

THE OXFORD GROUP IN AMERICA.

"GROUP MESSAGE OR DICTATORSHIP!"

The experience of travelling at a time like this constantly produces evidence of the most compelling kind to show how Jesus Christ is a force in the lives of people to-day. It is an absorbing experience to have the privilege of listening to people, sharing their real lives and showing unmistakably how the reality of spiritual things has come home to them. Let us take, for instance, a young business woman from New York, with great charm of personality, considerable intellectual ability, and a power of presenting the facts well above the ordinary. She told us how before meeting the Group she had three gods—brains, brawn and beauty; her idea of happiness was to be the central figure at a supper dance with the most intellectual young man on one side, the handsomest on the other, and the captain of football opposite. She lived to please them, and those were her real gods. A question from an elderly religious man asking her if she was saved infuriated her, but at the same time stuck in her mind. Later, under the influence of revival preaching, she made a decision to be a Christian. She found, however, that it was not the "done" thing to talk to her pagan friends about religion, the church people seemed equally embarrassed, and so she decided that the only people you could speak to about Christ were the heathen; she therefore sought acceptance as a foreign missionary, but was turned down. That rebuff had left her in the air. It was not until she heard Sam Shoemaker that she saw the way to go ahead as a vital force for Christ wherever He might want her. She experienced release from the sense of burden and frustration and ineffectiveness that had spoilt her Christian life—there was no effort to generate emotion for herself—instead of that came the peace which passes understanding. To-day she continues as one of the outstanding forces for Christ wherever she goes.

SERIOUSLY CONCERNED.

Many thoughtful men are seriously concerned about the conditions of to-day. Some of us have just come from a business men's lunch. Our host told us that four or five brokers had stayed away and were doing without any lunch because the market to-day was so jumpy. It is said that President Hoover is addressing the Senate in person to-day. An Army Colonel who followed the meetings carefully at Washington, summed up his conclusions in a sentence: "It is either the Group message, or it's military dictatorship for America within twelve months." Conditions in family life are so distressing that the Press refuses to publish the facts. Many tell us here in Detroit that we have arrived at the psychological moment—the news to-day of the fall of the Bruening Government in Germany and of the rejection of the sales tax in Washington, has created a profound disturbance. There are other evidences of the state of mind of responsible people who are by no means alarmists. We are reminded of John Wesley's comment on the serious conditions he found in one of the English cities: "Surely, this place is ripe for God."

THE TEAM IN DETROIT.

It is with a sense of eagerness, even of thankfulness, that we begin our work in Detroit; already there are the evidences of the power of God to change lives and family situations. Dr. Buchman has been drilling the team to the point of discipline and readiness which we need; in a view of the pressing needs of to-day we must forge a message that is adequate to the demands. Sentiment won't do it and we cannot afford to be too nice. We are not satisfied with people saying that they like the meetings. We have to bring people to the point of deep sharing. One young man told us how he went up from Asheville to New York—as he put it—intending to be a "world beater"; he thought the Groups were all wrong, but could not think up excuses fast enough when one of his friends in the Group invited him to different meetings. He arrived at the House Party deeply opposed, intellectually superior, and hypercritical. He sought to argue but failed—what he saw instead was happiness and guidance. So he made a compromise surrender, asking God only to deal with the things that worried him, hoping that God would allow him to keep his pet sins. On that basis he tried to find guidance but his mind was a blank; the unreality of his surrender was brought

home to him, and he ultimately made a full surrender of himself to Christ. He prayed for the first time in ten years—he began to experience the reality of guidance, he found a new change in his attitude towards others. Perhaps the best endorsement of his change came from his family, who are deeply impressed by what has happened to their son.

DO NOT KNOW THE HOLY SPIRIT.

This morning at lunch Bishop Page told us that while we believed in God and in His Son, Jesus Christ, our weakness as Christians to-day was that we did not know God, the Holy Spirit. It is through such days of experience as these that we learn to recognise the Holy Spirit's working, guiding, controlling, changing men. With all that, we are reminded of Henry Drummond's comment on his Group travelling experiences in England, where he says that "for all the solemn character of their work, they yet have plenty of laughter together."

We had in Asheville striking evidence of how the message of Christ will work in the life of the schools to-day. One head mistress said that since the coming of the Groups to their school, problems of discipline had been entirely solved; another head mistress told us of how problems of staff unity, parents, and cliques among the girls had been met in her school. She instanced a girl who was working her way through school, who before the Groups came had been rebellious, undisciplined and difficult, feeling keenly her position among other girls who had more money. The head mistress said that that girl was now quite a changed person, and that all her needs had been met for her school expenses and her graduation.

TESTIMONY BY CLERGY.

The meetings for clergy and ministers were equally vital. One minister spoke of how he had been irritable, selfish and demanding in his home life; he had been gripped by intellectual pride and impure thoughts. The result was that he had put up a "stage front," as he said, and was living behind a mask. This honest self-humiliation meant for him a real experience of peace and power and change. A stockbroker told us how he had gone to church regularly, to try and save himself and not others. He said that finding a text in the Bible was like looking for a needle in a haystack as far as he was concerned. He ran a boys' club, but was unable to help the boys vitally. Since being brought to surrender through the Group he had found that his business worked so much better; when asked about certain stocks, he now says, "I don't know" or "I'll find out," instead of giving a false reply as he used to. His determination had been to be a real Christian or get out; his witness was sufficient evidence of the reality of his change both in home life and in business.

UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF DRINK.

A part of the team spent the week-end in one of the lovely country homes of Virginia; the hostess was given the nickname of "General" because of the marvellous way in which she handled people; she gathered a group, many of them under the influence of drink, who came fogged and bewildered by other things to her drawing-room. Dr. Buchman only consented to speak when pressed. The effect was such that they ended with a quiet time. Next morning the "General's" friends rang up to ask why they had not been invited; that evening the group was sober and became hearers of the Gospel. Our hostess from that home is with us here in Detroit for these days.

These few days of preparation in Detroit have been wonderfully blessed. The Group occupied fifteen pulpits on Sunday. One of the clergymen who was previously opposed so changed his attitude after hearing the Group on Sunday, that he is now bringing sixty of the younger married people from his church to the meeting. After a young business man, a member of the Group, spoke in the Episcopal Church on Sunday, the whole congregation stayed when the service was over, to hear more, and they are coming in force to our meeting to-night. Bishop Page presided at a lunch for ministers and clergy yesterday in the Detroit Club here, the lunch ended with a quiet time and prayer shortly before 4 o'clock!