

The Fifth Sunday Movement

The other evening we had the opportunity of a long interview with the founder of the Fifth Sunday Movement in Canada. Our purpose in seeking the interview was that one of the objects of the movement is to ultimately place candidates for municipal honours throughout Canada. Whatever prejudices we might have had previous to our meeting Mr. Woodward, the gentleman in question, were swept away after a few minutes conversation, for no more sincere and sane exponent of any cause could be met anywhere, and though we may even have cause to criticise the platform of the Fifth Sunday Movement, when it comes out, for the founder and present manager we cannot help but have the greatest respect and admiration.

The Movement is an educational and political propaganda with the railroad men of the country—about 80,000—forming the basis, though the idea is to secure as members every worker in the Dominion—whether he works with his hands or brain. The potentiality of such a movement for good, or evil, is enormous, for there is no doubt that through the wonderful organizing ability of the founder the

desired end in membership will be attained. Frankly we believe that so long as Mr. Woodward is in control, the influence of the Fifth Sunday Movement will be for good, particularly in educating the masses in their duties as citizens. This in itself will be a new experience in Canada, inasmuch, it is the first attempt made by any movement in this country emanating from organized labour to educate its own members along the lines of citizenship, and its responsibilities. One of the difficulties that students of municipal reform have to contend with is the ignorance and apathy of the masses in civic affairs, and no one will welcome an enlightened electorate—made up in every urban community principally of workers—more than will the present municipal administrations of Canada.

If then, the Fifth Sunday Movement does nothing else but carry out its educational programme it will be serving a useful purpose in the building up of a real Canadian democracy, and as such we wish the promoters all success. So far as the rest of the programme of the movement is concerned we suspend judgment until we can study the full platform.

Training of Social Workers

When McGill University opens for the winter season, a school of social study and training will be started under the direction of Mr. J. Howard Falk, whose experience in social welfare was gained principally in Winnipeg, though he first became identified with the work in New York in 1906. While a school for social workers is an innovation for the Montreal university, other seats of learning have been experimenting with the subject for some time, and no doubt some good workers have been turned out from these schools, yet we seriously question the wisdom of the course usually given, which to our mind smacks too much of a business training at the expense of the cultivation of the humanizing forces that should be within the mind and heart of every student. We don't believe, for instance, that much uplifting of the "submerged tenth" can be done with statistics, neither do we think that the worker trained along the lines laid down in these courses, has much influence in the rearranging of the weekly budget of those housewives whose dwellings are located in the poorer and usually dingy parts of our cities. These tenants of the tenderloin districts are not there from choice, neither are they there because of incompetence on the part of the women, but are usually there because of economic circumstances over which they have no control, and so they are bound to resent even the best intentioned interference of the would-be uplifters. It is true, drunkenness and squalor are to be met in too many of these so-called homes, but who could condemn the inmates, living as they do under such fearful condi-

tions as allowed under our housing regulations, taking to drink and then uncleanly habits. The pride of living has been taken from them and all the preaching in hygiene, child welfare or domestic economy will have no genuine effect. Take these same families and place them in decent surroundings and in good healthy habitations and then watch how quickly they will rise to their opportunities. We are all creatures of environment, and the denizens of the poorer districts have no less moral fibre than those of us better circumstanced. Their mode of living, or rather existing, is bad because they have never had a helping hand to lift them, not up, for how is it humanly possible to uplift any human being living with a constant stink in the air by reason of the overcrowding of his or her neighbours, but to lift them clear out of their mire of despond—the only term one can give to our too many districts of squalor—into a district where they can freely breathe God's good air. The fact of the matter is that the social worker of to-day is too prone to take up on strictly business lines, non-essentials, which do not alleviate the sufferings of the poor, but rather irritates them, while he, or she, leaves alone the essentials—one of which is to keep bringing right home to the councils the housing conditions of those who can only pay low rentals. It is then not only the duty of the councils to listen to the said stories that the workers can bring forward in almost every urban municipality in Canada but to act, even if it means some of the rascally landlords who fatten on the misery of their tenants losing some of their ill-gotten gains.