

Investigator Avers the Church Losing Ground

Exhaustive Research by Government Body Results in Surprising Report

NEW YORK (AP).—Results of exhaustive researches showing that Protestantism is rapidly losing its grip in rural America, were made public today by the Institute of Social and Religious Research, of this city, in its report of a recently completed study of thousands of rural Protestant churches.

The study shows by attendance data, according to the Institute, that the influence of the church in the country, its supposed stronghold and inexhaustible recruiting ground, is now only half as great as it was a generation ago. Yet evidence of the church's decline is not the only feature of the report that will prove disturbing, especially to denominational executives.

The purpose of Institute of Social and Religious Research is to apply scientific methods to the study of social and religious problems. The governing body is composed of John R. Mott, chairman; Ernest T. Burton, secretary; Raymond B. Fossick, treasurer; Jas. L. Barton, W. H. P. Fauce, and Kenyon L. Butterfield. Galen M. Fisher is executive secretary.

The main purpose of the study, which has made for the Institute by Dr. C. Luther Fry, was to test the trustworthiness of methods generally used by these executives to get at the truth about the churches; and the conclusion reached, according to the report, is that the methods are misleading and should be discarded.

The report is a volume of more than 200 pages which is published today for the Institute under the title "Diagnosing the Rural Church."

In it Dr. Fry presents the results of an exhaustive scientific study, based on extensive surveys, in a way to show that the real situation with respect to the church could not have been brought to light by the usual methods employed by denominational boards. It was only by developing and using new and precise statistical methods, the report shows, that he discovered the rural church's plight.

Neither the amount of money contributed by members nor the proportion of inhabitants belonging to church was found to furnish a reliable index of the church's influence; yet these are the indices commonly used by the boards in church studies.

In pointing out that comparisons of churches by denominational executives on the basis of money contributions are unwarranted, the report says:

"The church in its financial life is closely dependent upon economic conditions and unless the church-

es have equally prosperous members there is no ground whatever for the conclusion that differences in the average contributions of members indicate difference in religious interest."

Estimates based on membership figures were found to be less reliable than those based on attendance figures. Windsor County, Vermont, was selected as a field for specially intensive study and it was found that the proportion of Protestant church members in the population there had remained constant throughout the entire period since 1855.

During this same period, however, the average attendance at Sunday services dropped from 3456 to 1845, showing a loss of 47 per cent.

"But this figure," says the report, "does not take into consideration the increase in the Protestant population over the last generation, which was 11 per cent. In proportion therefore to the Protestant population the decline in church attendance over the last 33 years is 52 per cent. In other words, attendance at church is only half that of a generation ago."

"No matter how much one may explain away the decline in attendance as the result of the new age in which we live, certainly it is important for church leaders to know that even though the proportion of members throughout the country is increasing, people may be growing more and more apathetic to the church's services. Should the decline continue Windsor County at its present rate, it is only a question of a few decades before the church will become a deserted institution."

Other phases of the study showed that there is surprising uniformity from region to region throughout the United States in the influence of the church as measured by attendance interest; and that contrary to the general belief, there is no greater apathy in the far west than in the east or south.

The report stresses the need of more precise church studies and of denominational action for the standardization of statistical terms. "Even the meaning of such elementary terms as 'members,' 'benevolences,' 'contributions,' etc.," it says, "differs from denomination to denomination. Hence at the present time it is out of the question to secure accurate and comparable data about individual churches from denominational headquarters."

"To further our scientific understanding of the church, the most immediate need is the standardization of local church records. To this end a conference of denominational leaders should be called either by the Federal government in connection with the next religious census or by the Federal Council of Churches. Such standardization, however, would not necessarily involve the keeping of additional church records but would merely aim to make the information secured as precise and accurate as it would be of significance for comparative purposes. Having available large bodies of detailed and comparable information about churches, we would then be in a position to gain a new insight into the workings of the church."

MANY OREGON PLAYGROUNDS

NEW YORK (By the Associated Press).—From a single playground directed by two leaders, Oregon's public recreation resources, have grown in the last ten years to 27 playgrounds and recreation centers in the state where 54 workers were employed last year, states the Playground and Recreation Association of America. This association has determined by comparing reports sent by Oregon cities in 1913 and 1923 for its annual compilation of statistics on organized recreation throughout the nation.

Oregon invested 113 times as much in public recreation during 1923 as ten years before, the reports show. The 1923 expenditures totaled \$92,828.52. The five cities reporting that they have taken up the development of recreation as a civic asset were Ashland, Astoria, Eugene, Klamath Falls and Portland.

Considerable credit for their recreation advances is given by Oregon cities to the assistance of the Playground and Recreation Association of America. George W. Braden, western division representative of the association, says that, although Oregon may well be proud of her progress in public recreation, there is still much room for development along this line.

"Nine cities each of 5000 population above do not report playgrounds or play leaders," he asserts. "And many rural communities are in need of community recreation activities."

"Thirty-three cities in the western division, comprising the eleven western states maintain year-round community recreation under municipal or community service administration with budgets ranging from \$2400 to \$375,000. Nine cities are maintaining municipal camps. Fuller cooperation between municipalities and school boards in securing additional recreation areas is stressed."

Women may be vain, but the average man thinks himself rather pretty just after a shave.

A woman is a creature who doesn't know which she likes until she sees the price tag.

WALLOWA LAKE TO CELEBRATE

Old-Time Fourth of July Fete Planned by Wallowa Lake Wonderland Resort Management.

JOSEPH, Ore. (Special to the Observer).—Joseph will join hands with the management of Wallowa Lake Wonderland, Inc., in staging an old time celebration July 4th. This was decided upon at the regular weekly luncheon at Hotel Jennings Tuesday when J. Ross Leslie was present and submitted a plan to the business men in session there.

It has been several years since a celebration of note has been put on in this vicinity, the so-called celebrations at the lake having been conspicuous in the absence of entertainment, and when Mr. Leslie submitted his plans with the suggestion that the town might cooperate in handling the sporting events and any other features which may be worked out, he was greeted with a hearty response.

One of the first things spoken of was of securing a speaker of note to deliver the oration of the day. E. D. McCully was appointed a committee of one to look after this detail. It was suggested that Governor Pierce, if available, would be a great attraction. Mr. McCully wired the governor immediately and received this reply:

"I regret it is impossible for me to accept your kind invitation to deliver oration Wallowa Lake July Fourth on account of a previous engagement. Many thanks for your kindness in inviting me."

Walter M. Pierce, Governor of Oregon.

Mindful of the lack of entertainment at recent celebrations, Mr. Leslie and the business men hope to prepare a program that will make the people forget the disappointments of the past. A sports committee with Hugh Gibson as chairman, will look after the various races, baseball and such other events as may appear necessary to keep the ball rolling. Mr. Gibson will be assisted by Ed Eben and Ralph Pelt. For the races, liberal prizes will be offered, and it is hoped that a baseball game between two strong teams can be arranged.

Mr. Leslie is negotiating for a band and will secure other musical attractions as well. There will be plenty of dancing, bowling, and other features maintained regularly by the resort. It will be a celebration that everybody can attend and have an enjoyable time. In fact, there are few spots in the country with so many natural advantages for a picnic and with the addition of a man-made program there is a big time in store for all who attend.

Episcopal Social Workers Will Confer in Toronto

NEW YORK (AP).—Problems of home life, democracy in industry, divorce, jail reform, the foreign-born and congestion in the big cities, will be among the subjects discussed at the annual conference of social service workers of the Episcopal church which will meet in Haverock college, Toronto, Canada, June 21-25. International flavor will be given the occasion by the fact that the social workers of the Church of England in Canada will participate in the Episcopal conference, which will be followed by the national conference of social work, also meeting in Toronto, thus enabling delegates to

Preparing the Prosecution



Three of the prosecutors who will present the state's case in the trial of Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb, Chicago's boy slayers. They are left to right: Milton Smith, Joseph Savage and John Starbuck.

participate at will in all three sessions and pressed by the need of providing for his wife and child, recently placed himself "on the auction block."

"I am both slave and auctioneer," Hansen said in his announcement. "I will be knocked down to the highest bidder. I must provide for my wife and child, and welcome any reasonable offer."

Hansen said he was a public accountant.

OFFERS SELF AT AUCTION SEATTLE, Wash. (AP).—Geo. N. Hansen, unable to find a po-

May Wholesale Prices Decline, Report Shows

WASHINGTON (AP).—A continued downward swing in wholesale prices through May was shown in an announcement Monday by the department of labor statistics report. Due chiefly to declines in the farm products and metals groups, the bureau's weight index number on 484 commodities fell off one point from the April level to 147.

With the exception of the foods group, which was stationary, all groups showed a slight decline in May. The average wholesale price level was nearly 6 per cent below that of the same month last year.

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Millions of Salmon Released.

MILL CITY, Ore.—Several million of salmon which have been in the ponds of the hatchery at Me-hama for several months, have been released into the river and the hatchery will now be placed in readiness to receive the new eggs, which will be taken from the salmon at the racks near Detroit next fall. The run of chinook salmon has been fairly heavy this year and likely a large number of eggs will be taken. It is reported that parties have been dynamiting salmon in the vicinity of Niagara, and this is being investigated by representatives of the game department.

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