

## Methodism and Sociology

The General Conference of 1910 unanimously adopted the following Report of the Committee on Sociological Questions:

### Introductory

The Committee on Sociological Questions begs leave to submit the following statement in the hope that in some degree the mind of Christ has been expressed on these perplexing problems. We note with pleasure the very great use which the Church and the college in our own country and abroad have made of the report on sociological questions adopted by the last General Conference, ten thousand copies having been called for and distributed. We desire to reaffirm in substance that statement of the position occupied by our Church on these questions.

### Universal Principles

We believe the Master intended that in industrial, commercial and political affairs, in laws and social regulations, and in the spirit of all our dealings with each other, the principles of the Golden Rule and the Sermon on the Mount should govern; only through these can we be led out of our semi-barbaric commercialism, and only by means of these can we lay firm and strong the foundations of the Kingdom of God upon earth.

### Community vs. Individuality

We wish again to emphasize the fact that these high and lofty principles, which many regard as impossible of application, are founded upon the necessary and fundamental relations of men. "Lie not one to another, for ye are members one of another," all will admit to be a sound principle, but this co-partnership of men in a community is the basis of many other duties also. If the individual amasses wealth it is the community which gives him the opportunity. His own enterprise, foresight and energy constitute one factor in the production of this wealth, and the enterprise and brotherliness and the predominant honesty of the community as expressed in their laws, which guard the individual in the acquirement and possession of his wealth, constitute the other factor. The community is, therefore, part owner in his wealth, a fact which we recognize in the collection of taxes from unwilling citizens and in the enactment of our graded succession duties. It is one of the problems of Christian citizenship to determine how much relative importance is to be given to these factors in making our social and commercial regulations.

We must not reduce the rewards of individual effort to a point which would mean the destruction of incentive to effort, nor must we

allow the rewards of individual effort to become so great that the community suffers in general well-being thereby. The altruism of the Gospel is developing a class of men who find a personal reward in the good of the community which has nourished them. We have accomplished some forms of socialistic organizations, which have enriched the life of the community and have increased the power and the range of influence of the individual and have greatly enhanced the rewards of personal effort. Therefore, in the controversies between individualism and the many forms of socialism, we may, as a Church, declare in favor of any form of communal organization which, while it enriches the life of the community, will also increase the functions and development of the individual,—the organization of trusts for the benefit of those who enter them, leading the way to the final trust in which the forces of the community will be used for the reinforcement of the power and the enrichment of the life of all the individuals composing it.

### No Privileged Class

Further, in common fairness we must admit that all we claim as our right in the community is, on the average, the right of all. We have accepted the benefit of a good home, a public school education, etc. We should see to it, as far as we can by Christian effort, by economic reform and by legal enactments, that these benefits are not denied to any. Thus we love our neighbor as ourselves.

### Weakness of our Social Order

We acknowledge with regret that the present social order is far from being an ideal expression of Christian brotherhood. We deplore the great evils which have their source in the commercial greed of our times, which often leads men to oppress the unfortunate and to forget their obligations to the higher interests of society.

We deplore the lack of sympathy which too frequently exists between our more wealthy and our less privileged individuals in society, leading to that most dangerous condition of indifference and sometimes contempt on the one hand and envy and distrust on the other. While we admit the right of both labor and capital to guard their interests by combination, we condemn the disregard of the rights of the public and the individual, which has been shown now by combinations of capital and now by combinations of labor.

### Lemieux Act Commended

We rejoice in the work which has already been done in our own country and elsewhere to guard the interests of the public when the struggles concern the necessities of life. Your Committee is inclined to favor a law which would require that, when a dispute has been referred to a Board of Commissioners for adjudication under the Lemieux Act, both parties abide by the decision.

### Inequality of Economic Conditions

While we admit that with the abounding and increasing wealth of our country it is possible for the rich to grow richer without the poor becoming poorer, we deplore those existing economic conditions which tend to accentuate the inequality of opportunity open to the various classes of the community, and to permit, through artificial and unfair conditions, the massing of the larger proportion of the wealth of the country in the hands of the few, with all the attendant economic, social and political dangers.

## The Church Proclaims for Human Brotherhood

In the presence of these and other evils the Church of Christ cannot stand inactive and silent. We regard as our brothers-in-arms all who in organized form or otherwise are struggling for justice for themselves and for others. We truly express our sympathy with all those who suffer from unjust economic conditions by making most sincere efforts to find practical solutions of the insistent problems of our industrial life. We regard man's cause as God's cause always and everywhere, and therefore we have set ourselves as a Church by the organization of a special department to aid in finding some solution of those problems so as to do something to prevent the growth in our new land of those unjust social conditions which form so regrettable a feature in some older communities. There are many signs indicating that we are passing through a transition time in our economic history. Our very standards as to what is right and wrong in economic conditions are changing. Never was there a time when the duty of the Church to proclaim the high demands of human brotherhood was so imperative as now.

## Brotherhood Sentiment Permeating Civilization

We rejoice in the hopeful and reassuring features of the situation, such as the kindlier spirit of our times, the growth of humanitarianism sentiment, the development of a more sensitive conscience on social questions both inside and outside the organized Church, and the growing sense among the wealthy classes that they owe something to the great partner in all business enterprises—the public, whose multiplied activity, predominant honesty, and law-upholding habit make the winning and holding of wealth possible. A millionaire is one who has reaped a harvest from a million lives. The man of culture and education is one for whom have been pressed out the richest vintages of the world. It is well, therefore, that in proportion as men reap, by inheritance or otherwise, these rich rewards of civilization, they should feel their natural obligation to the less fortunate, to whom indeed, in the nature of things, they are debtors. Only when the sentiment of Christian brotherhood permeates our whole civilization and reduces itself to law and practice, can we expect that substantial justice will be done to all classes of the community. "Love is the fulfilment of the law."

## Evidences of Improvement in Social Order

We rejoice in the way the sense of this obligation is beginning to show itself, in many gifts, great and small, to institutions whose work enriches the whole community. A public hospital is every man's refuge. Our public school system is an attempt to equalize opportunity for all. A university is a ladder with its foot at the door of the public school, up which even the poor man's son may climb to the highest positions for which his powers fit him. "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." We, therefore, commend those who, for the good of all, invest their wealth in the higher things of civilization, as performing acts of social justice, but such gifts, however magnificent, do not make atonement or reparation for wrongs perpetrated in the iniquitous acquisition of wealth. The blood of the oppressed toiler will continue to cry to Heaven for justice, notwithstanding the high plaudits with which these gifts are greeted. When the living wage is not made the first factor in determining the price of manufactured articles, and in the sweat shop the scale of wages is so low that our maidens have set before them the awful choice between hunger and dishonor, and in the factory young children are stunted in mind and body by excessive labor, it is time for the Church

to aid in driving these things from the holy places of our civilization, and to urge its members, who in corporate bodies and otherwise are served by labor, to keep themselves clear of guilt in these economic relations.

### Conservators of Wealth

As no scheme of social reorganization, however well calculated to remedy the evil of our times, can prove effective unless the motives of Christ are made the motives of men, as selfishness is the great source of economic wrong, as all commercial values depend upon the natural trust begotten of honesty and fair dealing, and as immorality tends to undermine the whole commercial fabric, we rejoice in the growth of those influences which work to bring men under the sway of Christ's ideals of rectitude and brotherhood. For patriotic and economic reasons we regard with great satisfaction the growing prospects of union among the evangelistic forces of our land, since the resulting efficiency through more wisely distributed effort must add force to the influences which conserve the wealth and enrich the life of our population. The commercial rogue is the universal enemy; the careless and unfaithful workman as well as the idle capitalist is a tax upon all; honest, God-fearing men add to the value of all kinds of property. They are the conservators of wealth, the salt of the earth, and the hope of the world.

### The Sacrifice of Men and Women

We occupy common ground with other social reformers in our opposition to all forms of economic waste. The most costly and invaluable product of any country is its young manhood and womanhood. Anything which tends to injure the developing citizen in physical, intellectual and moral development is a source of greatest loss to all.

### War and Intemperance

Nowhere should manhood be sacrificed to demands of industry. We regard it, therefore, to be the duty of the Church and the wisdom of the working man to oppose those colossal forms of national impoverishment—war and intemperance. On an immense scale they destroy the finest assets of civilization, and make for the impoverishment of the world. War, though making a constant drain on the resources of the people, does its most fatal work only now and then, but intemperance plays havoc unceasingly with the finest things in a nation's life.

### The Unearned Increment in Land Values

Your Committee has considered the memorials on the Land question submitted to it. Believing that "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" and that under the providence of God the State is the trustee whose duty it is to enact the conditions under which these Divine gifts should be used for the benefit of all, we, therefore, condemn the handing over of large tracts of land to individuals and corporations without attaching conditions which would prevent their being held for speculative purposes only. Whenever vested rights are not interfered with, we recommend legislation which will prevent any individual or corporation from profiting hereafter from the unearned increment in the value of land. We note with pleasure the experiments which are now being made in Great Britain, the city of Vancouver, and other western towns, in organizing their finance on the basis of a tax on land values. We shall have opportunity to determine, experimentally, how far this method may prove to be a panacea for economic ills.

## The Sanctity of the Ballot

We deprecate the violation of the sanctity of the ballot as a grievous wrong to all classes. The poor man who sells his vote gives undue influence to the power of money in the State and thus endangers the interest of his own class. The agents of a political party who tempt the poor man to barter the great right of free citizenship not only degrade him, but practically disenfranchise the uncorrupt voter by robbing him of his due influence in the government of the country. The political parties which win victories by means of the corrupt use of money or by any form of patronage are usurpers in that they grasp a supremacy in the State which does not belong to them. The undue weight of money and patronage in politics hampers every great reform, and the low moral standard it presupposes makes some of the finest things our nation might otherwise achieve in government for the people impossible.

## The Health of the People

We rejoice in all efforts to reduce the waste of life in unhealthy and dangerous occupations and to prevent the building of insanitary homes for the poor. We commend to our local Churches the work of spreading a knowledge of preventive medicine among our people, that the woeful waste of life through such preventible diseases as tuberculosis, typhoid and children's summer diseases may be prevented.

## Non-admittance to the Unworthy Immigrant

We deprecate the opening of the gates of our country to the criminal, the diseased and those burdened with unfortunate hereditary taint. In order that Canada may serve the world well in days to come, it is necessary to guard well the blood of our people, especially as any strain once introduced becomes a permanent factor in our racial future.

## The Sabbath Rest Secured

We rejoice at the success of the effort made to obtain a law to secure for all our population a weekly release from the dull grind of toil and opportunity to enjoy a higher and freer life. In international competition the influence of this day of rest in conserving the physical and moral energy of our people must result in distinct advantage to the nation. We commend the suggestion of an eight-hour day of labor as a most desirable goal to be reached as soon as economic conditions will permit it. Where the ten-hour day is in force we regard the mid-week half holiday as a valuable adjunct to the Sabbath, which we can well afford on account of the greatly increased speed and economy in production. We commend to the sympathetic interest of the Church the efforts being made by organized labor to right what they regard as economic wrongs.

## Sociology and Civics in Colleges

Your Committee regard it as most encouraging that our students in divinity, feeling that they need more effective training and instruction in present day problems, are asking that greater importance be attached in their curricula to the subjects of Sociology and Civics, and that some course be provided in applied Christianity. The need for social evangelism is so peremptory that every possible help to understand present day problems should be given, not only in our colleges but also to all the young people of our Church.

## Social Evangelism Literature

It is highly satisfactory that the Department of Temperance and Moral Reform has given and is giving increasing attention to literature on these civic questions and that so many of our students and young people are engaging in this work of social evangelism and in every form of applied Christianity which is open to their effort.

## Our Own Rather than Foreign Tongues

Your Committee deem it desirable for the unification of our people that, in the schools of this Dominion, children of every race should be instructed in one or both of the official languages of this country rather than in foreign tongues.

## Enfranchisement of Foreigners

This Committee recommends that persons coming into Canada from foreign lands shall not be naturalized until they have been resident in the country for a period of five years, in order that more time may be given for the acquirement of a knowledge of the institutions and ideals of our people. It is desirable in their opinion that enfranchisement should not take place without some test being applied as to the education and intelligence of the persons seeking that power.

## The Uplift of the Criminal

Your Committee is pleased to note the improvements in some of our provinces as to the methods of dealing with criminals, and would recommend that these methods be encouraged and extended; and especially that the indeterminate sentence be applied in these cases so that our punitive methods may all, as far as possible, become remedial and look to the earliest reclamation of the criminal and to his transformation into a useful and respected citizen.

## Giving Practical Effect to the Report

We recommend that all the matters in this report be handed to the Department of Temperance, Prohibition and Moral Reform, that they may give as much practical effect as possible to the recommendations and principles embodied therein.

W. W. ANDREWS, *Chairman.*

A. E. SMITH, *Secretary.*

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