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The New Civic Life.

BY MR. CLINTON R. WOODRUFF, VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE
AMERICAN CIVIC LEAGUE.

ADDRESSING the Canadian Club on the occasion of a union meeting with the Toronto Guild of Civic Art, Mr. Clinton Rogers Woodruff, of Philadelphia, Vice-President of the American Civic League, spoke on the subject of "The New Civic Life." He said:

*Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Canadian Club and Guild of Civic Art,—*Punctuality is, I believe, one of the leading excellent characteristics of your meetings together. Accordingly I have set the alarm in my watch here before me, so that when my time is up I will know it and you will know it, too. It's just possible it may not go off at all. It's just like some speakers. You can never tell for certain. But I have done my part. I have wound it up and placed it here in a conspicuous place right before me.

I can assure you that I feel greatly honored in being asked to address you to-day upon the, to my mind, altogether important subject of the new civic life. When, some time ago, I travelled to the Pacific coast I conducted an interesting experiment within myself. Throughout the whole journey, at every opportunity, I was testing to see if I were in any way getting away from civilization. Let me tell you that never once during the whole journey from my summer home on Lake Champlain until I reached San Francisco did I seem to get away for a moment from the great American influence. My experience in Canada has been exactly similar. I have not been able to get far enough away at any time to lose the sense of the great and vital force which is developing this continent into a higher and better life. We are all men with common aims, men who set before us the same objects in civic life, you in Canada and I in the United States. You are the more progressive in some lines of development and we in others. We can all benefit by our common experiences in the development of the great American idea of the new civic life. And wherever I use the word "American" I want to be understood as using it in its continental and most comprehensive sense, including all the Anglo-Saxon peoples on the continent.

In the past ten or twelve years there has grown up a great group of organizations with aims and objects similar to those of your own Guild of Civic Art, to create a sound public sentiment and to devise a comprehensive plan for improving and beautifying civic conditions, as aptly and concisely set forth in the slip of paper which has been left at our plates. Each of these organizations is composed of a group of devoted, far-seeing, public-spirited men and women, with a new and patriotic conception of the rights, the privileges and the duties of citizenship.

The Chairman has alluded to what he aptly termed "the hop, step and jump policy" of your own City Council in making improvements. Such a policy is carried on to too great an extent everywhere. And it is inevitable that such should have been the case. We are still a young people, scarcely more than emerged from our pioneer struggles. But we have at length reached the stage where we have surplus energy, surplus time and surplus means to undertake these great new projects. We are released to a large extent from that long hand-to-hand fight with Nature, from our battles with the problems of primitive transportation, and should be prepared for the finer and larger realization of the opportunity of a community for a more uplifting and npbuilding influence. So we find that wherever the citizens have come to that realization there the city as a civic institution is doing much more for the community.

May I give you some comparisons which I looked up and which interested me much in the budgets of my own city? Comparisons they are of a century apart, the years 1800 and 1900. In 1800 the per capita expenditure was 69 cents for education, fine arts, boulevards, schools, school grounds and school gardens. In 1900 the per capita expenditure was \$29. This did not merely provide for the education in the three R's. It expanded to embrace the higher types and phases of citizenship, the development in the widest and wisest sense of the men and women of the future, to inspire within them high, noble and uplifting thoughts.

The little red schoolhouse of the past is now the centre of the highest influences. They are the creators of artistic homes. In the New England States in architecture and hygienic and sanitary perfection the schools are now among the best buildings to be found. It all makes instruction more delightful and creates a true spirit of communal life. Such schools are real uplifting forces.

You in Toronto have no slums, I hope. If you would escape them, make the schoolhouse your real missionaries. There are schools in New England cities that are open officially, like yours, from nine in the morning till four in the afternoon for instruction. But they are not closed during the days of vacation. They are carrying on a perpetual work for the State. In the mornings the mothers bring their work and sew, while in the evening hours of recreation the men use them for club purposes. Thus the schools are made of valued civic service to the whole people. They break up improper and unwholesome influences, and in vacation periods, by furnishing a pleasant home-like atmosphere they win the children from the streets. Of course this doesn't apply to the children of well-to-do homes, who hie them to the country for their summer holidays. It is a simple matter for them. But there are children whose means never enable them to get outside of the city, yes, some, in fact, who never get beyond their own neighborhood. They are seldom, if ever, permitted to get into touch with Nature. It is to them that goes out one mission in the manifestation of the new civic life. It is to counteract the dire influences of the street. So we find a desire on the part of our most advanced educators to make the schools attractive, artistic and home-like.

During the last fifty years much has been done towards the development of our park systems. When the project of the creation of the Central Park in New York was first undertaken, it was regarded as a rare instance of civic extravagance. Now we have reached that period when parks in our congested communities are regarded as absolutely essential. We are even going a step further. We are bringing the park home to the people, bringing it to their very doors. We are bringing people and parks together, all part and parcel of one harmonious whole.

What is this new civic life? In a word, it is devising, through a comprehensive planning, a way of making two and two something more than four. At least, it means more. Let me illustrate by one concrete instance. Ten years ago Cleveland needed a new federal building, and its senators were instrumental in getting the Legislature to make an appropriation for the purpose. At the same time the municipal council required a new building for their railway terminal. Both were secured and all was very well. Then some wise citizen was heard. "Why not," he suggested, "bring the new buildings all together in a civic centre or esplanade?" The suggestion

caught attention and was acted upon. As a result there is now the famous Cleveland group plan, with the regeneration and the rebuilding of the whole of Cleveland. What was the result? The new buildings cost between fourteen and sixteen millions of dollars. When they were all brought together on an intelligent plan they were valued at over thirty millions. It was indeed a way of making two and two more than four.

You in Toronto are on the threshold of your greatness. The odds are tremendously to your advantage. Take right hold now with intelligent planning. Look at New York city. Its plans for civic improvement involve an expenditure of \$80,000,000 now. Yet how little we realize the vast saving possibilities of some intelligent planning. Your plan should represent a development of one hundred years. A few years ago I went to Washington and there heard of the plans for the capital's extension and beautifying which are being made by the late Senator McMillan in 1893 and 1894. When I heard of the estimated figures. I exclaimed, "My gracious, what a large sum!" expecting to see the contracts already let and the whole work about to proceed. I was deeply interested, however, when I saw that the plans constituted a map or chart providing for the growth and development of Washington for the next one hundred years. It was a most complete and cosmopolitan plan, and all civic improvements must be done in accord with it. The city was doing precisely what an intelligent business man would do in relation to his business. The plans of the architect and the estimated cost would be so gauged so that he could add and add from time to time as the business grew and opportunity developed. So it should be with city planning. Don't lay your plans for next year, or even for the next decade, but make them century plans working out for the next hundred years.

There are 42 American cities which have under consideration to-day some comprehensive civic plan. This is the manifestation of the new civic life, planning not alone for the present, but also for the future. I am glad the Canadian Club and the Guild of Civic Art in Toronto are engaged in this splendid work of creating a public sentiment in this country, that they are educational factors working together that they may build mightily for the preservation of our common heritage. In this work it must be recognized that the rights of the community are paramount to those of any individual. In New York there was appointed some years ago an Art Commission which was required to pass upon all gifts of art and all build-

ings erected, whose value was a million dollars or more. Governor Hughes has recently attached his signature to an enactment whereby the Art Commission has absolute power to dictate and determine the plans of all buildings on the principle that the rights of the whole community were entitled to first consideration. To my mind that plan is the right one. Secure a group of experts with power to determine these things. In New York it is no longer possible for a Tammany heeler to build a wharf or a dock or a schoolhouse of inferior character through preference or party pull. It must pass muster at the hands of a commission of experts.

One thing more. We must clear the atmosphere of smoke. (Laughter at the expense of the members who were smoking.) Your ready adaptation of the words reminds me of an experience I recently had at Brown University. I was making a short address and as the desk had been removed I had no furniture to rest upon. I started to explain, "I am so used to leaning on the bar—" I had no opportunity to finish "of the court" before they broke out as you did just now, and there were many shocked ladies in the gallery.

But I must not overlook this phase of the new civic life. The atmosphere must be cleared of the smoke that hangs like a pall over the city and is a hygienic menace to the community. What is needed is a vigorous anti-smoke society and a Health Department that will insist upon action being taken. In this matter, too, the interests of the community should be considered before those of the individual.

I see my time is up, but I want to allude to just one thing more along a similar line. What about unpicturesque advertising? As I crossed the Canadian border I began to cast my eyes about to see if you, too, tolerated these hideous billboards. Very soon I began to feel very much at home. American people are beginning to appreciate the fact that we can have the city beautiful. What, then, about the country? Shall God's beautiful landscape be insulted by these impudent signs? The people are resenting to a greater and greater degree the placing of advertisements on buildings. We have followed the erecting of a beautiful building with deep interest when suddenly all our artistic sentiments are dissipated by the painting of an obtrusive advertisement. It is like the vending of soap at a symphony concert. But I'm not going to dwell upon this further than to call upon all American people of character, energy and capacity to establish a regulation of this abuse with a view to its eventual elimination. The Canadian

Club can do much good in educating public opinion toward this end.

The most important phase of this new civic life is the fact that it is a democratic movement. It is not imposed upon us from above; it comes from the people themselves. Always remember, too, that every privilege carries with it duties and obligations. But, though the new civic life is a democratic movement, you and I have it in our power to deal it a deadly staggering blow. You remember in the Scriptures we are told how, when the blessed Lord was in the throes of the last crisis, Peter stood by the fire and warmed himself. When public spirited men are organizing and there is great work to be accomplished, you and I too often are at home by the fire-side, warming ourselves. Every movement gains strength and impetus from each active unit within and behind it. We must remember we are part of it and contribute our share.

Those of you who have read "The Autocrat at the Breakfast Table" will remember that a discussion arose as to whether there was a man in the moon. It was arranged that on a particular day every man and woman would unite and shout as loud as possible, and if there were a man in the moon he would show that he heard it. So the day was set, and the hour was set and the minute was set. But there was a man over here who said to himself, "I won't be missed among so many. I'll listen." And another man over yonder said to himself, "They will never miss me. I'll listen." and a third said, "I don't think I'll shout. I'll listen." And so it went on, each man, woman and child thinking they'd not be missed. And the day and the hour and the minute came, and Dr. Holmes tells us that a profound silence reigned.

That's the history of many a civic movement. Let there be no such individual apathy in Toronto. Let each citizen determine to do his part faithfully and well in placing Toronto in the forefront of the American cities of the new civilization. Then will the Canadian Club and the Guild of Civic Art see the fulfilment of their noblest aims and aspirations.