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The Movies and Juvenile Crime

Chief of Police Belanger of Montreal in his annual report makes note of the large increase of crime among juveniles. "This alarming increase is due," he says "in my opinion, and in that of several judges, to the attendance at picture shows. Parents should make it a duty to watch their children carefully and to prohibit their attendance at these places, which are dangerous for young people."

Such an indictment of the movies from a man of over forty years police experience, should be sufficient to make citizens realize that in the movies an educational force has been established, that is fast becoming an influence such as never was exercised by the ordinary methods of education. Everyone is fascinated by the movies—men and women, old and young—and children. What is more the movies have come to stay. The question is what is the moral effect on the lives of the people, particularly children. According to Chief Belanger the effect on juveniles is bad because it breeds criminals. And probably the chief is right, not that there is anything wrong shown on the screen,—the censor in most of the Canadian cities sees to that—but that the realistic scenes and situations in many of the stories, particularly those of a wild west or detective character, too often suggest to the young mind those means to develop that touch of the devil which is in every child with red blood in his, or even her veins. We all have the mood at times. It is purely a question of control.

We have more than once urged in these columns the advisability of the local authorities, who in most cases have the licencing of the movie theatres, making it a condition to show at each performance an educational picture of a Canadian character. There are many of such pictures being filmed every day—the Dominion Department of Trade and Commerce has many films dealing with Canada—her scenery and industries, so that the excuse put up by the "movie" people that there are not enough Canadian films to go around is all bluff. There is undoubtedly an opportunity for municipal councils throughout Canada to advertise, through the movies, the glories of the Dominion to our own citizens.

Insurance for Municipal Employees

For some years now we have urged the adoption of the group insurance in Canada for municipal employees. In an editorial in the February (1920) issue we stated that "The municipalities of Canada have in the aggregate approximately 100,000 men and women on their payrolls. These municipal employees have, for the most part, but limited incomes with very little prospect of a pension, so that there is ever before them the nightmare of actual want in their old age should they live, or should they die positive poverty for their families. This nightmare has become more intense these last two years because of the high cost of living which has affected salaried municipal officials more than any other class.

"This being the case there is a special responsibility on the municipal councils to remedy as far as possible such economic conditions so far as they affect their employees, for no man (or woman) can give good service with such a hopeless future facing him or his family. For some time past we have been studying the problem, and taking into consideration the scarcity of funds at the disposal of the councils and of the smaller municipalities in particular, we have come to the conclusion that the best means of solving the difficulty is for the councils, that have not already pension schemes (which means about 80 per cent) to insure each of their salaried employees in favour of the employee himself or his family. By doing this we believe that both the municipality and its employees would benefit at a small cost."

We are pleased to note that a system of group insurance has been adopted in the City of Calgary. According to report about 700 employees are covered in the sick benefit fund and the same number in the life policy fund. Forty per cent of the policy is paid by the city and 60 per cent by the employee, a deduction of 50 cents per month being made from the employee's salary or wages. The policy is \$1,000 in case of death of an employee; and provision is made for payment, up to 10 weeks or 60 days, of 80 per cent of the employee's present salary or wages in case of sickness or quarantine. "A maximum amount of \$100 is payable for each of the following: Hospital fees, operations, and medical fees." This is encouraging.