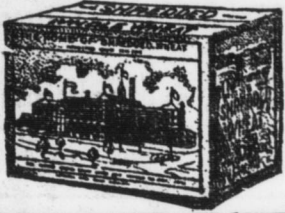


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Say Church is Going Backward on the Big Social Questions

National Leaders in Social Service Hold Two Lively Conferences and Contemplate a New Organization

By THE RELIGIOUS RAMBLER

Although not a line has as yet been printed about them, there have recently been held in New York two conferences of national leaders in social service, which were more radical and portentous than anything that has definitely been on the religious horizon in recent years. In a word, there is a strong group of representatives of many denominations, who are determined that the social program of the Church, which was loudly heralded half a dozen years ago, shall be put through in spite of present ecclesiastical tendencies. It is openly charged that religious bodies have become reactionary in part from fear of loss of revenue. The Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America was freely criticized for its alleged failure to live up to its own social program.

Who I am not at liberty to name the participants of these two conferences. I can testify that they were not irresponsible zealots, but men of strength and proved leadership; many of them holding high positions in denominational and other religious organizations. When their purposes mature in action, the names will appear.

The first conference, which met at the end of December, was attended by twenty-five men. At that time a committee of five well-known men was appointed to report back to another meeting held a few days ago, which was attended by thirty men. The debate in both gatherings was vigorous and candid, and there was by no means unanimous agreement upon the points up for consideration. Now another conference is to be held shortly to proceed with the organization of a new national body pledged to put through the social service platform adopted seven years ago by the Federal Council of Churches.

That platform declared, "the churches must stand for equal rights and complete justice for all men in all stations in life; for the right of all men to the opportunity of self-maintenance; for the right of workers to some protection against the hardships often resulting from the swift crises of industrial changes; for the release of the workers from dangerous machinery, occupational disease, injuries and mortality; for the abolition of child labor; for the suppression of the sweating system; for the release from employment one day in seven; for a living wage as a minimum in every industry; for the highest wage that each industry can afford; for the most equitable division of the products of industry that can be ultimately devised; for the abatement of poverty."

Say the Church Falls Down

The preliminary proposal for a campaign of social service, which accompanied the invitation to the conference, quoted Bishop Williams of the Protestant Episcopal Church as saying:

"Religion to-day is vitally concerned

with the fundamental question of social righteousness, industrial equity, political and commercial honesty and honor and economic justice. Great movements, essentially religious, for the establishment of these ends are sweeping over the land. But the church, as an ecclesiastical body, is out of touch with these movements. She speaks timidly upon such matters, if at all."

The document went on to say: "There can be no question as to whether the Gospel of Jesus is big enough to meet the present-day social and religious situation. The real question is, is the Church big enough to apply it?"

"Already in this country there are fully forty million persons who are at least nominally connected with the Protestant Church. These have it within their power to accomplish any social reform which they really desire to make operative. The 200,000 ministers in the Church could alone accomplish this result."

"It is a serious question, however, whether present-day ecclesiastical organizations reflect the social consciousness of the membership of the Church. These ecclesiastical bodies, are, for the most part, dependent upon large sums of money for their maintenance and support. This support, it is generally believed, comes mainly from those who are opposed to an aggressive program which may include economic justice."

"* * * It must be apparent from all this that the official Boards of the Church cannot, at present at any rate, take the place of leadership in social service."

This long statement also laid stress on the importance of the utter demerit of any movement with clergy and laity on absolute equality.

Some Pungent Questions

The "Suggested Program for Discussion," which was in the hands of the participants of the first conference, contained eighteen questions, of which the following are samples:

"Do present-day ecclesiastical organizations reflect the social convictions of the membership of the church?"

"Can the official boards of the church take the place of leadership in social service?"

"To what extent has the social service program adopted by the Federal Council of Churches seven years ago been made practically effective?"

"What are the present-day tendencies in denominational groups with reference to social service?"

"What social results do revivals of the 'Billy' Sunday type produce?"

"Should the Church engage in great 'crusades' for social and economic justice?"

"Have we a right to expect that the church be officially consulted with reference to social service legislation which is fundamentally moral or ethical in character, upon the assumption that the church is the authority upon ethical and moral questions?"

"To what extent may the church become sponsor for work which has to do with the economic and social welfare of the State?"

A New Body Proposed

While the report of the committee of five was not adopted at the second conference, but goes over to the one yet to be held, its proposals were thoroughly discussed. The most radical of these was the creation of an entire new national body, which, naturally, would either be a rival to, or supersede the Federal Council of Churches. The committee recommended:

"The organization of a National Committee on Church and social problems. This committee was to consist of approximately two hundred persons selected from the various geographical sections of the country, and was to establish an office, and maintain an executive force, its function being to provide a service of social intelligence for the inquiring public, organize corps of social engineers and advocates, call and conduct an annual national conference, establish a periodical organ of discussion devoted to reconstruction and progress among the American people, and act as an independent financial, and become responsible for the organization of an experimental team for social education and evangelism, to undertake a campaign in the cities of the United States."

While no formal deliverances were adopted by the two conferences, there was a substantial agreement upon the following points:

"That the average ecclesiastical organization does not reflect the social consciousness of the membership of the church because of natural conservatism, the feeling that the church has nothing to do with the solution of social problems, or because it was feared that certain financial resources would be thereby lost."

"That there is an increasing number of men and women in the church who are getting out of patience with the church because of its apparent inability or unwillingness to attack some important social and religious problems."

"That there is need for an independent group composed of Christian men to take the lead in discussing pressing social and religious questions, and when necessary and feasible, to initiate movements which shall not only truly represent the progressive wing within the church, but which will hold such persons within the ranks of the church, rather than have them become identified with outside movements to the exclusion of the church."

"That there are many sincere Christian men and women outside of the church to-day, not only among working people, but among employers of labor and social workers who might be won for the church, were the church to offer them a broader basis of thinking and a larger program of work."

"That while the Federal Council of Churches began its work in the social field with a strong set of resolutions, and with excellent purposes, the force of its program was soon diminished largely because the secretary of its Social Service Commission became, thus practically discontinuing his activity in the social field, and because the Federal Council now lacks sufficient funds to carry out an aggressive social service program."

All of the foregoing is news of serious import, not only to the churches but to every observer of the times. All the men of these two conferences were churchmen; many are denominational officials. Their indictment of ecclesiasticalism is one of the most significant symptoms of the organized church life of to-day.

THE RELIGIOUS RAMBLER.

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Including Hats that sold from \$5.00 to \$10.00 apiece.

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OSTRICH PLUMES — worth \$2.00, for **79c**

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These Plumets are all perfect. French Plumets and Tips made of the best male stock and can be had in the following colors: White, Black, Pink, Light Blue, Alice Blue, Rose, Brown, Green, Citron, Yellow and Black and White mixed.

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MANY BUFFETS SCATTERED ALONG RAILROAD LINES

British Started This Highly Successful Method of Refreshing Soldiers

London, Feb. 11.—(Correspondence of the Associated Press)—The history of the soldiers' refreshment buffet in Victoria station, London, is in a small way the history of British effort in the war. The buffet began in a loose and unorganized fashion, more or less helpless from lack of precedent, and gradually developed until it now represents high efficiency backed by a steady determination to see the thing out to the end.

All the early organizations have concentrated their efforts in a single management which dispenses bread of tea, coffee, cocoa, sandwiches, wort and butter and cake weekly, all supplied by private donations. Branch buffets are maintained at the stations of less military importance, at an additional expense, and the whole machinery runs like clock work. It is the same sort of transformation that has gone on in every department of the British government, from the raising of recruits to the making of munitions.

Victoria station is a great barnlike railway terminal in the center of the metropolitan area. Its lines feed many important southern and southern ports, such as Portsmouth, Southampton, Brighton, Folkestone and Dover, and its troop trains arrive at night with their loads of men on furlough from the trenches, and there the returning trains leave every morning to carry back those whose week of home and liberty has expired. Between times, there is a constant stream of soldiers arriving from or returning to the great training camps at Aldershot and other points.

An average of about 4,000 soldiers daily are fed at Victoria station. Eighty women volunteer workers under the direction of Mrs. Kenward Matthews stand six-hour shifts day and night, for it is in the early morning period that hot refreshments are most needed and most appreciated by the soldiers.

The most exciting time of the day at Victoria is the hour of the troop trains. Their arrival is preceded by a number of telegrams. The first message approximates the time of arrival on news of the sailing of the channel boats. This is corrected when the boat arrives in the English port, again when the train starts on its journey and finally when on the last lap to London on a clear track. Often there are hours of difference between the first and last telegrams, and a train due to arrive at 5 p. m. will pull in nearer 10 o'clock.

One of the first signs of the coming of the troops is the gathering of the home guards. A detail of sixty of these men, most of them quite old and all ineligible for the army, gather at the station at 4 in the afternoon. They show, furthermore, from the soldiers by green uniforms and red armbands. They make themselves useful by answering questions, putting the soldiers on the right buses and in protecting them from outsiders who invest the platform. Official money changers who give the men the benefit of the best rate of exchange, open up their booths. Friends, relatives and idlers also begin to collect outside the gates to watch the troops pass by.

When the time for the arrival of the first section is accurately known, Mrs. Matthews, or her quartermaster, Miss Perry, have tables set up on the platform. There are three of these tables, each covered with a strip of oilcloth. Dishes are filled with sandwiches and cakes are placed on the tables and great urns full of tea. Vases of flowers also grace the tables. It is curious that a home touch a few flowers give the show, furthermore, that there is a real welcome in the pans and urns.

One who thinks of the British Tommy as he was before the war, might easily be misled by the present campaigner for a Serbian or some other kind of picturesque fighting

man. Off hand, he looks rather like Robinson Crusoe. Life in the trenches and successive coats of trench clay give his clothes a new individuality. The smartness of the tailor is lost. The soft cap with its ear-tabs and neck protector or a wilted Scotch bonnet, the overcoat, plastered with mud and standing out over a sheepskin jacket as if the wearer was swathed in pads, the mud-covered boots and puttees are the assortment of packs, bags and other paraphernalia of the same color on his back have nothing in common with the parade ground. Often the tartan pattern of a kilts shows itself under the bottom of an overcoat.

A quiet lot of men they are, altogether different from the singing, whistling troops that march off so gaily for the front. They are campaigners, now. They went away boys, lots of them, and came back men.

YOU are sure to please the entire family when you serve at breakfast, luncheon or supper, tempting, hot muffins made with

HOTEL ASTOR UNCOATED RICE

Hotel Astor Rice Muffins
1 cup boiled Hotel Astor Rice
2 eggs
3 teaspoons baking powder
5 tablespoons melted butter
1 cup milk
1 teaspoon sugar
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Mix Hotel Astor Rice and milk together, add well beaten eggs, melted butter, sugar and milk, then the flour sifted with the baking powder. Bake in moderate oven about 20 minutes.
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