

THE
TURNING POINT

March 29 - April 1, 1972

Welcome to the second meeting of the National Sing-Out Action Council.

For the next two days, we will be working to change the downward course of Sing-Out nationwide and renew the surge of "Up With People" spirit which captured many of us in the 60s. Hence our theme, "The Turning Point".

The first step in "The Turning Point" is the NSOAC, a national organization designed to bring about better communication and a renewed spirit of dedication to Sing-Out and to each other. But the NSOAC is only the first step.

The strength of Sing-Out, and the real test of "The Turning Point" lies in local casts. Until we are building successful and useful local casts, and through them better communities, we are not reaching our goals.

Those of us here this weekend must be the links to take the spirit of Sing-Out back home to our own casts. For each of us, the most important task is not whatever new job we may find here, but an old job that was there all along - making Sing-Out work in our own communities.

The following is a brief but comprehensive history of the Sing-Out movement from its inception to the present as researched and written by Roger C. Hoover of Sing-Out Volunteers - Knoxville, Tennessee.

The roots of the present day Sing-Out movement can be traced back to an experience of a young American minister over sixty years ago. Frank Nathan Daniel Buchman was an ordained Lutheran minister who had run a hospice for underprivileged young men in Philadelphia. After a financial dispute with the board of directors, he angrily resigned.

At a retreat near Keswick, England, Buchman went through a profound religious experience. Afterwards he wrote letters apologizing to the directors of the hospice and returned to the United States as YMCA director at Pennsylvania State College. Here he developed his ideas and methods for converting people to Christianity. Later he began travelling over the world, gathering followers around his formula of "guidance" from God, and four absolute standards of love, honesty, purity and unselfishness.

There was no formal organization at this time -- Buchman called the group "A First Century Christian Fellowship". The press began applying the titles "Buchmanism" and "Buchmanites".

As the number of followers increased, conversion methods changed. Instead of strictly personal encounters, there developed "house-parties" at which converts came together, had guidance, shared experiences, confessed sins, and tried to convert guests.

In the thirties the movement began to be known as the "Oxford Group", after a sign on a train identifying some Buchman followers from Oxford. Large auditorium rallies replaced the houseparties.

As the clouds of World War II gathered, Buchman came up with a new name for the movement -- Moral Re-Armament, or MRA. Literature, stage plays, and musicals became favorite communications media as the emphasis of the movement shifted from religion to ideology: the idea was to overcome political adversaries with moral strength. A former British journalist, Peter Howard, became a leading writer and speaker for MRA. He headed the movement from Dr. Buchman's death in 1961 to his own in 1965.

In the summer of 1965 at a MRA youth conference at Mackinac Island, Michigan, Sing-Out '65 was organized. Although originally intended as a one-time show, it soon developed into three international travelling casts and hundreds of local Sing-Out casts, involving thousands of young people. These Sing-Out casts used music and "speak-outs" to present their ideas for changing men and the world. Large "World Sing-Out Festivals" and visits from travelling cast members aided in training local cast members.

Brief History, continued

Up With People, Inc., was organized in 1968 to largely replace Moral Re-Armament in the United States. Most of the old MRA organization came into Up With People. Although the change was described as "a change in name but not in Aim", there was no longer as much drive for changing the world or presenting an ideological message. The emphasis of Up With People, Inc. was on the education of those within it.

Up With People, Inc. gradually abandoned any support of local Sing-Out casts, noting that they no longer had the funds or the personnel to manage such a program.

The local Sing-Out movement almost collapsed -- but some casts held on, and attempts are being made to regenerate Sing-Outs as a moving force in the United States.

Various regional action councils have existed for a few years to improve communication and organization. In the fall of 1971 the National Sing-Out Action Council was formed to reunite the Sing-Outs of the country and reestablish a moral basis for their movement. Representatives from Sing-Outs all over the nation are now meeting and planning to remake the world!

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It's Up to Us

Those of us assembled here this weekend are Sing-Out's thinkers - and doers. We know what we don't like about the way things have been going in the past, and we know what we want to change and where we want to go. But if we don't do it, it won't be done!

This weekend can be just another fun weekend conference where we all kick some ideas around and then go home to the same old rut. Or it can be a launching pad for something better - the beginning of a new start for Sing-Out across the country. We have no National cast to fall back on - no directors to blame when things go wrong. We are the leaders. We can't stop here. The energy and ideas we pour into Sing-Out in the next few months and year are going to determine its success or failure. It's up to us!

Purpose: We believe that there is greatness in all people. Our aim is to draw out that greatness, and to improve the world by changing ourselves.

Objectives for 1972:

1. To set up a national action council that will tackle the problems of local Sing-Out casts and work as a unified force to solve them.
2. To set up regional action councils in each geographical area in the United States that will give all local casts a chance to participate in joint efforts for their common good and to encourage them to realize the importance of such joint efforts.
3. To compile a complete, up-to-date mailing list of all Sing-Out casts and individuals interested in Sing-Out and to use this list to set up a national communication system.
4. To help local casts to understand and to realize the purpose on which Sing-Out was founded.
5. To revive, practice, and preach the idea that a change in the world begins with a change in yourself.
6. To hold our first annual national conference for all Sing-Out members in the United States designed to teach the history, purposes, and ideals of Sing-Out, improve our methods of communicating these purposes and ideals, and help local casts to see other casts not as rivals but as equals working together toward common goals.
7. To publish a monthly national newsletter.
8. To assist in writing, copyrighting, publishing, distributing, and producing a complete new show for local casts.
9. To encourage local cast members to experiment with new applications of Sing-Out ideas.
10. To introduce the concept and purpose of Sing-Out to new areas of the nation, and to help in the establishment and growth of new local casts.
11. To revitalize all local Sing-Outs.
12. To build a force of dedicated young people who can grow beyond selfish motives, class and race barriers, and national prejudices to become citizens of the world.