

MUNICIPAL ENTERTAINING.

When a dance was given in Milwaukee recently under the auspices of the municipal authorities, and announcements were made of municipal concerts to follow, the newspapers throughout the entire country commented upon the matter. Some editorials ridiculed the idea of a municipal ball; others approved it. Upon one point only they seemed to be agreed—that here was something new; that now, for the first time, was the government interesting itself directly in the recreation and entertainment of the public.

The fact is, however, that whether this idea be good or bad, wise or unwise, it is old,—old even in this particular form. Chicago has conducted dance-halls for years, under the auspices of the municipality. In New York City not only has provision been made for dancing on the recreation piers, but instruction in dancing has been provided,—under the auspices of the municipality.

Moreover, some of our principal cities are now giving dances night after night in the recreation centers located in the public school buildings. These dances are given through the patronage of the school boards, but

at the expense of the municipality.

On the night of St. Patrick's Day this year, a social dance was held in New York a public school recreation center down on the East Side in New York City. The girls of the neighborhood were the hostesses, and the guests were boys from a near-by recreation center. A school official who dropped in found that there were over three hundred young people on the floor having a most delightful time. On leaving, he stepped across the street into a commercially managed dance-hall of questionable character which ordinarily had a large patronage. On this occasion only thirty couples were present.

In Chicago, during the 1909-10 season, two evening recreation centers were established with day school principals in charge. Neither building had an assembly room or a gymnasium, but the wide corridors gave the boys space for basket ball and the girls opportunity for folk-dancing and games. There were study rooms for those who wished them, a double room for reading and single ones for choral singing. The experiment worked so well that the Board of Education adopted a report which

asked for \$10,000 to start social centers the next fall and further recommended that "suitable assembly halls, equipped with opera chairs, be constructed on the first floors of all elementary and high schools, either separate from or in connection with a gymnasium, and further, that parents' associations and all other organizations working for the 'physical, social and moral uplift' of children and adults be encouraged to use school buildings."

The effectiveness of the work done in Rochester is illustrated by the following quotation from the report of the Social Center and Civic Clubs: "A month after the opening, a merchant whose place of business is near the Center, stopped the director on the street to say, 'The Social Center has accomplished what I had regarded as impossible. I have been here nine years, and during that time there has always been a gang of toughs around these corners which has been a continual nuisance. This winter the gang has disappeared.'"

"They aren't a gang any more," answered the director, "they are a debating club."

For the past five years the Board of Education of Newark has supported after-class and evening recreation in its buildings. The girls are made merry with folk dances and the boys strong with games and "gym" exercises. The annual expenditure ranges from \$1500 to \$2600.

"Resolved, That the Social Centers be opened October 13 Milwaukee and conducted for five School Board evenings per week. . . . Takes Action . . . the work in such centers to include reading and study, games, gymnastics, industrial work, and instruction in civics, history, oratory and music." (Proceedings of the Board of School Directors, October 6, 1910.)

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Details concerning the administration of Evening Recreation Centers and other after-school uses of school buildings are given in the "Wider Use of the School Plant," by Clarence Arthur Perry, Charities Publication Committee New York City. Postpaid, \$1.25.