

Friends' Forward Movement in Sutton

IN 1932 a group of concerned Friends called a meeting in a hall in Sutton, Surrey. To this meeting they invited all Quakers living in the neighbourhood and also anyone interested in the proposal of a new Meeting for Worship in the town.

The number of people who arrived at the hall was astonishing, and after the concern had been voiced, there was a remarkable discussion in which two things became clear. First, that a new witness was required in the life of the people of Sutton, in spite of the fact that there were fine churches of many denominations in the town. But there was also a definite expression of the opinion that unless the Quakers really had something to offer which was vital to the life of the Spirit—then they need not come!

A man stood up in the centre of the hall and said, "If the Quakers have something to give which is vital to the people of Sutton, then they will take root and grow and witness to the power of the living God. But if they are merely going to begin a little Quaker Meeting—another small denomination—then I for one have no time for this concern."

One Friend suggested that the number of Friends actually living in the neighbourhood might be too small to justify the existence of a Meeting for Worship. Then someone said, "The greatest movement in history began with three people in a stable. No group is too small if it is dominated by the power and glory of the living Christ."

The discussion ended with a decision to start the Sutton Meeting for Worship.

Eight years have passed.

The Meeting has grown from the first group of twelve who met on the first Sunday morning in a small committee room, to a large group of friends and attenders, so that one usually finds fifty or sixty gathered for worship in Dashwood Hall. At public meetings held in connection with the Peace Testimony, there have been over a hundred present on each occasion. The hall is hired for the larger meetings and for worship, but the weekly Study Circles have been held once a week in the homes of local Friends. But now these Study Circles have grown until an ordinary living-room can no longer

accommodate them. It has become quite an adventure to find seats and teacups for thirty to forty people! Then every Wednesday afternoon, hospitality is again required for the Women Friends' Working Party, and on Thursdays for the growing circle of Refugees who meet for tea and social intercourse.

So the time has come when a real home is needed. The Sutton Friends have been searching for a place where they can gather for Worship and Fellowship—where they can grow in strength and in peace, in love and joy and hope. When they found a house that seemed just right for their new home, they told all the group about it, and the Refugees called it "The Quaker House". So that was what was needed in Sutton—a real Quaker House! Then an appeal was sent out and with the money first collected by the Friends, the house and its garden was secured. It is a friendly old house in a quiet cul-de-sac just off the main thoroughfare. In front of the house, under the shady trees, the Friends have planned to have seats on a little paved court, where wayfaring folk can rest near the door of the new "Quaker House".

But there is just enough money in hand for the actual purchase. Before the premises can be used for worship and all the other activities, another £400 is needed to make structural alterations and to clean and redecorate at least the first floor. On one side of the entrance there will be a large room for meetings and for worship, but a wall has to come down first. New heating, lighting and plumbing must be finished before the end of summer. At first the Children's Room will have to be used by the Refugees and the other busy gatherings, but some day when there is money for further adaptation, the pleasant rooms on the upper floor can be put in order.

The children are planning their own room. Already they have painted their chairs in bright colours.

So in the midst of war, this group of Peacemakers are gathering and preparing to build their home. They are hoping for the further sympathy and help of other Friends who share their belief, that God requires us to witness together to our faith in the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory, here and now.