

# Building a Better Community

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will eliminate duplication and increase the focus of the interest and energy of all the people on the most important things to be tackled and completed.

Any municipality is capable of providing what its people want if the people reach agreement about their desires and pursue their ideals with planned energy. The question challenging everybody is: Are you sincerely interested in working to make your neighbourhood the best place on earth in which to live and bring up your children? If the answer is "yes," then your ideal personality will find itself, and work out its hopes, in joint action with other like-minded persons.

The respected citizen in every city or town does more than merely live there. He achieves dignity through his contribution to the community of which he is a part. Alfred Adler put it this way: "People always make mistakes if they do not see that their whole significance must consist in their contribution to the lives of others."

To participate does not call for a heroic grappling with uninteresting situations. Everyone should concern himself with finding a phase of activity which commands his honest interest. Everyone has some quality of mind or hand to make his contribution significant.

## Business and the Community

This principle applies with full force to business companies. Business executives may deplore the conflict of pressure groups and the chaotic official structure in the municipality in comparison with the well organized efficiency of their own offices and factories, but they cannot ignore community affairs. A good business is a good citizen, with citizenship privileges and responsibilities.

Looking at this relationship in another way we realize that firms operating industries want their people to be happy, and therefore look upon a good community as part of their assets. Among the qualities studied before establishing a factory or branch are these: the extent of cultural activity, the adequacy of the school system and the extent and type of the community facilities. One firm selected its new branch site more than a thousand miles from other sites under consideration because of a favourable community situation.

The good community offers opportunities to men and women to demonstrate social qualities which are also good business qualities. Young people who have shown leadership talent in the affairs of their municipalities are preferred choices for advancement in the managerial staffs of their companies.

Big industries are properly reluctant to assume a parent role in community development. They encourage their workers to participate in making the municipality into a good community. The result may not be perfect, but it is more lovable than the spotless efficiency of the benevolent father.

The welfare municipality may be noble in motive but it provides more and more things for men which once they provided for themselves. This involves making decisions for men which once they made for themselves, and undertaking responsibilities which once were theirs and thus diminishing the special qualities that distinguish man from animals and vegetables, the special qualities that make him man.

As was said at the Duke of Edinburgh's Study Conference by a speaker from Africa's Gold Coast: "People are happier and become better citizens, if they are encouraged to think and to put effort into doing things for themselves, for their families and for their community group." There are all sorts of things which it is better for a community to do for itself, even if these things could be done more efficiently by outsiders.

## Asking Questions

A transition implies not merely a goal but a starting point. If we are to move the community, as Archimedes threatened to move the world with his lever, we need some ground to stand on.

There are certain key words to guide the person seeking a way to improve his community; find out the necessary facts; survey the areas where improvement is needed; make an inventory of the resources in people and materials; explore means of rousing interest; inform the public of every step; provide opportunities for everyone to share in the planning and work.

After making a survey of the municipality be sure to validate your findings; is this proposed change really significant to an appreciable number of citizens? It is easy to become caught up in momentary enthusiasm for something trifling. The man who finds his car caught in a bottleneck wants

the cork drawn, but does the end justify a community effort? It is necessary in any society to learn not merely the facts of life but how those facts are viewed by other people. One should relate what is strategically desirable to what is technically possible with the facilities at one's disposal and the support one will be given.

Instead of floundering around in the underbrush, speculating as to where the path is, let us climb a tree and see the whole landscape. Instead of a mere track, there may be a broad highway within sight. The search for utopias and the fountain of eternal youth have been fruitless, but it has been a boon to mankind that there have been people eager to climb the heights looking for them.

If someone were to ask the question: "What sort of community are you seeking to build?" the answer might be something like this: the people in our ideal community are alert to community interests, and are ready to seize opportunities for civic betterment; groups and workers communicate readily, so that people are not working at cross purposes; everyone takes pride in cooperative achievement and joyfully accepts civic responsibility; the organizations have aims that are clearly stated, ardently pursued, and efficiently carried out.

Municipalities become good communities more by the positive actions of good men and women than by the repression or extermination of evil. Negative aims are not enough. We need the invigorating stimulus of supporting some cause dynamically or pursuing some purpose fervently.

## Constant Adjustment

Making the community a wholesome place to live in implies more than occasional outbursts of energy.

All our institutions are undergoing change, rendered necessary by the progressive civilization of mankind. Fixations in social patterns have to be replaced by willingness to explore.

Adaptation is a continuous process in nature, of which we are a part. We seek to hold fast to that which is good, while adding innovating practices of promise. It is important to see that the changes are not made with a view to merely temporary advantages.

The good community cannot be created by a jumble of busy bodies, but it does need the services of a lot of busy people. There is no galaxy of experts competent to build a good community. It is necessary to make proper use of expert knowledge while preserving control by the people.

One function of the voluntary body is to ascertain and make known the needs of the community and the desires of the people. The municipal government will have statistics of population, houses, miles of streets, acres of parks, and so forth, but it cannot read from its file the human experiences and aspirations on which planning a better community should be based.

People like to participate in community life. The need for a swimming pool and the need of a man for participation in community life are separate and distinct needs; they come together when the process for acquiring a swimming pool permits the citizen to take part in planning it. They do not blend when people are forced to accept a solution worked out for them under the sort of government called "consent-democracy" wherein they are limited to saying "yes" or "no" to a prepared plan.

There are many needs in a democratic society which cannot be met by statutory authority. It was said in the Report of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (the Massey Commission): "The importance of voluntary societies in a democracy needs little emphasis in this generation, which knows that their suppression is the first move of a dictatorship; but it is perhaps not fully realized to what extent democracy depends upon their activities."

A progressive civic council will recognize citizen participation as a high priority need. It will pool the experience and the thinking of those citizens and groups of citizens most competent to consider various problems, that crop up, and then incorporate that thinking in its deliberation.

The best planning will flower when the diverse parts of the community — council, school board, welfare agencies, labour and business leaders, religious leaders, service clubs and all other groups — discuss the needs of the municipality with one another, establish priorities, and combine their resources to do the work.

Social life revolves around these organizations and groups and all of them are community forces waiting to be channelled into a tremendous force for community betterment. The small streams will join together

at the touch of a master force to form a river of considerable size and power.

This good result of group participation and the union of groups is not produced by establishing a hierarchy of leaders or cliques but by a fusion of thought among people of earnest goodwill. A writer about democracy said it this way: If I give you a dollar and you give me a dollar, we shall each have one dollar; but if I give you an idea and you give me an idea, we shall each have two ideas.

Perhaps it will be necessary, in order to get things started, to bring the groups together under a moderator who is not a member of any of the groups. The individuality of groups must be respected, while striving for effective cooperative action.

A round table conference will bring to light many ideas for the good of the community. Any neighbourhood in Canada can muster an enormous amount of brains in such a gathering.

When the ideas have been tabulated, there are three things remaining to do. The needs should be grouped by kinds or areas so that the problem can be defined and discussed in an orderly way. When the problems have been specified and understood, the next step is to examine various plans for dealing with them. The third step is to assign groups or persons to take action.

Round-table discussion is significant only when it deepens thought, broadens horizons and opens up vistas of vital service. It is insignificant when it is used by individuals for personal satisfaction, to press some private indulgence, or to prop up a pet project with a cobweb of words.

The appearance of being a pressure group should be avoided. Volunteers should work constructively with the authorities as far as possible. We should not confuse the sort of cooperative group we have been discussing with so-called leagues which mushroom around election times as fronts for special issues.

## On Being Realistic

Many of us are inclined, when we take part in community work, to lay aside the material measuring rod, which seems vulgar in so exalted activity but we must be realistic in our aims and demands. We should not be like the philosophers castigated by Francis Bacon in his book *Advancement of Learning*. They make imaginary laws for imaginary communities, and their discourses are on the stars, which give little light because they are so high.

Some people with good intentions fail to get desirable things done because they think and talk in terms of vague generalizations; they don't come to grips with real situations. Others hunt far and wide for novel or subtle ways of doing things, instead of facing the needs of the situation in a straightforward way. Still others fail to keep their eye on the ball; they have a program on child welfare one month, on education the next, on the menace of the atom bomb the third month. Much is said, and probably there is a lot of good in it, but the effect is superficial and smattering, with little happening of a constructive nature.

## Inform the People

Vital to the success of any movement for improving the community is that the people be kept informed fully and intelligently. Community effort will prosper more by attraction than by promotion, but in order to attract you must inform.

Here is a great and constructive work for the neighbourhood newspaper. Every issue should display reports of things planned and things done toward building a good community. Every editorial page should propose new ideas, comment on progress and heap coals up on the fires of enthusiasm.

The newspaper can be, in words engraved upon the building of the Detroit News: "Reflector of every human interest — friend of every righteous cause — encourager of every generous act — mirror of the public mind — troubler of the public conscience — interpreter of the public intent — nourisher of the community spirit."

## To Sum Up

It is better to participate in the creation of good things than to boast of their possession.

Since the beginning, men and women who grouped themselves together in communities, have been faced with many problems. In seeking solutions, they have been handicapped by ignorance, prejudice, and mental inertia. Despite all this, man has, over a few thousand years, succeeded in improving his environment and has had an enjoyable time doing it.

It is, indeed, a poor rejoinder to say about a suggestion for community betterment "our fathers got along all right without all this fuss". Because of the planning and work that they did we are given today's oppor-

tuities. But we cannot be merely onlookers at the pageant of life.

New conditions have brought new needs, and only the community whose people are guided by intelligent awareness of its needs and a determination to meet them can preserve the goodness it has.

This is a job for people with faith that even the most threatening situation can be handled successfully by co-ordinated effort; that even the best they can imagine for their community can be achieved.

## LEGION NOTES

by Les Clark

The last meeting of the year will be held this Thursday evening and it is hoped that an extra large crowd will be present to show their interest in the branch. We understand that there are several special items of interest that will be coming up and merit your attention.

We understand that the local initiation team had a wonderful time at Burlington last Friday night when they initiated a host of new members. They and their wives were guests at a party afterwards and say the Burlington group showed them a grand time. They took a bus down.

There's "big money" floating around on branch these days, at least on Wednesdays and Saturday nights, with Alex Taylor's bingos playing to packed houses. "The big money" we refer to is the \$100 prize that is up for grabs each night. Frankly, on invitation from Alex, we dropped up to see for ourselves what kind of crowds he was getting and there are far above what anyone expected. He is, and has been for many years, doing a grand job running this money-making activity, and indeed deserves a vote of thanks from all members for his tireless efforts to promote and run bingos. It goes without saying that those on his committee are equally deserving of praise.

Once again, we hear complaints about the dangers being put out. Well, there's an answer to that one. If there are enough members wanting them, why not get out and complain about it at the meeting and vote them back in again? We imagine that would be a great deal more effective than crying about it in the beverage room below. "It would be a wonderful thing if all who complain about various phases of Legion administration would get out and attend the meetings, so much more could be accomplished. But then, as in any organization or indeed anywhere, so few want to carry the load when it comes to work."

It was interesting to see the pictures of some of Canada's Victoria Cross winners at a dinner at Toronto's famed Military Institute. Incidentally, if anyone hasn't seen through the Institute, they are missing a real treat. Technically, we believe it is classed as a museum, to entitle it to a grant and indeed has many rare weapons and books and prints there. To get back to the dinner: At least three of the men among those with the empire's highest award, are no strangers to town. Charles Rutherford, was related to the late Tom Grievy and had visited town frequently, in years gone by. At one time he was sergeant at arms in the legislature, and later a postmaster.

Handley Geary attended a Legion party years ago, before '39, indeed was one of five of the VC winners who attended that night. At present he is sergeant at arms in the Ontario parliament. George Peakes has also visited town, and has a number of friends here and also has a number who served in his regiment during the first world war. A retired major-general, he is minister of national defence.

With the liquor store and bake shop leased for long periods, the real estate purchased by the branch is doing very nicely and certainly should add to the value of our property. It also gives room for possible expansion, and in this direction we think serious planning should be given to future extension. We would rather think the logical and intelligent way to do this would be to lift the roof over the bake shop, thereby giving an additional hall about a third larger than the present auditorium. An opening in the wall at the head of the stairs would allow for a good large doorway, and would eliminate the necessity of a costly second stairway and also be in close proximity to the washrooms, kitchen etc. And now, just before the "cryers of doom" raise their banshee wail that we are throwing money away again, would they stop to think of the added revenue where there would be two halls available for rent, as well as added facilities for our dinners, parties, etc. and we imagine that

## MERRY MENAGERIE

By Walt Disney



"I STILL think this is a birdhouse!"

a pretty penny could be made out of it by Alex Taylor enlarging his bingos to take in the both rooms. However, we hasten to add, that is only our private opinion, and we have no intention of promoting it either in the Legion hall or in this column. Heaven forbid that we should be given credit for acquiring another "white elephant." (What every happened to those chaps who said the branch would lose "their shirt" on that white elephant that was purchased two years ago? ... remember, the liquor store, bake shop, and apartment. Wonder if they have checked recently to find out the value of it as it stands today?)

Kid hockey seems to be off to a grand start with lots of enthusiasm around the arena and seemingly lots of new faces about. Let's hope that this will be the biggest and best year yet for this great project. With scores, standings, etc. appearing weekly it should be of real interest to the whole community.

Remember these dates: TONIGHT — Monthly meeting, Legion auditorium. THURS., DEC. 18th: Annual Kiddies' Christmas Tree. Be sure your kiddies are on the Christmas Tree list. It is posted on the bulletin board. NEW YEAR'S EVE: Annual branch party.

PAGE 8 THE GEORGETOWN HERALD Thursday, November 26th, 1959

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