

ROTARY CLUB AT SUPPER DISCUSSED THE IMMIGRANT

Problem in Sault Was Theme —Committee Will In- vestigate

After the usual supper last evening at the Y.M.C.A. the Rotary Club spent a short time in one of the most profitable discussions on the question of "How to deal with the Foreigner," which has ever been held by any gathering in this city.

The subject was opened by Mr. J. A. McPhail, who as a former mayor and city official, as well as in his legal practice has had much to do with the foreigner.

Mr. McPhail thought it would be presumption on his part to set forth any definite scheme for dealing with this particular resident of the city.

"He is here, whether we are satisfied with him or not," Mr. McPhail remarked, and he was not prepared to endorse all that had been said by Mr. J. J. Kelso, of Toronto, a couple of weeks ago, for he was of the opinion that Mr. Kelso spoke without having the proper information at his disposal when he dealt with the manner in which this city treats its foreigners. He is satisfied that Sault Ste. Marie has made an honest effort to deal with these people in a proper manner.

"It is true there has been considerable segregation of the foreigners in this city," he said, "but it has not been an enforced segregation, but rather one of their own choice in an endeavor to keep in touch with their own people and customs, but the city has put forth every effort to better conditions for them.

Mr. McPhail said, he had, together with Messrs G. W. Goodwin, Jas. Lyons and W. F. V. Atkinson made a tour of what is generally known as "Little Italy," Bay View, and the Steel Plant subdivision in order to get an idea of how these people are living. They did not find things the way that Mr. Kelso described them. Mr. Kelso said the best schools and the best civic improvements were to be found in the east end of the city, but Mr. McPhail said his party found that the city had made vast improvements in the West end, and that they had good up-to-date schools with all the latest improvements, and Mr. McPhail found reason to compliment the Public School Board on the work they are doing for the foreigner, for not only have they good day schools, but they have also inaugurated night schools for them, which the foreigners are taking advantage of. Great praise was given Miss McCrea of McFadden school, who, the Rotarians said, was doing more good than any twenty persons in the Sault among the foreign residents, by her devoted attention to them and throwing her whole life into the work of educating them.

Mr. McPhail thought the older person was much more difficult to deal with than the children.

The great problem of dealing with the foreigner is to educate them," he went on. "Until they are educated they they cannot become good citizens. The greatest trouble maker we have to deal with is the individual who has a spattering of the English language. He preys on the ignorant one, and becomes an agitator, and the result is that those who do not speak the English language become the victims of the agitators and soon find themselves in the police court. Some people say the police court is oppressive to the foreigner, and that the city runs its public affairs on the police court fines. This is not true, in fact the police court is very lenient with the foreigner. But several fines are necessary to make them understand they must obey the law. We might have had a great deal more trouble with this class of people since the war broke out, but for the firm way they have been dealt with."

President, H. J. Hollinrake called for round the table two minute speeches, and City Solicitor G. W. Goodwin was first called on. He endorsed Mr. McPhail's remarks regarding the manner in which the city has dealt with the foreigner.

"The council have not taken nationality into account when undertaking the work of improvements, they have dealt very generously with the foreigners," he said. He thought there might be some improvement in the method of handling them. He urged that every foreigner should learn to read and write the English language and put on a sort of probation before being given the franchise.

"There is something wrong" he said, "if a man is in this country ten or fifteen years, and does not show a desire to become a citizen."

There are about four thousand foreigners in the city, he said, and he was satisfied the magistrates and judges had been very fair with them. The foreigners themselves think so,

he stated.

"At least seven eighths of the criminal records of the city come from the foreign elements," he went on, "because they come from a country where they are used to being treated as serfs." Education is the only, though slow, process, by which the foreigner could be made into a good citizen in his opinion."

Mr. Goodwin stated that if the Rotary Club could work out some practical scheme to help them, on behalf of the Crown, he would say that their scheme would be acted upon.

Mr. L. L. Jacobs thought that one great difficulty in dealing with the foreigners arises from their low standard of living. It is a great handicap, Mr. Jacobs said, in getting them to work. He thought Canada would be able to handle them better if there was some way of getting them to learn the English language, so that they could understand what was wanted of them and they would know that others know they understand, as at the present time a great many of them pretend ignorance.

Mr. R. H. Carney suggested that a more friendly interest in them might tend to make them better citizens and keep them away from the police court.

Mr. C. M. Green was satisfied that education was the only solution to the problem, as he had often found the parents were bad, but where the children had been taken hold of and given proper education they came along fine.

Mr. Leo Crume said he knew where they went when they were not in charge of the police. He said that he had been endeavoring to show these people how they should live by educational films in his moving picture theatre. Referring to the educational films that were run for the public schools some time ago, Mr. Crume said that from the standpoint of order, the best children were those from Miss McCrea's school.

Magistrate Mackay said there was two things to do with the foreigners. One was to censor them well when they came to this country, and to compel them to learn the English language, and the second, to require them to declare their intention of becoming citizens. He had no use for promiscuous immigration. Those who would not learn to read and write English and become citizens should be shipped back home after the war.

Major Wilson paid a compliment to Mr. Crume's work in the theatre. He felt the great difficulty was to teach the foreigner what honesty is, and he felt that the chief of police must have done wonders in dealing with these men to get off with as little trouble as he has done.

Mr. W. J. Fuller said: "I do not know that we want to accept them as citizens, as doing so would mean they would degenerate our race." He thought the matter of putting them on probation even was one that should be seriously considered.

Mr. Thos. Chitty said he had found that "the foreigner was a pretty decent fellow when you understand him." "But his language, habits, customs and ideals" he said, "are not the same as ours. We should help him to learn our language, and endeavor to help him live in clean, sanitary quarters."

"Negative morality never gets one very high up," Mr. James Basingthwaite remarked. "That is the only way in which the police court can deal with them, in a sort negative way with the usual 'Thou shalt not.' It is a positive system that is required, and this cannot be provided officially. Not only have we got to be square with the foreigner in business, but we have got to make him feel that we are glad he is here and that we are interested in him."

He thought it was a farce to give the franchise to foreign women who could neither read or write English.

Mr. Walter Mayer, secretary of the Y.M.C.A., thought it was a question that it was impossible to deal with in two minutes.

"How much has been spent by the Public School Board in the past three years to educate the foreigner?" he asked, and then went on to relate his experience in dealing with the foreigners at Sunday night meetings, and the marked change in the attitude of the foreigners toward Canadian citizens after a period of meetings held with them in their theatre. Development in friendship and conversation and business, he thought, would be a great step ahead.

Mr. T. E. Simpson suddenly discovered why he had not been able to get a majority in the West end, as some other members present inferred that the foreigner had been used for election purposes, but by being given liquor. Mr. Simpson said he had listened to the same question being discussed in the House of Commons at Ottawa all day and well into the night when the members had concluded they were no farther ahead than when they started.

"One thing we have got to remember in dealing with the foreign element", Mr. Simpson said, "is that they are here on our invitation. Canada has spent thousands of dollars in the past in order to induce these men to come to help out the labor problem of the country. But there is another phase of the situation. These men are getting larger wages than they ever got in their lives before and very few of them are contributing anything toward the prosecution of the war. They should be made to contribute their fair share of the cost of the war."

"This, Mr. Simpson thought, might be done through taxation, possibly by a heavier poll tax."

Mr. Simpson thought that all who were not assessed should pay a heavy poll tax, and that none of them should receive the franchise unless they had learned to read and write English. He also thought that the work being carried on by Miss McCrea and through the industrial classes of the Y. M. C. A. was a very effective way of dealing with the foreigner.

Mr. W. J. McCormack, of the Algoma Central Steamship Lines, made some interesting suggestions.

"There are all classes of foreigners," he stated, "and Canadians are not in a position to deal with the case. These

men come to roll up a pile in the summer time and go back again in the fall to live in a nice warm climate for the winter and then they are back in the spring, and any country that allows that kind of thing doesn't know its business."

"Some of these men carry knives and use them," he said, "and I know something about that for I have had charge of some of our boarding houses and I have found that there are always some of these fellows who will not live with the rest of them just on that account."

Mr. McCormack cited an instance where he had four or five men that refused to live in a boarding house on that account and he asked them: "are you going back to Italy for the winter?" and they replied, "yes". "Then you pick out a crowd of your own men and get them to come out here next year." Mr. McCormack said to them, "and they did it, and the result was that his company was able to pick its men and eliminate a great deal of the trouble."

"That is the only way in which to get the right kind of men, is to pick them out. The great majority of them only obey the law because they have to," he said, "we shouldn't allow such material in the country, for you can't trust ninety per cent of them"

He thought that the police had handled them in the right way.

Mr. James Lyons was one of the party who had gone over the ground to size up the situation as regards the comfort in the foreign section. He thought the result of their training was to be found in the homes of these people, and many of them he said

had fine gardens and were clean, and in fact could set an example to a good many others. He thought that getting in personal touch with the the foreigner and showing them how they should live is the only way they can be dealt with. In the past the dollar has been the only thing in sight in dealing with them, especially when it came to election time.

President Hollinrake appointed Messrs. G. G. Farwell, L. Chapman and C. M. Green a committee to take the question up further and make recommendations for the club.

Those present were: Messrs H J. Hollinrake, J. A. McPhail, Major P. B. Wilson, Alex McIntyre, J. T. Mackay, L. Chapman, R. L. Crume, M. Blaney, W. . Gilchriese, R. H. Carney, L. L. Jacobs, G. W. Goodwin, James Lyons, R. G. Campbell, W. J. McCormack, T. E. Simpson, W. C. Mayor, Jas Bassingthwaighte, T. Chitty, W. J. Fuller, N. H. Patterson, G. G. Farwell, N. Holgate.

During the evening Professor Holgate favored the gathering with a piano selection and Major Wilson contributed a vocal solo.