admitting she finds the MRA aims of moral absolute difficult to live up to, says: "It's much easier to get into a holy huddle than to go out and do something about the world's problems."

And while many of us moan about those problems, how many of us go out and do anything about them?

Perhaps it is the word "moral" which makes hackles rise, but the MRA has come in for some criticism in its 37 years, sometimes on the grounds that its aims and

ideals are too vague and simplistic.

Frank Buchman founded the movement, sometimes called the Oxford Group, and his ideas were based on God's guidance, moral absolutes and the "life-changing" of individuals through personal approach.

The world is basically bad and must be made good, says MRA, and who's to argue with that. But to change systems you must first change people by persuading them to adopt a God-based ideology free from greed and prejudice, and to rearm them morally with the traditional values of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love.

MRA urges the removal of all conflict, including racial ones. Although it favours no particular system it is recognized as anti-communist, and over-

themselves on other vegetation, the northern orchid takes root in the earth.

Although they differ vastly in size, colour and shape, all orchids have three petals and three sepals. The third petal is the "lip" or "slipper" and may be greatly expanded brightly coloured, or stretched out at the back to form a spur.

And the reproductive organs are united in a structure found only in orchids and called "the column".

SHAVINGS

THE OCCUPANT of Seat No. 36 in the foreign journalists' section on the House of Commons Press Gallery the other day was one Yoo Bum, which probably means something delightful in Chinese.