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AMERICA'S NEIGHBORLINESS

The strongest cement yet developed for binding men and women together in peaceful relations is neighborliness. Nothing else so takes hold, so reaches into society's cracks, so ties its fragments into a whole. It is the world's most effective social force.

All of us with an American background are familiar with its practical workings. Run back to the days of your great, great, etc., grandfather and grandmother in any pioneer community - New England - Pennsylvania - Ohio - the Middle West - the South - and you will find that it was neighborliness which kept people together.

In those days as today there were orphaned children, crippled men, homeless women, the old, the sick; unable to work they must either die or be looked after. Your good neighbor among pioneers took for granted that it was his business to see that in some way they were cared for. Read the early records of Town Meetings, of Church Conferences, and you will find a constant interest in placing those who were homeless and helpless. Families in pioneer communities, often poor themselves, took in the orphan child, made him one of themselves. There was not always a legal binding though sometimes that

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happened, but it was taken as a matter of course that the orphan was the charge of the good neighbor. There was many a fireside in those early days by which sat a crippled or homeless old man or woman. I can remember myself when in cases of illness either in the country or in the town where we alternately spent our time a sick person was the care of the neighborhood. There were no town hospitals, no trained nurse service, few practical nurses, so if the family was too small or too worn out you took a night or day turn at the bedside.

As for the poor, the unemployed, the good neighbor had them always in mind. Out of the larder there went not merely the ten percent which the accepted religious code of the day devoted to the Lord's work, but more often it was twenty.

This neighborliness at the start was necessarily individual, unorganized, but it was not long before it came under the direction of the Church which as we know was the first institution of the American pioneer. In the Church there was soon set up a collective neighborliness handling the problems with more system but with no less individual devotion.

I grew up on the Women's Aid Society, an institution inherited from my great, great grandmother. The society, as I remember, did as thorough "case work" as any organized society of today. It had its regular clientele which it strove to keep at work to clothe, feed, nurse, place in homes as the needs arose, and in epidemics it guarded the

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homes and tackled the work like a band of trained nurses, unscientific of course, but they managed to do their job. It was a triumph of volunteer friendliness.

Out of these early forms of neighborliness there have grown naturally and inevitably as society has enlarged, become more complicated, new forms of neighborliness. Our great institutions for the care and training of children, summer camps, boys and girls clubs, opportunities for work and helpful interests, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, our hospitals, nursing service, Homes for the Aged - all of these fine latter day developments are the natural outcome of early forms of America's neighborliness.

We no longer individually watch at night over the bedside of the sick and poor, we support and direct hospitals where it is done more effectively. I am told that nine out of every ten bedside cases are now cared for by trained visiting nurses. They are paid out of our private funds. It is you and I who must see that they are supported to do what is our own individual inherited task. And what need there is today of these nurses. The Children's Bureau reports that the long depression has left its mark particularly on children. Thousands of our little folks have gone through these years without having on any day enough good nourishing food; they have been crowded into uncomfortable houses; they have not had proper medical care. Nothing but a renewed effort, a revival of the spirit of the good neighbor, is going to give them this

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coming winter what they need.

What is true of children is true all down the line of Human Needs. We have developed institutions to do the work our grandparents once took care of; we have put ourselves into them. We cannot let them languish at the moment of greatest need any more than those ancestors of ours let people die uncared for in times of famine and pestilence. They went in and did their best whatever the cost. That is what we who carry on the spirit and practices of neighborliness they left us must do today.

It is not a question of what the Government may or may not be doing in certain essential ways. The Government cannot do the work of the good neighbor. There is personal intensive work, your duty and my duty. We must meet the individual needs of our particular community. The community is our business. The better and safer and happier we make it, the better our government will be; for we make the government, it does not make us.

Luckily and logically given the evolution of the spirit of American neighborliness we have developed a splendid organization for preserving it in bitter times, that grand Mobilization in the interest of Human Needs which has been held every Fall through all the years of Depression. Devoted men and women from all parts of the Union are annually giving the best of themselves to preserve the tradition of neighborliness. The annual campaign is now on and if you are true to the spirit of your great, great American ancestors you will do your part - whatever your taxes.

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