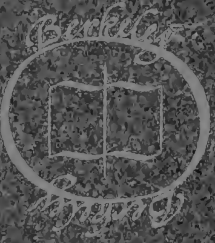
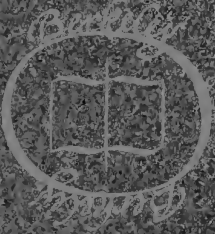


UC-NRLF



B 3 013 954





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

OCT 8 1914

18-11

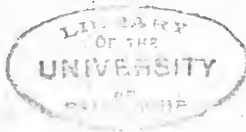
25 last.

STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

BULLETIN NO. 20

1914



The Community Center

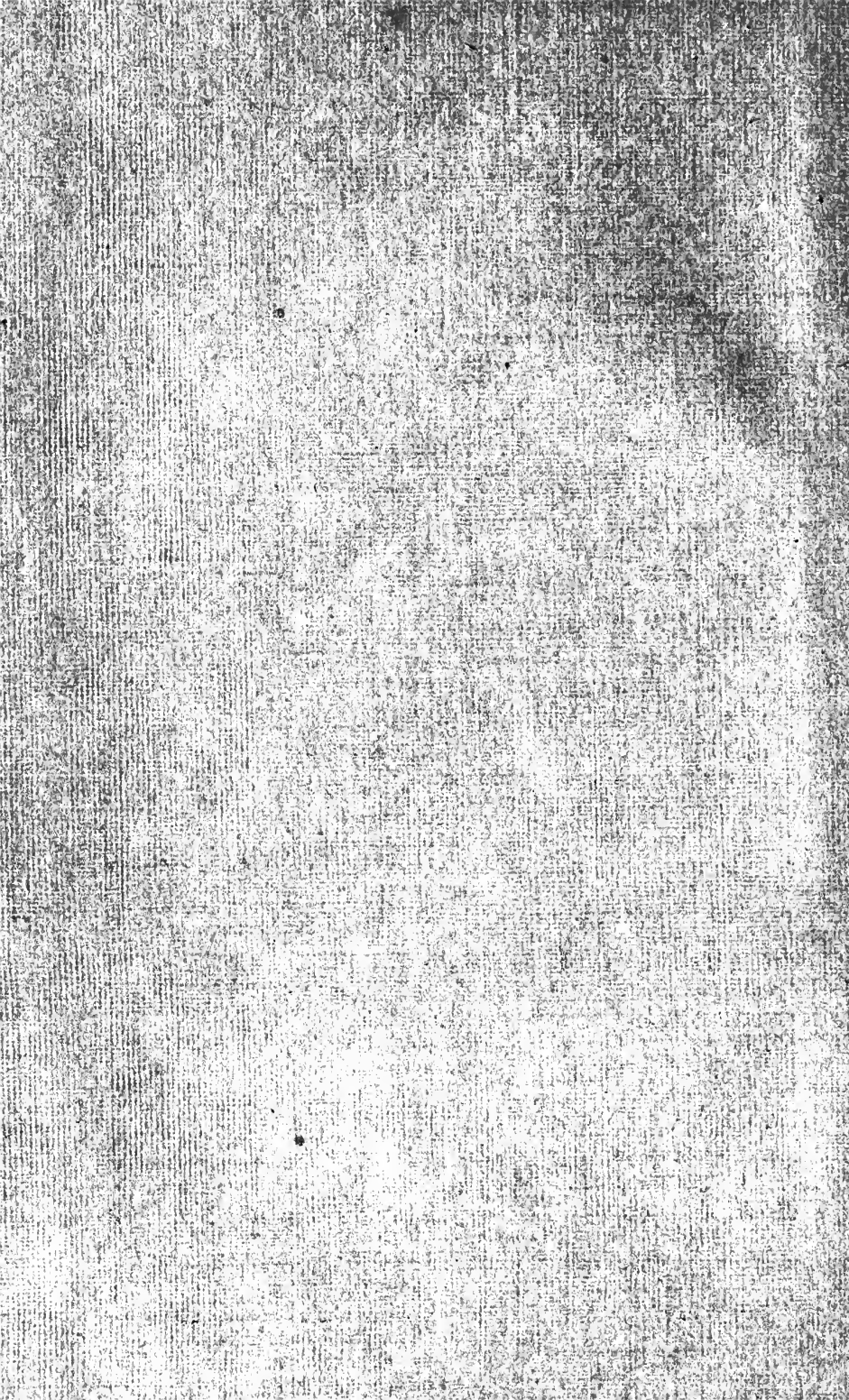
BY

MRS. JOSEPHINE CORLISS PRESTON

SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION



OLYMPIA
FRANK M. LAMBORN PUBLIC PRINTER,
1914



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

BULLETIN NO. 20
1914

The Community Center

BY

MRS. JOSEPHINE CORLISS PRESTON
SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION



OLYMPIA
FRANK M. LAMBORN  PUBLIC PRINTER,
1914

NO. 1111
ABSTRACT

L212
B3
no. 20-31

THE COMMUNITY CENTER.

We hear much these days regarding the Social Center movement and this bulletin is sent to you with the desire that you read it so that you may fully understand what the Department of Education of the state of Washington is trying to do in its "Community Center Development."

It is impossible for me to personally meet many of the teachers of the State of Washington for more than a brief conference, or an informal talk at Institutes, and I cannot hope to meet more than a very small percentage of the earnest men and women in our state, who are co-operating and lending their assistance to all efforts pertaining to educational and social development. For this reason, I am sending this message to you so that you may understand what I have in mind.

The need of constructive work in rural schools and rural development is everywhere recognized. The Washington Educational Association at its last meeting set forth by resolution the paramount importance of the rural school problem. The new rural awakening is upon us. We have a new vision of the vitalized Community Life in our rural neighborhoods. There is a keen eagerness in all rural welfare work. The country folk are fast coming into their own. Much has been written and spoken about the "Back to the Farm" movement, and so important is the problem that the President of the United States appointed several years ago, a National Country Life Commission to study this important problem. This work was supplemented by State Country Life Commissions appointed by many western governors.

It has been said that there is no "Back to the Farm" movement. It is argued that with all of the effort made to keep people on the farm they are drifting to the cities faster than ever. Be that as it may, we who are close to the situation know that if we are to keep our boys and girls on the farm, we must develop a "Stay on the Farm" spirit that the lure of the city cannot break. The fundamental task of the rural advance is the quickening of country life, vitalizing of the country school, the gradual erection of stronger and enlarged community units, and the improvement of local community buildings.

SOCIAL CENTER AS DISTINGUISHED FROM CIVIC CENTER.

The terms "Civic Center," "Social Center" and "Community Center" often times confuses us as to the distinct meaning of each. The term "Civic Center" stands for a city center and uses the municipal building and grounds in connection with the town or city hall for its focal point in which to express the unity of the city. The term "Social Center" stands for the use of the school house as a common gathering place for the citizens of a community, the head-and-heart quarters of

the society whose members are the people of that community. It is the effort to bring people together across all lines of opinion, creed and income upon a common ground of interest and duty.

HISTORY OF THE SOCIAL CENTER IDEA.

Edward J. Ward of the University of Wisconsin, who has made an intensive study and application of the "Social Center" idea, said in his recent book, "The Social Center:" "The keenest thinking of the past fifty years has been devoted to devising machinery by which things should work together for good, by which mechanical forces should be combined for the service of man. The solution of our problem of right adjustment among individual citizens lies practically in the construction of machinery by which folks may work together, think together, act together for good. The colonist of early American History did not just try to like each other, they established a Social Center wherein it would be possible to get together on a common ground, to disagree agreeably under rules which guaranteed each an opportunity to be heard. They constructed a headquarters of coordination and found it to be a means of cooperation. And, incidentally when they did they found, of course, that most of the unpleasant things which they had thought about each other were not so."

Prof. Zueblin, speaking on "Historical Antecedents of the Modern Social Center," says: "The organization of people for self-expression dates back to primitive times. Public discussions were familiar in the little democracies of Greece and subsequently in Rome. The German Mark and Swiss Commune furnished the best example of freedom of public discussion and public actions, the oldest democratic organization now existing, and historically the most important, is the Landes gemeinde of Switzerland. From the 13th Century the male citizens of several Swiss Cantons have assembled from their mountain homes for the conduct of their public affairs by the living voice in the open air." In closing, Prof. Zueblin follows this popular democratic assembly down through the churches and guilds, and closes with these words: "The larger use of the school house and the organization of social centers are not novelties. They are the 20th Century revival and expression of that democratic spirit which has been vital at intervals for more than two thousand years."

Do you notice that when asked to discuss the historic antecedents of the modern "Social Center," Prof. Zueblin finds them in the ancient forms of free discussion and democratic expression.

Dr. Samuel M. Crothers of Cambridge, Mass., in his paper, "The American Historic Antecedents of the Modern Social Center," says: "The present movement for using the school house of a city for the promotion of neighborhood life is one that has a long history—as long as democracy. It is the attempt to adapt ancient usages to modern conditions. The sense of social solidarity which gives rich and deep meaning to the word 'neighbor' is in danger of being lost. The neighbor is the 'high dweller,' but what signifies this if the door of his dwelling be shut. The house with its locks and bars becomes the symbol of

exclusive individualism." Dr. Crothers then gives a brief survey of the democratic expression in ancient Jewish times, and in the meeting of the free-holders of the primitive townships on the moot hills where England learned the worth of public opinion, of public discussion, the worth of argument, the common sense, the general convictions to which discussion leads, where England "learned to be the mother of Parliaments." He then came to America and traces the line through the New England town meetings and the democratic expression in the primitive school house. He ends with these words: "Those who are opening our school houses for the largest public services are simply carrying on the traditions of freedom."

WASHINGTON PROVIDES FOR SOCIAL CENTER WORK.

The legislature of the State of Washington in 1913 provided by statute for the "Wider Use of the School Plant" in these words:

"The school board in each district of the second class and third class may provide for the free, comfortable and convenient use of the school property to promote and facilitate frequent meetings and association of the people in discussion, study, improvement, recreation and other community purposes, and may acquire, assemble and house material for the dissemination of information of use and interest to the farm, the home and the community, and facilitate for experiment and study, especially in matters pertaining to the growth of crops, the improvement and handling of live stock, the marketing of farm products, the planning and construction of farm buildings, the subjects of household economics, home industries, good roads, and community vocations and industries; and may call meetings for the consideration and discussion of any such matters, employ a special supervisor, or leader, if need be, and provide suitable dwellings and accommodations for teachers, supervisors and necessary assistants."

The free and democratic use of school buildings for non-partisan, non-sectarian, non-exclusive gatherings is fundamental in importance. This wider use of the school building is feasible in every community. It requires practically no equipment. It costs the districts little more than the mere lighting, heating and janitor service, and it is the element which gives significance and promise to the whole.

From the standpoint of mere economy it is desirable that the school buildings be not left idle and unused throughout the majority of the day. The vast capital invested in lands, buildings and equipments for educational purposes lie idle and unproductive during more than two-thirds of the time between eight in the morning and ten at night.

COMMUNITY CENTER AS DISTINGUISHED FROM SOCIAL CENTER.

We have gone a step further in the State of Washington in the "Social Center" idea and are developing "Community Centers," which have for their basic principles the grouping of our isolated and small villages and town districts into neighborhood centers, in our effort to

quicken country life and vitalize our schools. The "Social Center" movement in this state applies to the civic use of the school house in the larger centers or cities. The "Community Center" applies to a group of rural districts organized into one neighborhood center where problems of the community are freely discussed and frequent social and educational gatherings are held.

I am seeking to build up "Country Life" in the State of Washington, through the organized "Community Centers."

OPPORTUNITY OF THE COMMUNITY CENTER.

The "Community Centers" give the rural people of this state an opportunity to meet and exchange ideas on all important public questions of the day. They offer them an opportunity at all times to meet for social and educational and recreational purposes, and if the people of our state take advantage of the opportunity, we shall give an impetus to the "Stay on the Farm" spirit, which will mean much in the future agricultural, industrial and social development of this state.

For generations, the school houses have been monuments of neglected social and civic opportunities. In the policy of closing them to the people outside of the regular school hours, we have failed to grasp a great opportunity for development of that higher type of citizenship which makes for better government.

The school plant has meant little more to the majority of us in the past than an educational institution for teaching children, but the leading students of political, social, educational, economic and other public problems, are alive to the tremendous importance of the undeveloped resources in the wider uses of the public school plant. We used to think that the expensive school house structure had served its purpose when we used it from nine o'clock Monday morning until four o'clock Friday afternoon. Now we know that this is only half of the story. The school building furnished by the taxpayers of a community belongs to the people of a community, as well as to its children.

Because the country life problem is primarily one of community organization, and because the great rural need is a plan of organization that will include the whole interest and enlist the united energy of the people, we have urged that the "Community Center" be large enough to form an efficient social and economic group with common interests.

NEED OF COMMUNITY CENTER WORK.

Mr. Herbert Quick, editor of the Farm and Fireside, whom I heard speak at the Social Center Conference at the Mother Chautauqua, in New York this summer, said in part: "The conscious demand for organized Social Centers is a thing of recent growth. Like most conscious demands, it springs from a need too long left unfilled. There is a feeling running through society that the common ordinary citizen must learn to cooperate with his fellows as a means of fostering the

common good. And when we come to consider Social Centers as relating to the rural community, if the treatment is not to take us outside the field of the Social Center as ordinarily conceived, we must keep in mind the basis of the movement, the need for cooperative action in neighborhoods.

"Along with this demand for rural centers comes the admitted need for a new kind of rural school. The rural school of today is apt to be in the name a bad copy of a poor city school. It is not related to the rural life. It proceeds as if on the theory that farmer's sons should all become clerks or professional men engaged in urban employment, and all country girls stenographers, shop girls, factory employees or the wives of such city dwellers. This bias of rural school against rural life is the one great scholastic blunder of the nation. Our eyes are becoming open to the destruction which such school works on our national lives. The word has gone forth that the rural school must ruralize. It must be corollated with the rural life. It must open the eyes of the country children to the beauties of the field of nature in which the farmer acts with, and is reacted upon, by scientific truths. Out of this new kind of country school I believe will grow the new kind of rural Social Centers."

NEED OF A SOCIALIZED COUNTRY LIFE.

As George P. Wiley, cashier of the Waterville Savings Bank, and President, this year, of the Washington Boys' and Girls' Agricultural and Industrial Contest Association, said in his recent address before the Washington State Bankers' Association, "The country life movement is nothing more or less than an awakened interest in the rural phase of our civilization. It is a movement to secure from society fair attention to agriculture as an industry, and for rural people, as a part of society, their just share of the common good. Many strong men who are trained to investigate such problems have made surveys during the past four years. They have discovered the exact rural status and analyzed it. From these investigations we learn why country life does not attract boys and girls and we learn that the country is being deserted in most instances for social reasons."

Governor Adolph O. Eberhart of Minnesota on "What I am Trying to Do" in the April, 1913, number of the World's Work, relates the experience he had when he went to the city to find men to work on his farm. The farmers were suffering from an excess of crops and the lack of men to harvest them; having heard that the cities contained large numbers of unemployed men, who claimed to be looking for work, they thought it best to send someone to Minneapolis to round up a number of these and bring them out into the country where they were needed. Upon arriving in Minneapolis he had no difficulty in discovering the workless ones. They were seated on park benches in all sections of the city and overflowing on the curbstones. Work, it seemed, could not be found. Some of them were on the verge of starvation and the charitable organizations of the city were taxed to their utmost capacity to provide for them.

"I approached a likely looking group and told them that I could give them work if they wanted it.

"Lead us to it," cried one, "We'll do pretty nearly anything to get money." Then I told of my proposition.

The moment I mentioned the word "Country" or "Farm" I saw a change come over their faces. When I finished painting my word-picture of the benefits to be received of accompanying me back home, there wasn't a smiling face in the crowd. They were as glum and dissatisfied as they had been before.

When I asked for a reason for their lack of enthusiasm concerning the scheme, one of them said, "We don't want to go to the country, Boss. We don't want to live on a farm. There's nothing for us there—no life, no entertainment, no lights, nothing but monotony and work. We'd rather stay in the city and starve than to go to the country and have nothing to do but work. No, Sir, we stay right here!"

And stay they did. I couldn't get one of them to come with me, and the farmers had to harvest their wheat as best they could. While the city held in its grasp, unemployed, enough men to garner all of the crops of the state."

I mention this concrete illustration of the sentiment regarding country life—as depicted by Governor Eberhart, because it is typical of many states in our Union, including Washington.

Many teachers and superintendents have asked for more definite directions as to the "Community Center" organization, and we are pleased to submit the following:

"COMMUNITY CENTER" PLAN.

The County Superintendent is the natural educational leader of the county, and we look to him to group his county into natural neighborhood centers of several districts. We find that a school system which carries with it a four-year accredited high school has sufficient responsibility for any superintendent, and we have suggested that the County Superintendent treat this as an independent "Community Center." Then, with a few exceptions, the rural "Community Centers" should consist of small towns and villages, grouped with neighborhood districts or, as is necessary in some instances, a grouping of districts of one room schools. Each center should have a teacher in charge who acts as a supervising principal of all social, recreational and educational gatherings for his particular community group.

The first thing to do after the county is organized and the teachers are notified, is for the County Superintendent to hold a conference with the supervising principals to plan for future work.

The first effort in the community should be a general educational gathering at each center, with the County Superintendent present to explain the purpose of this unity of effort.

It is a good plan to supplement the educational talk by a school program under the management of the supervising principal, and with prominent people of the several districts taking part in the educational program and entertainment. Often the social spirit will express itself

at these gatherings in the preparation and serving of a bountiful old fashioned dinner.

The purpose of the "Community Center" is to utilize the intelligence that exists in every community; to bring that intelligence to a focus in the common gathering in the school house; and to direct the attention of the men and women in the community to their needs, and the needs of the school, and by this interchange of ideas to discover the means of meeting those needs. It is thus stimulating and directing thought in communities that social progress will be initiated. "Good Roads" may be the topic for one meeting; an address may be had from the county engineer or some other well known informed person, followed by open discussion. The benefit of meetings of this kind in communities cannot be overestimated. The mental faculties are like tools, they become rusty and dulled by non-use; but men's minds are liberated; ideas are born which will bear fruit.

A series of county-wide contests, such as spelling, reading, athletic, declamation, cooking, potato growing, manual training, sewing, etc., may be carried out successfully. The annual field meet at the close of the year's work has been a happy culmination in some of our counties. The Community Fairs, which were held in over 200 of our neighborhood centers brought much enthusiasm and neighborly spirit. As one woman enthusiastically wrote us after the Community Fair in her neighborhood, "I've been here twenty years and our Fair, this fall, brought all of the people of this community together for the first time in history."

RURAL HIGH SCHOOL A POSSIBILITY OF THE "COMMUNITY CENTER" PLAN.

The idea of a rural high school with its course of study and organization shaped directly by the industrial and cultural needs of the particular community which it serves, is steadily growing. This high school will never be developed in the large town or city. Its possibilities lie alone in the purely rural community or village, where its interests and activities are most homogeneous. It is one of most satisfying visions in the educational future.

The full organization of "Community Center" plan makes possible the development of the rural high school. The Supervising Principal or Social Engineer has the opportunity for a wider and more intimate contact with the boys and girls and parents in the outside districts. This personal touch and the social relation with the center which is developed, will draw many a boy and girl into the high school who otherwise would not attend.

Again, in the recognition of the fact that there are different kinds of education, and that one kind may be just as valuable as another, there is now seeping through the minds of people, the idea that the state would be better served by its schools if its high schools were not all organized on the same plan and did not all follow the same course of study.

I hope with this explanation of our plans and ideas for assisting rural communities in quickening country life, I have been able to give you an insight into the stupendous task of country life development. It calls for the active cooperation of all state institutions, educational agencies—such as State Grange, Farmers' Union, Bankers, Women's Clubs, Federation of Labor, etc., as well as the persistent effort of this Department of Education.

The boys and girls of today will be better developed in character and ideals and trained for better citizenship through this rural life stimulus. The heart hunger of the men and women who live in isolated portions of every county in our state will be satisfied through the opportunity which the neighborhood centers bring to them. The supervising principal of the neighborhood group of districts, who is willing to serve his fellow men, will have an opportunity to fulfill in the largest possible sense, the great service to his people as a Social Engineer. The public spirited citizen, who is to be found in every part of our state will be afforded an opportunity to serve his neighborhood and through his service to his fellowmen, become more contented. In fact, the men and women who aid in this great movement for social service are not only educational pioneers; they are worthy citizens of the commonwealth.

COMMUNITY OR SOCIAL CENTER CATECHISM.

Community center catechism in which nine questions asked most frequently in the field and by correspondence are answered.

1—WHAT IS A “COMMUNITY CENTER”? In Washington a “Community Center” is a place where the people of a district or group of districts meet regularly or at stated intervals for social or educational purposes.

2—WHAT MEETINGS ARE REQUIRED OF REGULAR “COMMUNITY CENTERS”? No particular kind of meetings is required, but a spelling bee, a declamatory contest, a lecture, and an agricultural and industrial fair are suggested for the first year, the latter to be worked up next spring and held next fall.

3—WHERE CAN LECTURERS BE FOUND WHO WILL COME WITHOUT BIG FEES? Write to the state educational institutions, public officials, private citizens of ability within your reach, or inquire of county or state superintendent.

4—TO WHAT CLASS OF DISTRICTS DOES THE “COMMUNITY CENTER” PLAN APPLY? It applies especially to districts of the third class. In cities each school house is sufficient within itself for a “Social Center” work.

5—WHY GROUP THE DISTRICTS? Many are too small or lack facilities for carrying on “Social Center” work by themselves. A district large enough to do the work may be a center within itself, but if there are smaller nearby districts unable to carry on independent work they should be admitted to the activities of the larger district.

6—HOW IS A “COMMUNITY CENTER” ORGANIZED? (a) The county superintendent groups his districts around as many centers as population warrants, and appoints the principal of the central district supervising principal of the unit. (b) He then invites the patrons and teachers of each district to meet at the central school building where speakers explain the “Social Center” work, and the people take part in the discussion. (c) A motion to approve or endorse the movement is next in order. (d) The supervising principal then names his assistant, secretary, and such committees as he may need. (e) At this meeting the people should decide upon the time, place and nature of the first “Social Center” meeting. The spelling bee has been most popular so far, coming usually the first or second Friday of December.

7—WHERE ARE THE “COMMUNITY CENTER” MEETINGS HELD? Usually in the school house of the central district, but if any

one of the associated districts is enthused and wants to play the host it should be encouraged to do so.

8—WHAT RELATIONSHIP DOES THE RURAL “SOCIAL CENTER” BEAR TO PARENT-TEACHERS’ ASSOCIATIONS? The “Social Center” works hand-in-hand with such organizations, not confining its activities to one district, but supplying the social life needed by the entire unit.

9—WHY HAVE THE SCHOOL HOUSE AS THE “COMMUNITY CENTER”? The public school is the people’s institution. In a large majority of communities there are few, if any, meetings of a social nature where people are free to go and become acquainted, and to hear and participate in something inspiring and uplifting.

(Signed) JOSEPHINE PRESTON.

EXCERPTS FROM FIELD NOTES OF FIELD ORGANIZER C. C. THOMASON.

"The response from the people of Clarke county was far beyond what we had even hoped it would be. Our average audience was about one hundred and fifty, almost wholly adults. We talked to the children in their school rooms. Here are some characteristic statements from parents or teachers of country boys and girls which I wrote down as nearly as possible just as they were spoken:

"I have lived here three years and am still unacquainted with my neighbors. There is nothing to go to. The people do not call. I cannot start anything, being a newcomer. When there happens to be a meeting at the school house we all go, and there I always make, or find, a friend of two.'

"It seems to me the boys and girls today do not have as good times as they used to when we had spelling bees, literary societies, and such things at the school house. It seems that a pioneer country always has more good things to go to than an older country. I guess its because no one likes to take the lead where he is so well known.'

"We came a long way to see if you could tell us how and where to get some good speakers or something of an uplifting nature for our boys and girls way up in our logging town.'

"It would be a great thing for the home mothers to have a chance to take part in some public meetings. It would inspire them and improve their health by interesting them.'

"I like the agricultural and industrial contest phase. Not long ago I visited a state training school and the work there seemed so much better than the work of the public school that it seemed to me it was a pity all boys were not just a little worse so they would be sent to the training schools for practical education.'

"I can see how this work will be a great help to us teachers. It will help us get acquainted with parents and pupils in a real way. When we call the people to hurry around to prepare something extra to eat and really do not give us a chance to get acquainted with them. At school the children are not always their real selves. But at a literary society all act natural and we can get better acquainted.'

"I've been an old farmer for forty years and can't say much, but I just wanted to tell you how we used to spend our time on the farm. We had spelling bees, house raisin's, and quiltin' parties. During the winters it gave the young people plenty of sleigh riding. Then the old fashioned Methodist circuit rider would come around to hold meetings and make us some more sleigh riding. But now the country church as a community influence has passed away. The fiery preacher

comes no more. We do our work in a different way, every farmer for himself. So our neighborhood parties and all they stood for have passed. Now I think this (the social or community center) has come to take their place. If we don't provide places for our young people to go they will provide them for themselves. I want my boys to stay on the farm. If they leave I'll have to milk the cows, and I hate that worse than anything on earth. I am giving the boys land to cultivate, animals to own, and favor a Social Center. I think I've said all an old farmer should say at one time.'

"An account of one of our typical organization meetings will give you an idea of what they were all like. After a long stage ride through the mud and darkness we came to Hockinson, a three-room country school near a country store, blacksmith shop, and grange hall. The house was packed and extra benches were improvised. After the Social Center work had been explained and the crowd had discussed and in-dorsed the movement a motion was made to spend an hour in a rapid calculation contest. One of our state potato first prize winners, Charles Caples, a ninth grade boy, was present and stood about the middle of the line chosen by one of the captains. When his turn came to go to the board he easily defeated half a dozen of his rivals and was placed on the reserve seat. The next champion that appeared was a local merchant. He defeated all comers until his rival across the street was called and turned him down. Then this merchant's wife was called on the opposite side and vanquished him. Finally the county superintendent was called and defeated the merchant's wife. Finally the potato champion was called from the reserve to go against the county superintendent. Turning to the boy the superintendent said, in her happiest manner, 'You may beat me growing potatoes, Charles, but I don't believe you can beat me ciphering.' The problem was read amid breathless silence of the audience. The boy read his answer about two seconds before the county superintendent had hers. His teachers were called but went down in rapid succession. Charles added the rapid calculation championship to his potato growing honors. So general was the good feeling in the audience that a little boy in the neighborhood awakened at six o'clock the next morning and called to his parents to get up and take him over to the school house.

"During the Clarke county organization work I had time to spend a day at the Klickitat county institute at White Salmon. The county superintendent had grouped his district about 32 centers. He had the teachers of each center sit together during the hour's conference we held on the Community Center work for the coming year.

"Before the Spokane contest I had visited Douglas county and visited most of the centers with Superintendent L. L. Sellers. One of Mr. Sellers' plans which seems to me to be especially promising is that for a cooking contest at each Community Center. The winners shall be eligible to compete at the County Meet, the county contest being in the nature of a banquet at 6 p. m., following the track meet. This banquet shall be for all school officers, teachers, and other invited guests.

"On Thursday, November 27, I left for a trip through San Juan county with C. E. Flint, horticultural inspector; Mr. Blanchard, director of the Western Washington Experiment Station, and W. W. Powell, lecturer for the state grange. At Lopez we held a meeting and met County Superintendent W. R. Nichols who grouped his districts about three centers, Lopez on Lopez island, Friday Harbor on San Juan island, and East Sound on Orcus island. At these centers lectures, spelling bees, and boys' and girls' contests will be held. The people of the islands are enthusiastic over their success in the Spokane contest. At the contest to be held in Tacoma next year a special boat will be chartered to bring down the San Juan children's produce for display. At West Sound I talked to the school in the forenoon on contest work, to a mixed audience in the afternoon on the same subject, and to a crowd in the evening on Community Center work. Mr. Blanchard followed each of these talks with lessons on poultry, dairying, or soils, and Mr. Powell spoke on rural cooperation. At Friday Harbor we held a series of meetings in which we reached almost the entire population. At East Sound we held the regular institute meetings afternoon and evening. In the forenoon Mr. Flint and Mr. Blanchard conducted a stock judging contest at the school.

"The Community Center plan has awakened dozens of communities which I have visited. It doubles the crowds which ordinarily turn out to hear a good, practical lecture. The centers are proving to be the schools in which the people who are actually engaged in tilling the soil are the pupils."

Mrs. Elizabeth Sterling, superintendent of Clarke county, who has her county so well organized, writes regarding the next series of meetings after the organization meetings held early in November: "The reports from the second series of Social Center meetings are so splendid that I can hardly believe them. I hope you are meeting with as good success everywhere as in Clarke county. I am convinced that this Social Center movement is going to be productive of great and good results in our rural communities."

Another county superintendent said recently: "Heretofore I had seen my work entirely from the viewpoint of the school. But this new movement has given me the broader view of the school as a part of the community and inseparable from it in interests and progress. Some communities are slow to break through, but I believe we have the bear by the tail and shall not let go now."

The annual boys' and girls' agricultural and industrial contest should be held in every "Community Center." Here is where the real good is to be done. The children can all see their work on display and compare their results with those of their neighbors. Ribbons or small cash or merchandise prizes are sufficient for the community contest. The contest makes an excellent social function for the people. Winning exhibits may be sent up to the county and the state contests.

All-day community institutes constitute a most excellent plan being worked out in some counties. Speaking in the forenoon is fol-

lowed by a dinner at noon and program of sectional work in the afternoon, and a lecture in the evening. Afternoon and evening meetings are also proving exceedingly profitable and interesting.

Music of some kind can be obtained in every community. Many are getting Victrolas. There is in every community musical talent rusting for opportunities for improvement. Music, like a great many other good features, depends upon the resources of each individual community.

"COMMUNITY CENTER" CONFERENCES.

The "Community Center" meeting has unlimited possibilities as a means of interchange of ideas regarding community needs and how best to meet them. Organization and consultation must precede any successful line of work. Frequent conferences on community problems stimulate better community life and lead to constructive community work. Following are a few topics suggested for community conferences to be lead either by outside speakers or local citizens:

Good roads and how to get them.

Papers or talks on local history.

Marketing of farm products.

Rural libraries—value and how to get them.

Pupils' health problems—medical inspection, ventilation, etc.

Agriculture, history, possibilities, and present status.

Rural high schools.

Keeping boys and girls on farm. Why? How?

Why do "retired" farmers rent and move to town?

What is the significance of the large enrolment of city boys in our agricultural colleges?

What of the rural church?

Inventions of machinery and country life. Has the home gotten its share of labor saving devices?

Value of breeding in farm animals.

What bearing should "Community Center" work have upon the old problem of the difficulty of organization and cooperation among farmers?

What has been accomplished for rural schools by consolidation. Look up "John Swaney School" in Illinois.

"COMMUNITY CENTER" SOCIAL OR EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONS.

Enthusiastic reports are coming in from "Community Center" spelling bees. These usually include a short program from representatives from each of the associated districts. The "Community Center" champions go to the county contest.

Rural school girls who have been trained to cook in their homes are going into "Community Center" cooking contests. The county contest for finals will be held in the spring in connection with the county athletic meet. The "Community Center" champions will prepare and spread a banquet in the evening following the meet. This is the Douglas county plan.

Each "Community Center" may have a declamatory contest. The first winner should then be sent to the county contest to be arranged by the county superintendent. Parents and older folks should have a section in this work at least locally and take a part of the program.

The spring field meet and picnic is a charming "Community Center" event. Where the "Community Center" cooking champions are ready they may contribute greatly to the event by serving a banquet.

Literary and debating societies are always good, both from the point of view of interest and entertainment, and educational value.

SHALL THE STATE OF WASHINGTON LEAD IN AN ADVANCED POLICY OF RURAL SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION.*

Important movements, and affairs which affect the general life of a community, are always best considered in frank and open conference. No one person, or group of persons, is likely to see all sides of a question. In any movement, the point of view of a large number of persons, presented and carefully considered tends to reveal more clearly both the weak and strong points of that movement. Hence I am glad of this opportunity to come before you today with some of the problems which are of vital importance to the country life progress of our state.

We have in the state of Washington, as you know, a system of public schools of which we are proud. We felt encouraged when a Russell Sage Foundation report placed our state in the first rank as to public school expenditures and equipment and length of school year. The people of Washington may be justly proud of their educational development.

However, in spite of the recognition which has been given us, we know that Washington still has problems—grave problems to solve. It is my purpose at this time to take up one that has been before this state, as well as other states, for years and that recently has been receiving serious attention. I wish especially this morning to present to you the problem of the supervision of our rural schools.

It is unnecessary for me to take much time in explaining the organization of our public school system. As you know, we have three classes of districts. The first class district includes all cities of the first and second class. The second class districts include all cities of the third and fourth class, and the third class districts include all schools in towns and villages not incorporated, as well as the one-room so-called "country schools."

In the city schools of our state we find splendidly organized administrative systems, almost complete equipment of laboratories, libraries and gymnasiums, and well cared for and sanitary buildings. We find special instruction provided for the defective and even the attempt now to specially provide for the super-normal child. Our city systems are arranging pre-vocational classes to care for grammar school boys and girls, who have fallen behind for any reason whatsoever. Close and efficient supervision of music, drawing, penmanship and in-

*Address delivered by Mrs. Josephine Corliss Preston before the Washington Educational Association at Spokane, Oct. 31, 1913.

dustrial work, is also given. In most instances our city schools of the first and second class districts of this state present administrations of efficiency.

The question of supervision is then, as you see, well taken care of in districts of the first and second classes. The real problem of supervision which presents itself to us in this state in the small towns and isolated one-room schools.

The city schools in this or any other state have received the attention of our best educators during the past fifty years. Not until recent years has any concerted effort been made for the development of the rural school, be it found in small villages or isolated districts. In fact the development of the city school everywhere has in a measure retarded our country schools, as the city has drawn, and is continually drawing, many of the best teachers from the country.

The course of study fitted to the needs of the urban life has in many instances throughout the nation been thrust upon the country schools which exist under conditions entirely different from those surrounding the city schools.

Intelligent attention is now being given the rural schools and communities. An attempt to redirect their work by the addition of new studies to the curriculum is showing good results, but many of us feel that the redirection must be more fundamental. Reform must begin with the management. No permanent educational improvement endures unless our schools are wisely administered.

THE WORK AND REMUNERATION OF THE COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT.

The rural schools are at present under the control and supervision of OVER-WORKED and UNDER-PAID county superintendents. Because he is under-paid, in many counties he can give but one or two days a week to his work, for he must supplement his income by teaching or other work the rest of the time. Because he is over-worked, much of the time which he devotes to his duties is absorbed in clerical work. The first thing that I stand for, as an advanced step in rural supervision, is placing the office of the county superintendent upon a higher plane and giving to it the recognition that it deserves.

The leader of all movements of educational and social development of the common schools in every county is the superintendent, PROVIDING HE RENDERS THE SERVICE WHICH THE POSITION DEMANDS. The law assigns to the office of a county superintendent many duties, both clerical and administrative. Our state gives much power to the county superintendent as an administrative officer. It places much responsibility upon him in his clerical duties. The responsibility of the legally qualified teacher, legal contracts, accurate district boundary records, apportionment of all school moneys, approval of plans for school buildings in the third class districts, compulsory attendance, legal notices to school boards and teachers, circulating libraries, checking registers, annual reports, indicate the multitude and importance of his duties.

To those who have never been county superintendents this enumeration of duties means little. Those of us who have had the experience in this important work know that even in a small county the clerical work alone demands the full time of one person. In larger counties more assistance is required.

And what do we, the people of the State of Washington, the state that leads all others in public school expenditures and efficiency, do for these men and women who must devote their time and energy to this work. Let me ask you again, WHAT DO WE DO? We fail to pay them in most instances a living wage. I emphasize this fact of the inadequate salary of the county superintendent, because it presents our first and greatest stumbling block. We have had from some of our county superintendents the highest and noblest service that men and women can give to any county. We have men and women in these positions now, spending hours each day in the supervision of the rural schools of this state. The highest salary paid to any of them is \$2,000, seven of our 39 county superintendents receive this salary, two receive \$1,800, 13 counties pay a salary of \$1,200, one pays \$1,100, two pay \$1,000, seven pay \$750, one pays \$700, four pay \$600 and two pay \$500. Seventeen out of 39 receive less than \$1,200, only nine receive more than \$1,200.

Could one of you live and support your family on \$500 a year and in return for your money give twelve months of service? Could you live on \$600—\$750? Doesn't it take good management to live on \$1,000, \$1,100, or \$1,200? How much can any of us hope to save from even an \$1,800 or \$2,000 salary?

To remedy this injustice, I propose, first, that the county superintendents be given a salary of \$1,500 a year as a minimum; and that a maximum salary of not less than \$2,400 with appropriate gradations, according to the size of the county and number of school districts be made; second, that he be required to devote ALL of his time to the work; third, that in all counties having over fifty districts the county superintendent be given one deputy for the supervision and inspection of schools, and for counties having one hundred districts an additional deputy; fourth, that in ALL counties the county superintendent shall be provided with sufficient clerical assistance that he may be free to devote his time to his larger administrative duties.

I think that the mere statement of these proposals will impress you with their worth. As soon as we pay the county superintendents an adequate salary and require them to devote their whole time to administration and supervision we shall find a wonderful improvement in the work done in rural schools.

In a county with less than fifty districts where the county superintendent is relieved in a great measure of clerical work, it will be possible for him to visit all one-room schools in his county at least three times each year. When this plan is put into effect we shall find another thing true, the increased salary and added dignity given the office will attract and continue to attract to it stronger men and women.

The county superintendent will, with very few exceptions, be the big man educationally in the county and he will not feel that he must resign to accept some principalship because it pays better.

We shall then have provided for efficient and adequate supervision of our rural schools. This supervision will be standardized and made uniform throughout the entire county. We have provided this without changing our system of public school administration, without attempting to add new departments and create new offices. We have set forth a system which will meet the needs of the present and of the immediate future, and this at a minimum cost. I do not believe that this state should embark upon any plan at this time that calls for any great additional burden of taxation, even for so pressing a purpose as rural school supervision. So much for the general inspection and supervision of the rural schools.

PLANS FOR THE RURAL SCHOOLS.

In late years there has grown up a feeling that there should be a closer cooperation among school districts. Besides the assistance which the central office of the county superintendent can give, many have felt the need for the grouping of contiguous school districts for educational advancement. Various plans have been thought of or worked out.

Let us consider some of the plans that have been proposed. As you know, we have a plan for consolidation which has done much toward country life progress, both in social and educational development. Five heads of families may petition a county superintendent for a consolidation of two or more districts. The state encourages this movement by giving a bonus of 2,000 days of state money for all districts consolidated less one. Thus if two districts consolidate, the new consolidated district receives 2,000 days bonus in addition to its actual days attendance. If three districts consolidate, 4,000 days bonus is given by the state to the new district.

In the counties of our state we find a number of these consolidated centers. They have efficient supervision, a good central high school, and sometimes a number of one-room schools some miles from the central building, all under the management of one board of directors and one principal. The problem of supervision is practically solved in the consolidated district. With the consolidation, which actually consolidates the school districts into an actual, as well as an organic unit, I am in sympathy. Community life is in that way stimulated, and educational progress initiated. I heartily disapprove of a consolidation which is effected for the mere purpose of getting a bonus from the state apportionments.

Where districts go together without really consolidating their schools, in order to lessen their taxes, by the consolidation attendance accredited to them, I feel that it is no more honorable than obtaining money under false pretenses. Consolidation means consolidation of

schools, and not a method of avoiding taxation. The district area should not be so large that the people cannot be welded into one community, with common interests and feelings. Unless you can arouse among the people a genuine growing interest in their schools, the supervision that is superimposed will not be enough to accomplish large results in rural school progress. The difficulty with the consolidation plan is that it operates too slowly. The people many times must come to consolidation only through the process of education after prejudice, neighborhood contentions and selfish interests are overcome. The "active minority" is more in evidence in a district boundary change than in any other school question. Experience has proven over and over again that consolidation is accomplished by contention and strife. County commissioners are the final court of appeal in district boundary changes and sometimes they reverse the decision of the county superintendent, and thus all progress is blocked. The purpose of the consolidation plan is wise; but practice has demonstrated that if we were to wait for the consolidation plan to solve the problem of the rural school, we should have to wait until human nature is greatly modified.

Last winter a bill was presented to the Legislature which set forth another method of dealing with rural school supervision. It proposed that in counties with forty or more districts the county superintendent should have power to appoint rural school supervisors for groups of districts numbering twenty-five or less. The minimum salary of the rural supervisor was to be \$1,000, a greater salary than sixteen of our county superintendents receive. I openly opposed the plan; and told the persons most interested in the bill why I opposed it. I also gave the joint committee on education of the Legislature, my reasons. My opposition to that bill is based on the following reasons:

First, it subordinates the office of county superintendent to that of a rural school supervisor. This has been conclusively demonstrated in Oregon where the plan has been put into operation. The real rural supervisor should be the county superintendent and his deputy. The plan robs the county superintendent of those powers.

Second, it leaves the school districts exactly in their same present disjointed condition.

Third, it does nothing in the direction of stimulating common action and interest in the community. The rural school problem is the country life problem. You must vitalize the whole of country life, you must quicken it from within itself, not from without.

Fourth, the plan fails to reach those counties where the rural school problem is greatest, namely—the small counties. Eleven counties in this state would not be included in the plan; yet, these are the counties where help is needed most. For in larger counties the county superintendent is better paid and better supplied with help than in the smaller counties, where not even the county superintendent can devote his whole time to the work.

Fifth, there is danger under the plan that the supervision will not be standardized and made uniform for the county as a unit, because

the county supervisors are not closely enough in connection with the central office.

Sixth, it is proposed to pay for the rural supervisor by taking the money from the county school fund. Since the present plan for the apportionment of the county fund gives the distinct advantages to the country districts, it would be manifestly unfair to make additional inroad upon those funds for the exclusive benefit of country districts. But if the money was so taken it would simply make necessary the commensurate increase of the special tax levy of districts. I contend that such a marked increase in the burden of taxation in the State of Washington is not warranted at the present time.

For these reasons I have taken my stand against House Bill No. 65, which was presented to the Legislature last winter.

Another plan that has been proposed is to make the county the unit, abolishing all district lines permanently. That seemed a great step, and would so appear to the Legislature and to the people. But the plan needs to be worked out more completely before it can even be considered. In fact, the prospect of its adoption seems to me to be rather remote.

Still another plan for rural school supervision and general advancement emanates from Snohomish county. I asked that a brief resume of that plan be furnished me by those instrumental in working it out and shall present the brief just as it was given to me:

1st. An appointive commission of which the county superintendent shall be *ex-officio* chairman, shall redistrict all territory in each county not now included in districts of the first class, into school districts of a single class.

The new districts shall consist of the highest possible valuation, and largest area, consistent with centers of population, condition of roads, transportation, etc.

Boards of directors shall be elected as in the manner now provided by law. School clerks shall constitute the County Board of School Clerks, of whom the County Superintendent shall be *ex-officio* chairman. They shall meet annually, and make a uniform tax levy for general school purposes, rearrange district boundary lines, provide for transportation of pupils across boundary lines, establish school houses when necessary and all other duties not inconsistent with law.

The Superintendents of the new districts shall constitute the County Board of Education, of whom the County Superintendent is *ex-officio* chairman, whose duty shall be to perform all duties now delegated to the County Board of Education, and who shall meet annually with the County Board of School Clerks. They shall make reports, suggest changes in school conditions, formulate courses of study, consistent with the State Course as prescribed by law, adopt uniform text books, and perform all other duties that may arise from time to time.

A summary of its advantages is as follows:

1. Equalization of Educational Advantages.
2. Equalization of burden of taxation.
3. General elevation of standard of efficiency.
4. More complete unification.
5. Thorough supervision of all schools.
6. Better adaptation to growing needs.
7. Broadening of scope of usefulness.
8. Economy in administration.
9. Improvements in sanitation.
10. Justice to the pupil.

This plan has a great many things in it of distinct merit. It organizes school districts along the natural line of community life, equalizes valuations and tax levies, and secures the benefits of consolidation without its attendant strife and bitterness. I wish to recommend it for the careful consideration of educators of our state, members of the Legislature and citizens.

It is a timely question to ask whether or not the state as a state is ready for such a measure. It is not enough at present that a measure pass the Legislature. If it is one where there is much division of sentiment, it is sure to be presented to the people by referendum. Before we can get the people to consent to such a marked change in boundary line, two things are necessary; first, that the people be taken into confidence, and the plan with its benefits explained to them, a campaign of education, if you please; and second, that the people be brought together so that they may learn by experience the value of the Community school unit.

THE COMMUNITY CENTER PLAN.

I now wish to present to you another plan, one which I have worked out for the coordinate development of school and community. I feel that we must not wait for great changes in our laws regarding rural schools; but that we should forge ahead, taking care that our directions are correct and our course wisely chosen. I feel that the rural school is a part of country life; that its problem is a part of the country life problem. The thing that our rural school needs at the present time is vitalization more than anything else, just as does country life as a whole. Our rural communities have not kept pace with modern development in many ways, because the old idea of isolation has been allowed to prevail. Because in cities people live close together they quickly come to get together, to work together, and have a common social feeling. But in sections where the houses are far apart there is little community feeling. I believe that country communities need to be centralized, and the people quickened into a common consciousness of needs and desires.

Now, my way of bringing about this community interest is by making the rural school the social center. A survey of any county brings to light natural neighborhood trading centers. These centers

have developed stores, blacksmith shops, churches, schools, postoffice. Social life is many times the exchange of ideas on the postoffice steps, or at the corner grocery, or in the ladies' aid of the rural church. These communities are known as town or village centers. In every direction from these centers we find one-room schools. Too many times the patrons of one school district content themselves with the thought that this is OUR district, and that is YOURS. Thus is the social development of communities narrowed to the limitation of district boundary lines. Few of us realize the magnitude of the rural educational problem now before us. The readjustment in the course of study, the well arranged program, and the classification of the pupils can be intelligently made only when we know and understand the economic and social conditions of the community which affect and enter into the life of every school in our land. Experience has taught me that a school cannot rise beyond the social development of its community. Train our teachers as well as our state institutions are doing, send them out with the message, and strive as they may, they cannot make the progress that they should unless the community is moving with them. Teachers who seem to fail to "measure up" in their school, many times have complained of the indifference of the people in their community, the failure to meet a response in their earnest attempt to carry out the idea and method received in the normal school, or departments of education of any of our institutions of higher learning.

Many a neighborhood dispute settled by a county superintendent, reveals the struggle of an earnest teacher, the heroic cooperation of a number of progressive families, but also often reveals the fact as well that honest energy has been blocked by the blind prejudice of the "active minority." Perhaps it was because some patron of the district did not believe children should waste time on busy work. He remembers that this was not done when he went to school. Perhaps it was over transportation of pupils. Those who have never worked in a rural community do not know the problem of the family or perchance, two or three families, who constitute the "active minority" in some neighborhood, and who attempt to retard all progress. It is a well known fact that the farmer is individualistic. The nature of his work makes him so. Many times his life of isolation gives him "set ideas" and makes him suspicious of innovation. One family steeped in prejudice toward a certain progressive school movement can be a stumbling block in a neighborhood. No truer thought has ever been given than the one in our 1912 National Educational Association Report, which says "prejudice is more shameful than illiteracy."

It is my hope that in country life the school and community may develop together; and that by means of the school as a social center, much of this insularity and individualism that has prevailed in farming districts may be done away with.

Briefly, my plan for the organization of the community in a county is as follows:

First, the county superintendent should group the third class districts in his county around their normal and natural center. Usually this will be a town or village, sometimes it will be a natural center in the country itself.

Second, the county superintendent should appoint a supervising principal for each community, who will either be the principal of the town school, or some other active and capable teacher in the community.

Third, the work of the supervising principal is to organize the common activities of the community which may center about the school. This will include community center fairs, agricultural and industrial contests, athletic meets, spelling and declamation contests, lectures and school meetings. We shall find the fathers and mothers and patrons responding with the children in these school activities until unconsciously there will come the much needed development of social life.

Fourth, supervision and inspection is to be done by the county superintendent and his deputies; but by organizing the teachers of the various schools in his group, a supervising principal can stimulate and assist in carrying out plans and advanced ideas. He will be the community leader or social engineer in his group of neighborhood schools. The reward which he receives for his work in directing the social center activities is twofold; first, that of service in a wider sphere, and second, through his building up of a strong central high school by encouraging the outlying districts to send their children, the directors will recognize his energy and efficiency by an increased salary, or else some other board will.

Fifth, when the community has experienced the benefits that come from working together, from the cooperation in the consideration of educational and other interests, then they may desire to change their district boundary lines to make them conform to the natural community line, either by consolidation or by a redistricting of the county into large units.

You will notice that this plan does not involve any present change in law; that it creates no additional machinery and involves no great expense; and that it seeks to reach the rural school by reaching country life. The county superintendent is the leader in this work, the one who shall direct all of the work which the community centers should do.

My work in Walla Walla county along these lines has given me the assurance of experience as to its practicability. In that county where I worked, the need of consolidation was very evident. It was plain that many of our districts could have been grouped for rural high school development, agricultural experiment and a program for farm life encouraged. What effort I made toward consolidation succeeded, but it was accomplished always with a bitterness of feeling from the "active minority" that caused me many hours of serious thought. It was necessary to plan something that would encourage the neighbor-

hood groups of districts for effective team work without disturbing district boundaries. The topography of my county was studied very carefully, and finally all of the schools were grouped into ten districts. Each neighborhood group included a small village as the central unit. I called the principals of these small centers together and we planned to carry out a spelling contest in each center the first year.

I do not know what there is in a "spelling bee" that touches the heart of every man and woman in urban as well as rural life, but our county contest plan for "spelling bees" simply made the beginning of a "Social Center" out of every school house in the county, and incidentally the business men of our county who said that our schools were not teaching spelling, changed their minds before the year was over.

My principals were pleased. They were willing to give the social service to their own district community, as well as those included in the larger district. They knew as well as I that many a boy and girl whom we encouraged and urged through the work of the eighth grade would never go to a *city* high school. These principals knew, too, that these boys and girls would never go to their *own* high schools as long as those schools were small and inefficient. And so, planning for the *education* and *vitalization* of the *community*, thinking of the boys and girls who left school at the close of the seventh or eighth year and hoping to build up gradually an efficient small rural high school that would attract these young people, these men and women principals of small villages, serving as supervising principals of the surrounding one-room schools, and I as their county superintendent, began on our "Community Center" development work.

The principal of the small town, now in the enlarged field as a supervising principal, began to take heart. The community gatherings—one of which we held that year in all neighborhood centers, were in a number of instances financed by the Commercial Clubs of the small towns. It was a rare exception if a chicken dinner was not served. Hundreds of people came out to hear the speakers from the State College and other institutions. Districts whose social interests were limited by their own district lines, forgot those lines, joined with many neighboring districts in common interests which centered in the school, and before we realized it, we were moving. We were able in a short time to accomplish great and lasting results. While not all that we hoped for was accomplished, it gave me a distinct vision of the possibilities in the plan when it should be finally organized and established.

This plan works in admirably with the present movement for the emphasis on boys' and girls' fairs and contests. The real place to encourage agriculture, manual training and domestic science is in the community. One district is too small; a group is necessary for the greatest success along these lines, for then competition and general interest will supply the needed incentive.

Members of the Washington Educational Association, I have spoken to you frankly, and I hope I have set forth clearly my ideas

regarding rural school administration. Let me restate my position briefly. The work of rural school supervision should be done by the county superintendent. That he may do his work efficiently he should be given first, an adequate salary, and second, sufficient deputies and clerical assistance. The second part of the rural school problem, namely, the proper organization of the schools of a community, should be solved by the organization by the county superintendent of "Community Centers," with a supervising principal over each to encourage "Social Center" work and common school activities, reaching in this way into the very heart of the community.

**HOME USE
CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT
MAIN LIBRARY**

This book is due on the last date stamped below.
1-month loans may be renewed by calling 642-3405.
6-month loans may be recharged by bringing books
to Circulation Desk.

Renewals and recharges may be made 4 days prior
to due date.

**ALL BOOKS ARE SUBJECT TO RECALL 7 DAYS
AFTER DATE CHECKED OUT.**

MAR 24 1976

REC. CIR. MAR 27 '76

LD21—A—40m-8,'75
(S7737L)

General Library
University of California
Berkeley



