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THE AIMS OF ADULT RECREATION *

MARY P. FOLLETT

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After Organized Play—What?

We have all had a tendency, I think, to be a little vague about aims when it has been a question of grown-ups. When asked to write a paper on adult recreation, I inquired what adult meant and was told, "All who no longer count themselves children." Much more has been done in formulating the ends to be reached through play for those under sixteen than for those over that age. It is difficult, however, to develop a proper technique for the recreation of adults if we do not put clearly before ourselves the objects of that technique. We have all talked a good deal about organized play and supervised play, and indeed that emphasis has been needed and is needed and will be needed for a long time yet to come. Still most of us are now looking forward to the step beyond this and are asking, more specifically than ever before when speaking of *adult* recreation,—organized for what purpose? supervised with what intention, to what end? We have been delighted justly with the results of organized play, as measured against unorganized play, but organized play is certainly not where we are going to leave off; it is exactly where we are going to begin. Let us suppose we *have* organized play. Now what are the aims of organized recreation for adults? In other words, what is it we hope from the leisure hours of working young men and women, or older men and women?

To Develop the Social Being

I should say the primary, fundamental aim, including all others, is to develop the true social being, to fit men and women to take their place in society,—to fulfil its general relations, its civic relations, to the utmost of their ability. What is needed to attain this end?

Subordinate the Individual to the Group

First, to teach the subordination of the individual to the group, not the subordination of repression, but of activity for the common good.

* Extracts from address given at the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Playground and Recreation Association of America, Richmond, Virginia, May 7, 1913

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Develop a Sense of Responsibility

Secondly, to develop the powers of self-expression and initiative and the sense of responsibility. As has been recently pointed out, many men and women work all day in occupations which tend to repress and stifle all initiative, all power of decision, of self-expression, or of self-dependence. Even when the factor of the machine does not enter in, one obeys every moment orders from above, and never has the education of making one's own decisions and failing or succeeding from one's own initiative. Is the development of our young men and women to stop here? Are we going to have the right kind of citizens unless we provide *means* to develop initiative, will-power, self-direction? Those who have made a special study of the years from sixteen to twenty-five agree that the quality most often lacking, or existing in very small degree, is that one most needed of all—a sense of responsibility. How to arouse and develop the sense of responsibility through recreation is one of the most vital problems before us, I believe. To this end, and to other ends, all adult recreation should be constantly and insistently a training in self-government.

Form Desirable Habits

Third, the formation of habits is a most important part of recreation. You cannot *preach* to people pluck, perseverance, moderation, self-restraint, and expect them thereby to become persevering, self-controlled. You may at the utmost arouse their admiration of these qualities, even their wish to possess them, which is of course a good foundation, but it is, alas, only the foundation, the whole structure has now to be erected. How are we going to help our young people erect this structure?

Each One Must Have a Definite Purpose

The Boston School Committee in October, 1912, opened, in four high-school buildings, evening recreation centers for all those over fourteen not in school. Only those are allowed to join the Boston evening centers who wish to come for some *definite* purpose. This is a principle not yet fully accepted in *adult* recreation, but one that I believe is coming to be accepted more and more. It has always been thought necessary to provide some specific activity, basket-weaving, sloyd, games, for children's clubs, but many people have thought that those over sixteen or seventeen could come together with profit in what was called a social club. Most of us think now that the degree of profit from such clubs has been exaggerated.

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We have all known many of these social clubs (they are usually called social and literary clubs!), they often degenerate into mere lounging places or places to drop into for half an hour or so before the commercial amusements of the city begin, to read a newspaper or to make an appointment.

Active Participation Men and women, boys and girls, who have been under other people's direction all day need in the evening something more than passive amusement, which requires nothing but reception on their part. The active participation of the individual is necessary for the amusement to have life-giving power. We saw this in our mothers' clubs in our four centers this winter. They enjoyed seeing their children do folk-dances, but it was the afternoons when they danced the Virginia reel themselves that they went home with their faces aglow and with the quickened heart-beat which meant a lifting of burdens and an easier facing of the home problems.

Ninety-five Clubs—and No Provision for the so-called social club.
Not One "Social Club"

In our Boston evening centers we have made no provision for the so-called social club. We have had this winter in the four centers, twenty-nine musical clubs (orchestras, bands, glee clubs, mandolin clubs and mixed choruses), fourteen dramatic, eleven plain sewing, novelty sewing and Irish lace, one millinery, eight folk-dancing, one social dancing, four young men's civic clubs,* one young women's

* In Munich one of the main objects of the continuation schools, considered of equal importance with the industrial training, is the training in citizenship. The Boston School Committee is one of the first school boards in this country to recognize training in citizenship as part of its duty to our youth from 14 to 21, as its duty to those who have left school at 14 as well as to those who are still in school, and it hopes to reach through the evening centers those it does not reach through the regular day or night school.

Mr. James Clark, President of the Edinburgh Board of Education, said in his report of 1911: "The close of the day school course is probably the most critical period in the life of children. There is grave danger of educational and moral waste if they are suddenly set free from discipline and instruction." And of equal interest and significance are the two questions and answers in the 1912 report of the Edinburgh organizer of continuation classes:

"How can the control, discipline and training of the old system of apprenticeship be obtained under modern conditions?"

"How can workers in blind alley occupations be prepared for entry into the ranks of adult labour?"

The answers given are:

"1. Attendance at continuation classes.

"2. The taking part in some part of corporate life—club life, Boy Scouts, Boys' Brigade, gymnastic classes, athletic clubs."

The juxtaposition of no. 1 and no. 2 is a striking corroboration of the position of the Boston School Committee which last year began the education of club activities in the evening centers, and this year is asking the Legislature for money for continuation schools. Our Committee has seen that the fourteen to eighteen or twenty year age must have further oversight and training and is taking the same two means as advocated by Edinburgh for providing that guidance.

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civic club, one men's civic club, eight athletic clubs, one printing, nine art, four boys' games clubs, four girls' games clubs (not for the playing of games, but to prepare girls from seventeen to twenty to tell stories to children and to teach them games and songs), and four mothers' clubs,—in all ninety-five.

Everybody Does Something

The young people of each neighborhood have been steadily encouraged to *do* something. If some one had a wish to play the violin, that was discovered, and he was shown some way of learning how, so that he could join the neighborhood orchestra. If a young man wished to learn to debate or to know something of civic affairs, every opportunity was given him. Dancing was favored as being as valuable in its way as civic training. All who wished some form of activity were cordially welcomed in the centers. (They have had moving-pictures, it is true, once a week or once a fortnight, but all who came to these were encouraged to join some club and take some active part in the center). You can easily see the effect of this plan on the neighborhoods. As the young men and women could not get into the center clubs unless they did something, they began to inquire of themselves what they wished to do. Thus all had the training and development of the activity chosen. We hope through this requirement alone to make each neighborhood more *alive*.

Many Working for the Good of All

Those activities were chosen for the centers which required pulling together, such as dramatic and glee clubs, orchestras and bands, civic and debating clubs, folk-dancing and team games. In these it was hoped the members would learn patience, perseverance, pluck, self-control, forbearance. But above everything else it was hoped that through such activities as these might be taught the valuable lesson of the subordination of the individual to the group.

A Basis of Self- government

From the beginning we have had a basis of self-government. Each club had its own officers and constitution and was self-governing, while a central council in each center composed of the president and one elected delegate from each club was given as much control as it was able to take. It is hoped that some day these central councils will be sufficiently trained to take practical direction of the centers.

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Self-government Necessary to the Success of Adult Recreation

The absolute insistence I always put on self-government is not only because I think people need this training. I think also it is the only way we can keep our members. It is a good idea to catch your hare before you cook it, and what some of us have felt chiefly about adult recreation was not so much perhaps concerned with the question of how to deal with adults after we got them, as how to get hold of them, or rather to keep them, for novelty will always bring numbers at first. I believe that there is only one way to keep them and that is to make them really feel that they are directing themselves, that the place is theirs, that they have charge of all the activities and are responsible for them. I believe that real self-government is absolutely necessary to the success of adult recreation.

For the older men and women the truth of this is obvious, but I believe it to be just as true for the young men and women. The adolescent age is utterly different, physiologically and psychologically, from the age of the child under fourteen. Just at this age, too, the external circumstances of the child's life are changing; he is earning money and is partially independent economically, and feels wholly independent humanly. Our methods must meet this state of things frankly, and be utterly different from those followed in school. The secret is to give this period of youth just as much self-direction as is wisely possible.

And the question is not whether we shall *allow* them self-government or not; we have to *teach* them self-government. Self-government is not a thing which can be *presented* to you. It is like almost everything else in life, a thing which you must win, must conquer for yourself. This of all the functions of adult recreation centers, I believe to be the most important,—to show our young people how to win self-government, to train them in the ways of self-direction.

Not the Vote Alone, but the Preparation for the Vote

The director of a club to whom I gave suggestions in regard to his club being self-governed, told me triumphantly the next week: "I didn't decide such and such a matter for them. I got them together at 9.25 [five minutes before closing time] and put it up to them and told them they were to decide; so we got their vote and now we are going to do as they decided." That director had understood only half of what I meant.

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It is the *process* of self-government that is educational and valuable. Instead of giving them five minutes to make their decision, they ought to have had an hour.

On the other hand I was present at a meeting of a central council where they took two hours to decide whether the colors of the organization should be dark blue and white or medium blue and white. There was a hot debate. But I saw they were learning in some measure during that time self-control, forbearance, courtesy, consideration for the opinions of others, and many other valuable qualities. It was that two hours that I think of value to those young people, not just the two minutes at the end when the vote was taken. Beginning with questions in which they will be genuinely interested and yet in which we are willing to give them the final decision without claiming the right of veto, gradually our members can be given more and more responsibility.

At our Boston centers the members preside at public meetings, usher at concerts and lectures, and have general charge of the conduct of all public assemblies. This is very important in the case of dances. The large dance which closed the activities of the centers this year was attended by six hundred people, and managed, with constant help and advice, by the members of the centers themselves. Twenty-one floor directors, aides, held frequent meetings for three weeks, and were taught how to work out for themselves the standards for that dance and the whole method of conduct. It is our hope gradually to get our members to take some responsibility towards the younger ones, also responsibility in community and municipal efforts, and to understand their responsibility as voters.

Education Better than Regulation

The development of responsibility and self-direction will be the most effective means of raising standards. We are hearing a great deal just now of *regulated* recreation, regulated dance-halls. I think we must give this word regulation a secondary place. You can force a moral code on people from above yet this will change them very little, but by a system of self-governing clubs with leaders who know how to lead, we can make real progress in educating people to higher standards. This is true of athletic games as well as of dances. We find indeed that it is true of all parts of our center work. Through the stormy paths of club election of officers, I have seen leaders often guide their young men to an understanding of

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honest politics. It is usually *easier*, it is true, to do *for* people, it is easier to "regulate" their lives, but it is not the way to bring the results we wish. We want education not regulation.

We Look for a Positive Result

We can get a recreation raised to its highest power of usefulness only through able leadership. The greatest need of the adult recreation movement is a wise and trained leadership, a leadership realizing the furthest possibilities of recreation and trained in the methods by which these possibilities may be reached. We surely cannot feel any large degree of satisfaction that young men and women have, during the time they have been with us, been kept out of undesirable places. We cannot be content with our work unless we see its positive influence in the lives of those with whom we have to do. For this we require more than sympathetic, well-intentioned young men and women for leaders. We have got to put at the head of every recreation center, outdoors or indoors, rural or urban, trained people, men and women who understand the psychology of recreation for adults as well as the psychology of play for children. We want people who understand that their work with adults must be constructive and who know how to make it so.

The Need for Technique

We used to have an idea that we as leaders emanated something regenerating from our mere presence. It seems now a particularly naïve idea. We know now that we must get people to do their own regenerating. This is exactly our task, to help them to do this. But there is a technique here to be worked out. I wish we might all agree on this point and concentrate for the next few years on the working out of this technique. Let us make a more definite attempt than we have ever before to co-ordinate technique and aims, to study the technique of our work at every single step in its relation to the ends to be reached.

Fitting for a Larger Measure of Democracy

I cannot sum up my ideas on the aims of adult recreation better than by saying it is to fit people for a larger measure of democracy. We used to talk a good deal about doing *for* others; that has been superseded by our present idea of doing *with* others. The whole significance of the value of recreation is that you play *with* people. You study by yourself, many forms of work you perform by yourself, you can take exercise by yourself. Now the most striking characteristic of the present time is that people are doing more

HOW TO SECURE A LARGER ATTENDANCE

things together. They are coming together more than ever before in municipal movements, for national purposes, in labor unions, in associations of employers and employees. The key-note of the twentieth century is the passion for solidarity. That this is so is the great hope of our future democracy. To train people for that larger degree of democracy which we see coming, to help them learn how to work and play together, how to live together harmoniously and effectively, is the great mission of adult recreation and what makes it loom up so large at the present moment. Because togetherness is the essence of play, we can through adult recreation, while giving it expression, at the same time foster it and bring it to fine issues.

HOW TO SECURE A LARGER ATTENDANCE AT EVENING RECREATION CENTER MEETINGS FOR ADULTS *

JOHN H. CHASE

Superintendent Playground Association, Youngstown, Ohio

When we opened our eight schoolhouses for family gatherings (not for young folks; we had boy scouts, camp fire girls, and gymnastics for these) for family gathering, meaning Papa, Mary, Johnnie, we expected about thirty or forty would be present, and if refreshments were announced the number might be inflated to seventy or eighty, but to make sure we provided a hundred and twenty-five chairs for each center. To our utter surprise when we opened our doors in every case between two and three hundred people crowded in, took every chair and every inch of standing room, and made it necessary to turn away all late-comers. This kept up through the season. What was the reason? We had observed four types of meetings in other cities.

Learning from Other Cities

First, some cities we knew had moving picture shows in their schools. These drew the crowds, but in material were little better than the common commercial moving picture theater and were expensive to maintain, with their high rent for films and a licensed operator,

* Extracts from address given at the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Playground and Recreation Association of America, Richmond, Virginia, May 8, 1913