



Saturday December 1 1945

CLUBS FOR BOYS

ECHO OF BRITISH PLUCK IN GERMAN PRISON CAMP

When Mr. Attlee attended a luncheon at Grocers' Hall yesterday, organized by the National Association of Boys' Clubs, he outlined the story of one of the most human and unselfish episodes of the war, and one which may have great and far-reaching results.

It began in Oflag 79 in Brunswick on a dull winter's day about nine months ago. In an upstairs room, without windows and with holes in the roof, some of the officers called a meeting of the prisoners of war. About 2,500 attended, a cross-section of the Empire. They came hungry and miserable, a good many of them without knowing what it was all about. Some had been captured at Dunkirk.

The organizers of the meeting outlined their plan. It was suggested that as a memorial of their captivity and as thanks for the deliverance they were looking forward to, something should be done to help poor boys who were brought up in the slums of London or some other great city when the war ended. A proposal was mentioned for founding a boys' club which should take its name from the German city in which their camp was situated.

PRIVATE SOLDIER'S TRIBUTE

About half the men present thought it a good idea; the other half were not enthusiastic. Then a speech was made from the body of the meeting by a private captured at Arnhem. He was present yesterday, and Mr. Attlee said that his unrehearsed remarks were partly responsible for their meeting that day.

Private G. Flamberg, of Hackney, had been a member of the Eton Manor Boys' Club before the war. He was aged 21 when he was wounded at Arnhem and was captured while his wounds were being dressed in the improvised hospital. In a speech full of enthusiasm he told his fellow prisoners about the aims and ideals of boys' clubs and of what the movement had meant to him.

Ultimately the project was agreed to unanimously, and £13,000 was collected there and then to start a club, with promises of £700 a year in subscriptions. The average donation amounted to £5, and many of the men who agreed to that sum being deducted from their pay for the purpose were private soldiers.

The organizer of the original meeting, COLONEL J. W. DUNNILL, said yesterday that if he then had predicted that nine months hence there would be held in the City of London a meeting attended by the Lord Mayor and by the Prime Minister and other members of the Cabinet as a sequel, he would have been laughed to scorn and probably thought a little mad.

Now the plan has been handed over to the National Association of Boys' Clubs, of which Lord Aberdare is chairman. It is proposed

that the Brunswick Boys' Club should be started as intended on a site in London, but that the original plan should be greatly enlarged in scope. It is now intended to start a national campaign for the boys' clubs movement generally. The aim is to collect £250,000. Of that amount one-tenth will be allocated to the Brunswick Boys' Club, which, in addition to the normal functions of a boys' club, will be a meeting place in London for all ex-prisoners of war who served in the British and Dominion forces and for leaders of boys' clubs throughout the country. The other money raised will be used to double the number of existing boys' clubs in the country from 2,000 to 4,000 and to train new leaders.

Colonel Dunnill is to begin a tour of the country next week in furtherance of the project.

At the luncheon yesterday LORD ABERDARE, who presided, read a message from the King, in which he sent his best wishes to the leaders of boys' clubs for their loyal work, which, he said, had been of such assistance in the past.

PRIME MINISTER'S APPEAL

The PRIME MINISTER paid a tribute to the courage and faith of those who had fought in the allied cause and had been captured through no fault of their own. The Brunswick Boys' Club, he said, would be a living memorial to the heroic spirit of the men in that camp, and it might be a challenge to everyone else. In the days ahead there was need for all the leadership, friendship, and example that was possible, and in the boys' club movement he believed there was a great opportunity to provide it.

The boys' club, he thought, was a great school of citizenship. Unselfishness and the right kind of discipline—self-discipline—were developed there.

LORD WOOLTON thanked the Prime Minister for attending.

COLONEL DUNNILL said that the Brunswick story, far from being ended, was only just beginning. He hoped their appeal would be a challenge to the people of Britain to get to grips with things as the prisoners of war had done on empty stomachs in captivity in Germany.

LORD ABERDARE said that the Carnegie Trustees had presented the association with a house in Monmouth for training club leaders, and Lord Joicey had given Ford Castle, near Berwick, for training senior boys. The association also proposed to set up in Kent a school for drama and the arts.

Among those present were:

The Lord Mayor and Sheriffs of London, the High Commissioner for Australia, the Home Secretary, the Minister of Education, the Lord Chief Justice, the Duke of Richmond and Gordon, Sir Frank Alexander, Lord Ammon, Sir Edward Baron, Field-Marshal Lord Birdwood, Lieutenant-Colonel M. Bowes-Lyon, Major-General Lord Bridgeman, Lieutenant-General Sir Douglas Brownrigg, Sir Edward Cadogan, Lord Cawston, Sir Walter