

**BEVERLEY BAXTER, M.P., spends
an evening with the Oxford Groupers**

The peer seemed on the side of the angels

THEATRE

YOU may remember the announcement a few weeks ago that Dr. Buchman's Oxford Groupers had purchased the Westminster Theatre and would henceforth use it for the presentation of Moral Rearmament plays.

The first presentation by the Group is "The Forgotten Factor." The Group were good enough to invite me to the opening night, but I resisted the temptation until this week when, having been in bed with a cold for three days, I felt that a little moral rearmament would not do any harm.

EVERYONE in the theatre was smiling as we took our seats—even the box office staff handing out the tickets which are free, the ushers with their no-charge programmes, and the two pianists who linked themselves in melody.

I saw three M.P.s there, and they were smiling. As an unregenerate snob, I succeeded in catching the eye of a peer of the realm, and his face lit up too.

We were obviously going to be one cheerful family enjoying a moral charade by happy boys and girls on the stage.

I AGREE that few things are more depressing than organised cheerfulness, and nothing more crushing to the human vanity than to find people who are already in such a condition of congenital happiness that you cannot possibly add to it.

On the other hand I could not help comparing the atmosphere of the morally rearmed Westminster Theatre with the refreshment room of a London railway station where, last week, I was reactionary enough to interrupt the private conversation of four waitresses and ask for a cup of tea. The icy, impersonal contempt with which a saucerless cup was handed to me, without the young person even

glancing in my direction, was undoubtedly the chill which caused my cold.

Eventually the smiling pianists at the Westminster came to a harmonious end and up went the curtain on a choir of smiling boys and girls (all without make-up) who sang very well indeed.

Mr. Ivan Menzies was then announced as a D'Oyly Carte star, together with his own explanation that the Prime Minister of Australia adjourned both Houses of Parliament to hear him sing about Moral Rearmament.

Mr. Menzies sang a song about the Third Way. You know the idea . . . not your way, not my way, but a third way. Husbands and wives, Tories and Socialists, employers and employees. Instead of taking the high road or the low road, we all travel in the centre. Having reached this point of philosophy, Mr. Menzies then did a jolly dance while all the boys and girls in the choir smiled.

I must confess that I found the dance slightly disconcerting, but then, as far as moral rearmament is concerned, I am obviously at the bow and arrow stage.

MR. CECIL BROADHURST, a cowboy from them that Canadian prairies, then sang a pleasing self-written number about seeing the King ride by at the Victory Celebrations. (My own impression is that I saw the King drive by, but we can let that pass.)

After the cowboy had gone a group of four miners appeared and told us in a homely, well-timed eloquence how Moral Rearmament had made them realise that nothing could be accomplished without national unity, personal unity and industrial unity.

They were first class and deserved the applause we gave them.

Mr. Peter Howard, author—former political columnist, former farmer, former Rigger captain of England and a big shot in the Moral Rearmament

World—then appeared and told us in dynamic language that from this country must go out the message of unity, one for all and all for one, without which Europe and civilisation could not be saved.

He called for a colossal renaissance in human values, then he explained that the American play we were about to see was written by an Oxford don, and had so impressed audiences at Washington that . . . I thought he was going to say "that they voted Republican," but he did not. The play also stopped trouble in the Nova Scotia mines during the war, and was received with profound interest by the Yorkshire miners. A great many people had been "changed" by the mere witnessing of the drama.

I looked around in the hope that Mr. Agate was present, but all that I saw was the peer still smiling.

"THE Forgotten Factor" starts as an American Junior Miss, domestic comedy, and develops into a struggle between a stubborn American employer and an equally stubborn union leader. The worthless son of the employer sees the light and thus brings the dispute as well as the play to an end.

The acting and production are professional in standard, the whole thing being rattling good entertainment and on the side of the angels. Afterwards the enthusiastic audience, which had not paid for its seats, was invited to stay behind and have some free refreshments.

AS a dramatic critic I have no quarrel with "The Forgotten Factor." It is good fun, and funny even when it is good. The message of universal brotherhood ignores the subtleties and the problems of economics, but I suppose there is nothing the world needs so much as the conception of the human family.

The only objection I see is that it makes people smile all the time, which gives a suggestion of harmless idiocy. But remembering the four waitresses at the railway restaurant I am ready to admit that a few more smiles wouldn't do us any harm.