

# The Citizenship Department—Its Purpose, Place and Plans

## Suggestions for Fourth Vice-Presidents in Local Leagues

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### WHAT THE FOURTH DEPARTMENT MEANS.

The following address given by Miss Hardy at the Cannington District Convention is so eminently practical and its suggestions so practicable, that we give it in full as delivered.—Editor.

**D**URING the last year I have been closely in touch with the Citizenship department of the Oakwood Epworth League. For this reason our league wishes that I take up this topic with you this afternoon.

The Educational Department, seeing the need, has placed Civics on the public school course of study. Those of you not familiar with it may wonder what was the idea. It was not to teach the children that the Conservatives or the Liberals were the best party, nor was it to teach them the English Constitution, nor yet even the clauses in the British North America Act. They desired to instill in the minds of the children thoughts and ideas which would help them to promote the best interests of their country, and to use their vote for the party having the best man or the best platform.

### THE MEANING OF CITIZENSHIP.

Using the dictionary I find that Citizenship means that state of one who has full municipal and political privilege. The suffragettes have been trying to force the Government to allow them to be citizens. It seems to me if there had been some training along the line of true citizenship they would have thought a little more before they would have gone to the extreme measure of window-smashing.

We find in Psalm xv. a good biblical definition of a true citizen. "Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord. He that sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved."

Not only has the Educational department seen the need for education in these matters, but the Church has also seen this need. Our readers have given the league the privilege of training the young people (those who have mislaid the school training) in the principles of true and Christian citizenship. Along what topics has the league attempted to do this?

### OUR CITIZENSHIP TOPICS.

Before I answer this question let me read a few sentences regarding the official topics which I found in the May issue of the ERA. "The value of our regular uniform topics is being demonstrated more and more every day by the unsatisfactory character of a number of lists, locally arranged, must be just as evident, when one considers the disconnected and wholly scrappy nature of many of them. . . . The official topic list for the year just beginning is in many respects the best we have ever had, and I have an idea that you will find it difficult to improve upon it. Adopt it, study it, work it and have something really worth while every night in the month." It seems to me if for no other reason than the one in this paragraph we should all take up the Citizenship topics.

In the constitution we find that the Citizenship Department has five different lines along which we may work. Patriotism is the first. During the past year we have had a number of topics on this subject, which have been particularly seasonable. The whole of Canada has been stirred by parliamentary elections, and right in the midst of parliamentary speeches we were studying in the league, "Political parties," "Dominion elections," "Departments of Government," "Provincial Governments." What could make the young people more interested in this line of work than such study?

The second line mentioned in the constitution is *Municipal Politics*. This was taken up in November under the topic of Municipal Government and to those sections concerned with council elections must have proved most interesting. The late Henry Drummond said, "To move among the people on the common street, to meet them in the marketplace, to live among them, not as salaried men, but as brother men, with brother men, to serve God not with form or ritual, but in the free impulse of the soul; to bear the burdens of society and relieve its needs; to carry on the multitudinous activities of the city—social, commercial, political, philanthropic—in Christ's spirit and for His sake."

The third line is *Temperance and Prohibition*. We in Marlboro are blessed in having Local Option. This does not mean that we may sit down with folded hands and think our work is complete. I have been more than shocked to find some of the things that have been done in the township. During the winter there were skating rinks in full force and some of the boys would take a bottle there on Saturday nights, to have as they said, a good time. Not only was this the case, but some of them would stay after the rink was closed, playing cards until late in the night. During the skating season we found some of our professing Christians staying away from league in order that they too, might skate. The searching question comes to us: "Have we as leaguers done our duty?" Then too, all of our young people are not always going to be where there is Local Option. If we do not train them in Prohibition principles may they not yield to temptation when they go elsewhere?

The fourth line is that of *Moral Reform*. In looking over the topics for the coming league year I find that most of the Citizenship topics deal with this line. Many of us have read stories regarding the city of London, that immense cosmopolitan congregation. Goldwin Smith said "It is becoming so large that soon it will not be a question of how the people are to be supplied with food but how they are to be supplied with air."

Under such conditions the moral condition of the cities could not possibly be the best. During this year we are studying "The Modern City," "The Making of a City," "The Struggling Masses," and "Undermining the Home." Perhaps you think we live in the country and ask "of what use would it be studying these things?" We never know where we are to live our complete lives, and although it may seem as if, now, we can do nothing to help this class, we would be in far poorer condition to do

the little that falls to our lot if we knew nothing about it than if we had studied the subject closely. If we as leaguers all over Canada study this subject it will not be the two and three who are becoming interested, but the hundreds and even the thousands. The Church can and must often go beyond the state in matters of moral reform. It can place ideas ahead of the state which the state must gradually approach. The Church of to-morrow is the league of to-day. Should we not then do our duty and make the most of our opportunity to study Christian citizenship?

It is possible that there may be some here who would feel that in studying this subject, which on the surface appears to be of a secular nature, we are neglecting topics more religious. Citizenship deals with our every-day life, our relations and dealings with each other, and if these be not true and honourable where is our religion?

Rev. A. H. P. Anderson, addressing the Epworth League Conference Convention, said: "The demand does not necessitate less of the Bible. It does, however, mean that the Bible principles shall be made real and practical in the light of every-day life." Some one has said, "God and one man could make any other religion, but it takes God and two men to make the Christian religion."

### SOME WAYS OF WORKING.

And now we come to the practical part of my subject: How can we make this Department a success? In the Little Britain league the committee in charge includes all the young men of the league. They have one and all become very much interested in it. We need the young men in our league, and they need the league, and if we can get them there by this method it would be well worth while.

We need first a committee which is interested in this work. I do not see how any one who reads any part of the ERA can be uninterested or very much of a haphazard meeting. I have found the ERA at all times full of most helpful suggestions. Debates have been suggested, and although they require some thought and preparation they are worth while.

We must not allow our meetings to become dreary because they are always the same. We should plan to arouse interest by having a variety in the order of our service. Have something new in each meeting. If this is impossible, make over the old so that it will be as good as new. Have each member of the committee on the lookout for new ideas and suggestions.

At one meeting in our league we had the township clerk address us on "Municipal politics." It was a new voice in the league and coming as it did fresh from the work of the township, he was able to tell us about municipal matters with such a tone of certainty and assurance that we could not help remembering what he had to say.

Contests may be held to serve as review; mock parliament, and mock trials may be arranged. You can arrange a trial or parliament and have your league making a far more interesting occasion than one you could have otherwise.

Study of one thing. Do not study too much at first or you may become bored in well-doing. After your Citizenship Department is successfully organized it may be well in order to have a club to study some historical character outside of the league topics. This would be a new thing to add later on to the department and be very profitable as supplementary or special studies.

See that all on your committee are diligent workers, and then read, study and put into practice the suggestions found from month to month in our splendid league paper, THE CANADIAN EPWORTH ERA.