

COUNTRY YOUTH'S SOCIAL NEEDS

There is a great deal of anxiety these days about the departure of so many of the country youth to permanent life in the city. Such cityward migration is a serious state of affairs, especially in our Island province, where one sees so many once prosperous farm homes going to ruin and the land growing again into a wilderness.

No doubt there are various reasons for this situation; various remedies have been suggested as a cure for the trouble—such as rural electrification, shorter working hours for the farmer and more security in case of loss and crop failure. These improvements, if ever introduced, should certainly be some incentive to young people to stay on the farm; but there is one thing that would be a much greater enticement to the young—the assurance of amusement and recreation. In fact, rural electrification will be of little avail, if this matter of recreation is neglected.

It is true that country people in general were happier and more contented in pioneer days when electricity was not even dreamed of; when work was harder and working hours longer than they are today; and when security in case of loss did not exist. Why were these people happier and more contented than the country people of today? Because they had recreation and entertainment.

It is undeniably true that there is a natural craving for recreation in the human heart. Just consider the number of people who attend the horse races on almost unbearably hot days in the summer; the crowds which fill rinks to capacity in extremely cold weather in the winter; and the distance that many people drive, or even walk, to see a third class movie in an old country hall where accommodation, in many cases, is very poor.

This instinct for social life seems to arise from a desire to be wherever the crowd is. Many people who attend hockey matches, horse races, and shows, go, not because they are interested in the sport, but because they know that there will be many people whom they know at such places.

If it were possible to canvass the young people who have left, or desire to leave, the country in favour of the city, and to ask them why they had left or are dissatisfied, almost invariably they would answer. "I'm disgusted with the place; there is nothing to do but work, eat and sleep." A country school teacher, who had done an excellent job and who had proven himself a very capable teacher, was asked when he resigned at the end of the term why he was giving up the country school and going to the town to teach. He replied. "If it had not been for hockey last winter, I would have resigned long before the term was up." This person, a country boy, lived about six miles from the open-air country rink, to which he had to drive most of the time by horse and sleigh. Was he justified in leaving the country?

As has already been said; the people of pioneer days had their own recreation which very often consisted of nothing but a stumping or chopping frolic, and the inevitable dance that night. When one hears his grandfather or some other old person relate some of the stories of those days, he can readily understand that those people were happy and contented in the country. They provided for their own amusements just as they provided for their other needs, conveniences and luxuries. Since times have changed and people have lost to a great extent their versatility in providing for their own needs, they have to depend, for the most part, on the manufacturing plant to supply them. They have also lost their ability to provide their own entertainment, and have to depend on some public organization to provide such recreation. Wherever there is no such organization, the social life of that community is practically non-existent.

If our Island is going to revert to the state that it once knew, when all farm homes were occupied and the land was under cultivation, some programme for the betterment and the preservation of rural life is imperative. In such a programme ample provision should be made for the social, as well as the material, welfare of the farm youth.

In the inauguration of any scheme for the betterment of social life, the initiative will have to be taken by the youth, with the older people cooperating and assisting in every possible way. The fact that there are many efficiently operated skating rinks in country communities is sufficient to prove that the young people, once organized, can provide recreational centres for themselves.

There are four essentials for the success of such an undertaking: organization, financial support, guidance and encouragement. The first and most important could be taken care of by the young people themselves; once organized and enthusiastic, they could find ways and means of providing for their financial needs. Any further financial assistance might be provided by such organizations as credit unions, church organizations, or even the government; such assistance could be a loan, or security on a loan which might be necessary for the completion of any undertaking. Guidance and encouragement would have to come from the leaders in the various community organizations, or from the government, as the case might be.

The construction of recreational halls, similar to those built in army camps and Air Force stations, would be a practical way of supplying young people with recreational facilities within reasonable distance of their homes. In such halls, it is possible to play basketball, volley ball, badminton and floor hockey; to present movies, boxing matches and plays; and to hold dances; it could also have a basement for bowling alleys and pool tables.

All those who are interested in the welfare of country youth and who are concerned about this cityward trend should realize that part of the cause is to be found in the social condition outlined above. Such persons should encourage and assist the young people in organizing to provide for their own entertainment and recreation. This lack of social life once realized and the solution found would not only tend to a much happier and more contented rural population but also increase the prosperity of our province.

—CLIFFORD MURPHY '50

THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH

"Morgan, drive around by the lake road", Pauline Richards had ordered her chauffeur-gardener as he was driving her from her office in the city to her country home. She was leaning back dreamily in the seat with her eyes closed. When she opened them she realized that they were well past the turning-off point. Immediately her anger flared; but it was too late now to fume.

Other instances of such irregularities came to her mind: on the previous evening Morgan had shown up half-an hour late, stumbling over his apology, "Jane had some fool idea that I'd have to finish the gladiola bulbs". The executive from the soap firm, whom Mrs. Richards had brought home to dinner that evening, had begun to look rather bored when dinner was announced late. It turned out to be a humdrum affair. The little sales talk which Mrs. Richards had planned concerning the efficiency and appeal of the Richards' radio advertizing schemes, failed miserably in the face of the servant's carelessness. She had given up in despair as the conversation lagged.

As she reflected on these things, Mrs. Richards' resentment grew. It was often thus when she entertained any of her unmarried male friends. The servants would be subtly ungracious and would watch her like a jealous husband watching his wife. She suspected that they were hostile towards any probable change in her status.

But the indifference of Morgan was the straw which broke the camel's back. She realized that she must assert her independence before she was overruled by her well-meaning domestics. With a feeling of frustration, she picked up the evening paper which was lying on the seat. Her eye was caught and held by headlines announcing a trio of murders in which a society woman of her acquaintance was involved. She read the account in breathless amazement. The woman, in a fit of insanity, had poisoned her servants. Mrs. Richards thought grimly, "If I could only shake **their complacency**".