

# Child Sponsor Visits Hong Kong

By Allison Hart

*Editor's Note: When we learned that Mrs. Hart on her trip to the A.C.W.W. Conference had stopped at Hong Kong to visit a Chinese boy sponsored by her son, under the Save the Children plan, we asked her to tell us about it through Home and Country. Perhaps those Ontario Women's Institutes sponsoring children from the Hong Kong area will be particularly interested but we feel that Mrs. Hart's human interest story will appeal to everyone.*

CHAN YUK-WAK—what a solemn little Chinese boy he was, with a quick, shy smile and a quizzical look. He had been told that his Sponsor was coming to visit his school which is Simon Peter School, Castle Peak, New Territories, Hong Kong Crown Colony. I wondered what his ten-year-old imagination would make of the word "Sponsor." Actually, I was only the mother of his Sponsor, and I was one of several Canadian Women's Institute members stopping briefly in Hong Kong en route to the A.C.W.W. Triennial Conference in Melbourne.

On this hot day in late September we were touring the largest of the three areas that make up Hong Kong Crown Colony. New Territories was leased in 1898 by the British Government from China under a ninety-nine year agreement. Here is the bread-basket for the crowded areas of Hong Kong Island and the Peninsula of Kowloon on the mainland. "Here also," to quote the guide book, "can be seen the quiet pastoral China of the willow pattern, coolies and water buffaloes at work in the paddy fields, rice terraces carved out of the hillsides, and frail houses with up-pointing roofs." However, to present a true picture, one must add more detail. In contrast to natural beauty of sea, hills and sky we saw poverty, privation and over-crowding amid obvious attempts to make the most of difficulties. The influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees from Red China into Hong Kong has produced problems in human need that are almost insuperable.

At Castle Peak a farmer's holding is frequently so small that even the most careful and hard-working find it impossible to provide beyond the bare necessities. The sampan at the water's edge may be a makeshift home, or, if seaworthy, its owner can find competition in the fishing industry so stiff that returns are meagre indeed. Here and there small industries or small factories appear, a tribute to the ingenuity of a people who live where

food is scarce and where hours are long and wages low. But let us return to the happy boys and girls in Yuk-Wak's school.

From a humble beginning eight years ago this primary school, now recognized by the government and supported by voluntary contribution, has grown to include more than 500 children. Of these, 130 live at the Hostel because of inadequate home conditions. Many of them are orphans. A clinic attends to the health of the pupils and often takes in the parents as well. The life of the school centres around the Christian church where children and parents attend Sunday School and services. For the pupils who live at home, a modest food supplement is provided and the mothers may be helped to use wisely the little food they have.

Two case workers and a devoted staff assist the Reverend Richard Tsang who is the moving spirit behind this splendid school. Although a full-time medical officer in Kowloon, Mr. Tsang finds time to know each child in the school personally and to lay plans for a wider extension of the work of St. Peter's, particularly among the elderly.

While inspecting the modern classrooms in a building recently completed, we learned that a few older children could now be admitted if sponsors could be found. "Where do the sponsors come from?" we inquired, and in answer were invited into the small room which does duty as reception, emergency store-room and office, in order to see for ourselves. Looking through the card index for the names of child and sponsor, we were amazed to find over forty of the sponsors with an address in Ontario. Most of these were the representatives of Women's Institute branches whose money, channelled through the Canadian Save the Children Fund, is doing so much to provide schooling and adequate care where both are sorely needed.

We were happy to see in this distant community these results of the efforts of dedicated workers and generous sponsors of the Canadian Save the Children Fund. At the door stood a bus whose lettering indicated it to be a gift to the school from C.S.C.F. Supplies in the store-room included Canadian canned pork, milk powder and nutrient, gifts in kind from the same fund. Although these foodstuffs were for use as a supplement to the children's diet, some of them were shared (under strict supervision and with permission from the Canadian Director) with the mothers of those families