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OREGON STATE DEFENSE COUNCIL



317 STATE CAPITOL BUILDING, SALEM, OREGON
CIVILIAN WAR SERVICES
CITIZENS' SERVICE CORPS
728 Corbett Bldg Portland, Ore.

December 28, 1942

Mr. Jerrold Owen, Coordinator
Oregon State Defense Council
317 State Capitol Building
Salem, Oregon

Dear Mr. Owen:

Enclosed herewith is a copy of a report sent to Mrs. Helen Schreiner last Saturday. She telephoned a request for this information last week and, as Mrs. St. Pierre explained to Mr. Olson, if we had waited for a clearance from your office before forwarding it, there would have been a delay that would have caused us to miss Mrs. Schreiner's deadline of Monday morning.

I hope this is satisfactory to you, then. Apparently these reports were being made from several Coast cities as source material for a Reader's Digest article on the Block Plan and they were all to be based on a list of specific questions. Let's hope my small effort will succeed in getting Portland a mention amongst the others.

Sincerely yours,

Dorothy M. Potter

(Miss) Dorothy M. Potter
Field Representative
Civilian War Services

Encl.



As Mrs. Evelyn A. Smith, Block Chief for Portland, expressed it, "There has been a growth in the number of men and women who feel very little responsibility for this country as yet. They are hard to reach and convince that their defense contribution is not coming from them for their part in winning the war."

ASPECTS OF THE BLOCK PLAN IN PORTLAND, OREGON

Mrs. Smith also discussed the interesting thought that Block Plans would not be of any value unless they are carried out by the women.

The use of its Block Leaders as solicitors this year brought Portland, Oregon to an average of 130 per cent of its War Chest quota and 153 per cent of its Red Cross goal.

With such measurable profit and proof in dollars and cents the Block Plan in Portland can truly be called a success, even though its organization is not yet complete. When fully set up this system will include between eight and nine thousand women. At present 3,995 workers have been enrolled and have put in an average of 6 hours each on five separate campaigns in the city: The War Chest and Red Cross drives, distribution of bomb-control and "Share the Meat" literature, and silk stocking and household fat salvage campaigns.

Portland's Block Plan had its nucleus before Pearl Harbor when those women who are now leaders first volunteered as air raid wardens. On their replacement by men in this job they became assistant wardens, and later were absorbed into the Block Plan, of course retaining their same geographical jurisdiction. Since this made-to-order group was at hand to take over the Block Plan it was never necessary to call residents together for an election of leaders, either block, sector or zone. In Portland's system, by the way, previous titles have been retained to the extent that sector and zone leaders are known as precinct and area chairmen respectively.

Portland as a defense center has grown into a city of 400,000 during the last year--an increase of almost 100,000 over its 1940 census figure. This tremendous growth has increased the problems of Block Leaders in some sections of the city.

As Mrs. Joseph A. Minott, Block Chief for Portland, expressed it, "There has been a great influx of new people, who feel very little responsibility to this community as yet. They are hard to reach and convince that their defense industry work is not enough contribution from them for their part in winning the war.

Mrs. Minott also expressed the interesting thought that Block Plans would not be of war-time duration only. She foresaw that they might be called on for sometime after in an attempt to aid in educational campaigns and readjustments of the public. She felt that every leader in Portland would agree that there was a great satisfaction in doing this work and that in many instances it afforded an opportunity to serve their country to women who otherwise were unable to be active; those with small children for example. The greatest compensation to these volunteer workers is in knowing theirs is a patriotic job and an important one. As Mrs. Stella Dunbar, a Block Leader, expressed it, "We are all trying to do our bit. Being a Block Leader has made me realize that we are all working together all over the country."

The Block Plan has definitely brought about an increase in friendliness amongst neighbors of long standing. Every leader interviewed remarked upon the friendly reception they received, and this large influx of newcomers has likewise offered an opportunity for new contacts and friends, apparently. Mrs. Clinton D. Town, Precinct Chairman, indicated that she, in her capacity as a Block Leader, always called upon any newcomers in her neighborhood, at the same time making the interview the occasion for a friendly visit of welcome. A Mrs. W. H. Barnard, who is an Area Chairman in Portland's Northeast section, mentioned that since her installation in this office she had come to know six other women in her immediate neighborhood much better; to the extent, in fact, that this group had formed a bridge club. Mrs. Barnard makes her Area meetings the occasion for afternoon tea and a purely social gathering at the conclusion of her period of instruction.

Last spring during a city-wide "Good Neighbor Week" a number of neighborhood parties were held throughout the city in private homes. At one such typical gathering

children and parents alike were present, games were played, interesting travel movies shown, and refreshments were served for which a small fee was paid. There was no repetition of this entertainment, however, in spite of plans made for another party, as a Block Plan project. Such sheerly social gatherings would seem to be impractical to a defense-occupied population and it might be noted that these neighborhood parties were engineered and well publicized during the campaign week only.

Until transportation or other war-time difficulties make the situation more acute, it is felt that individual Portlanders will generally continue their social diversion amongst particular friends however scattered. Portland has always been a city of good-neighborliness though, but as Mrs. Minott said, "Neighborliness is different from a social community of interest."

Distinct social strata are lacking within a district in this city since the income levels dictate residence sites and it is impossible to find the extremes of poverty and wealth within the same section often encountered in the larger Eastern towns.

For this reason we cannot give any examples of social barriers being leveled through the Block Plan. They just simply never were present to begin with. On the other hand, cooperation has increased.

One Block Leader, a former nurse, told of her recent fat salvage efforts. "All the people in my block", she said, "are elderly couples. They accumulate such a little bit of fat at a time in these small households that before a regulation pound tin could be filled some of it might be spoiled. So I've made it my business to collect what they do have regularly and combine these into one larger tin for the whole block's contribution." This Leader, it is understood, has also distributed the smaller cans she later picks up and has marked them with a bright red "V".

Mrs. A. Gresham, a Precinct Chairman, told of a Block Leader in her sector, who found a household in her calls with a permanent invalid in it. She has since made arrangements to help out in this home occasionally and relieve the tied-down nurse.

It is of course obvious that this increasing neighborliness and cooperation are themselves the opposite to usual big-city indifference, and thereby "small-townish".

Mrs. Barnard, the Area Chairman previously mentioned, tells of her experience with a Victory Garden last year. She was inspired by the efforts of her next-door neighbor on one side. Her neighbor on the opposite then followed suit likewise, remarking that he "couldn't be left out of the line-up".

It seems pretty safe to generalize from sample interviews then that neighborliness, without ^{many} actual social tie-ins, is proving one wartime development and that the Block Plan has definitely aided in this new spirit.

To quote Mrs. Minott once more in conclusion, "Portland's Block Plan is proving a sound idea and with increased ^{privations} we anticipate the neighborly feeling of sharing and working together will be stimulated for all of us -- Leaders and public alike. This neighborliness seems an essential part of our morale. I hope we can all continue in this new emphasis on the kindly feeling to our fellows."

campaigns.

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