

Buchman Party Ready to Greet 600 Tomorrow

Oxford Groups Leader to 'Expose' World Ills at Session's 'Classic Event'

Critics Ignore Invitation

Followers Hold Movement Will Avert Catastrophe

By a Staff Correspondent

BRIARCLIFF MANOR, N. Y., April 29.—More than 100 new guests of the First Century Christian Fellowship or Oxford groups house party arrived here this afternoon to participate in the last three days of the event, now in its seventh day at Briarcliff Lodge. Some came to see for themselves what a fellowship party was like, while other arrivals have participated in the religious group's meetings before but were unable to get away from business and professional duties until now.

The fellowship leaders expect at least 100 more to arrive tomorrow, and on Sunday, which will be the last full day of meetings, at least 600 persons are expected. On Sunday there will be what one of the group leaders called "the classic event of fellowship meetings." It will be a church service under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Frank N. D. Buchman, founder, organizer and spiritual director of the movement. During the service an "exposition" of the world's ills and a cure for them will be given through talks, testimonials, hymns and prayers. Dr. Buchanan, it was explained today, has passed many hours in prayer and in "Talks with God on his plans for the meeting.

Critics Invited But Absent

Visitors have been welcomed at the meetings since the house party began last Friday. Some of Dr. Buchman's and the fellowship's severest critics have been invited to come and see what the movement is like. None of the critics apparently have accepted the call yet, but many members of the Protestant ministry of New York and elsewhere who have not been identified with the movement, have come to look the meetings over.

This is not the first house party the fellowship has had in America, but it is the largest from the point of attendance and certainly the most widely heralded.

The guests' ages range from seventeen to seventy. There are bushy-haired, red-cheeked youths, pretty young debutantes, gray-haired grandmothers, young married couples, old and young clergymen, professors of colleges and universities, middle-aged spinsters and men and women listed in the social register. They are for the most part, up-to-date, modest, frank and healthy, exceptionally well dressed and well mannered and seem to have scarcely a care in the world, physical, mental or financial. The Rev. Samuel M. Shoemaker jr., one of Dr. Buchman's staunchest followers in America, who is rector of Calvary Protestant Episcopal Church in New York, quoted one outside visitor as saying that the persons in one fellowship group were "offensively happy."

Spends Last \$100 to Attend

The guests come from New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Texas, Nebraska, Illinois, New England, South Africa, Holland, England and many other places. A woman from Georgia said she spent her last \$100 to attend. Most of those from New York and nearby points have come by automobile. They dress informally during the day, some of them attending the meetings in sports clothes. Mr. Shoemaker has worn knickers the last two days. At night one may see many men and women at this religious meeting in evening gowns and dinner jackets.

The house party consists mainly of four major meetings a day at set times. A number of other periods are arranged as new plans are formulated. The first meeting is the "quiet hour," just after breakfast. Before this group meeting, however, most of the fellowship have their individual quiet times in their rooms in which they have their "two-way" prayer with God, not only listening to God but praying to Him as well and usually recording on paper the thoughts that enter their minds.

About fifty leaders of the group, who make up what is called the "family," arise earlier than the rest, have their "quiet hours" alone and then meet before breakfast to receive guidance for the day. Every meeting of the group is "God-guided." One member, perhaps, has received guidance that one person should lead the "quiet hour" that morning, and another that some one else should lead the afternoon meeting. These guidances never conflict, it is said, but the "family" often prays over details for long periods. Thus the "family" passed five hours in prayer to decide whether to have one meeting at noon or at 5 p. m.

All Must Mark "Quiet Hour"

The "quiet hour" is the one item that a member must observe. It does not have to come at stated periods, but it is thought that it should preferably come in the morning, so that the person will have complete guidance.

No detail in a person's life is too small for guidance. One can hear in the lobby of a hotel, one person telling another that he has been guided not to play golf today or to take one train to New York instead of another. One woman was heard asking God to give guidance to her watch to make it truthful, since it persisted in being slow. Many of the group receive guidance for friends, and will then send this information by wire or telephone from the hotel.

The group "quiet hour" comes at 9:30 a. m. A description of it can perhaps best be given in the light of today's meeting, at which A. S. Loudon Hamilton, of Edinburgh, leader of the Oxford group in Scotland, presided. The leaders sit on the platform, never rising, to make the meeting as informal as possible.

Before the quiet period Mr. Hamilton gave a few explanations. He asked how many had had quiet periods before coming to the group hour, almost all held up their hands. He then asked how many had been in touch with God in their quiet time; slightly fewer responded. He then told them that if they weren't sure some of the thoughts they received came from God to put a question mark after them when they wrote them down. He then said, "Shall we have a minute of united silence and draw ourselves into the presence of God? Be still and know that I am God. Let us listen to God unitedly."

Urged to Confess Pride

The first person who rose after the period gave two words that had come to him, "sight" and "fight." Mr. Hamilton answered each one who had received a message with "thank you." The next person said the possibilities of healing physical disabilities had come to him and recalled a woman in his church in Texas who had suffered from headaches. The third person, a white-haired woman, told of childhood occurrences for which she had been commanded to apologize. Another said that God had given him the word "courage" and that he was going to four persons and confess to too much pride. A young girl said that God had guided her to write to four of

her college friends and apologize for incivilities.

The next meeting is a Bible meeting at 11 a. m., then, after lunch, the guests are free for golf, tennis, ping-pong, billiards, riding or hiking, until 5 o'clock, when there is another meeting lasting until about 7 p. m. This meeting, as well as the one beginning at 8 p. m., consists generally of a lecture and then of the telling of experiences by various persons, "surrenders" to God and of other people's conversions.

After each meeting the group breaks up, generally into couples, two men, two girls or perhaps a mixed couple. They generally participate in what is called "sharing." One of the tenets (the group dislikes to think that it has rules, regulations or tracts) of the fellowship is that every one must tell some one person everything he does. That is, every person in the fellowship has what amounts to a "father confessor." As the visitor wanders around the grounds of the lodge one hears one person saying, "I feel I must share this with you, just as one hears another saying, "I have guidance to do this. To the observer it would seem that there is little "sharing" of intimate details of life in the group meetings, and that this takes place only between two persons.

Get Sticklers for Words

The First Century Christian Fellowship may be away from such hackneyed phrases as "how do you saved?" and have a word, "Surrender." The quiet hour is a "Resurrender" because there was a question in one of the meetings as to whether this new phraseology would be understandable to the outside world, but this was answered by saying that any phraseology was sufficient, that one could call "guidance" by the word "rheumatism" as far as the group was concerned.

There is no drinking among the group and little smoking. The group, one of the leaders explained, does not especially consider it immoral to drink or smoke, but most of the fellowship have quit such practices for the simple reason of increased efficiency in the service of God.

The group's purpose, as described by Mr. Shoemaker, is to "discover again the power of the living Christ which transformed, inspired, welded and used the early Christians, to learn from Him the ways by which that power may come to us, and to apply it today with sympathy and understanding to the deeper needs of men and women in this changing world." They believe that the world is near collapse and that their movement is destined to save it. And they believe that at this time all possible speed must be used to that end.

The members call each other by their Christian names. Thus, the youngest person in the house party will call Dr. Buchman, "Frank," Mr. Shoemaker, "Sam," or Dr. Philip Marshall Brown, professor of international law at Princeton, "Phil." This, it is said, is not a rule of the group, but is the result of being so close together spiritually that it would sound "ridiculously formal" to do otherwise.