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Children's Playground Association Meeting

(Continued from page 17.)

the centre of the city and second, the procuring for playground purposes of a piece of waste land which should appropriately be a part of Victoria Park. In spite of the fact that a thousand dollars has been offered ever since the beginning of the association last year for the former, and that all evidence available shows that the council should rightly have control of the latter, the two objectives seem to be at the time of this writing no nearer accomplishment than at the beginning of the summer. So, in the light of these objectives my record for the summer must be one of lamentable failure. However, I trust that the preliminary work which has been done this summer will some time in the near future fructify and that these two objectives will eventually be accomplished, and although the playground work has not advanced in the sense of broadening out or taking on new responsibilities, I do believe that a firmer foundation has been laid and the permanency of the work more carefully secured.

I am attaching to this report my recommendations and a provisional budget which I hope will be useful as offering some guidance for the future activities of the association.

R. S. BARTON.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROVISIONAL BUDGET FOR THE FURTHER ACTIVITIES OF THE PLAY-GROUND ASSOCIATION.

Not very much can be accomplished in the busy world of to-day without planning out things in advance. The wise man budgets his time, his income and even his energy. It is hoped that the following suggestions may serve as a tentative plan of action for the Playground Association. It will, of course, be impossible for me to plan out an exact financiallows:

1. CURRENT EXPENSES FOR SUMMER WORK, 1926.

(a) Instructors and Directors similar to those employed this past summer $1,500.00

This will include one Director of Playgrounds, four women instructors and two or three men instructors. A school house without a teacher has not very great educational significance. Neither has a playground without one or more instructors. If you cannot afford to spend money for both equipment and instructors on a playground, by all means spend your money on the latter. This has been found to be the better investment wherever tried. One good playground instructor put on a plot of land without one piece of equipment on it will do more good for the children of that community than a playground fully equipped but without an instructor. Children do not learn much about honesty and good sportsmanship and fair play from swings and see-saws and slides, nor do they in fact get any very great increase in physical ability. It is through the contact with the instructors and through their games that they get these things which the playground primarily aims to foster. This should not be taken as being detrimental to swings, slides and other equipment. They are exceedingly necessary and beneficial in amusing the children and keeping them happily employed, but of the two, equipment versus instructors, the latter are by far the most necessary and desirable. They are the sine qua non, the one indispensable element of successful playgrounds. And not only must we have instructors, we must have the right kind of instructors—those who understand the children, have sympathy, tact, "pep" and knowledge. This $1500.00 estimated for "personnel" is the same amount as last year.

(b) Miscellaneous equipment 200.00

This includes footballs, bouncing balls, skipping ropes, stilts, story books, tea, sugar and milk which is supplied to from 50 to 150 children once each week on their picnics, and in fact every thing necessary for their games, picnics and playground activities for the summer.

(c) Prizes, Ribbons, etc... . . . . 200.00

Even though the prizes given are usually very small and inexpensive, where so many are given, this expense for many of our Friday special days amounts to $30 or $50.00. The money is well spent however, for the prizes arouse much interest, and however small or inexpensive, are always useful.

Taking these two items B and C together we have an average expenditure per child per summer of considerably less than fifty cents per child. I would be very much interested in knowing of any other way in which one gould so cheaply give to all the children of St. John's who care to take advantage of it, good, wholesome fun and enjoyment plus the desirable physical and moral training which the playgrounds aim to give.

(d) Miscellaneous Expenses 100.00

Total for Current Expenses for Summer Work $2,000.00

The question next is that of raising the money to carry out this program. We received from the circus $1809.40, but this was gross receipts. After all expenses were deducted the net proceeds were something less than $1300.00, part of which must be used to meet some of the expenses for the past summer, so that when all bills incurred during the past year have been paid we will have a balance of about $1000 toward the above mentioned $2000.00. Thus $1000 must be raised by membership subscriptions or otherwise to meet the amount needed for running expenses next year.

2. WINTER ACTIVITIES

If more than this $1000 is raised, which I certainly think should be the case, whatever is over may well be spent in providing some form of winter activity for the children. I think that the plan which you followed last winter of opening the skating rink on certain afternoons free to the poorer children is an excellent idea and Mr. P. E. Outerbridge deserves the deepest gratitude of the Playground Association, as I know that he has already won from the children of the city, for the kind interest shown in their welfare, and the St. John's Skating Rink Co. Ltd. for their generosity in giving them the use of the rink free on certain afternoons last winter. If sufficient money can be raised the rink should certainly be used again this winter. As many of the poor children had no skates to use last winter, I am sure that it would be very much worth while to purchase a few pairs of skates which those children might use.

3. A NEW PLAYGROUND

We all know that there are still hundreds of children in the city which the playgrounds do not reach. As the distance the children live from the playground increases, the attendance decreases. This is to be expected. The significance of this is however, that many children are not yet supplied with a playground near enough to their home for them to use. Consequently they must still play in the dirty streets and brave the dangers of motor traffic on the main roads or of dirty and unhygienic alleys of the side streets. The answer is—more playgrounds so that the distance which any child lives from a playground may be as short as possible. If Mr. Cahill will undertake the work I recommend that he represent the Playground Association in his legal capacity and find out for the Association the cost and the procedure necessary to obtain a part of Buckmaster's field or other property that may be used for playground purposes in that part of the city. To meet this expense we have $1000.00 already offered. If the playground costs more than this, the additional expenditure must be in some way provided for.

4. A SWIMMING POOL IN RENNIE'S RIVER.

A swimming pool in Rennie's River is very badly needed. Good as the facilities are at Long Pond, Quidi Vidi and Bowring Park, these places are too far for many of the children, especially the smaller ones, to go to daily, and on very hot days twice daily, for a swim. As a consequence, hundreds of children go in bathing at a number of places along Rennie's River and at no place is there any supervision or instruction in swimming, and in fact there is no place there really big enough for swimming. Thus the children go paddling around without ever learning to swim. This is unfortunate, for besides the possibility that life or death may some time depend upon one's being able to swim or not, there is the great advantage physically in muscle and lung development which comes from swimming. Probably no exercise so evenly develops all of the muscles of the body as does swimming. If a good large swimming pool can be built in Rennie's River, therefore, at a not too exorbitant price, I strongly recommend that this be done. Probably the best way to raise the money after finding out how much it will cost, would be by special subscriptions. There is no greater joy in this world, I believe, than giving joy to children, particularly to those children who otherwise have little. Perhaps some individual seeing in this way an opportunity of brightening the lives of hundreds of children of this city will donate the necessary funds for budget for next year, first, because I do not know what the income of the Association for the year will be, and second, because I do not know what decision will be reached regarding the proposed new playground and swimming pool. Certain expenses can, however, be estimated as follows:

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this enterprise, and thus get his own pleasure in a way which will also give pleasure to the children for many years to come. Also since the Council was glad to co-operate in regard to placing a wading pool in Bannerman Park, which plan has since been discarded, no doubt they would also lend assistance to this swimming pool project. Moreover, if the approach were made in the right way, I feel sure that we could get volunteer labor for this kind of enterprise.

Again if no individual or group of individuals come forward to finance the building of the pool, I think that since the Rotary Club have already expressed their desire to do something as a body to help us, that we may without imposition suggest to them that they take over this matter and thus add one more star to the crown of glory which they have already won as the champions of the boys and girls of this city. The Rotary Swimming pool may well be a permanent monument to the good which they have done.

5. MEMBERSHIP

My fifth recommendation is that at the next annual meeting of the Association the officers see to it that there is a much more definite understanding among the members of the Association, that the Association is to be supported by annual subscriptions. That whatever one contributes to the Association, makes one a member for that fiscal year only. Since the annual meeting was held in October membership will extend from October of one year to October of the next.

6. CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

There is at least one change in the Constitution which I would recommend, namely, that part which says that the five members who shall be withdrawn from the Executive each year shall be withdrawn in alphabetical order. A more intelligent way would be to withdraw those have shown least active interest in the work of the Association. As it happens those in the first part of the alphabet have been very actively interested in the welfare of the Association.

7. THE EXECUTIVE

My seventh and last recommendation to the Association, is to select a strong, active executive board who will have the interest and energy to get things done. The meetings of the Executive are held usually not often than once a month, and if a member is not sufficiently interested to attend these meetings, he is probably not sufficiently interested to be of much use in furthering the interests of the Playground Association. I realize that an Association of this sort can never be as solidly organized as for instance, is the Rotary Club which supported this work last year. This means that the work of our Association must be practically carried on by the officers and executive, but we also need as solid a membership basis as possible to sustain this work. The Playground Association is not simply a play thing. It is undertaking the serious and important business of offering our boys and girls proper and wholesome recreation—not only use of leisure time which shall not be bad, but use of leisure time which will result in greater health and vigor and zest for life. This is the important work that we have undertaken—the influencing for good of the minds and bodies of the next generation. Any organization which can in any way show that it is even in a small way accomplishing such a program deserves the utmost encouragement and assistance from its members. Much of our success will depend upon whether or no we select interested, energetic, efficient, executives and officers. It has been a great pleasure to work with the present executive board and officers, many of whom have done everything in their power to further the interests of Playground work.

SUMMARY

So far as I know now, I shall be at liberty to undertake the work here again next summer, if it is the pleasure of the Association that I do so. I have heartly enjoyed my work with the boys and girls. They have, and put into practise, really high ideals of good sportmanship. There is a fine spirit of friendliness among all the children of the playgrounds rich and poor. Those of varying creeds and home conditions mix in the most democratic manner, and one boy is superior to another only because he can play better football, can chin himself on the horizontal bar more times, or because he personally excells in some other of the playground activities.

It is a very great pleasure to work with such an organization as is the Playground Association and with such eager, active, yet respectful children as those who frequent our playgrounds.

R. S. BARTON.

September, 1925.

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