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"OUT ON EARTH"

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I am sure this occasion is of profound importance. The theme I have in mind is "Out on Earth." Thinking it over, it has significant implications. If there is anyone in the world who should be "out on earth" and whom we should trust to be "out on earth," it should be human beings. We have all kinds of animals living "out on earth." We trust them almost without question. Are human beings not capable of living "out on earth?" How can we get them out of the cities and how can we provide more adequately for their country recreation? That is part of the question you are to consider today.

I think we need, therefore, pause a few moments and look at the background of our crowded city life and we will find reasons why people need to spend more time "out on earth." Do I imply that we do not spend much time "out on earth?" Yes, this is the case. In the United States as a whole, approximately fifty-five percent of the population resides in large cities; places where there is congestion and where there are pigeon hole apartments in which people live. It is very difficult to get off of concrete walks and foundations. It is difficult for many people to get out into the country. Does it make any difference whether you live on concrete or dirt? It makes a lot of difference and you can find evidences of it. Something is happening to the way people think and act. As population increases and becomes more centralized, more power is vested in fewer people--others become dependent on the city for more things. This increase of regimentation does affect the attitudes of people.

We have only to think back to the landing of the Pilgrims. These people were seeking freedom - farms to work - and the right of self-determination. Later they called it Democracy. Upon arrival they found Indians, a few scared Indians and a few brave ones, who offered help and food. If it had not been for these few friendly Indians, these sturdy settlers might not have survived.

As far back as 1650 we find evidences of these early pioneers having pushed their way to Port Jervis and along the Delaware River, searching for minerals and building their homes. These people had daring, vigor and determination. Up to the time of signing our Constitution, therefore, was a period of building - the formation of a pattern of living. Finally our Constitution was created and signed, a little over a hundred and fifty years ago. A design for living - a concept of freedom - our form of government was created. The concept emerged before the actual signing. The ideals were set forth - a new concept - we have a right to continue them. In line with current thought and happenings it may be divided into two types--a true democracy and a false democracy.

False Democracy

We should beware of the earmarks of the false type. It argues in all its brands and brandishings that everyone should be brought to an average, irrespective of individual capacity and initiative. That means certain individuals with capacities above the average would be forced down and those who are below the average in capacities would come up to the average in spite of their abilities. This is an insidious philosophy.

The proponents of the false democracy take advantage of the freedom granted them and use it to climb the democratic ladder to gain control and then knock the ladder from under themselves and everyone else. They dote on mass movements, mass psychology and emotional appeal. The public is quite gullible and needs to watch its step.

The false democracy speaks of the common voice and then directs that voice. Who can say or believe that in our dictator countries a plebiscite is a true expression of individual will?

In spite of some objections and criticisms of democracy as we visualize and practice it in this country, every one should be very proud of the privileges, freedom, and right to think and do as he pleases. Our form of government permits far more freedom and is far more liberal than we realize. It is possible to do almost anything we please. The instrumentalities are there.

The false democracy further glibly argues about minorities and then proceeds to choke their minorities into submission and almost complete obliteration; it destroys individual personality by submerging it into a central pattern; it parades in gay costumes of many styles and colors--beware of these styles. Keep in mind that as people become more crowded in large centers there is a greater tendency to centralized control, coercion and authoritarianism. Do we find any traces of false democracy in our camps?

True Democracy

True democracy on the other hand says that each individual should be free and helped to reach the height of his capacity for service to his fellow man and his country, along with the ideals usually associated with the word.

The external signs of democracy are not so vital. We have perhaps made too much of them--allegiances, flag waving, salutes, and parading. They are at times important and we would not want to do without them. But we must not be fooled by them and think that when we parade or salute we necessarily have democracy. There may be sufficient signs of conformity, but no real inner understandings or convictions about it.

This inner thing is self control and is an extremely valuable part of true democracy. It is, in fact, something so deep and significant we can well call it spiritual. It controls our inner thoughts, convictions and actions.

True democracy is something more than a majority vote. It is an awareness of individual personality and its development to the maximum degree. With the full recognition and understanding of this view, the minority problem

cannot be wrongly handled. Opposition is a good thing for us all. It should, however, be constructive and loyal. Our form of government requires opposition. We elect it and pay for it by taxation. Constructive and loyal opposition is an essential part of true democracy.

It is essential, therefore, in our organized communities, to think and work out our problems so that the true democracy will be aided and encouraged instead of the false type. Concentration of people in small areas has a profound effect upon national attitudes - thinking. One problem is to get people "out on earth" and into the woods. Youth wants it and needs it. It is man's nature to get out of crowded areas. After a time it becomes imperative. The necessity of providing more spaces and facilities is now acute. I am aware of the technical problems, but through cooperation of all agencies, municipal, county, state, park systems, recreation departments and water departments, I am sure great progress can be made. Too, the public must be educated to use these areas and facilities properly.

The Life Camps between High Point and Stokes State Forest has a thousand acre tract with a forty-five acre spring fed lake. We have a reforestation problem, a watershed problem, a conservation problem, a fire protection problem and the responsibility to teach youth how to live out in the woods. The outstanding feature in our camp is that we have no crowding into small places. Each group of eight children and two adult counselors lives in their own small camp--a covered sled, covered wagon, tree house or some similar shelter. They build, construct, move about, make and care for their own shelters. They do much of their own cooking. They are facing the realities of living!

Basis for Camp Living

If we wish to teach youth to love the out-of-doors and the woods naturally, it can best be done by living in the woods as much as possible. Briefly stated, there are five major emphases basic to the captivity procedure of the decentralized type of camp:

Shelter: There should be various types of shelters. Campers should share in designing, building, altering and keeping them in repair. Man has always had an urge to put a roof over his head. Youth likes to build, work and create, especially when they can enjoy the benefits quickly.

Food: Campers should share as much as possible in planning their menus under proper guidance. They should know what various items cost--how to care for food and how to cook. We should take full advantage of this fine educational opportunity. Campers cannot learn much about these problems when the dietitian does it all. They can do it and like to do it.

Self Occupation: Each small camp should work out its own program. Under wise and careful counselor guidance they should and can assume the most of this responsibility. A centralized program, no matter how many choices are given, does not develop the powers of self direction comparable to the small group plan.

Spiritual Uplift: A fuller knowledge and deeper understanding of nature causes one to dip deeper into the realm of things spiritual. A part of the spiritual influence is found in this poem written by camper Joe True at Life Camp Pole Bridge last summer:

What is the night?
A dark and fearsome thing
That causes us to tremble,
To bend our knees,
And pray for light?

Ah no! 'tis beauty
'Tis beauty born of peace
And rest from daily strife,
A part of eternity
Is the beauty of the night.

Group Relationship: Living in small groups of six or eight campers and two counselors intensifies individual relationship and interdependence. Little things count for more and are more readily observed and evaluated by camper and counselor alike.

Under this decentralized campsite procedure construction costs are less. Maintenance costs are also less. We have considerable evidence to indicate that character growth is far greater under the decentralized plan.

Adequate leadership is essential in any endeavor. In response to a demand for adequately trained administrators in camping and recreation, we have established the National Camp which will operate this coming summer. People taking this course will come from organizations, park systems and school systems. Our camps and the National Camp located in New Jersey will be pleased to cooperate in any way we can to promote better recreation and camping for more people in New Jersey.

How to use watershed areas for recreational purposes presents many problems. If the issues are freely and frankly presented and all groups cooperate, I feel sure that real progress can be made. You have already made a fine start!
