

'L' AUBE'

FRANCE, the home of political parties, has seen the birth not of another party, but of a supra-party group—the 'Nouvelles Equipes Françaises.' The NEF, whose daily paper is *L'Aube*, stands for a united, Christian democracy, based on Christian principles of social justice, liberty and toleration: but it is well aware that such an ideal is not going to be realised without the most generous and whole-hearted work. The congress which it held in Paris last month showed its spirit: I reproduce here the most significant portions of some of the speeches.

The chairman opened the congress by saying that it met under the 'standard of conquest: the conquest of public opinion.' Financial remedies are insufficient to restore the country. It is necessary to recreate the soul and body of France by reviving her sense of spiritual and human values and by making her into a real community.

The Marquis d'Aragon, known in Oxford and London as well as here for his competence in social problems, described his work in a small village of the South. Mere discussion meetings, he said, are useless: people must first understand what they mean by democracy and spiritual values. We do not wish, he said, to behave like electioneers, and induce people, by fair means or foul, to elect a democrat: we want them to *become* democratic. We must win their consciences, and save them from finding refuge in authoritarian government out of sheer disgust with the vagueness of our present democratic Government. A disciplined democracy can revive the desire for liberty and for those spiritual and moral values without which realism means abject submission to force, and idealism a fruitless and vague appeal to an unknown god.

M. Madaule, whose work on Claudel and Dostoevsky is well known, lent the weight of his historical knowledge to the support of democracy. But what are institutions, he asked, without men? We must begin by forming the men capable of reviving the institutions we cherish. No one section of the people can be blamed for the present situation—not even the avowedly separatist Communist

Party. All are to blame, and especially Catholics. He quoted André Gide's remark to him: 'If Catholics were really Christian, all my problems would be solved.' It is we who are responsible for morality, public and private. Democracy is not a debating society: it is a virtue: it involves will and character. Catholics have lacked this will: they have not taken sufficient part in the life of the body politic. And if this body is allowed to grow at the expense of its soul, the paganism which is inherent in the nature of every one of us must break out: we need only look at the present-day pseudo-mysticisms and exaltation of force to see the truth of that. As Catholics, we must remind man who he is, and save him from this slavery to paganism. But in the name of what principles? Those of age-old human reason, proclaimed from Sophocles to Pope Pius XI, in their condemnation of that immoderation which succeeds in hurling all mankind into the abyss: principles summed up in Christianity, which alone knows man's true measure. This is the time for the Christian and the democrat to be reconciled in a common action for the saving of all people, armed with disinterestedness, enthusiasm, charity and hope: 'forward, for democracy and peace, with Christ!'

The editor of *L'Aube*, M. Bidault, spoke of the NEF's ideal. Our ideal, he said, is not a party slogan, nor a formula: it is something which we have to incarnate. It is an ideal of youth: we stand for liberty and independence in respect of parties, powers, settled habits: we defend the innocent—the persecuted are sacred in our eyes: we desire reconciliation—we have always urged friendship with Germany, and do not think that she is right to-day simply because she is strong. It is an ideal of morality: we stand for a press which does not print divorce news alongside of pictures of concentration camps: for public speech which does not misuse ideals of peace or religion for party politics: for a social order which respects and furthers the rights and dignity of the family. It is an ideal of comradeship: we can be the cement which joins together all these antagonistic parties which, often, are fundamentally in agreement: we demand a common effort from all, em-

ployers and workers, and, for the workers, not only decent salaries but the maintenance of their dignity and independence through trade unions—so that the sacrifices which to-day they are called upon to make may be their free gift, and not forced labour. It is an ideal of respect for authority, which involves true liberty. It is an ideal of peace, internal and external, which urges us to work for justice at home and abroad, which makes us willing to negotiate even at a sacrifice for the sake of peace—but only once the avalanche of hostile force has been arrested. We must work hard—and quickly: he who does not realize the danger is lost.

The Congress closed on a note of very genuine enthusiasm—and determination.

The NEF appeals for the support of all men of good will, of whatever race or creed or nationality, and its sympathies are naturally inclined towards its fellow democrats in England. Good will: translated into action: that is the ferment—small, indeed, but strong in its source—which can leaven the whole of this sad lump.

MIRA BENENSON.

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EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

LOVE, MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN occupy an important series of articles in the November 25th issue of *La Vie Intellectuelle*. First comes the 'Billet' of Christianus on 'The Sanctity of Marriage.' After reference to the forces, and particularly the economic forces, which are destroying family life and encouraging everything that undermines it, he remarks:

From time to time Christians meet one another elsewhere than in church. Naturally they speak to one another of that which forms the framework of their lives: their work and their families. These Christians, however docile they may be, are accustomed to remark that those who officially have spiritual charge over them too often show little understanding of this