

## THE SIDNEY AND ISLANDS REVIEW

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C. Norman Senior, A. Emery Moore  
Editor. Manager.

### RURAL SOCIAL LIFE.

In another column of this issue appears an excellent article written by Dr. Helen McMurchie for The Canadian Countryman. It explains the operations of a "People's Institute" in Gravenhurst, Ont., and is republished in Sidney in the hope that it may stimulate local thought upon the matter of social organization.

In rural districts and small towns the problem of social life is the greatest issue pertaining to the happiness of the inhabitants. The needs of Sidney, Saanichton, Ganges and the other communities of Saanich and the Gulf Islands are different from those of Gravenhurst and different from those of each other. Nevertheless there is much in the institution originated by Mrs. Fournier which might well be adopted in each and all those communities. The need of a central meeting place where the young and old of both sexes may gather at any time either as individuals or as associations and clubs is felt in all those places, none the less keenly if unconsciously.

The present is perhaps not the most favorable opportunity for undertaking expense in connection with such a scheme, but the general idea may be borne in mind until a suitable time for crystallizing thought into action shall come.

The chances are, however, that the cost of renting a hall permanently would be no greater to the community than the sum of the amounts paid once or twice a week when the owner has to make his entire revenue from such occasional leases. The saving in other ways would be great, as the Institute would have no object in charging more than 50 cents or a dollar for the use of a hall which now costs anywhere from \$5 to \$15. The item of hall rent would thus practically disappear from the expenses of benefit concerts and dances.

### ROUGH ON JOFFRE.

It is unfortunate that General Joffre and Sir John French have to conduct their campaign against the Germans without the benefit of the advice of those military experts who gather in groups at the post office, the hotel, and the Trading Company's store to map out plans of campaign which would completely annihilate the enemy in a week or two. The generals in the field are hardly to be blamed for their mistakes as they have not the perspective of the Sidney experts from which to view the situation calmly. Thrust in the thick of the actual operations as they are they cannot keep into such close communication with their advisers in this portion of the world as, no doubt, they would wish to do if they had time.

### NO BREACH OF FAITH.

Whatever differences of opinion there may be as to the uses to which the proceeds of the New Year's Eve dance should have been devoted there is no room for any allegation of breach of faith upon the part of the ladies committee which handled the money. They intimated quite clearly to the editor of the Review and he in turn announced positively in the issue of December 11, that the money was to be used for local relief. The misapprehension appears to have arisen from the use of the word "patriotic" as applied to the character of the entertainment. This probably was a mistake, but an altogether innocent one.

Interesting memories are recalled to the old-timers in North Saanich by the tearing down of the ancient mill at Shoal Harbour.

## A HOME FOR THE COMMUNITY IS THE PEOPLE'S INSTITUTE

MRS. FOURNIER OF GRAVENHURST HAS SOLVED PROBLEM OF SOCIAL LIFE IN RURAL DISTRICTS. "MEET ME AT THE INSTITUTE" IS TOWN'S SLOGAN.

Even in this day of many missions—and more missionaries—it is rare to find anyone with as whole hearted a belief in her peculiar mission as Mrs. Fournier of Gravenhurst, showed in her pet scheme, which she has christened the People's Institute, when she outlined its main features before the Women's Institute's meeting in convention in Toronto on November 12th, writes Helen McMurchie in the current issue of the Canadian Countryman. Mrs. Fournier is a woman who has seen the vision of great things which are within the reach of common people—or, at least, people who think they are common, and who would never realize their own possibilities but for guidance from themselves. With which preface I must let Mrs. Fournier speak for herself.

### The Communal Family.

"What the home is to the family the People's Institute is to be to the community" with this text Mrs. Fournier introduced her new idea. Then she went on to explain that the People's Institute was designed to bring the members of a community together and thus to develop a corporate spirit growing out of common undertakings and common pleasures. It was also to supply what a diversity of agencies supplied in cities—free libraries, club rooms, amusement places, gymnasias, and places for open air recreation. No town could afford to maintain all these activities separately, but even a small village could accomplish a scheme for their common support.

The Government just now was very anxious to send back to the country people whom the city could not support during the present crisis. All this was shutting the stable door after the horse was gone—the real remedy was to make the country so attractive that people would not want to leave it. People, especially the young, were drawn to the city by perfectly legitimate desires for things which they could not have at home. Let them have these things—along with the others which they must of necessity forfeit by going to the city—and the inducement to leave the country would have gone.

### It Has Been Done.

"But what is the charm that is to work all these wonders?" you are asking. Mrs. Fournier anticipated this question and answer it by telling of the People's Institute in Gravenhurst, and what it has accomplished in the years of its life. There was in Gravenhurst, a town of about 2,000 inhabitants, an abandoned Salvation Army barracks. It occurred to certain townspeople that this might be used as a community centre for the town. A donation day was held and pledges secured to the amount of \$300. The Women's Institute then obtained the barracks, furnished its various rooms with furniture given and loaned by interested people, and then put one of their members in charge as matron to live on the premises. Then the Institute was opened.

It is open from 9 a.m. to 10.30 p.m., Sundays and week days, and its uses are as varied as its hours are generous. To begin with, the matron gives food and clothing to those who need it, thus forming a distributing centre for the town. Many cases of need have been relieved in this way, which strikes one as being unusually sensible, as it ought to prevent private and indiscriminate giving provided wise people are in charge.

The rooms are furnished for many and various purposes, some are reading rooms, others game rooms, still others sewing rooms, and the sewing machine installed has proved a boon not only to societies in their work, but to women who have not machines in their own homes. Then there are rooms for entertainments with proper equipment in the way of stoves and dishes, and lastly there are committee rooms.

If you remember that these places are furnished to be as cosy and attractive as possible, you may imagine just how enticing a place this People's Institute is.

### Used For Everything.

That it does entice people is shown by the various societies which find a use for it. The Women's Institute, as mother of the scheme, finds its home there, so, the benevolent societies of the Victorian Order of Nurses, the township council, the agricultural society, as well as various church societies. The churches, by the way, seen to find the Institute a safe neutral ground where their members may mingle with love and good will—a

not unimportant feature of the Institute's work.

For social events the demands on the Institute are even more exacting, and I believe that the common word in town is "Meet me at the Institute."

Mrs. Fournier gave a list of the various services which the People's Institute may render to the community. I give her admirably condensed list with only the slightest explanatory notes:

### A List.

The People's Institute may supply:

- (1) A good hall.
- (2) A small room for committees.
- (3) A waiting and rest room (with toilet accommodation). I intend very shortly to take up this question of rest rooms. What a boon they are to the country woman, and yet how rarely are they found.
- (4) A general utility room for sewing classes, supper meetings, etc.
- (5) A game room—to replace the saloons and the street corners. (And might one add, this is entirely my own amendment, a hall for dances which would be under the patronage and direct supervision of the Institute members.)
- (6) A corner for a museum. Every town has its interesting curios which civic pride should preserve. (I must say I think that alone is worth thinking about.)
- (7) A Bureau of information.
- (8) A Labor Bureau.
- Here maids could be engaged, or work by the day sought and found, or sewing let out. If all the people in the district who wanted work would register here, and who needed help applied likewise much confusion could be saved.
- (9) A place of interest to keep people off the streets at night.
- (10) Grounds—a park grounds adjoining the Institute.
- (11) One emergency bed for use in case of accidents or in an emergency operation.
- (12) A library.

I should like to add to this list a gymnasium, which is surely one of the things most sorely needed in a village or small town.

### A Big Idea.

In closing, Mrs. Fournier mentioned that the Women's Institute, or any corresponding organization, should be prepared to undertake the housekeeping for the community, to provide and maintain a community home. Now, here is a great idea, worth much reflection. Of course, it must always be recognized that the success of such an undertaking rests primarily not on equipment but on the people who manage it. No doubt Mrs. Fournier is the explanation of much of the phenomenal success of the Gravenhurst People's Institute. But surely every community possesses people competent for such an enterprise. Think it all over, and then ask yourself: Is it worth while? Ought I to help to do it?

### THE FORD'S 23RD PSALM.

The Ford is my auto; I shall not want (another).

It maketh me to lie down beneath it; it soureth my soul.

It leadeth me in the paths of ridicule for it's name sake.

Yea, though I ride through the valleys I am towed up the hills;

And I fear much evil, for thy rods and thy engine discomfort me.

I anoint thy tires with patches; thy radiator runneth over.

I prepare for blowouts in the presence of mine enemy.

Surely if this thing followeth me all the days of my life I shall dwell in the hug-house forever.

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