

THE INTERCOLLEGIAN

Devoted to the Work of the Young Men's Christian Associations in Universities, Colleges and Schools

Vol. 39, June, 1922 No. 9

Entered as second-class matter, April 17, 1922, at the post office at Cooperstown, New York, under the Act of August 24, 1912

AN EXPERIMENT IN CHRISTIAN INTERNATIONALISM

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Men and women from thirty-four countries, living together, meeting in the same room, frankly discussing their common problems, differing strongly on many points, yet with a spirit of agreement that went deeper than their differences—doesn't that sound a little like a description of the millennium? Yet it was an accomplished fact at the Peking Conference of the World's Student Christian Federation. From the Orient, and from the Occident, from Czecho-Slovakia and Poland, from Burma and Ceylon, from the white and black and yellow races, students came together at Tsing Hua College, for the purpose of understanding one another, of comparing and discussing their problems and their opportunities, and in the hope of binding together in a real and vital fellowship the Christian students of the world.

It was the first world conference of the Federation since Lake Mohonk,

New York, in 1913. Between lay the whole ugly period of the war with the train of hard feeling, arid chaos, and evil, and hate that have followed it. The realization of those years hung like a dark curtain behind the conference, as men and women from all over the world, many of whom had been on opposite sides of the battle front, gathered to build up again the ties of friendship between the nations, and work together for the bringing in of a Kingdom in which there shall be no war. Another background which the Conference was always conscious of, was the situation in China. There has sprung up in China during the past few months a strong anti-religious movement which has been extremely critical of the Conference. Its main charges against Christianity are that it is capitalistic, that it is only another superstition which educated people should fight, and that it is a worn out and dying religion in the West, being foisted on the Chinese by a few misguided missionaries. These facts will help to give the setting for the Conference.

The Conference was very carefully planned and prepared by the committee of the Chinese Movement in charge, and the program was arranged to meet the situation in China and also the world situation. The trio of speeches by Prof. Heim of Germany, Capt. Monet of French Indo-China, and Prof. Monnier of France, showed the place of Christianity in the intellectual world, and the relation of Christ to Philosophy to Science and Culture. Addresses by Dr. Mott and Dr. Hodgkin of Great Britain, brought home the place of Christianity in our international problems, and especially the necessity of clear thinking on our part on the question of war. Pastor Koch of Denmark and Ex-Chancellor Michaelis of Germany spoke on the question of Christianizing our industrial and economic life. These were some of the outstanding speeches of the conference.

One of the most interesting periods of each day was the hour at eleven-thirty when representatives of the various Movements spoke to the Conference on the problems and trends of thought in their own Movements. Most of us will never forget the stirring message from the

Russian students—poverty stricken, persecuted, and in many cases actually suffering martyrdom, yet with a new spiritual vitality and power in their Movement, and a greater and deeper faith than they had ever known before. The messages from the newly formed Student Movements in Czecho-Slovakia, and Poland, and the tales of struggling and suffering among the students of Asia Minor and Korea, were not only of tremendous human interest, but were a challenge to the older and better organized Movements to find again the spirit and power that is so obviously behind these Movements—weak perhaps in numbers, but certainly not in moral strength.

Perhaps the most valuable part of the Conference, however, was found in the forums, where the students from all over the world discussed, frankly and openly, the questions involved in making Christ's principles rule in international relations, in social and industrial relations, and in campus life. The six forums were all held at the same time, and included besides those mentioned, forums on "How to Present Christ to Students," "The Student and the Church," and "How to Make the Federation a More Vital Force in Student Life." The interest of the Conference naturally centered around the forums on international relations and social and industrial problems. It was astonishing for many of us self-satisfied Westerners to find that the Orientals were already in many ways beyond us in their thinking on these questions. The Chinese, for instance, have done a great deal of constructive thinking on the whole question of the Christian attitude toward the present economic system, and the Indian and Australian Movements startled the Conference by their advanced position on the question of war. The forums were a challenge to every delegate to go back to his Own Movement and bring them face to face with the fact that together the students of the world must think through these questions in the light of Jesus' teachings.

There are several rather remarkable aspects of the spirit of the Conference.

The first is the splendid Christian fellowship which bound the group together. In spite of differences of race and nationality, in spite of the delicate and almost strained relations between many of the countries represented, in spite of the most profound differences of opinion on some questions, never did any one show anything but the finest friendly spirit.

When it is possible for Indians and British, and Japanese and Chinese, to get together in small groups and discuss openly and frankly the difficult international relations existing between their respective countries as they did here at Peking, then we can begin to hope for a solution for those problems.

The second aspect of the tone and spirit of the Conference was its alertness, its wide-awakeness. It was far from being a conference for the students. It was a conference of the students. They were alert to everything that was offered, and frank and open in their criticism of certain things that did not come up to their expectations. It was astonishing to find what a degree of similarity there is between the students of the world in their frankly critical attitude. The present generation is only satisfied with its leaders when they not only reflect their own thoughts and aspirations, but challenge them to further ventures in faith.

There was a strong feeling among both students and leaders at Peking that the great need of the present time is not so much the preaching of Christianity, but the actual living of our Christianity. A Chinese said to me: "There wouldn't be any need of sending over more missionaries, if the Christians In America would definitely and positively stand for the putting of at Christ's principles into the social and industrial order. We wouldn't need missionaries then." The conviction of the Conference was that the time for halfway Christianity, and the policy of compromising with things that we know are un-Christian is over, and that we must earnestly re-think our position on many of our old problems, such as the Christian attitude toward war, as well

as our more immediate problems of our attitude toward campus evils. There was a full realization of the fact that following Christ's principles to the full would necessarily involve a deepening of our own faith, and a willingness to pay the price of such action.

The attitude of the students at Peking was that we are standing on the brink of a new day. They do not mean that in any rhetorical sense. They mean it literally. The students are tired of compromising. They are beginning to feel that definitely and consciously, they must help to bring in a new day when Christ's principles shall be not merely preached, but applied in every phase of life. They realize that to reconstruct society on the basis of Christ's law of Love, means changes far more revolutionary than Bolshevism ever brought about, but they are willing to make the attempt. Nor are they going about it in any hip-hip-hooray spirit that will soon fade. This Conference has had no note of false optimism, It has been charged through and through with a realization of the terrible amount of evil, and selfishness, and hatred, that we are facing in the world, and this has driven us back to Christ as absolutely the only One who has the solution to our problems. Every other way has been tried and found wanting. Why not take Christ at his word try and His way? The students of the world were brought face to face with that challenge at Peking.