



Saturday September 30 1933

THE GROUP MOVEMENT

FINANCES OF THE TEAMS

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—As the one who is now responsible for such funds as the Group in Oxford possesses, and as one who has travelled with teams of the Oxford Group in England, America, and on the Continent, and who has had full opportunities of seeing the inner workings of the Group over a number of years, I feel your readers would be glad to have the facts with regard to a question that has been raised more than once in your columns—that of the Group's finance.

1. The Oxford Group never asks for funds either by private or public appeal. Anyone doing so is disloyal to, and in direct conflict with, the principle and practice of the Oxford Group. The mythical millionaires who are supposed to finance the work, the frequent large cheques which we are told that the Group receives, do not in fact exist, and never have existed. Actually the gifts received amount to very little, and these are always given unasked to individuals personally, by friends who have reason to know that those gifts will be wisely spent in God's service. A detailed account of such spending would be as tedious and unmanageable in print as would the private and personal accounts of your readers.

2. On the other hand, where members of the Oxford Group undertake any corporate activity, such as a house party, scrupulously careful accounts are kept. They are fully supervised and open to anyone's inspection who cares to wade through long inventories of landladies' bills, local telephone calls, printing and postage. It may interest your readers to know that at the recent house party at Oxford, which lasted nearly three weeks, and at which some 5,000 people were present, the average inclusive cost to each individual was under 10s. a day. The Group has no paid secretaries. All the business arrangements for this house party were carried out with a quite remarkable efficiency and smoothness by a team of young people, mostly undergraduates, who were ready to spend three weeks of their vacation working all day, and on more than one occasion all through the night. Such sleep as the men had time for was sometimes upon the office floor, because every other available place had been allotted to last-minute unannounced arrivals. Yet hundreds who, in a case of illness, would not hesitate to spend all they have on doctors and nurses, found in these days, free of all charge, expert and endlessly patient treatment for moral and spiritual ills.

3. All this suggests that the charge of extravagance is ill founded. And this is true also of the travelling team. Oversea teams, which include the elderly and venerable as well as the young and hardy,

travel either third class or tourist third in Atlantic liners. Those who hold it against the Groups that the team sometimes stay in large hotels have not thought the matter out as a business proposition. These hotels not only make drastic cuts in their prices for a large party, but they are also willing to provide, free of all charge, private sitting-rooms and large halls for big public meetings. As a result of staying in large hotels in Canada and the United States the Groups were able to have the full use day and night of what was often the finest public hall in the town, capable of holding thousands. To have hired such halls would have cost large sums of money. To anyone who has seen a team of the Oxford Group at work, and who knows the quite ceaseless stream of visitors, telephone calls, requests for personal talks, and small group meetings with which it always has to deal, it would be an amusing spectacle to see a team of 100 people queuing up for the one boarding-house telephone or receiving their friends coming in for personal talks in the one living-room of a private hotel. Those who give up safe jobs or precious vacations to go on such travelling teams do so always without salary and without security of any kind. They live and travel at their own expense for just as long as their own resources, together with such personal property as they can sell, will meet that expense. When that is exhausted there is no guarantee other than God's providence. Those who enjoy settled jobs, a regular income, and homes of their own must try for themselves before they can know the "luxury" of living month after month in suitcases working 16 to 18 hours a day, travelling constantly, without present income or future pension.

4. Dr. Buchman and the Groups have no investments, no endowments, and no debts.

These facts speak for themselves. The four or five hundred members of the Group who will shortly be coming to London solicit no funds. It has never been the policy of the Group to do so, and this statement, made necessary only because of misrepresentation, must therefore in no sense be interpreted as an appeal. The members of the team are proud to be coming, and are prepared to spend everything they have for the cause of Christ in London. They are tasting the joy and certainty of a life which has no security but God's provision. They believe the call to London to be His, and that where He guides He will also provide. This is not luxury. It is the highest economy. Some would call it poverty, but it is a poverty that maketh many rich.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

ALAN THORNHILL, Fellow and
Chaplain of Hertford College.
Hertford College, Oxford, Sept. 29.