

NEW EVANGELISTIC CRUSADE

May 18-10-33

The Oxford Group Launches its "Attack" on London

(From our London Staff.)

FLEET STREET, MONDAY.

At a great meeting in the Central Hall to-night the Oxford Group Movement launched the campaign that it intends to carry on in London throughout the winter. The widespread interest already aroused in the activities and methods of the evangelists had created so much interest that three overflow meetings, one of them at Westminster School, had to be arranged and the selected speakers went on from one meeting to another. Among the well-known people who had accepted invitations to the meeting were Lord and Lady Irwin, Lord Noel-Buxton, Lord Lothian, the Dean of Westminster, Miss Rose Macaulay, Lady Oxford, the Chaplain General to the Forces, and Sir Robert Perks.

Some people perhaps had come out of sheer curiosity, but one's feeling was that the audience generally was sympathetic rather than curious. It listened to the speakers in perfect silence and only applauded once—that was at the end of a speech by a man who was obviously extremely nervous but, or perhaps because of that, spoke with extraordinary frankness about his experiences at a house party and about the transformation those experiences had wrought in his life.

SPECIAL TRAINS

There were, at a guess, more men than women in the crowded hall. Special trains had brought contingents of 250 dons and undergraduates from Oxford and 150 from Cambridge. Youth dominated the scene. It filled the seats that rose behind the speakers, and wherever one looked one saw young faces, some of them boyish, all alive with a pleased and unflinching interest.

It was a religious service without hymns or prayers, simply a series of straightforward statements of spiritual experiences that had, the speakers claimed, entirely transformed their lives and had set free powers that had been hampered and unsuspected. They were all frank. Someone commented on this—that a lack of reticence is characteristic of youth to-day. But against that must be placed the fact that the older speakers revealed even more than the youths.

The founder of the movement, Dr. Buchman, set in the middle of the front row of the platform, his face aglow with pleasure, and beside him was the Rev. Cuthbert Bardsley, curate of All

Hallows', Barking, who took charge of the meeting when the chairman, Dr. Foss Westcott, Bishop of Calcutta, went on to the overflow meetings. Dr. Westcott, opening the meeting, pointed out that the motto of the City of London, "Domine dirige nos," embraced three of the main principles of the Oxford Group Movement.

Mr. Bardsley said that the team had not come to London to provide a sort of emotional thrill for the winter. They all knew that London needed a tremendous renewing of life under the guidance of God. The world had been knocked off its equilibrium by the war and again by the depression. There were people who longed for something to which they could pin their faith and yet were unable to find it. The members of the team had come to London because they believed implicitly that the living God had a purposeful plan for London.

TESTIMONY OF YOUTH

Having explained that the leadership of the movement was going to be largely a leadership of youth, Mr. Bardsley called on a number of young men who until recently were either at Oxford or at Cambridge. The audience liked them and their plain speech, and it especially liked Mr. Charles Sergel, who rowed in the Cambridge boat last year and who is now studying medicine.

Each in turn described the vision that the movement had revealed to him. Mr. Sergel conveyed his message in the parable of his old motor-cycle that puzzled him by refusing to go, till he found that the petrol tap was turned off. He turned it on, and then the power came through. "The power must come through to your life if you are going to be efficient," he said. "That power I find in Jesus Christ."

Dr. Jan de Bordes (Finance Section, League of Nations Permanent Secretariat), who flew from Geneva in order to attend the meeting, stated that he was present last night at Geneva at the meeting on disarmament, at which the principal speaker was Lord Cecil. Lord Cecil said one thing that struck him very much—that the chief obstacles to disarmament at present were Chauvinism and fear. Dr. Bordes said he believed that those were the obstacles preventing the world from becoming what they would like it to become.

A number of other speakers gave brief messages, including Lady Fletcher and Miss Janet Woods, the daughter of the Bishop of Croÿdon, and it was announced that the list was so great that many people would not be able to speak until next day. The meeting closed with a prayer by the Bishop of Warrington.