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*If you only want overcoat patterns, cross out the word "suit." If you only want suitings, cross out the word "overcoat." Grain Growers' Guide

The Co-operative Community

The Church and the Community

By J. S. Woodsworth, Director, Bureau of Social Research

J. S. WOODSWORTH

Church reports usually record the number of members, the sums of money contributed to various church enterprises and the prospects of denominational development. In this study we are interested primarily in the contribution of the church to the community life, and the changes needed to bring about the greatest efficiency. The denominations at work in Canada originated at various times in various countries. In the home lands a number of them were national churches. Most of them were established in districts where they obtained a considerable membership. Here, owing to the mixed character of the population, several denominations are found in most communities, each ministering to a comparatively small group. If an effort is made to reach members of other groups there is suspicion, if not hostility.

Size of the Charge

The size of the charge of any minister varies greatly. Some are confined to one small "town," others the town and adjacent districts. In Manitoba there are a number of compact charges varying from 40 to 80 square miles; there are others in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta running from 100 to 900 square miles. Quite a number in Alberta cover an area of from 1000 to 2000 square miles. Route maps submitted show that ministers cross and re-cross one another's tracks as they pass from one appointment to another.

An effort was made to obtain from each minister the number of families in the whole district, the number of church buildings, the number of other places where religious services are held, the number of resident ministers and the number of schools. Only a few gave accurate information, most gave approximate figures. A number evidently thought in terms of their own parishes, e.g., "85 on my visiting list"—"there are about 90 families belonging to the Anglican Church, but I have no means of finding out the number of other denominations"—"100 church families"—"60 for which I am responsible"—"50 in my parish"—"a rough guess"—"no means of knowing exactly."

The average for each district would seem to be (disregarding fractions) 250 families, 2 church buildings, 2 other meeting places, 2 resident ministers and 4 schools. Or, more accurately, there is a resident minister for every 103 families, and a church or other place where religious services are held for every 56 families. In 260 mixed and foreign districts in Saskatchewan there is an average of 70 families to a church and 84 families to a minister. One hundred and ninety of the districts are, however, without a church and 196 without a resident minister. The churches and ministers are evidently grouped in the little towns.

Groups Not Cared For

Most ministers in the predominatingly English speaking communities report that there are no groups uncared for. They seem to consider that the existence of some church is sufficient. This is not borne out by the replies of the secretaries of the farmers' and women's organizations, who look at the situation from an altogether different angle.

In Manitoba 10 per cent. to 50 per cent. of the people attend no church. So high is the percentage in some cases that the average of the figures furnished would be 65 per cent. In Saskatchewan in 10 per cent. of the districts reporting at least 90 per cent. of the people attend no church. In the remaining districts from 5 per cent. to 10 per cent. do not attend. In Alberta in some 80 districts the usual percentage of families said to be attending no church is 60 per cent.

The following criticisms may not be without value. "We have no church at all; I have been here five years; we have tried to have church, but the people will not come out." "The ministers of religion have not solved the problem of awakening the rural conscience. In a community of so many denominations, denominationalism should have no place at all." "We have plenty of preaching, such as it is, but what we need and do not get is Gospel truth." "Too many different religions and races makes it hard to organize societies for community betterment. Eliminate religion, race and politics, and come together on the basis of brotherly feeling." "In a community with various co-operative enterprises, the school seems to be doing well; church almost total failure, tho fine brick structure. Outside of church life people are social and all friendly." "Ministers appointed to new places are, I fear, mediocre and rather uninteresting." "We need a minister who would take some interest in the community and some outside lectures to get the people together." "We believe it is the duty of the church to cry out against immorality in all its phases; not socially only, but commercially, politically, or wherever it is found. When the church joins with us in this, then we may have hope also of our political party. Co-operation is in the air and altho we have to begin on the lower levels of economics and prove its value in dollars and cents, still we hope by this means to enable men of different creeds and nationalities to work together for the common good."

Small Groups' Needs Unmet

In the mixed districts where there are any large numbers of any group there are usually church services, tho in the foreign districts there are few resident ministers or priests. Where there are only small groups their needs are unmet. For example, in a predominatingly German district with a number of Scandinavians and Slavs, the Lutheran minister reports that the English and Polish are not cared for by any church. In a predominatingly Icelandic district the English speaking people are uncared for. The following replies from English Protestant ministers suggest community problems still unsolved by the churches.

In a district made up of 58 English, 10 Russian, 8 Dutch, 4 German, 6 Norwegians and 4 Finns, "none uncared for." In district of 12 English, 10 Ruthenian, 8 German, 40 Jews, "only Catholics uncared for." In an English community, Seventh Day Adventists and Russellites are uncared for. In a community 100 per cent. English, only "indifferent suckers;" in various districts, "none uncared for except two or three Catholic families;" "better distribution of church buildings needed;" "small group of Slavs not cared for;" "a few Jews and Chinamen;" "only odd families;" "a few Germans who do not belong to any congregation;" "only foreigners working as section men on the railroad;" "the half-breeds;" "European foreigners and Asiatics;" "Lutherans do not have church services;" "Roman Catholics have only occasional services;" "Scandinavian Lutherans unprovided for;" "Germans, 25 families, no service;" "150 Ruthenian families, Greek Orthodox, no service;" "Ruthenians have services only occasionally;" "Doukhobors;" "most districts have religious services during the summer months;" "scattered families of Germans;" "Roman Catholics go long distances to church;" "nothing done for Russians and Austrians in remote districts;" "hired men."

Social Activities of Church

Many of the ministers state that their churches have none but religious meetings, but the majority mention various social activities. Some of these are confessedly "prompted by domestic financial needs." The secretaries of the farmers' and women's organizations state that in Alberta 60 per cent. of the churches make country life attractive by festivals, lectures or socials. In one English district "the church leads in all social and community life. In this district the teacher takes an active interest in community work and owns his own home. There is night school in the winter,