

Factors in Building the Better American Community

Sound American Democracy is Making Progress Where the Constructive Citizens Are Bending Their Efforts Toward the Elimination of Corruption, Suspicion, Intolerance and Strife and Pooling Their Common Interests in Developing a Spirit of Community Reciprocity

COMMUNITY PROGRESS, is something every citizen, having an interest in the stability, growth and development of the municipality of which he is a part, is vitally interested. It is not limited to the businessman and property owner alone. It is something of equal importance to the man of toil, seeking remunerative labor in every field, from the skilled artisan to the street worker, even though he holds no property title and is not a taxpayer.

Community progress is possible only where a large number of the people within a community are looking ahead and constructively plan and work for the betterment and the upbuilding of the community in the same diligent and tireless manner in which they plan and labor for the development of their respective business interests, the betterment of their living conditions, and the maintenance and proper upkeep of a home, no matter whether it be a large and expensive dwelling or a modest little two or three-room cottage in an outlying suburb.

The achievements that constitute a community's progress testify, in all instances, to the extent to which the forward looking citizens within, native and foreign born, have pooled their community interests: established and sustained, directly or indirectly, organizations of their own making, designed to represent a common front, to speak for the community and its varied activities, its opportunities and resources, its integrity and coördination of interests. These are invaluable assets to advertise abroad in our land and the best guaranty to the investor who puts his money, his skill or his brawn to work in the community: in business, in homebuilding and in the performance of skilled or manual labor for the purpose of finding maximum compensation, the fullest possible measure of happiness.

The foremost organization to advance a community interest and to speak reliably in behalf of the community has a universal name. Without such an organization the business booster seeking to interest an outsider, may refer to his community's healthy condition on the strength of its banks, business houses, newspapers, churches and schools—valuable assets—but none of these institutions will speak of civic solidarity and coördination of interests such as will the fact that the community has established and is sustaining an active **Chamber of Commerce**, furnishing reliable information and always ready to serve everyone interested, whether for the purpose of establishing a business enterprise or a home.

The progressive foreign born who has established himself in an American community, pursuing a business avocation or a trade, a homebuilder and taxpayer, should take an active interest in civic organizations among the native Americans, with an equal zeal and enthusiasm. If he has obtained citizenship and sworn allegiance without reservation, aiming to make America the permanent home for himself and his children,

he is not fulfilling his obligation in citizenship unless he becomes a constructive coöperative member in his constituency, giving some of his time and energy to the common interests of the community and the state of which he has become a part. He should not permit the organizations of his nationality to levy upon his spare time to the extent that he has no time for the civic organizations where the active citizens of his community come together to discuss ways and means to improve civic conditions. He should cease complaining that **they** (meaning the Americans) are running things to the detriment of this and that interest of the community and rather seek membership in some civic organization, particularly the Chamber of Commerce of his community, where the civic problems are discussed, where needed improvements are advanced and given indorsement, if feasible, and where his opinion along constructive lines would receive proper consideration.

The Chamber of Commerce of the city is as essential to the welfare of the city as the Grange is to the farming district. The Grange is in effect the country district's Chamber of Commerce. Every actively interested owner or lessee of farmland in the farming community finds it profitable for his community's good to be a member of the Grange and be at the Grange meetings regularly so that he may be personally conversant with the needs of the district, in order to be an intelligent member of his community.

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In some cases the Chamber of Commerce, like the Grange, may have been used for selfish ends by cliques neither representing the broader interests of the people sustaining the organization nor the best interests of the community.

Such instances, however, are few, and such misuse of the purposes for which particularly a Chamber of Commerce is organized is usually of short duration. A Chamber of Commerce is necessarily a democratic institution where the ballot of the membership is the final factor of control.

If a Chamber ceases to represent the broadest possible spirit of the hustling, forward-looking community, the reason is invariably to be found in the lack of active interest on the part of the best citizens of the community who have become, perhaps, too busy to take an active interest in the affairs of the Chamber. The result of such a condition in a Chamber of Commerce is no different than the situation too frequently developed in politics, when the better citizens are too busy to give any thought to the political affairs of their city and state.

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The pioneer Portland of a recent yesterday suffered its measure of that particular brand of civic apathy, which unfortunately has marked the transition of many a small town emerging into a metropolitan city. Such conditions are generally the sequences of marked indifference to personal responsibility on