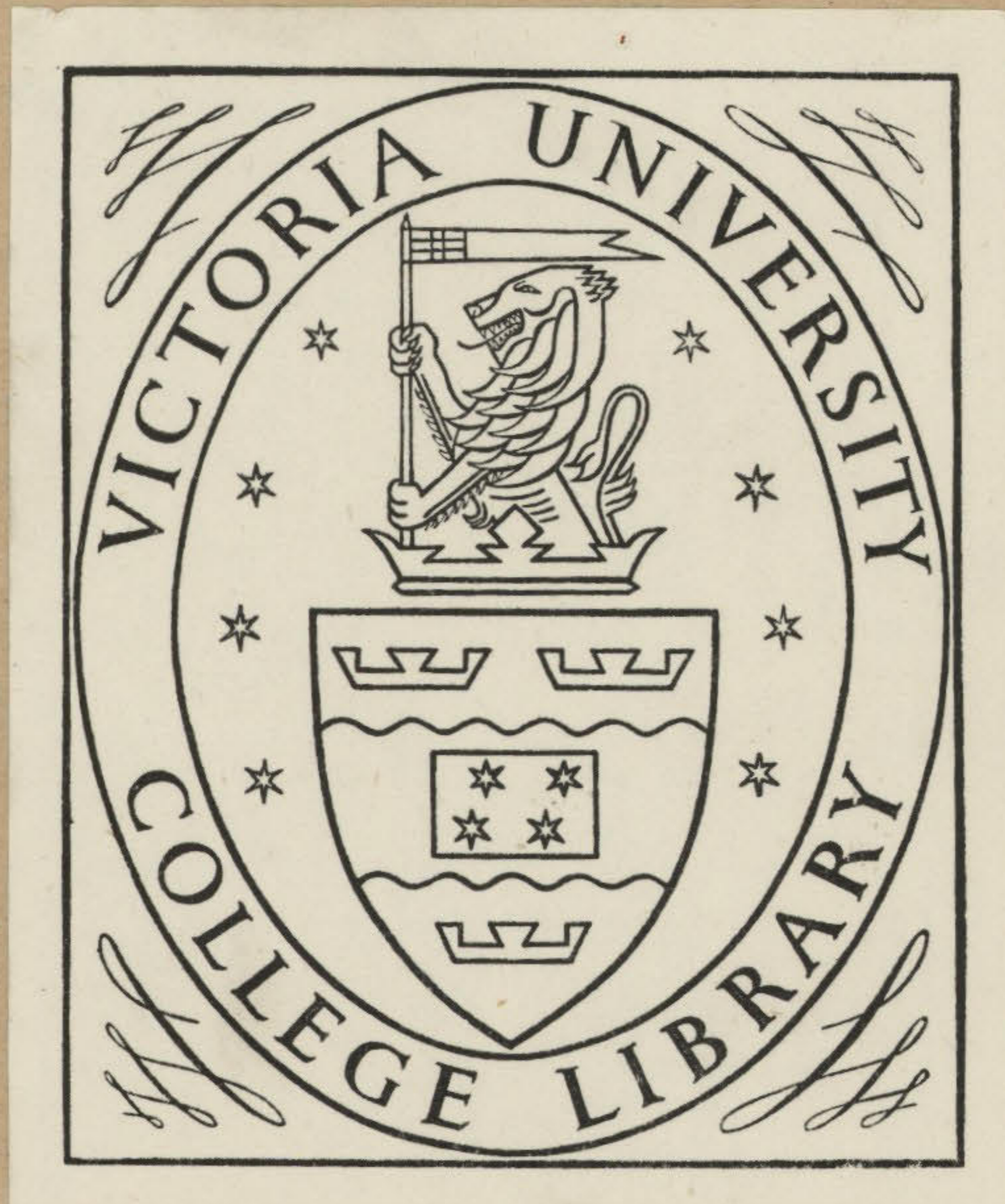


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AN EXPERIMENT IN COMMUNITY RECREATION FOR

YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN IN A RURAL

COMMUNITY

(RANGIORA)

A THESIS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS  
IN EDUCATION.

BY: W. E. LANIERETH:

FEBRUARY, 1955.

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INTRODUCTION:

C O N T E N T S

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guided recreational activities.

By various processes young people pass from the stage of dependence on their elders to the stage of full participation in society. This 'adjustment' involves on the one hand the maturing powers of the individual, both physical and mental, and on the other, the influence of the social environment. This environmental influence is partly deliberate and partly incidental, providing opportunities and at the same time imposing limitations and responsibilities.

## INTRODUCTION:

'Adjustment' is not enough. Education,

whether given through formal agencies such as the

The Borough of Rangiora, lying twenty miles north-west of Christchurch, provided the setting for an experiment in community recreation from 1945 - 1953.

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beyond the type as well as for the type. Where the

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means of meeting the needs of the young people of the

town in the field of recreation. The record of this

allow of full development.

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richer life for many young men and women should

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Chapters 1 and 2, some consideration is given to the

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Rangiora High School and to the community of which it

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formed an integral part. A brief account of the

'Adjustment' is in itself not enough. Education, whether given through formal agencies such as the school or through the many informal agencies such as clubs, must have as its end something beyond conformity to a particular pattern. We must educate beyond the type as well as for the type. Where the social environment exercises restrictive influences upon the 'fulfilment' of an individual's potentialities, an effort must be made to change the pattern to allow of full development.

The club about which I write developed its particular character, not as the result of a progressive argument from first principles. Rather it was an incomplete sociological experiment conducted under constantly changing conditions. There was no constant factor throughout, unless it was the tendency of the young people involved to reach their immediate goals by vigorous independent effort.

The significance of the experiment is considerably heightened by a study of the social environment in which it was carried out, and in Chapters 1 and 2, some consideration is given to the Rangiora High School and to the community of which it formed an integral part. A brief account of the

educational philosophy of Strachan, Headmaster of the School, is included in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 describes three attempts made to solve the problem of leisure time activity for the young people of Rangiora and discusses the community centre movement. Suggestions are made as to why these experiments should have failed. Chapter 4 marks the end of the introductory section and deals with community problems which were the outcome of World War II. This section attempts to describe the setting for the experiment and emphasises those features which have particular significance, if its guiding principles are to have general applicability for other experiments.

Chapter 5 outlines the problem existing for young people in Rangiora in 1945, while chapters 6, 7 and 8, contain an account of the experiment as it ran its course during eight years.

Throughout the thesis, an attempt is made to examine critically, the problems of leisure, and in particular, those experienced by the young people of one rural town. Chapter 10 contains an evaluation of the project, using the standards of noted

educationists as criteria of value.

This account is set down in the hope that it may encourage other experiments, not only on the same, but on other lines so that all may learn to deal more adequately with the needs of young people. The Borough of Rangiora with a population of 2,840 viewed by unfamiliar eyes has little to distinguish it from New Zealand's small towns. This sameness in physical character is a feature of the country towns of New Zealand that has drawn comment from many visitors from overseas, whose business or pleasure has meant journeying from one part of the country to another with no lengthy stay in any one place. The main street stretching long and straight through the centre of the town, emerging from the plains at one end and disappearing into the vagueness of distance and a confusion of telegraph poles at the other, the sudden slowing of through-traffic as the shopping centre is reached, the unimpressive commercial buildings clustered together as if fearful to leave the established solidity of the long familiar places of buying and selling, the solitary general purpose store towards the outer limits of the town set amidst the quickly growing residential area with bright new houses and bare uncultivated sections, the



CHAPTER I

THE RANGIORA COMMUNITY: farmers 'in town' for

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lines of parked cars of farmers 'in town' for shopping and business, - all these make up the familiar pattern that is repeated again and again throughout the country. A more discerning observation of Rangiora or indeed of any small town would reveal much more of than the apparent similarity to other towns of like size. Though its residents may not be aware of the nature of any distinctive or unique character that the town may possess, they would quickly and vigorously protest against the commentary that this was 'just another country town'. From the Post Office to the Bank Corner, Rangiora's High Street for a distance of some two and a half blocks forms the hub round which much of the life of the town revolves. No matter that the High School lies on the borough boundary nearly a mile from the centre of the town, that the Primary School lies off the main street in the opposite direction, that the Town Hall, the Library, the Railway Station and the Recreation grounds are all some ten minutes walk from the shopping area, it is in High Street that the bustle of the town grown as the increasing prosperity of the farmers has

presents an air of activity that belies the settled and unhurried flow of community life. The movement of transport trucks serving the outlying farms and smaller settlements, the frequent passenger bus service linking Rangiora with Christchurch, school pupils and office workers on bicycles, the vans of servicing stores, the lines of parked cars which have brought the country people in for shopping etc., pedestrians and taxis, all combine to produce an atmosphere of busy living towards which gravitate those compelled by no other urge than the desire to mingle with crowds, to see familiar faces, to talk to friends.

the land. Dairying to the south and east Rangiora is essentially a trading post for the farming community, but in recent years with improved transport and better roads, the formerly important stock market has been forsaken for the huge stock sales at Addington in Christchurch. 'Sale Day' no longer means the influx of farmers and agents from Christchurch stock firms, but tradition dies hard and every Thursday many country people still 'come to town'. The servicing business of the town has grown as the increasing prosperity of the farmers has

created a demand for farm equipment and household appliances, yet the shops, offices, engineering works, garages, post-office, banks, timber yards, schools, newspaper, printing works, flour mills, twine works, railways and road transport, cannot absorb all the available labour and every day of the week buses and trains carry workers to Christchurch, the Woollen Mills of Kaiapoi, and the Freezing works of Belfast.

The basis of the town's economy rests mainly on the sheep farming industry, though few of the people who live in the township may have any direct contact with the land. Dairying to the south and east predominates, with small-seed farming and fruitgrowing contributing to the wealth of the community north and west of the town.

The establishment of secondary industries in the urban area has not been regarded with favour by the business people and the rapid increase in the town's population after the war has not been due to the increased avenues of employment. In some respects Rangiora is becoming something of a dormitory suburb of Christchurch and is also regarded by elderly

people as a desirable place for retirement. The reserve of the business people has also been noted in the opposition evident towards proposals for a better rail service between Christchurch and Rangiora. The opinion has been expressed that a speedy railcar service would make the shopping and entertainment facilities of the City so accessible to the citizens of Rangiora that the trend towards a Christchurch-orientated community would be further advanced. On the one hand Rangiora looks towards Christchurch. It depends on the City with its offices and industries to absorb much of the available labour. It seeks a wider choice of goods displayed in the shops. It looks for greater variety in the field of entertainment. On the other hand Rangiora is a town with a community awareness that protests and opposes the tendency towards an increasing dependence on the nearby city. Pride in local institutions is constantly at war with a feeling that despises smallness and familiarity when the mores of city and country town clash.

A community cannot be adequately described by a commentary on the physical environment in which it is

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set, or be fully appreciated through a description of its economic and social relationships. One becomes aware of its real nature only by living within it, by knowing its people, by sharing in its problems and by rejoicing in its successes. For four years I was a citizen of Rangiora. During that time I came to know many of the people. I joined with others in attempting to solve some of the problems of the community and felt proud in their achievement. of tradesmen, craftsmen and people engaged in various professions. As many of the young men and women, whose activities during the post-war years form the body of this thesis, came from the High School, it is necessary to consider the school in relation to the community, and something of the work of Strachan the Headmaster.

One of the advantages that Strachan saw in the rural school as compared with the city school was its relation to the physical and social environment.

- (1) "The association with nature is intimate and immediate, and the community life is accessible, knowable and fairly complete.

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(1) J.E. Strachan "The School Looks at Life." N.Z. Council for Educational Research 1938. P. 33.

CHAPTER 2

THE SCHOOL AND THE COMMUNITY: is environment,

and should use it." Within the Rangiora Community there was yet another. The High School formed a community complete in itself yet linked to the life of the district from whence came its pupils. More than half of the children attending the Rangiora High School came from the country districts served by Rangiora as a marketing centre. The town pupils were the children of tradesmen, craftsmen and people engaged in various professions. As many of the young men and women, whose activities during the post-war years form the body of this thesis, came from the High School, it is necessary to consider the school in relation to the community, and something of the work of Strachan the Headmaster.

One of the advantages that Strachan saw in the rural school as compared with the city school was its relation to the physical and social environment.

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they The rural school has this environment, and should use it." Col's influence.

The pupils of the Rangiora High School were given every opportunity to know the larger community in which they lived but despite the hopes and the energy of Strachan, the School was not accepted by many as an integral part of community life. Prompted by motives of snobbery, influenced by rumours of "no work and no discipline" brought home by first-year pupils accustomed to mechanical habits of obedience to authority, urged by an outlook that sees education as a process by which the child should be made to work, pass exams and get a job, dismayed that the University Entrance course is subordinated to other educational considerations, many parents sent their children to city schools for their secondary education. Adverse criticism of the school has been almost entirely local, that is to say it has been confined to residents of the town of Rangiora. There has been very little, if any, from the country districts which the school serves. The subsequent careers of ex-pupils, their attitudes to life, and the service

(1) L. J. Wild 'An experiment in self government.'  
N. Z. Council for Educational Research 1938. P. vii.



they are giving to the community should provide the real test of the school's influence. Strachan felt that on this point he could not produce much evidence in attaching distinctive value to his school. The way in which Rangiora High School pupils and ex-pupils faced that test in the post-war years must have justified in Mr. Strachan's mind much of his school practice which was so severely criticised. In particular the principle of self government in the school which demanded considerable skill and patience of the teachers and raised the most spirited opposition from one section of the public, proved its value in the management of the organisation formed to serve the community's leisure time activities in 1945. Somerset comments

(1) "Now, it is a strange thing that the general public, which excuses democracy for breaking down in the adult world, will permit of no margin of individual non-conformity when it is introduced into the school."

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(1) L.J. Wild 'An experiment in self government.'  
N.Z. Council for Educational Research 1938. P. vii.

(1) J.E. Strachan, op.cit. p.90.

For years the chief bone of contention was the School Council and its subversive effect upon discipline.

(1) "The impression created and freely discussed was that 'the kids ran the

(1) 'school', and that the teachers had no authority... The main objection to the system was, I believe, simply that it was something new and strange. That

Despite 'children should be seen and not heard' of life is still a maxim that appeals to the despite exponents of patriarchal government."

Because democracy, whether in the school or in the society of which it is a part, is nothing less than a way of life, there will never be any finality about it. The problems faced by the School Council will always be tinged with novelty for those who must deliberate upon them. The problems in the community each carry the responsibility of 'thinking through' them; each must be solved anew by those who would take their place in democratic living. Mr. Strachan had vision to a degree which blessed few men. He saw beyond the classroom, beyond the community out past the boundaries of national life to the very

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(1) J.E. Strachan, op.cit. p.90.

limits of man's existence on earth and he saw the need of presenting to his pupils the truth of that existence. He would accept no superficial survey of life which

- (1) "might suggest Teufelsdröckh's analogy of the 'Egyptian pitcher of tamed vipers each striving to get its head above the others'".

Despite the difficulty of presenting a true picture of life through the medium of the school curriculum, despite the fact that the revelation of the real significance and worth of human life and the discovery of the mode and motive of its achievements transcends the usual subject studies, Strachan strove to realise his aim through all the studies and activities of the school. His organisation and school practice rebelled against the convention and traditional conservatism of secondary education as he sought to implement the reforms he felt to be needed. Traditional education stood in need of three major reforms:

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(1) J.E. Strachan op.cit. p.25.

(1) J.E. Strachan op.cit. p.p. 26-29.

(1) "In the first place we should plan an interpretative general course of studies with a central theme that expresses the significance and achievements of human life.... We should insist that all pupils, no matter what other work they do, take the complete general course. It is not divisible. In the second place, we should discover and apply in all school activities those incentives to effort that seem most truly to mark human life at its best... Amongst men, just as in nature, the significant urges have, I believe, been expressive rather than acquisitive. In spite of reactionary elements, human society today seems to be moving from a phase in which cultural progress is an adventitious by-product of industry centring in private and material gains to a phase of co-operative organization with much higher and more humane objectives.

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(1) J.E. Strachan op.cit. p.p. 26-29.

Some of these are the raising of the lower standards of living, the improvement of living conditions, the provision of better facilities for health and education, and, in general, the achievement of leisure and power to live fully and freely as human beings. The third reform that I would urge in the School... There should be every opportunity for individual self-expression. The school itself should be organised for serious work and the employment of leisure in such a way that every child, following his own bent and expressing his peculiar talent, is able consciously to further the co-operative ends of the school... The school must become a civilised community, representative, typical, complete in itself, and organically related to its natural and social environment... A School so organised would, I believe, give a better service to our young people. Through the interpretative general course should come understanding, vision and surmounted many of these obstacles could be seen in

the first inspiration. The School's life and work should provide the opportunity for self-expression and for practical training, and in his study and work the student should learn to appreciate the effectual social value of creative effort. Perhaps along some such lines shall we discover the kind of schooling that will best help our young people and the communities they are establishing, to resolve the conflicts that distract them and to find the highest satisfactions of life."

Strachan's philosophy found expression in a down to earth practice that bore little resemblance to the traditional methodology of education. His efforts were beset with many difficulties. In a foreword to Strachan's book "The School Looks at Life" Milner says, "He has faced up to great odds - the static weight of conventions, local prejudice of Boards, parental snobbery, disfavour or at least apathy of the educational hierarchy, and finally the inexorable glacial pressure of the examinational system."

That the work of Strachan in the Rangiora High School surmounted many of these obstacles could be seen in

CHAPTER 3.

the fine spirit of the senior classes and the splendid community service of many of the pupils, both young men and young women. In many respects Strachan was a disappointed man. His horizons were too broad for the people in his community and they could see but indistinctly or not at all the goals towards which he pressed so strongly. They had no yardstick wherewith to gauge the value of his work. Only the test of time and the students of his school would show how great was his vision, how real his dreams. The High School as Strachan tried to make it and the High School as seen by many of the residents of Rangiora appeared to serve different functions but from the school came many pupils ready and eager to find the opportunities for a full and exciting life which the cessation of the war seemed to promise them. Strachan saw that the incompatibility of much of the practice in his school, limited the fulfilment of his aims, but before the middle of the century he could point to a definite extension of the school's influence into the life of the community.

CHAPTER 3.

EXPERIMENTS IN COMMUNITY RECREATION:

Many of the school pupils left school at fifteen. Of those who lived in the town, some were able to find employment in the shops, offices, garages, work rooms, transport services and trades, established locally. Others were forced to travel daily to Christchurch and nearby towns to find work. Still others left Rangiora to continue with further education or to seek a livelihood in another centre. For the most part however, pupils leaving the High School together with those Rangiora children who had attended Christchurch schools and now worked in the City, spent much of their leisure time in the home town. To have raised the question of what these young people did in non-working hours would have brought forth the constant cry of ordinary people everywhere, 'What is there to do?'

The school attempted to bring its pupils to an awareness of their physical and social environment. The town had playing fields, swimming baths, tennis courts, golf course, cycling track, picture theatre, dance halls, library, school extension



classes in carpentry and engineering, a drama club and a music society. But if the young people were aware of the recreational facilities the town had to offer, the knowledge meant little to them. Their leisure time consisted of uninviting periods stretching emptily between the hours of work and sleep. 'What is there to do?' represented the characteristic attitude of the young people to the use of leisure.

Some of the attempts at organisation of leisure time groups in Rangiora deserve attention at this point if the attitude, at times almost cynical, towards such organisation held by a large section of the community is to be understood.

The Y.M.C.A. of Christchurch at the request of a Rangiora citizen, during 1942 sent two of its officers to Rangiora each week to conduct classes in physical recreation for boys and girls and for young men and women. The activities followed the pattern that had become traditional in the programmes of the association as it functioned in the cities. Physical exercises and indoor games with a strong bias towards gymnastics made up the weekly programme. A church

hall was used for a gymnasium and a small amount of gymnastic equipment was provided. The classes at first attracted large numbers, mainly children. Over one hundred boys and girls looked forward to the weekly 'Gymn Class', the thrill of dressing up in 'gymn costume' and the chance to admire the skill of the instructors as they performed difficult gymnastic feats. Only a few adolescents attended after the first meeting. Probably those that remained had already acquired skill in gymnastics while at school and welcomed the opportunity to display their prowess in this sphere, before their fellows.

The efforts of the Y.M.C.A. did succeed in providing a form of recreation that appealed to a large number of children but it was unrelated to the needs of the older adolescent group. Too restricted in the variety of activities provided and too formal in the method of presentation, the programme was not in harmony with the general outlook of most young people in the town. A few months after the classes had begun the officers were withdrawn to meet war-service commitments. The exercises, the games, and

the gymnastics, dependent upon the personality and skill of the instructor for their appeal, soon lapsed. The group of people who had been organised for recreative purposes were left with no co-ordinating influence: the club ceased to exist.

In 1944 through the efforts of the Christchurch Physical Welfare Branch of the Internal Affairs Department, another attempt was made to provide facilities for the recreation of young people in Rangiora. This attempt was made in pursuance of the policy of the Branch of encouraging the formation of recreation groups in the smaller towns. The training and leadership of the Welfare Officers was at the disposal of groups desirous of becoming established in any community within the administrative boundaries of the Branch. A Church hall was again used for a meeting place for weekly classes and as with the earlier effort of the Y.M.C.A. officers, the initial response was good. The programme was limited to physical exercises and gymnastics. The classes were conducted by two senior officers of the Department and while their experience and teaching skill is not questioned, the possibility that their

methods of approach would result in the establishment of a group with any measure of permanence should have been recognised as being remote. Youth itself will not be organised. Facilities and personnel are the raw materials of successful youth organisation. It is a temporary and only partly satisfactory solution to the problem of meeting the recreational needs of young people to provide a variety of classes which demand no more than the voluntary attendance of the members. Youth must be actively involved in the establishment and government of any organisation that seeks to serve their needs, particularly when those needs are but dimly perceived and concern that unregimented part of their lives which we call leisure.

It was obvious that two senior officers of a government department with responsibilities to the whole province of Canterbury could not personally conduct classes in one town for an indefinite period. There was no person with sufficient training or experience who was able to take over the leadership of the groups they had formed. The recreational activities which had brought the group together

required trained leadership, yet no provision had been made to ensure the continuation of the group, despite the declared policy of the Physical Welfare Branch, that the establishment of associations providing opportunities for recreation should be given every assistance and encouragement. Four months after the first class the Welfare Officers were forced to withdraw and once more the young people of Rangiora were deprived of an important field of recreational activity.

There were many facilities for recreation. A later chapter will indicate just what the town had to offer in respect of a favourable physical environment. The problem lay rather in the fragmented community life that set limits of choice for each individual, and in the lack of leadership that would stimulate a questing for opportunities and an awareness of unknown interests.

The two attempts at the organisation of leisure time activities which have been described involved a somewhat younger age group than that concerned in a later effort, although it was hoped in both instances that the older adolescent would become interested.

They were also founded on a strong tradition that thinks of recreation as physical recreation, and more particularly as formal exercises and gymnastics. Based on a much deeper understanding of the true worth of leisure was the effort made in Rangiora to establish a Community Centre.

The growth of the idea of a community centre as a means of stimulating and co-ordinating the educational and social activities of a community has been slow. In recent years however, the idea has been sharpened and strengthened by the success attendant on various experiments carried out in various parts of New Zealand. Most notable of these has been the centre established at Feilding in 1938 by Mr. and Mrs. H.C.D. Somerset. The success of this venture was due in large measure to the personal qualities of the Somersets, to their skill in recognising the needs of the Feilding community and to their ability in satisfying those needs under difficult circumstances. For several years prior to his appointment to the Feilding Community Centre, Somerset had been watching the growth of

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(1) A.E. Campbell "The Feilding Community Centre,"  
N.Z. Council for Educational Research 1945. P.2.

community centres overseas. (1) As early as 1928 he had corresponded with Henry Morris, founder of the Cambridgeshire Village Colleges, and in Oxford, North Canterbury had become interested in the possibilities for adult education of the community centre type of organisation.

In Rangiora Strachan had also been attracted by the development of community centres in other countries and saw how the cultural activities of his school might well extend into the daily life of the community. The movement towards a community centre in Rangiora was first publicly announced as an objective of the school in an article published in the North Canterbury Gazette of October 30th 1925. Almost thirty years have elapsed since that time and the centre has not yet been established. Strachan who strove hard to reach the objective, unselfishly devoted much of his time to the extension of the work of the school into the field of adult education. The leisure time of some adults in Rangiora was considerably enriched by attendance

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Proposals for a Rural Community Centre were

(1) A.E. Campbell "The Feilding Community Centre."  
N.Z. Council for Educational Research 1945. P.2.  
In 1941 plans for Community Centre buildings were

at lectures on World affairs, art, music, drama and topics of a scientific nature which were conducted by Mr. Strachan and members of his school staff. The school did not however, become the centre of community interest in cultural and social activity. I feel that this failure to establish a community centre as envisaged by Strachan was due in part to his failure to meet the interests of the people. He set standards for leisure time activity that found no response in the outlook of the public and he failed to realise that the satisfactions that spring from community effort can be realised only when the day to day problems and interests are first dealt with. Participation in community affairs must be direct and vital. I feel that the audience at a lecture is too remotely involved if the topic does not bear directly on its own experience. In Rangiora, numbers of lectures and classes gave to the people no indication of the value that might come from the co-ordination of community activities at one centre.

Proposals for a Rural Community Centre were published in the Christchurch "Press" in June 1930. In 1941 plans for Community Centre buildings were



prepared for the Rangiora High School. Strachan's belief in the idea of a community centre for Rangiora kept the issue alive, but public interest was sporadic and weak. Many of those who understood and appreciated the idea were of the opinion that the school was too far distant from the centre of the town to be popular as a centre of community life. To the young people in particular the Rangiora Community Centre became a myth. Their enthusiasm was never used and their interests never accurately gauged. The plans prepared in 1941 contained no rooms specifically designed for youth activities. Children leave our schools and enter a period of neglect. This at a time when their most urgent need is to establish themselves in their community and to feel that their efforts and their interests count for something in the development of the town. Many writers have stressed that the deterioration of the moral fibre of the adolescent is one of

CHAPTER 4

the inevitable penalties which we pay during war.

COMMUNITY PROBLEMS IN WAR YEARS:

While it is true that the lives of New Zealand

adolescents. Probably no section of the Community suffers so much in time of war as the adolescent. Unlike his younger brother and sister he is not young enough to remember it hereafter as 'something the grown-ups talk about', nor is he old enough to take his full share in it. He is old enough to be worried by the obvious preoccupation and distress of the adult world, and old enough, too, to be neglected and reproached by them in turn; old enough too, to realise that if the war continues for three, four or more years, all his apprenticeship, all his specialised training for adult life will be cut short while he is absorbed into the military machine. War, therefore, encourages two attitudes in the adolescent - the attitude that sees the future as so uncertain that 'tomorrow may look after itself, The today we have all the fun we can', and an attitude of rebellion and resentment against the reproach of the adult world. as best they could, their own probl Many writers have stressed that the deterioration of the moral fibre of the adolescent is one of

the inevitable penalties which we pay during war. While it is true that the lives of New Zealand adolescents were gravely affected during the war there was no startling increase in juvenile delinquency that could be directly attributed to war conditions. New Zealand towns and cities were not subjected to enemy action. There was no large scale evacuation of homes such as was experienced in countries closer to the war area. The street gangs were not encouraged to looting and raiding by the blacking out of street lighting and the life of the air raid shelters, although this was a major social problem in Britain.

In New Zealand towns the war did accentuate the already existing social phenomenon of street-corner loitering. In the cities and towns close to military camps the groups of idle adolescents wandering the streets became a familiar sight. The country though several thousand miles from the combat area was at war and the young people were left to work out as best they could, their own problems. Their restlessness, their activity, their boredom found expression in many ways. What the

young found to do varied in response to leadership or lack of it in each community.

In Rangiora, conditions in the home and outside it aggravated the 'growing pains' of those too young to enter military service. Let us take home conditions first. Almost all the homes in Rangiora directly affected by war service included some adolescents in the household. The incidence of military service, father away, mother working -- all these things altered the very personnel of the home, and all the consequent changes and adjustments to led, such changes told very heavily on the adolescent at the very time when his own emotional instability demanded the security of a serene and unchanging background. On the economic level, few homes were not subject to the worry of having less to spend than formerly. The adolescent himself was commanding a much higher wage than was possible a few years previous to the war, but rather much publicity in the popular press has been given to the extremely highly paid adolescent. A few isolated and flagrant instances of high wages obscured the real position which was felt by many adolescents. The change from school to employment is a very sharp and painful one

of most young people in Rangiora and probably elsewhere. For the most part the young wage earner felt obliged to pay board as soon as he obtained employment, and very little, if any, was left in the weekly pay envelope after buying clothing.

In war as in peace, the adolescent suffers from the lack of a well ordered home. Some homes in the community were disrupted because of the war. In some cases the father was killed on active service. In others one or more brothers were killed, wounded or taken prisoner. Of even greater importance on the outlook of the adolescent was the number of homes that provided a too well-ordered atmosphere, where everything was painfully neat both inside and out, and where there was no encouragement for the younger set to stretch their legs or make a mess. A house-proud mother can drive her children from the home just as quickly as one who lives amidst disorder and neglect.

Conditions outside the home, accentuated during the war years, contributed to the sense of frustration which was felt by many adolescents. The change from school to employment is a very sharp and painful one

for most pupils in this country. Their whole lives are reorientated. The set of values learnt at school often conflicts painfully with the set of values of the workshop and factory and the young worker is faced with frustration and the depressing realisation that perhaps, after all, for him there are no exciting adult worlds to conquer. The daily round of life in the Rangiora community appeared commonplace, and unexciting to those pupils who had shared in the vigorous and challenging life of the school. There was no place for the adolescent in the shaping or directing of community affairs and it was natural that he should feel resentment at his fall in status when formerly he enjoyed a sense of importance in his school community. At school he had established himself and felt that he belonged in the scheme of things. At work the deadening routine of office, shop and factory deprived him of responsibility. Adults and even school children were

The problems which faced the Rangiora community during the seven years of the Second World War were similar to those experienced by communities throughout the country. Organisations which at other times would have been concerned about the dearth of leisure

time occupations for young people, devoted their energies to the entertainment of servicemen, and the provision of comforts for overseas forces. Frequent appeals were made for funds for patriotic purposes and the plight of people in war-ravaged Europe was constantly enlisting the sympathy of local citizens. Patriotic effort in the town was responsible for stimulating a local awareness and sense of civic duty which was encouraged too, by the feeling that every other town in New Zealand was doing the same thing. Domestic tasks such as providing for the recreation of the adolescents of the town seemed unimportant. This neglect would not have been such a serious matter had the young people themselves been included in community activities. There was no attempt made however, to organise the youth of the town so that they could share in activities regarded as belonging to the whole community. Adults and even school children were enabled to participate in war sponsored community effort by virtue of their membership in organised groups, but many in their teens belonged to no recognised social group and were thereby excluded.

CHAPTER 5

The effect of war on the life-pattern of any community is far reaching and complex. The effects on the young people of Rangiora which I have noted were important in understanding the problems which I recognised in 1945. Other factors contributed to the general feeling of unrest and frustration, but from experience gained during four years of residence in the town, I believe that the genesis of the trouble lay in the attitude of the adolescent to his society - the attitude that saw himself as unwanted and unnecessary in the affairs of the community.

service. Tramping, mountaineering, track and field athletics and swimming were sports which prior to the war had all been provided by strong clubs. In each case, the loss of enthusiastic leaders lead to the collapse of the club membership. Other recreational and social organisations in the town by 1945 were struggling for existence. The clubs which had in pre-war years drawn members from teenage to fifty and sixty, lost the even age distribution and became suddenly the concern of the elderly. The teenage members felt uncomfortable and out of sympathy as more and more of the younger



CHAPTER 5

adults left. The Drama Club and the Music Society  
THE PROBLEM IN 1945:  
provide the best examples of this tendency.

The cessation of hostilities in 1945 marked the beginning of a period of eager anticipation among the young people of Rangiora. So many of the factors which restricted their leisure and dictated their choice of activity appeared to be attributable to war conditions. Several clubs which before the war had offered recreational activities attractive to youth had been unable to carry on as the leaders were drawn into war service. Tramping, mountaineering, track and field athletics and swimming were sports which prior to the war had all been provided by strong clubs. In each case, the loss of enthusiastic leaders led to the collapse of the club membership. Other recreational and social organisations in the town by 1945 were struggling for existence. The clubs which had in pre-war years drawn members from teenage to fifty and sixty, lost the even age distribution and became suddenly the concern of the elderly. The teenage members felt uncomfortable and out of sympathy as more and more of the younger

adults left. The Drama Club and the Music Society provide the best examples of this tendency.

Membership of the many clubs was small, enthusiastic support was lacking; the programmes appeared unrelated to the needs of the community; long pre-occupation with the uncertainty and instability of the world situation had dulled the urge for constructive and creative expression in social life; community effort was still largely devoted to conservative activities. The youth of any community can not be satisfied with conservatism. There must be opportunity for creative expression if the potentialities they possess are not to waste away.

Another factor that weighed against variety and freedom of choice for the young man or young woman was the economic question. Sports clubs such as tennis, golf, hockey, cricket and football had high membership fees and in addition playing equipment was expensive. Having chosen one of these sports, the youth with limited financial resources was excluded from participation in other forms of recreational activity.

The loss of leadership, the disregard of youth and its exclusion from community affairs, the fragmented social life of the community and the lack of variety in activities available to those on low income, all these influences meant an impoverishment in the use of leisure in Rangiora. The young people reacted to this situation by seeking substitutes for local recreation. The thrice weekly cinema was assured of good attendances, but soon the local theatre and the frequently second-rate films became irksome. The picture theatres and dance halls of the City offered more excitement and a brighter glitter. To be a spectator at the weekend sports in Christchurch, promised more fun than participating in games of an indifferent standard in Rangiora. The crowds of the city streets, the hotels and the theatres gave the daring youth protection from the critical scrutiny of his family and his fellows. The end of the war held promise of renewed vigour in community life with the return of the service men and women to civilian occupations. But an absence of several years lived under the strain

of fighting and waiting, had created a gap not easily bridged. The returned man had severed his connections with the social life of his home town four or five years earlier. He was out of touch with his surroundings and he found it difficult to appreciate and understand the changes that had occurred. He tried to pick up the old threads but found they had been broken. His younger associates no longer depended on his interest and his leadership and in any case he was himself beset with new and pressing problems. With four or five years of his youth gone, he must now turn towards establishing a home, rearing a family, finding a job. The old associations, the former interests, were not revived. It was this fact, the break in the continuity of social life and organisation, that left the young people of Rangiora without leaders. The break had been too abrupt and potential leadership had no time to emerge from the wreckage. The task of running a swimming club, an athletic club or a tramping club, was too big for boys and girls who had just left school. Successful leadership

requires more than knowledge of, or ability

A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM:

in administration and the qualities of effective

leaders had not developed in many adolescents the

who later showed surprising talent in this opportunity to

direction. community in which I lived and the time

to see. Such was the community of Rangiora as I

found it when I came to live there in 1945. air lot.

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satisfaction appealed to the youth of the town, and

within a few months the almost boundless horizons

CHAPTER 6

A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM:

My work as Physical Education Officer in the North Canterbury schools provided the opportunity to observe the community in which I lived and the time to seek for the reasons that lay behind the dissatisfaction of the young people with their lot. Many of the reasons why the recreational opportunities that existed in Rangiora had not been utilised, did not become apparent for some years, but it was at once obvious to me that their leisure time could be made brighter by suggesting a plan that promised some action. In conversation with young people, I began by traversing the whole field of recreational activity that should lie before the population of a town so favourably situated as Rangiora. When faced with the inevitable reply that the town offered none of these things, I suggested that the only real remedy lay in our own hands. This challenge of doing for ourselves those things which offered enjoyment and satisfaction appealed to the youth of the town, and within a few months the almost boundless horizons

of worth-while recreation were being freely discussed in Rangiora's community centre, the main street.

Having sounded the depth of interest connected with the possible formation of an organisation to transform these ideas into a reality, I sought the support of the Mayor. Young people are adventurous and resent restriction; yet they are also timid and are encouraged by the support and the security that is given by recognised forms of authority. They will rebel against their elders and at the same time feel apprehensive when left to go their own way. The Mayor, I believe, was aware of this contradictory characteristic of youth and gave an attentive hearing to the various proposals made to him. In view of the repeated failures to provide satisfactory forms of recreational activity for young people in earlier years, the Mayor was justified in withholding the support of the Borough Council until satisfied that the plans I proposed promised some definite prospect of lasting success. Of major importance to him, was the fact that the young people themselves would be personally

involved in the planning and control of any organisation established to serve their needs.

The support of the Mayor and the Council was readily promised on the assurance that the idea of forming a Youth Club came from within the town itself and that its continued existence would not depend on the efforts of outside organisations.

On the 19th February 1946 a meeting was held in the Council Chambers. An invitation to be present was extended to all those interested in the formation of a club to sponsor and organise recreational activity in Rangiora. The Mayor presided at a meeting which was representative of many sections of the community. It was particularly encouraging to note however, that the largest proportion of those present were young people, and to observe their favourable reaction to the situation that at last they were included in the deliberation of matters that concerned their own welfare. The use of the Council Chambers as a first meeting place proved to be a wise choice and gave added emphasis to the promise of co-operation and support that was made on behalf of the Borough Council, the Rotary Club, the



School and established sports bodies, by various representative speakers.

A committee was elected to consider several proposals as to the function and aims of the Club and to make arrangements to have these brought to the notice of all people in the town likely to be interested. It was many months later before the aims of the Club became fully formulated, but inarticulate though most of us were, the urge to seek in recreation an outlet for our energy was real enough. It seemed a good starting point to suggest that those clubs which had once provided enjoyable forms of sport and had ceased to function during the war years, should be reformed. Membership of the Youth Club would thus make available to many, the opportunities of joining in several forms of sport previously organised by separate clubs, the subscriptions of which limited the members.

The interim committee to which I was elected as Chairman, set about the task of surveying the recreational facilities offered in the town. It was found that prior to the war both swimming and tramping were sports that had a strong following.

There were many young people interested in swimming and many more leaving school with considerable proficiency in this sport. The public swimming baths and the High School baths were found to be available for Club evenings and at the second meeting of the Youth Club Committee on 28th February 1946, arrangements were made to hold a Swimming Carnival in April. Club members responsible for the organisation and control of the Carnival soon realised that such responsibility provided a challenge to them as young people to prove their capability in running their own affairs. The initiative and the enthusiasm displayed, left no doubt as to the outcome of their venture. The programme was varied and well planned, and ranged from events for learners to a display of swimming and diving by New Zealand champions. Of great value for the future of the Youth Club, was the stimulus gained by members from the vast amount of work involved in preliminary organisation and the satisfaction derived from the successful conclusion of their project.

Gorge, so attractive to tourists and holiday makers

At the first meeting in February, it was suggested that a circular be printed and distributed among the Sports Clubs of the town, outlining the aims of the Youth Club. We were unable at that time however, to give any clear picture of what the Club intended to do other than to fill the gaps that existed in the recreational life of the people. I was of the opinion that a programme would soon emerge that would meet the needs of those dissatisfied with the use of their leisure time. Suggestions for group activities came in to the committee with a rush, and for the first time in some years, the youth of Rangiora became aware of the favourable physical environment that their town possessed. We decided to test the response to the suggestion that a club tramp be arranged, and on the 16th March the first major activity of the Club was organised. It is interesting to note that when a trip to Ashley Gorge, an excellent place for a youth club outing, was suggested, there was considerable protest from the committee. Ashley Gorge, so attractive to tourists and holiday makers obtained a fresh impression of their own town as it

held no appeal for the young people of Rangiora, for the School and Church Clubs and almost every other group in Rangiora, which held an annual picnic or excursion, went there regularly for their outings. This lovely spot had become associated in the minds of the young with adult control and restriction and with the over-organisation of free time. The inhospitable slopes of Mt. Grey, a 3,300 foot mountain some thirteen miles from Rangiora were chosen as the territory for the first club tramp. A passenger bus was hired to transport the trampers to the foot of the mountain and fifty-six people, ranging in age from fifteen to forty, climbed towards the summit. This was a large number to come from a town the size of Rangiora, but was indicative of the desire of many to join with others in an adventure of this type. It showed too, that many were not involved in the playing of competitive Saturday sport, although I suspect that the spectators at the local cricket matches and the theatre's Saturday afternoon matinee were diminished in number. The excitement and the novelty of such an outing may have prompted the large attendance, but many of those present obtained a fresh impression of their own town as it

lay spread on the Canterbury Plains below them, and of its physical relationship to the neighbouring towns of Oxford, Kaiapoi, Belfast and Christchurch. I believe that this new experience made them more vividly conscious of a sense of community, and brought to some the realisation that their community was but one among many.

The programme of the Club began to take shape. There were requests for the holding of regular social evenings, for dances, for tramps into the hills, for swimming, for gymnastics and indoor games such as basketball. The realisation that the opportunity to join in these activities could be realised through their own efforts, appealed to the young, and among the street corner groups, discussion had acquired a new vitality and purpose.

The club committee were confident in their ability to manage their own affairs, but wisely accepted assistance and advice when it was offered. At the first committee meeting, it was decided to write to Mr. Somerset who at that time was Director of the Feilding Community Centre and ask for information concerning the functioning of youth in the hands of officers elected at that meeting.

activities in Feilding. His reply was helpful in indicating the part that young people played in a community similar in many respects to that of Rangiora and confirmed my own opinion that the programme must emerge from the immediate and pressing interests of the young people themselves. There were offers of assistance from local residents who in earlier years had shown interest and displayed considerable talent in such activities as tramping, swimming and athletics. This help was gratefully accepted by the committee and the club began to extend its influence into an older section of the community. The Rotary Club offered support and made the first donation towards the finances of the Club. The Physical Welfare Branch of the Internal Affairs Department were asked for assistance in starting Indoor Basketball and this was readily promised.

The interim committee now felt that it had fulfilled the task for which it had been elected, and that the time was right to call a general meeting of all interested in youth club activities, and for the control and management of the club to be placed in the hands of officers elected at that meeting.

CHAPTER 7

THE The executive officers of the Rangiora Youth Recreational Club were elected at the General Meeting, held on the 28th March 1946. The history of the activities of this club tells the story of a noteworthy experiment in community recreation in one of New Zealand's rural towns. It points to the spirit of community that exists in us all. It is concerned primarily with but one aspect of recreation, but throughout its existence, avenues towards a more permanent and satisfying use of leisure were continually being opened up.

A description of the club at work now follows with some indication of the influence it had on community life in Rangiora.

Members of the first committee therefore were representative of many occupations and of several age groups. Three teachers, two law clerks, a pharmacist, four shop assistants, a receptionist, an electrician, a baker and a bank manager were chosen to guide the activities of the club during its first year. I was elected President; this position to be held for one year only.

In general, the special functions of the committee might be considered under three heads. Firstly, the responsibility for the general conduct of the club programme; secondly, the administration

CHAPTER 7

THE CLUB IN ACTION:

Administration: The executive officers of the Club were by popular vote to be men or women under the age of thirty years. A motion to this effect was put before the first meeting of the club by an elderly man who understood the desire of members to make this organisation the concern and responsibility of youth. It was agreed however, that the presence on the Committee of people with experience in administration and talent in some recreational activities would be valuable to the smooth running of club affairs. Members of the first committee therefore were representative of many occupations and of several age groups. Three teachers, two law clerks, a pharmacist, four shop assistants, a receptionist, an electrician, a baker and a bank manager were chosen to guide the activities of the club during its first year. I was elected President; this position to be held for one year only.

In general, the special functions of the committee might be considered under three heads. Firstly, the responsibility for the general conduct of the club programme; secondly, the administration



of the members' fund; thirdly the consideration of rules and disciplinary measures. first issue

"The committee were required to meet at least once a month to report on club activities and to plan the programme for the month following each meeting. In effect it was found that the real business of the club, the ideas that promised exciting and worthwhile recreation, came from the groups which still gathered on street corners. The committee wisely listened to the wishes of the club members, and carefully considered their proposals as well as their criticisms. They proved they were indeed conscious of their responsibility to their electors and worked hard to provide the programme that was demanded. Plans organised by the committee were made as widely known as possible, but it soon became evident that notices published in Rangiora's newspaper did not reach enough young people. In addition it was a costly method of keeping members informed of forthcoming events. The committee decided to print a monthly news sheet, to be distributed to all members and others interested. This venture was a success and brought all members more closely in touch with the club's activities. charged to all members who attended. For example,

To quote from the editorial of the first issue  
"- a publication we hope to send out  
monthly to all members and friends. It  
is merely another branch of the club, an  
essential branch, and, if it is given the  
same support as the other functions, it  
will flourish well. We hope to keep you  
well informed on what's going on, what's  
gone on, and, what's going on in the  
future as well as giving a few useful hints."

With the exception of a few months in later years  
when assistance with the duplicating and typing  
was lacking, the news sheet filled an important  
role in the life of the club.

At the outset it was realised that if the  
club was to be of any benefit to those just leaving  
school the cost of participating in its activities  
would have to be low. The annual subscription was  
fixed at two shillings and sixpence. Means of  
raising funds for the maintenance of the club had  
therefore to be found and so began the organising  
of regular public dances by the Youth Club. For  
every special event planned by the club, a fee was  
charged to all members who attended. For example,

an organised excursion to Mt. Grey involved the club in the cost of hiring a bus, and members were required to share the expense. In most instances the cost per member did not exceed what was usually spent on weekend entertainment.

Financial assistance in the form of donations to the club was small and the money raising efforts of club members produced amounts too small to purchase essential equipment for indoor recreational activities. (1) The report of a question raised in the House of Representatives on December 6th 1945 concerning a vote of £10,000 for grants and subsidies towards physical welfare and recreation came to my attention. The Minister of Internal Affairs, the Hon. W.E. Parry in replying to the question stated that the money would be used to assist clubs, "as long as they were doing useful work in the community on a reasonably permanent basis." I wrote to the Minister outlining the purposes and activities of the club and asked for financial assistance in the purchase of equipment. A grant of £100 was made to the club on July 3rd. 1945 and represented the only financial assistance received from a public agency

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(1) Report of Parliamentary Debate published in Christchurch "Press" December 7th 1945.

during the years of its existence. This generous grant enabled the committee to buy a limited amount of gymnastic apparatus as well as other items of recreational equipment. Membership of the club, limited only in respect of entry at the age of fifteen years, increased rapidly as the programme became more varied. The range and variety of activities each involving careful planning and control meant a good deal of work for the committee. Club members were willing to share the burden, and the responsibility of many tasks was delegated to them. The administration of the club's finances became more complex. There was equipment to buy, halls and meeting places to hire, and costs of advertising, transport, catering and dance bands to meet. The President, the Secretary and the Treasurer were responsible for the handling of all monies on behalf of the club. The third major function of the committee involved the consideration of rules and disciplinary measures. The young believe in rules and regulations and are inclined to be self-righteous about them too. Happily the committee agreed that the club should be burdened with as few rules as possible and that

gradually these would be regarded more as traditions than as rules. Five years elapsed before the minutes of club meetings report an offence against the traditions of the club. It had become generally understood among members that spirituous liquor should not be taken on any excursion organised by the club. When this unwritten law had been broken on a trip organised towards the end of February 1950, the question of disciplinary action against the offenders was raised at a general meeting. No action was taken and the censure of the majority of members proved to be a sufficient deterrent to a repetition of the offence.

Programme: To describe in full the gradual emergence of the club's programme with its variety of ambitious ventures is beyond the compass of this thesis. It must suffice to indicate the general character of the type of recreation that was made available to the people of Rangiora through the efforts of the Youth Club. The enthusiasm with which committee members received and enlarged upon suggestions for possible activities, showed a spirit of adventure that would have gladdened the heart of any club leader. The actual number of activities

which a club can organise is of no great significance for their nature and quality matter far more. What is important and significant, is that the activities run by the Rangiora Youth Club were the outcome of the expressed wishes of the members and the results of their own labours. Concerning programme planning Macalister Brew, wise in the ways of the adolescent says:

(1) "It is my conviction that whether your club is collar and tie or cap and muffler your activities must grow out of the desires and limitations of the club members themselves and no subject is more cultural than another. One of the great responsibilities of democracy is that of educating people to be free judges of values, and the only way to do that is to start from what the club member values and take him to see what we value, always remembering that our values are probably not ultimate and eternal values either."

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(1) J. Macalister Brew. "In the Service of Youth" p.76.

The programme like Topay 'just grew'. We started with a club excursion to Mt. Grey. It was novel and exciting for a large number of people to travel by bus to the end of a country road, to follow for miles the course of a small river, to force our way up through heavy bush-covered slopes to the open tussock covered ridges above, to be caught in the open by an enveloping blanket of cloud and finally to emerge from the mists into brilliant sunshine at the top of the mountain and see far below the familiar countryside strangely small and remote. The race to the bottom and the picnic by the bank of a river, the songs and the laughter, all these gave to the outing an atmosphere of freedom and adventure. The people that crowded the bus on the return to Rangiora, were no longer just our neighbours whom we occasionally saw cycling about the streets of the town, but in every respect a group of young people with whom we had shared a common experience. There existed a basis of understanding and a new respect for our fellows. From this first activity there existed in Rangiora a new club, community centre.

Day excursions were thus assured of a permanent place on the club's programme. The surrounding countryside was searched for suitable places to explore and in the following years the hills, the rivers, the gorges and the beaches were all visited by those for whom the daily excursion proved an attractive form of recreation.

The experience of spending a whole day in the open with others was in my opinion a valuable one. It involved far more than the physical effort of tramping and climbing. The preparation of suitable food, the arranging of transport, the advertising of the event, the study of the route to be followed and the provision of safety measures in case of accident all meant an acceptance of responsibility on the part of the organisers. Out in the open and round the camp fire where the young people felt confidence among their companions, topics of discussion had no limits. The camp fire was the melting pot for ideas and the timid as well as the self-assured forged for themselves a new outlook on many things. While the flames mounted and the Billy boiled, Rangiora had a community centre. camps were



The day trip as a club event stayed, but in the second year we began to look further afield. Some members had had experience of camping and the suggestion that we arrange a camping trip during a weekend was enthusiastically received. We chose as the site for our first venture, the motor camp at Hammer Springs some seventy miles from Rangiora. Seventy three young men and women attended this weekend camp. The surrounding country proved ideal and during the two days in camp a full programme was well managed. Tramping, climbing, swimming, tennis and camp concerts with the campers free to come and go as they pleased, ensured a happy weekend. I believe that the development of camping such as this and the other trips that followed is of great potential value in solving the problem of worthwhile recreational activity. Its educational value was obvious to those who cared to join in the endless discussion. The resourcefulness with which the domestic duties and camp management were undertaken and the spirit of fellowship displayed by all, gave evidence of the favourable socialising influence exerted by the camping situation. Other camps were

arranged to different parts of Canterbury. but  
Camping under canvas on the Kaikoura coastline  
with swimming and fishing and tramping; camping  
in cabins below the snow-clad peaks of the Southern  
Alps in winter with ski-ing and climbing and dancing;  
camping in the open on two-day journeys over the  
foot-hills; these were adventures for youth club  
members who had previously never spent a night away  
from home. of members that in the town of Rangiora  
there The preference of club members for recreation  
out of doors was expressed in a desire to establish  
for themselves a suitable base for winter sports'  
activities. The story of the building of a hut at  
Lake Lyndon in the Porters' Pass area is long and  
interesting. To build a hut large enough to from the  
accommodate twenty four people and strong enough to  
withstand the fierce storms of the hill country, and  
at a distance of fifty miles from Rangiora, was no  
small undertaking. Legal formalities were completed,  
land was leased for a site and the hut, constructed  
in Rangiora, section by section by the members  
themselves, was transported to the mountains. Many  
working parties were organised before this new centre  
for 'club night' was therefore divided into several

of club activities was finally completed, but into the building of it went many hours of a new form of recreation. Design, building costs, labour, permits and transport were the problems that were worked out round the committee table. The cost of this project was met by funds raised at many club dances and social evenings. I feel sure that the motive which led to the building of the hut lay in the feeling of members that in the town of Rangiora there was no place which the club could regard as its own. There was pride in the building and the furnishing of the hut and when it was all finished, the organising of ice-skating, ski-ing and climbing activities was made easy.

Not all the club's activities led away from the town. Each week a 'club night' was held. The Drill Hall controlled by the Army Department was made available at a low rental for indoor recreation. My own training enabled me to conduct classes in gymnastics for men and women, but I realised that while a small proportion of young people enjoyed this form of recreation, many more preferred activities of a more informal nature. The programme for 'club night' was therefore divided into several

parts. Gymnastics, table tennis, indoor basketball, volley ball and other games provided a choice of physical activity. original clubs. The majority of the Assistance with the teaching of indoor basketball, a new game in North Canterbury, was willingly given by officers of the Physical Welfare Department and other clubs in Christchurch. Regular inter-club activity arose from this liason with Christchurch groups. Visits were made to other North Canterbury towns and by 1947 sufficient interest was aroused to establish a North Canterbury Indoor Basketball Association. The selection of two Youth Club members as representatives in the Canterbury Provincial Indoor Basketball team gave added stimulus to the game in Rangiora. Talks about their occupations were Table Tennis similarly gained popularity from the efforts of the Youth Club, and a North Canterbury Table Tennis Association was formed. The programme of the club was thus widened and co-operation with other communities in recreational activity became a regular feature. the showing of films. Films on art, travel Swimming and athletics, which were before the war conducted by clubs in the town, were organised as of lectures on Youth and Friendship, Sex and Marriage

youth club activities. Gradually however, sufficient interest in these sports was aroused to enable the reformation of the original clubs. The majority of the members of these clubs were also members of the Youth Club but the conduct of their affairs was the responsibility of separate organisations.

In addition to the many forms of physical recreation, club members participated in organised group discussion. This activity did not attract large numbers, but regular meetings for the discussion of many topics formed a valuable part of the club programme. Usually the meetings were held at the homes of members and several study courses supplied by the Adult Education Department were used as the basis of discussion. Talks about their occupations were given by members, and lectures by local people on various aspects of the civic affairs of Rangiora formed the major part of the discussion group's social programme. On several occasions the number attending these functions was swelled considerably by including on the programme the showing of films. Films on art, travel, photography, winter sports, traffic control, music and health attracted larger audiences. A series of lectures on Youth and Friendship, Sex and Marriage

given by a Christchurch physician were well attended. Educational values were not confined to these activities however, but could be seen in almost every part of the varied programme of the Youth Club.

The Youth Club, as an organisation, joined with other sections of the Rangiora community on many undertakings of a public nature. For several years club members assisted in the local Food For Britain Campaign by supplying essential collectors and the giving of funds raised at Dances. The club was represented on the Rangiora Community Centre Organising Committee and worked hard to further the plans for establishing a centre in the town. Appeals for aid to the blind and the crippled children were other community efforts well supported by the club.

Lastly I shall mention the dances and the social evenings. Dances were nothing new to the young people of Rangiora. They could go to dances two or three times a week and many of them could dance very well. It was much more fun however, to organise the dance themselves. There was the programme to plan,

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the band to hire, the supper to arrange and the evening's entertainment to control. Club members who were unable to dance watched longingly from the doorway or the corners of the dance halls until their more talented club mates with whom they had already shared the fun of other activities, enticed them on to the floor and cheerfully suffered with them the agony of the first few steps. Social evenings were fun. There was dancing and the chance to practise new steps; there were games, informal and spontaneous; there was music and drama; there was singing and eating and finally there was laughter. The atmosphere was boisterous and free, yet possessed that dignity which is the strangest paradox of youth.

I refrained from undertaking tasks that could have been handled more expeditiously because of my training and experience. Thus when I left Rangiora in October 1948, my going did not spell disaster for the club. Rather did its activities enter upon a new phase which promised a wider and more effective influence on the young people.

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A NEW PHASE:

At the inception of the Rangiora Youth Recreational Club Incorporated, the opinion was expressed by the Mayor that the future existence of the club would be assured just so long as there remained in Rangiora a leader able to give direction to its activities. He suggested that if I were to leave the community, or cease to interest myself in the welfare of the club, it would suffer the same fate as previous efforts to organise recreation. It was for this reason that I endeavoured to delegate the responsibility for club leadership to others and to spread the holding of executive positions as widely as possible among the members. I refrained from undertaking tasks that could have been handled more expeditiously because of my training and experience. Thus when I left Rangiora in October 1948, my going did not spell disaster for the club. Rather did its activities enter upon a new phase which promised a wider and more effective influence on the young people.



It was natural that some of the activities in the club's programme which were dependent for their existence on my control, should lapse, and the indoor programme of the weekly 'club night' was soon given over to the playing of indoor basketball. The gymnastics and games which had formed the entire programme of experiments in recreation earlier described in this thesis, once more dropped out through lack of trained leadership.

Five major sections of the club programme developed strongly and at the Annual General Meeting of the club in April 1949 a new system of control was adopted. This Annual Meeting of the club is an important one and I propose to quote extensively from the report published in the North Canterbury Gazette of April 8th 1949.

"By a unanimous decision at the Annual Meeting held on Wednesday night, the Rangiora Youth Recreational Club adopted the sub-committee system of control for the future handling of its widening activities. The various projects of the club have been divided into spheres each of which will now be controlled by a sub-committee. The central executive will comprise

in of two members from each sub-committee, along with the president, vice-presidents and secretary of the club. In proposing the change, Mr. B.A. Simpson said that for some time it had been plain that the remarkable growth of the club and its activities had been placing an ever-increasing burden on the executive officers. The secretary, for instance, was required to handle details for everything from tramping trips to dance arrangements. The proposal to substitute the present arrangements with the sub-committee system had been evolved because it was thought that in this way the club would gain greater strength. Each committee would be responsible for the organisation of its own department, and answerable to the central executive through its chairman and secretary, who were automatically members of the executive. The proposal was supported by other speakers and carried.

The report is a full one but the following extracts indicate the remarkable growth of the club

in four years. said, in conclusion: "I think  
"The balance sheet of the club, presented  
by the retiring secretary, Miss Coleen Obery,  
reflected the big expansion in the club's  
activities during the past year, when a total  
of £525 was handled, compared with £196 in the  
previous year. the club's administrative structure  
would start Starting with a credit of £58, the year's  
light revenue included £203 from dances and socials,  
£100 from grant and rent of the hut at Lake The  
off Lyndon, and £88 from the Carnival of Sport. and  
1950 Hut expenses were £182, catering cost £46, and  
music £40. The carnival showed a small credit.  
how The New Sheet cost £20 and brought in £5/13/-.  
com The credit balance carried forward was £49.  
influence The annual report, presented by the ending  
up retiring president, Mr. Ray Wright, recorded a  
deve growth in membership from 80 to 109. Unfortun-  
in ately several of the most active committee  
members had left the district during the year,  
fol but the committee had carried on the good work,  
ind holding a total of eighteen meetings., skating,  
climbing In thanking all those who had taken an tee  
interest in the club throughout the year,

Mr. Wright said, in conclusion: "I think I can safely say that these people are satisfied that the young people of Rangiora are ready and willing to organise recreation for themselves and also to take their share of responsibility in community affairs."

The change in the club's administrative structure would appear to have been motivated by a desire to lighten the burden of the executive officers and to facilitate the smooth running of club affairs. The official records of club activities during 1949 and 1950 show that the club was running well and was rendering valuable community service. I believe however, that despite the efficiency of the sub-committee type of organisation, the divisive influences that finally brought about the winding up of the club in November 1953, sprang from the developments in club life that followed the change in the structure of its administration.

Sub-committees were set up to control the following spheres of club recreation, tramping indoor-basketball, winter sports (ski-ing, skating, climbing), social and educational. Each committee

be found who can see beyond the immediate and the pressing problems that crop up daily, and indeed it

strongly set about planning its own particular section of the programme. Members interested in one particular form of recreation became more confident and skilful. There was a demand for activities within each section that would offer a challenge to the higher standards of personal performance and knowledge, and the committees were themselves, soon involved in controlling programmes that had assumed the complexity and size of major sports clubs. In particular the sub-committees responsible for the control of winter sports and of indoor basketball developed programmes of activity and undertook new ventures that left members interested in those activities, little time and no inclination to join in the other aspects of the parent club's programme. The interests of members were more and more concentrated on the activities of particular sections of the club, and a sense of irritation with what had now become a somewhat unwieldy organisation became apparent in the records of the central executive.

The personal qualities of those who comprise the controlling body of a youth group are of vital importance. It is not often that club leaders can be found who can see beyond the immediate and the pressing problems that crop up daily, and indeed it

is much simpler to see in retrospect the weaknesses that lie in any one course of action. In the earlier days of the Youth Club's existence, there were members with strong personalities who, because they possessed a high degree of personal skill in a particular form of sport, were somewhat impatient with the club's efforts to encourage other forms of recreation in which they themselves, did not figure prominently. I suspect that the support which they gave to the affairs of the club, and often it involved many hours of hard work, was prompted by the belief that only through the youth club organisation would they have opportunity to indulge further in their particular form of recreation. The sectionalising of the administration in 1949 suited admirably the temperament and outlook of such people when the stimulus given by the original type of organisation to community awareness and responsibility was removed.

Another factor which entered into this new phase in the life of the Youth Club was the unequal distribution among sub-committees of members possessing the qualities of leaders. The winter sports committee section of the central executive

contained members of strong personality and determined character and it was natural that the activities controlled by this group should develop rapidly by comparison with other sections. The surrounding country was favourable for the further growth of ski-ing and skating and during 1950-51 plans were made for the building of a mountain hut at an altitude of 4,500 feet in the Craigieburn mountains, for the erection of a ski tow and the surveying and construction of a road and track. It was felt by members of the committee concerned with this ambitious project that such a venture was too big for the Youth Club. Due to the efforts of this sub-committee the inaugural meeting of the North Canterbury Ski Club was held on March 11th 1952 and yet another 'activity' had outgrown its nursery. Many of those who formed the membership of this new club had been members of the Youth Club for six years. They had outgrown the need for the opportunities of social experience which the Youth Club offered, and were out of sympathy with the timid, awkward, boisterous, shy, eager, boastful and inarticulate adolescent. A gap opened up between the old members and the new. Parental opposition to their children joining the Youth Club was raised when

reports of drinking parties on organised club trips by older members reached the town gossips. Membership fell off and the force for good which the club had meant in the life of the community began to wane.

The sub-committee which controlled the indoor basketball on the club programme experienced many difficulties. Chief among these was the lack of facilities for play. In Rangiora, there was no Gymnasium and the tenure of the Drill Hall owned by the Army Department was very insecure. The storage of army trucks, the holding of poultry shows, and large public dances were all events which could and did deprive the youth club of its only club rooms at short notice. As with other sections of the club, indoor basketball was affiliated to outside organisations such as the Canterbury Indoor Basketball Association. The tramping section was affiliated to the Youth Hostels Association; the athletic section was affiliated to the Canterbury Athletic Centre; and the winter sports section was affiliated to the Federation of Mountain Clubs. These links with other groups served a valuable purpose in the club, but also



served to widen the gaps that began to open up between the sections as they developed their particular interests. The years of 1952-1953 were lean ones for the Rangiora Youth Club. The adventurous forms of recreational activity were being controlled by new organisations, and a young committee had little enthusiastic support for the remnants of a programme they had to offer. The newly formed North Canterbury Ski Club, many members of which had worked hard to establish the Youth Club Hut at Lake Lyndon, was desirous of purchasing this property. The executive committee of the Youth Club decided to retain the hut however, as it was still being used at that time as a base for tramping excursions and ice-skating.

Only ten people attended the Annual General Meeting in October 1953 and it was felt that the club could no longer continue to function. A Special General Meeting of the Rangiora Youth Recreational Club Incorporated was held on November 25th 1953, and was called to discuss the winding up and disposal of assets of the club. The organisation was disbanded and its material assets became the property of the

North Canterbury Ski Club and the Rangiora Indoor Basketball Club, two recreational groups which were born of the efforts of Youth Club members. The Rangiora High School received several items of athletic and gymnastic equipment.

To conclude this chapter, I propose to quote from the final entry in the 'Minute book' of the club's records.

"In conclusion the meeting wished to record that the R.Y.R.C. had fulfilled its original aims by forming two clubs, the Rangiora Indoor Basketball Club and the North Canterbury Ski Club Inc. whose activities had originally been sponsored by the R.Y.R.C. The N.C.S.C. had formed their own club in 1952 as the developments they were contemplating were too large to involve the R.Y.R.C. and also as the constitution (of the R.Y.R.C.) was not altogether suitable for a ski club. The Indoor Basketball Section has been the only active section for the past eighteen months and the time has come when this club would be better on its own and not encumbered by the unwieldy organisation of the R.Y.R.C.

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The Rangiora Youth Recreational Club

EVALUATION:

was formed at a time when many clubs and societies were in recess after the war, but have since been revived. Those members (more than two thirds of which were early or foundation members of R.Y.R.C.) who took the responsibility of winding up the club, feel that it has been done after due thought and deliberation."

Some of the opinions of well known Rangiora citizens who themselves had worked hard to solve the problem dealt with by the Youth Club. I could point to the existence of five flourishing clubs that have been revived by, or originated in youth club activity. Finally, I could record the reactions of former club members who were most intimately connected with club problems and its management.

The following remarks selected at random from the conversation of former members are indicative of the values which they attributed to participation in Youth Club activities. "I learnt a lot about people." "It was fun." "We made lots of friends." "I did things I had always wanted to do." "I used to be shy and clumsy, but the Youth Club helped to

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EVALUATION:

To answer the question 'what did this experiment in community recreation achieve?' I could recount the numerous activities of the club and analyse the values attaching to each in turn. I could quote from the speeches of civic leaders who from time to time spoke at formal functions in praise of the club's work. I could relate some of the opinions of well known Rangiora citizens who themselves had worked hard to solve the problem dealt with by the Youth Club. I could point to the existence of five flourishing clubs that have been revived by, or originated in youth club activity. Finally, I could record the reactions of former club members who were most intimately connected with club problems and its management.

The following remarks selected at random from the conversation of former members are indicative of the values which they attributed to participation in Youth Club activities. "I learnt a lot about people." "It was fun." "We made lots of friends." "I did things I had always wanted to do." "I used to be shy and clumsy, but the Youth Club helped to

to cure that." "We showed the old 'fogies' we didn't need to be spoon fed." Social adjustment, education, qualities of independence, perseverance, cheerfulness and friendship, critical judgment and tolerance, are all there even though they be somewhat crudely expressed.

The winding up of the affairs of the Rangiora Youth Recreational Club marked the end of an interesting period in the life of the Rangiora community. It had its beginnings eight years earlier in the cry of the young people, 'there is nothing to do.' It began at that particular time because I recognised the nature of the social problem that existed and believed that youthful enterprise and initiative under wise leadership would solve it. That the club should finally end its work is not surprising, for a club such as this is essentially a transient association of human beings, adult and juvenile. It has no power except that exercised by these human beings. Tradition, atmosphere, loyalty, and the rest, have no existence apart from these, and the best conceived programme in the world may express no more than the pious hopes of an idealist. The plain fact of the matter is

that the accomplishment of a club, whatever high ideals may be written into its constitution, and however glorious may be its past history, cannot at any time be greater than the effective intention of those who, for the time being, are its active members.

The club filled a need among the youth of the community. That need is still there but it exists in a new generation. The same social hunger, the same sense of exclusion, the same feeling of inadequacy in the performance of physical skills has become the lot of those who now enter the period that might well be called 'the adjustment of youth.' The association of human beings which made up the Youth Club have outgrown the needs it could supply and their interests have become more narrow and specialised.

At this stage I would venture to suggest, that had Rangiora been successful in establishing a Community Centre, the gaps that existed in the leisure time of its citizens, both young and old, and which were filled for the young during eight years by the Youth Club, would have been closed.

The community would not have again been faced with the problem that springs from youth's difficulty of adjustment. The provision of permanent buildings, adequately designed to meet the leisure time needs of the whole community, and the presence of a director to ensure continuity of interest, would have counteracted the weakness that lies in the transient nature of human associations.

Looked at from all angles, the Rangiora Youth Club as an experiment in community recreation must be regarded as a success. I agree that the cultural, social and educational values attaching to its work was limited to the members who participated freely in its programmes. But four hundred young men and women represent a significant number in any semi-rural community, and during the active years of the club's existence, approximately that number had been members for all or part of the time. I believe the club met the requirements which a team of trained investigators deemed necessary to cover adequately the word recreation and I quote from their published report.

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(1) "The Adjustment of Youth"

The Australian Council for Educational Research 1950.  
P. 147-148.

(1) "The term recreation is to be taken as covering all the activities, cultural, educational and physical, which the individual might enjoy in his leisure time..... modern society not only provides the opportunity for increased leisure, it also creates conditions which for many people are seriously deficient in opportunities for self-expression and for cultivation of useful interests. Indeed, recreation has a therapeutic role to play in the modern community of which the importance can scarcely be exaggerated.

The present day acceptance of recreation is due only partly to the realisation that working conditions leave unfilled gaps in the lives of individuals; it is due also to better insight into the nature and needs of the individual personality. To our fathers, play was strongly contrasted with work; it was trivial and unimportant. A large part of the history of modern thought

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(1) "The Adjustment of Youth"

The Australian Council for Educational Research 1950.  
P.147-148.



in education can be interpreted as an attempt to break down this dichotomy, to capture the essential spirit and value of activities which are spontaneously and willingly entered upon. --- Recreation services may at times cover physical recreation only, but the present trend is to bring physical recreation closer to general recreation. Formalised exercises of the gymnastic type are no longer regarded as the sole means of securing physical recreation. The increased adoption of informal activities and pastimes has come about through a deeper understanding of human needs."

'Activities spontaneously and willingly entered upon' the criteria given for recreation, expressed the guiding principle of the Youth Club. The importance of mental and emotional well-being, and of a satisfactory adjustment to the social environment was not lost sight of in its activities. Its programme laid stress on activities which included social as well as physical elements and the educational influences of the school acquired

breadth and fresh impetus from application to everyday affairs.

One characteristic of all forms of recreation is that each provides an outlet for some basic urge or need. Each represents a medium through which personality achieves satisfying expression and which contributes to human happiness. This characteristic of recreation activity accounts for the great diversity of recreation forms. It explains the close relationship between the essential satisfactions which people seek in recreation activities, and the ways in which the personality functions. Just as the individual personality expresses itself through the exercise of its physical, social, mental and creative powers, so recreation activities in their varied forms bring physical, social, mental, and creative satisfactions to the individual engaging in them.

Among the satisfactions which large numbers of people attain through forms of recreation are the opportunity to create, fellowship, adventure, a sense of achievement, the enjoyment of one's physical powers, the use of one's mental powers, emotional stimulation, beauty, relaxation, and opportunity for

service. It is because some individuals find that certain forms of activity yield one or more of these satisfactions that those activities become for them recreation. The recreation value of an activity for a particular person depends upon the way in which he is affected by it and upon the richness of the experience which it brings to him. The use of the term 'higher recreations' which is sometimes applied to certain forms of activity, such as the cultural arts, implies that activities differ in value. Yet this label carries a connotation which is not always justified. Other forms of recreation such as swimming, dancing, or tramping may have more meaning and offer more satisfying outlets of expression for a certain individual at a particular time than the so called 'higher recreations.' No specific forms of recreation have an exclusive right to this title, but certain activities which serve a wide range of basic human needs and afford great possibilities for rich and satisfying experience have gained for themselves a high rank in recreation values. Thus an activity in which an individual can create, achieve, and find

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beauty, fellowship, and relaxation is more likely to have enduring value than one which yields only one or two types of satisfaction.

Rich and satisfying experience was afforded the young people of Rangiora by its Youth Club. In every sense the activity which they chose was recreation. For some, that activity held enduring value according to the degree it satisfied their basic human needs.

This account of the history of the Rangiora Youth Recreational Club presents a human problem and a description of the circumstances under which it was recognised and the manner in which it was solved. It is viewed against the background of its particular social environment, and is compared with the criteria which wise and experienced educationists and social workers alike hold to be the real meaning of re-creation. I saw the beginning of the experiment and helped to guide its course; but the real trial is still to come. How far will the values we acquired in our youthful adventure stand the test of time?

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