

Western Methodist Recorder.

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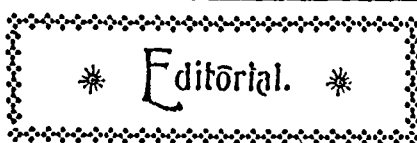
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FOR CONSIDERATION OF CONFERENCE.

It is doubtful whether during our history as a church in British Columbia we have ever held a more important Conference than that in which we shall assemble in a few days. This is so not only from the fact that we are making steady growth and shall probably have a larger representation this year than ever before, including many new faces whom we shall welcome to our councils. This, of course, will bring with it the necessity of careful and courageous action in order to wisely readjust and divide, and sub-divide, for effective and economical extension in various directions; but this kind of thing we expect to do more or less every year, and shall have to do for a thousand years, if the world lasts so long, or until all our countrymen are "born again." Our College Board, too, will no doubt again furnish us with important recommendations, arising in part from the very success the Institution has experienced of late. But there are causes outside of these making the Conference of special moment and laying upon it extraordinary opportunity and responsibility. In the first place we understand that the question of appointing a Superintendent of Missions for British Columbia will come up for consideration and action. We are not quite sure as to the exact form of the proposition to be laid before us, or what precisely we shall be asked to do. If it is contemplated that the one man may be appointed to superintend all our Missions—Domestic, Indian, Chinese and Japanese—it is at once a many-sided problem, and a pre-requisite for intelligent debate would seem to be a statement somewhat clearly defining the powers of such an official and the relations to other officials that such a quadrilateral superintendent would be supposed to sustain; and it is evident also that a man properly qualified for such a position must be blessed among other things with a good deal of versatility. There is no doubt, however, that the need exists for more perfect supervision of our various missionary work, and probably this need may be adequately met by the

appointment of a Superintendent of Missions, under proper safeguards.

But it was not of this that we desired in this article especially to speak. The unusual importance of this Conference to our mind arises from the impressive fact that it is the last we shall hold in the wonderful Nineteenth Century. This fact will involve a concentration of the best thought of the Conference upon the interests of the Twentieth Century Thanksgiving Fund, which, thank God, has met with general support by our people throughout the Dominion. But the great fact mentioned gives the Church a unique advantage of awakening men's consciences to the solemnities of life and the realities of eternal things, and herein lies its great responsibility. We would suggest that the Conference might pass a special and earnest resolution, recommending with all its authority that a Watch-night Service, for which more than usual preparation should be made, shall be held on the night of December 31st, at precisely the same time, if possible, in every Methodist Church in the Province, followed by the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper immediately after 12 o'clock; and that during the first week of the Twentieth Century a simultaneous Evangelistic Mission shall be held in every Circuit and Mission in the Conference. Thus, with the "fifties" already brought in by our T. C. T. Fund we may reasonably and confidently expect that the Lord will "open the windows of heaven and pour us out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

We are attempted to make a suggestion in view of the approaching Conference. Two years ago when the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes was elected President of the English Wesleyan Conference, he suggested, among other important though somewhat unusual things, that a brief address, on some spiritual theme, might be given by some senior minister or layman, at the morning's devotions, with closed doors during the devotional exercises. It was said that the innovation had a "marked" and "most happy" effect on the whole Conference proceedings, and was certain to become a permanent institution. Could not this suggestion be profitably adopted by our own Conference? It would be of immense benefit to the younger members present, both clerical and lay, to receive the matured, spiritual counsel from the fathers of the Church in this way, and it would produce a very healthy impression upon our people, to learn that we are not so completely absorbed, at our annual gathering, with reports and statistics that we have no time to concern ourselves about experimental godliness which is the very root of all our true success. It is a foolish argument against the suggestion to say "We are too much driven for time," for it is well known that there is often more time wasted in needless and irrelevant discussion in a single session, than this would involve for the whole week, besides the fact that it is more than likely the serious tone imparted by this exercise would have its effect in the expedition of Conference business.

As we have touched upon the matter of economising time in Conference sessions we may say it has often occurred

to us whether something could not be done to shorten the time now supposed to be necessary for the transaction of all our business. We have observed a restlessness and impatience on the part of our laymen to return to their pressing private concerns, and many important matters in which their voice should be heard has, in consequence, to be dealt with in their absence. Much time is lost because there is a frequent uncertainty as to the order in which subjects for discussion should be brought forward, and under what particular head they should be treated. Could not much of this be obviated if a committee of experts were appointed (or perhaps the Conference Special Committee could do it) to meet somewhere between the Annual District Meeting and Conference, to arrange the business coming before Conferences in the most convenient form in what our English friends have called an "Agenda," and which they find of great value. We believe that at least a day could be saved in this way, and our lay brethren would remain with us to the close. To make this practicable, it might be necessary, as we pointed out last month for another reason, that the Conference meet a week later each year than at present to give the committee time to receive the recommendations from the districts, but that could be no serious obstacle.

We are quite sure that our readers will be deeply interested in an article on another page, written by Mr. F. J. Bailey, and dealing with our Methodist work among soldiers and sailors of H. M. Forces at Esquimalt. The article is accompanied by a cut of a "Homo" it is proposed to erect there for the social and moral benefit of the brave fellows whose valorous deeds have stirred our pride and gratitude so much of late. Such an institution is very greatly needed, and the scheme has met the unanimous approval of the Wesleyan Army and Navy Committee, and of our own Conference Special Committee. It is expected to cost about \$6,000, and one-third of this amount has already been subscribed by the English Wesleyans, with further promised assistance from their Twentieth Century Fund. It is a part of our work, however, and of such a nature as to strongly appeal to every true-hearted Britisher in the country. As Mr. Bailey says, British Columbia should promptly subscribe at least \$2,000. We understand that help has been promised by our Eastern friends as well, as Revs. Dr. Potts, A. Sutherland and A. C. Courtice, having become warmly interested in the proposal. Subscriptions will be thankfully received and acknowledged by Rev. J. P. Hicks, Chaplain, Victoria West, B.C.; Mr. F. J. Bailey, Secretary of the Committee, Esquimalt, B.C.; or Mr. W. T. Andrews, Treas. Building Committee, Victoria, B.C.

PERSONALS.

The Quarterly Board of Mount Pleasant Church, Vancouver, at its February meeting, invited Rev. C. H. M. Sutherland, of Wellington, to become their pastor for the ensuing year. Bro. Sutherland has accepted.

Rev. James Calvert, of Trail, has been invited to the pastorate of the Haliburton Street Church, Nanaimo, and has accepted.