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THE CHURCH AS A SOCIAL CENTER

A Broader Sphere for Religion—New Field for the Rural Church.

By Peter Radford

Lecturer National Farmers' Union

The social duty of the rural church is as much a part of its obligations as its spiritual side. In expressing its social interest, the modern rural church does not hesitate to claim that it is expressing a true religious instinct and the old-time idea that the social instincts should be starved while the spiritual nature was overfed with solid theological food, is fast giving way to a broader interpretation of the functions of true religion. We take our place in the succession of those who have sought to make the world a fit habitation for the children of man when we seek to study and understand the social duty of the rural church. The true christian religion is essentially social—its tenets of faith being love and brotherhood and fellowship. While following after righteousness, the church must challenge and seek to reform that social order in which moral life is expressed. While cherishing ideals of service, the rural church which attains the fullest measure of success is that which enriches as many lives as it can touch, and in no way can the church come in as close contact with its members as through the avenue of social functions.

The country town and the rural community need a social center. The church need offer no apology for its ambition to fill this need in the community, if an understanding of its mission brings this purpose into clear consciousness. The structure of a rural community is exceedingly complex; it contains many social groups, each of which has its own center, but there are many localities which have but one church and although such a church cannot command the interest of all the people, it is relieved from the embarrassment of religiously divided communities.

Social Needs Imperative.

The average country boy and girl have very little opportunity for real enjoyment, and have, as a rule, a vague conception of the meaning of pleasure and recreation. It is to fill this void in the lives of country youth that the rural church has risen to

the necessity of providing entertainment, as well as instruction, to its membership among the young. The children and young people of the church should meet when religion is not even mentioned. It has been found safest for them to meet frequently under the direction and care of the church. To send them into the world with no social training exposes them to grave perils and to try to keep them out of the world with no social privileges is sheer folly. There is a social nature to both old and young, but the social requirements of the young are imperative. The church must provide directly or indirectly some modern equivalent for the husking bee, the quilting bee and the singing schools of the old days. In one way or another the social instincts of our young people must have opportunity for expression, which may take the form of clubs, parties, picnics or other forms of amusement. One thing is certain, and that is that the church cannot take away the dance, the card party and the theatre unless it can offer in its place a satisfying substitute in the form of more pleasing recreation.

Universal Instinct for Play.

In providing for enjoyment the church uses one of the greatest methods by which human society has developed. Association is never secure until it is pleasurable; in play the instinctive aversion of one person for another is overcome and the social mood is fostered. Play is the chief educational agency in rural communities and in the play-day of human childhood social sympathy and social habits are evolved. As individuals come together in social gatherings, their viewpoint is broadened, their ideals are lifted and finally they constitute a cultured and refined society.

It is plain, therefore, that the church which aims at a perfected society must use in a refined and exalted way the essential factors in social evolution and must avail itself of the universal instinct for play. If the church surrounds itself with social functions which appeal to the young among its membership, it will fill a large part of the lamentable gap in rural pleasures and will reap the richest reward by promoting a higher and better type of manhood and womanhood.

FARMER RADFORD ON WOMAN SUFFRAGE

The home is the greatest contribution of women to the world, and the hearthstone is her throne. Our social structure is built around her, and social righteousness is in her charge. Her beautiful life lights the skies of hope and her refinement is the charm of twentieth century civilization. Her graces and her power are the cumulative products of generations of queenly conquest, and her crown of exalted womanhood is jeweled with the wisdom of saintly mothers. She has been a great factor in the glory of our country, and her noble achievements should not be marred or her hallowed influence blighted by the coarser duties of citizenship. American chivalry should never permit her to bear the burdens of defending and maintaining government, but should preserve her unscathed from the allied influences of politics, and protect her from the weighty responsibilities of the sordid affairs of life that will crush her ideals and lower her standards. The motherhood of the farm is our inspiration, she is the guardian of our domestic welfare and a guide to a higher life, but directing the affairs of government is not within woman's sphere, and political gossip would cause her to neglect the home, forget to mend our clothes and burn the biscuits.

Education is a developing of the mind, not a stuffing of the memory. Digest what you read.

Old men have visions, young men have dreams. Successful farmers plow deep while sluggards sleep.

The growing of legumes will retard soil depletion and greatly add to its power to produce.

THE RURAL PRESS

The Local Paper a Most Useful Agency on the Farm—The Press, Pulpit and School a Trinity of Influence That Must Be Utilized in Building Agriculture.

By Peter Radford

Lecturer National Farmers' Union

A broad campaign of publicity on the subject of rural life is needed in this state today to bring the problems of the farmers to the forefront. The city problems are blazoned upon the front pages of the metropolitan dailies and echoed in the country press, but the troubles of the farmers are seldom told, except by those who seek to profit by the story, and the glitter of the package oftentimes obscures the substance. A searching investigation into the needs of the farmers will reveal many inherent defects in our economic system that can be easily remedied when properly understood and illuminated by the power of the press.

The rural press, the pulpit and the school are a trinity of powerful influences that the farmer must utilize to their fullest capacity before he can occupy a commanding position in public affairs. These gigantic agencies are organized in every rural community and only await the patronage and co-operation of the farmers to fully develop their energy and usefulness. They are local forces working for the best interests of their respective communities. Their work is to build and their object is to serve. They prosper only through the development and prosperity of the community.

Every farmer in this state should subscribe for the local paper, as well as farm periodicals and such other publications as he may find profitable, but he should by all means subscribe for his local paper, and no home should be without it. The local paper is part of the community life and the editor understands the farmer's problems. It is the local press that will study the local problems and through its columns deal with subjects of most vital importance to local life of the community.

A Noble Task.

In too many instances the country papers mimic the city press by giving prominence to scandals, accidents and political agitation. The new rural civilization has placed upon the rural press renewed responsibilities, and enlarged possibilities for usefulness. It cannot perform its mission to agriculture by recording the frailties, the mishaps and inordinate ambitions of humanity, or by filling its columns with the echoes of the struggles of busy stragets, or by enchanting stories of city life which lure our children from the farm.

It has a higher and nobler task. Too often the pages of the city dailies bristle with the struggle of ambitious men in their wild lust for power, and many times the flames of personal conflict sear the tender buds of new civilization and illuminate the pathway to destruction. The rural press is the governing power of public sentiment and must hold steadfast to principle and keep the ship of state in the roadstead of progress. The rural press can best serve the interests of the farmers by applying its energies to the solution of problems affecting the local community. It must stem the mighty life current that is moving from the farm to the cities, sweeping before it a thousand boys and girls per day. It has to deal with the fundamental problems of civilization at their fountain head. Its mission is to direct growth, teach efficiency and mold the intellectual life of the country, placing before the public the daily problems of the farmers and giving first attention to the legislative, co-operative, educational and social needs of the agricultural classes within its respective community.

The Power of Advertising.

The influence of advertising is clearly visible in the homes and habits of the farmers, and the advertising columns of the press are making their imprint upon the lives of our people. The farmer possesses the things that are best advertised.

The farmer is entitled to all the advantages and deserves all the luxuries of life. We need more art, science and useful facilities on the farms, and many homes and farms are well balanced in this respect, but the advertiser can render a service by teaching the advantages of modern equipment throughout the columns of the rural press.



Do you have head aches, smarting of the eyes, the inability to read any length of time without the letters blurring, the feeling of sand in the eyes, inflamed eyes and lids, etc? If so you should have your eyes looked after. 80 per cent of all head aches are caused by eye strain. Eye strain is a drain on the whole system.

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