

Community Clubs

By FRED. C. MIDDLETON.
Sec., Community Clubs of Manitoba.

At the beginning of 1918 Canadian people faced two great tasks. The first was to provide the men and the money to keep intact the Canadian line at the front; to stay with the job in Europe till the Prussian military machine was broken beyond repair, the spirit of militarism everywhere dethroned and the world made safe for democracy.

The second task, equally important, equally imperative as the first, was to build up an altruistic, ethical citizenship in Canada which would help make democracy safe for the world.

November 11th saw the completion of the first task in glorious fashion, though not without an honor roll of 50,000 Canadian slain.

The second task awaits achievement; and it has for its battleground not the bloodstained fields of Flanders, but the peaceful prairies of Canada.

Before this second task can be accomplished, the citizens of Canada must learn the art of living together in the spirit of the Second Commandment and the Golden Rule—loving our neighbour as ourselves and doing unto others as they would that they should do unto us.

We have not yet learned that "suspicion and individualism, narrow prejudice and plain cussedness" still control our relationships each with the other. Race and religion, politics and business all have a tendency to separate us into classes and cliques and emphasize our differences.

All this must be changed if we are to meet the demands of the day; individualism, sectionalism and selfishness must be replaced by altruism, co-operation and unselfish service.

This will need to be done in the cities of our land, and evidences are not wanting that a new conscience is developing in these urban centres, as witness the Greater Board of Trade movement recently inaugurated in Winnipeg and other large cities. As citizens of a common country the folk in the cities are learning to think together, work together and play together.

The community spirit must also be developed in the country. Canadian progress in the next half century will depend in great measure on the type of citizen we shall send out from our rural centres during the next ten years. Hence the importance of the "get-together" movement in our rural centres. And evidences are not wanting that the people of the country will not fall behind their fellow-citizens in the city in this regard. For the past three or four years a community conscience has been developing, and in some cases it has found expression in the formation of community clubs. Rural ministers have taken the initiative in some instances, while in other places the local branch of the Grain Growers' Association have led the movement.

The Social Service Council is not, therefore, a pioneer in the matter. It realized, however, that the movement was so full of possibilities that it warranted the calling of a man to give his whole time to community organization.

Again, it was felt that while individual ministers and local branches of the Grain Growers' Association might do good work in some centres, the movement, to be a success, ought to be guided officially by an organization which represented no particular domination or industry, but which was a combination of them all—such an organization the Social Service Council is. Furthermore, it is appropriate that the Council, having led the province in the great prohibition movement which destroyed a bad community centre, should assume the leadership of this new movement, which aims at putting something in the place of the "poor man's club" which was destroyed when we banished the bar.

What is the Community Club?

The Community Club is an organization that takes in the whole community, the basis of membership being citizenship. There are usually many other organizations in the town and district, but they are all sectional. The Board of Trade takes in the retail merchants and other business men, but excludes any one else. The Grain Growers' Association takes in farmers only; the Home Economics Society takes in women only; the lodges recognize only initiated members who have taken the degrees and whose dues are paid up; the churches ap-

peal to those only who are members or adherents of their particular denomination. And so it goes—every one of these organizations is, from its very nature, sectional, and indeed, consciously or unconsciously, each acts as a divisive element.

Hitherto these organizations have worked along parallel lines, each seeking to carry on their own work without much thought of their relation each to the other, or to the community as a whole. The Community Club movement seeks to have them move along concentric lines, all working towards a common centre, the good of the community. It seeks to remind the farmer, the school teacher, the merchant, the preacher, that while they may have a special work to do through their own organization, they are a part of the whole community, and must share in the community tasks.

What is a Community?

By "community," in the sense in which it is here used, we mean any given territory containing a town or village where people do their shopping, get their mail, go to church or send their children to school. This includes the people of the trade centre and those living within a radius of from five to ten miles of the town.

What are the Objects of a Community Club?

In answering this question I cannot do better than quote from a suggested constitution:

"The object of this club shall be to develop in the members of this community the art of living together in the spirit of the Golden Rule, and to so apply the principles of human brotherhood and co-operation in our relationships each with the other that this community shall be a better place in which to live.

"In the carrying out of this object we pledge ourselves to the support of and co-operation with every person who is filling a useful place in the life of the community.

"Hence, we will each seek to get the other's point of view, believing that before there can be co-operation there must be mutual confidence and understanding.

"We pledge our support to the doing of community tasks as they may from time to time be presented.

"Especially do we pledge ourselves to support any movement for the improvement of community health, community business, community morals, and community recreation, and will seek to co-operate with every agency toward this end."

Think Together, Work Together, Play Together.

This is the slogan of the movement, and also represents the threefold activities of the club.

In order to get the community to Think Together, each club establishes a public forum which meets regularly for the discussion of local or general issues, and provides a community audience for visiting lecturers, from the Extension Departments of the University and the Agricultural College. For local debates, the Social Service Council offers material pro and con on various subjects, thus making it easy for the debater to make his first speech. The local forum committee might also boost the public library, or form one if none exists.

Many tasks await the club under the motto Work Together, such as community health, community morals, community business, community roads, community education, community young people. I have space to enlarge on just a few of these. And first let me speak of the task facing all our communities, that of

Community Business.

Reviewing statistics covering the years 1907-1917, I find that in several places in Manitoba where there is increased acreage under cultivation and a greater number of resident farmers than there were ten years ago, there is yet less people in the town or village which forms the trade centre of these communities. The reason for this is that less and less community business is flowing through community channels; in one small town of a couple of hundred population, the mail order business had increased from \$5,000 fifteen years ago, to \$50,000 last year; in another centre, still smaller, \$70,000 worth of business was done outside of community channels.

Let me hasten to say that I do not propose to attack the mail order business. It has filled and continues to

(Continued on page 231.)