



Friday September 15 1933

## THE OXFORD GROUP

### PLANS FOR THE WINTER

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—The movement which has come to be known all over the world by the name of the Oxford Group will be familiar to many of your readers. To many it will still be little more than a name, and I am therefore asking the hospitality of your columns for this letter.

During the coming winter there is to be a campaign in London and the suburbs, for the awakening and strengthening of the sense of spiritual need and of a trust in spiritual power and guidance which is the one thing necessary if our hopes and plans for world recovery are not to go astray. It is only through individual lives completely freed from fear and selfishness, and surrendered to the guidance of the God in whom we profess to believe and to the service of their fellowmen, that the new and better world can come into being. The Group exists to bear witness to the belief that such a life is possible and that it is effective. There is no formal membership. It is just a fellowship of those who have faced, as well as they may, the challenge to a life of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness, and love, and who are willing to bear witness to others of the new freedom which they have found. They believe as most people do (nominally), that this world is of God. They are prepared to carry that belief out into everyday life, and to make the ordinary affairs of business, of industry, of society, an adventure for God.

In coming to London the Group comes with many years of experience behind it, and with a history of development in every part of the world. The story begins with work among boys in the poorest districts in Philadelphia. The personal experience which changed the whole course of Dr. Buchman's life came to him in England over 20 years ago. The big house-parties which have latterly been frequent, and through which most of the development of the work has taken place, came into being in China. For some 12 years now there has been a group in Oxford, and that group, with the large house-parties there each summer, has become increasingly the centre of the work. The growth in Oxford itself is remarkable enough, as one who has seen its development can testify. But much more remarkable has been the effect of the teams which have gone out upon simple campaigns of witness in this and in other countries. It is not too much to say that for many thousands of people, all over the world, the coming of the Group has meant new life and new hope.

The actual name "Oxford Group" was given by the Press in South Africa when a little party of seven Oxford men went out during the Long Vacation. Their message roused an interest which was nation-wide, and the effects of their visit still continue not only in a strengthening of the life of the Churches but in a bringing together of racial elements. Several of the national leaders have borne witness to the influence of the Group in the

sphere of politics. The same thing, upon an even larger scale, has been happening during the past winter in Canada and the United States. A team some 50 strong (not all from Oxford, though we provided a fair proportion of them) went out last October, with the blessing of the Bishop of Liverpool at a great service in Liverpool's new Cathedral. I was with them during the Christmas vacation, and saw for myself the intense and widespread interest which their very simple and straightforward witness evoked. Everywhere, from Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto to Vancouver, from New York to Los Angeles, there was the same crowd of eager listeners, the same stream of men and women, of every type and class, coming for personal help, and the same awakening both in the Churches and in the everyday world of society and of business. The team is back in England, but the work goes on. No new sect or new organization has been formed. It is simply the vitalizing in many ways of that which was already there. And yet the impression produced has been so definite that the Canadian Premier, Mr. Bennett, has said publicly: "It is my abiding belief that the influence which you so powerfully represent is the only one that can save the world."

The campaign in London this winter will be carried on in the same spirit and by the same methods. As in Canada, where the Group speakers occupied pulpits, and churches everywhere were packed, it is hoped that Churches of all denominations will take an active part in this great undertaking which ensures such far-reaching results. As a prominent lawyer in Toronto remarked, Christianity has had plenty of advocates; what it now needs is witnesses. The centre of the work will be in quiet individual conversation. For this some 300 to 400 campaigners will be available. There will also be public meetings, large and small, in the City, in the suburbs, and in Greater London. The Bishop of London has promised to preside at a big service in St. Paul's on October 7. There is to be a series of public meetings in the Central Hall, Westminster, during the week commencing on October 15. Of these fuller notice will be given later. Other meetings of a private character have been arranged. The Archbishop of Canterbury has promised to receive the team at Lambeth, and the Lord Mayor is also taking an active and practical part in our plans.

I write, Sir, on behalf of the team, to ask your interest and good will, and those of your readers, for this attempt to make the religion which we profess a more living reality in all London's manifold activities. I remain yours, &c.,

L. W. GRENSTED, Oriel Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion in the University of Oxford.

Oriel College, Oxford.