

TALK AT THE METHODIST CHURCH, SUNDAY, OCT. 29, 1933

-- Dr. Robert H. Wright

It is an interesting thing to me that we have set aside one week during the year and designated it Childhood and Youth Week. If we are to carry on our government, our institutions, our civilization, something must be done to give children and young people an opportunity to prepare themselves for their responsibilities as mature citizens. We all realize that if one generation of boys and girls in any state, in any nation, should go without education, civilization would automatically drop back to barbarism. It is absolutely essential, therefore, that we give the children and young people an opportunity to make the most possible of their lives, and to throw around them the kind of environment that will help them develop into right-minded men and women. Of course, education is, in a large measure, dependent upon the type of schools we have. We, in North Carolina, are operating an eight months school term. That leaves approximately sixteen or eighteen weeks at one time that the child is out of school, that he has nothing to do. By decree of the President these children cannot work, that is, be employed to do any steady work, until they are sixteen years of age. The young folks from that age down are without anything to do. On the farms it is different, there is no question of their working there. This gives the farm boy and girl a better chance to make good than the city boy or girl has. We must, therefore, create some kind of sentiment among our citizens to give the youth some kind of activity during this vacation period. If we do not, I am afraid to prophesy what the results will be. If the president's organization works successfully, the adults of the nation will also have shorter working hours, and be paid more for the time they do work. It looks now that we are sure to come to a thirty hour week; that means ^{only} five hours a day for only six days a week, which will mean eight hours at least, and probably much more, left on the hands of working people--and by working people I mean everybody except school teachers and preachers. What are mature people going to do with that time?

The schools must do something; there must be some organization for these mature people that will enable them to use this leisure time to advantage. What has this to do with Childhood and Youth Week? Mature people set the standards of conduct and make the environment in which the youth grow. If mature people are engaged in activities that are ennobling they are setting that example for the youth. We are really face to face with the most serious problems that have confronted our nation during my day. We will have more time to loaf or to engage in some kind of activities that will be elevating. The schools have recently eliminated many things people need to use in their leisure time--art, music, and things that somehow reach the soul and make one grow better. They are being called "frills". In reality they are the thrills that come into human life, but those who are shaping the destinies of our schools say we must get back to reading, writing and 'rithmetic. There is a utilitarian trend in education all over the nation, and if it dominates, Jehovah alone can tell what will come to our people. If we neglect those things that are ennobling and uplifting, if we fail to train the youth of today to read good books instead of trash, to gambol instead of gamble, we will have to pay for this neglect. We need to learn how to play, how to engage in activities that are sportsman-like, that bring out the best in life. Vacation time should be used for the up-building of human character.

The church is our organization for the development of the spiritual life. By The church, I mean all the Christian denominations, not any one particular division of the Christian churches. It is the spirit that counts, it is the spirit that lives on. This body of ours changes once in about seven years, but the spirit ~~lives~~ lives on; even after this body is laid to rest.

The responsibility that now rests upon the churches has been increased greatly by the new social order that confronts us. If the church does not save the situation, there is but little for us to look forward to.

"We are blind until we see
That in the human plan
Nothing is worth the making
If it does not make a man.
Why build the nation glorious
If the child unbuilt goes?
In vain we build the city
Unless the child also grows."