

Settlement Bulletin



VOL. II.

NOVEMBER, 1908,

NO. 6.

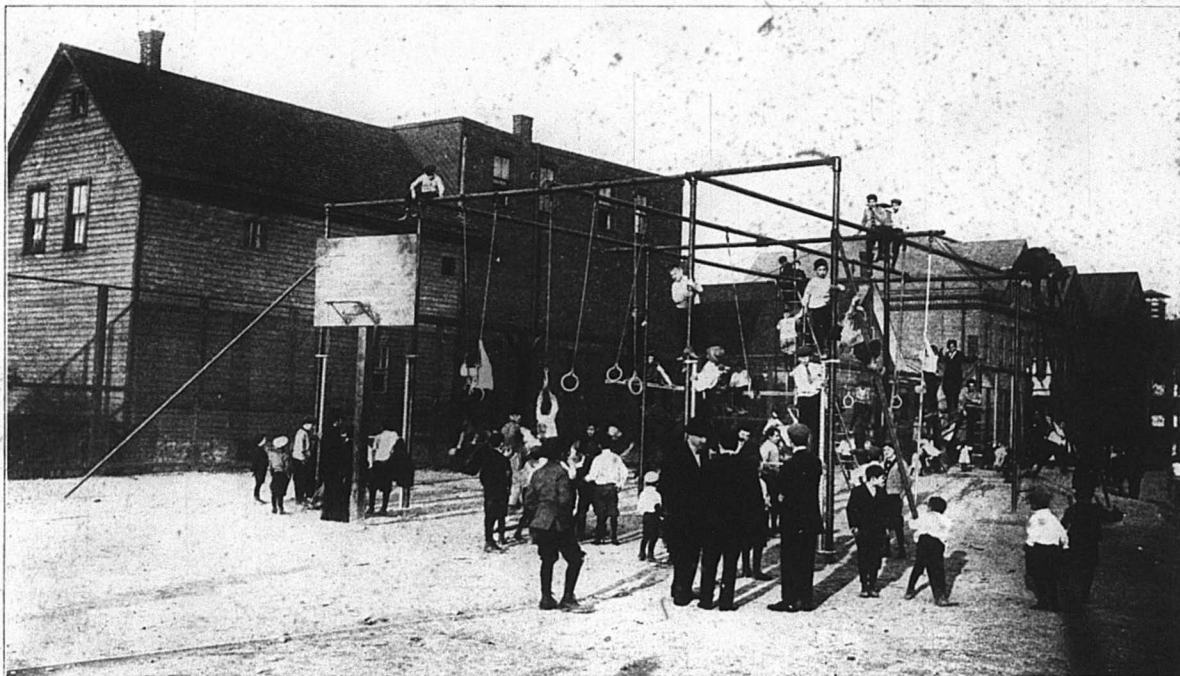
Settlement Bulletin

ISSUED NINE TIMES A YEAR IN THE INTEREST OF THE SOCIAL SETTLEMENT

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ROCHESTER, N. Y., NOVEMBER, 1908.

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THE PLAYGROUND

The Number Nine School Playground is a reality. Just about five o'clock the beauty of the sunset adds a crowning glory to the realized playground. The big open space for play is thronged with children. Oh! it is big to these boys and girls, who have had nothing but narrow streets and not free possession of them, either. But they possess this new land. It is their very own and they feel their right of possession. With this feeling of its being our playground, come two other characteristics that sometimes we older children do not always appreciate—the enjoyment and use of what is ours.

To see the boys and girls receiving all that we ever thought they would and vastly more than we even anticipated, is a joy. Have you seen them? There are the wee babes playing in the sand boxes,

little brothers and sisters on the seesaws and in the swings, and the bigger ones around the athletic frame with its suspended ladders, swinging ladders and climbing ropes. There are two race tracks: The straight one of a hundred yards, and a large circular track enclosing the baseball diamond. This will be used for a skating rink later. There are also, nets for basket ball. Yet, there is space for free play and games without apparatus. The real pleasure of the participants is indexed in their happy faces.

THE EFFECT OF A SOCIAL CENTER ON A COMMUNITY

There are some things that can't be measured; for instance, you can't measure the influence of a good man or woman, or the comfort of a true home. Why

yes, there are lots of things you can't. If you don't believe it, let's see you measure the fun on No. 9 playground or the joy that broke out when the girls won the cup. And the effect on a community of opening a public school building as a Social Center is one of the things that can't be measured. I don't mean because it is too big. Folks can measure big things. They can measure how heavy the earth is and how far you'd have to go to get to the sun, and how very warm you'd be when you got there. Think of that! And I don't mean that it is too small. One time I weighed a pencil mark on a piece of paper, and then I weighed a hair. It was a light hair. Yes, you can measure big things and little things, but you can't measure the effect of a Social Center. It's sort of funny too, because you can SEE its effect in the expression on the people's faces, you can HEAR its effect in the tone of their

voices and you can FEEL its effect in the "Atmosphere" of the community.

To find out the effect of a Social Center on a community, we no longer have to theorize. Of course, anybody would know, *theoretically*, that it *would* be a fine thing for any community to have an attractive, wholesome gathering place open every evening for recreation and entertainment, for discussion of public questions and physical exercise, where people could come together on a common footing and be broadened and sweetened and waked up and acquainted. A year ago that is the only way that you could tell, by theorizing. It's different now, for No. 14 School Building was equipped and opened last year and we have something to test the theories by.

Let's go over there and see what was done there last year, and what was the effect of it.

First, a word about the equipment. The assembly hall was fitted up as a gymnasium, and shower baths were installed. A stereopticon for the lectures, a supply of games, magazines, etc., for the quiet game and reading room and a lot of dishes for social evenings, were bought, and five hundred volumes were rented from Albany for the library.

A half dozen of the right sort of people were hired—a man gymnasium director and a woman gymnasium director, and her assistant (she has to have one, you know, to play the piano), a librarian, a man club director and a woman club director and doorkeeper.

Then, beginning the first of November, the building was thrown open between 7.30 and 10 every evening, Mondays and Wednesdays for women and girls; Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays for men and boys and Fridays for a lecture or entertainment for all—thrown open for everybody, white or black or blue, who cared to come there to hear lectures and enjoy music, or to play games, or to hold club meetings and talk and laugh and sing and discuss, or do stunts in the gymnasium and hustle around to raise the money for the ice cream beforehand—and eleven thousand, four hundred and sixty people came—not all the first night, of course, but in the first three months.

The attendance began with 688 the first week, about a hundred a night; in three months it was 1,169 a week, about two hundred a night. You see everybody who came at first kept on coming and brought

somebody else with him.

Nearly all these people, practically all except a part of the Friday evening crowd organized themselves into clubs—the men into a men's club, the women into a couple of women's clubs, the boys into several boys' clubs and the girls into "The Daughters of Uncle Sam." These clubs had enough serious work to do to keep them strong and enough fun to make them stronger. They governed themselves with their own officers and constitutions. They listened to speakers and asked them questions; they debated and did "business" and held social evenings and had all sorts of good times in the gymnasium and game room, on sleigh-rides and at picnics and—GOT ACQUAINTED, and, of course, found that there are a lot more fine people in this neighborhood than they ever had any idea there were before. And, somehow, these people—we people—broadened and deepened in our feelings, in our friendships and our sympathies till we began to think less of the fact that some of us are Irish and some aren't, or that some of us are rich and some richer, or some of us are Baptists and some Catholics and some Jews; and we began to think more of the great fact that we are all human beings, members of one big family, with pretty much the same needs and joys and sorrows. I said that you couldn't measure the effect of a Social Center on a Community—of course you can measure the development of the people's biceps after a month in the gym—but you can't begin to measure the effect of a Social Center on a community until you can cut a yard stick that is big enough to measure the breadth of human kindness and make an instrument that will register the growth of the home spirit.

Now, for convenience of consideration, let us divide the people into three groups—first, the boys; second, the women and girls; third, the men—and see, if we can, some single effect that the Social Center has on each of these parts, that so we may see its effect on the whole.

There are a lot of thoughtful people who believe that the "boy problem" is the most important and difficult of all, and I can hear them ask: "How about that?" School boys and school girls, you know, have the building during the day, and this winter, they are to have the playground—the true Social Center for children—during the afternoons. The

only boys or girls eligible for the Social Center are these who are not attending public school. But the fellows who have left school, the fellows between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one furnish the most serious phases of the "boy problem." It is at just about that age that young fellows "hang around" street corners in the evenings and make some people almost forget that they are the hope of the future. One day last winter a merchant, whose place of business is near No. 14, stopped me to say: "The Social Center has accomplished something that 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 that gang has disappeared." "They aren't a gang any more," I answered. "They are a debating club." Did you ever stop to think how many homes center their hopes in some growing boy just about to enter manhood? If you ever have you will realize that it is no small item in the happiness of a community to substitute a wholesome, clean gathering place for the street corner or even the ordinary "club" for these young fellows.

I am sorry to have to say it, but the sad fact is (unless I am mistaken, which I hope I am) that women and girls gossip sometimes and as a rule, when they come together, talk about clothes; that is—in neighborhoods where Social Centers have not yet been established. But just let those same women put on blue flannel bloomers and play dodge ball together or do the Hungarian Scarkos in a gymnasium, and put on aprons and roll up their sleeves and wash dishes together, and then sit down with their hats off and discuss Child Labor in a club meeting together. Why they haven't anymore room for gossip after that than a small boy has for soggy old bread just after a Thanksgiving dinner. Little Leo came over the other day and asked Mrs. Ward whom she was going to vote for, informing her that his mother is going to change her vote this year and telling her reasons for so doing. Will Leo as he grows up, love or respect his mother less? Will she be truly the companion that a mother should be, because she is intelligent on public questions, or more? Leo's mother is a Social Center woman.

And now—the MEN—and here we come to the distinctive feature of the

Rochester Public School Social Centers. There are two or three other features that characterize these Centers but the one absolutely unique feature is the Men's Civic Club development. And it is largely because of the dignity that this feature adds to the Social Center that its effect on the community is as strong as it is, and it is principally on account of this feature that the Rochester Social Center Movement is attracting the attention of other cities.

The first of last December, twelve men came together in No. 14 building and agreed upon the following statement of what they were there for:—

"Whereas, The welfare of society demands that those whose duty it is to exercise the franchise be well informed upon the economic, industrial and political questions of to-day; and,

"Whereas, By combination of effort the best results may be obtained; and,

"Whereas, the public school building is the best available place for such combination of effect;

"Therefore, We, whose names are hereunto annexed do form a society to hold, in the public school building, meetings whose object shall be the gaining of information upon public questions by listening to public speakers and by public readings and discussions."

Five months later, that club had grown in membership to one hundred and twenty-seven and two other Men's Civic Clubs had been formed in other parts of the city to use the school building for the discussion of public questions.

The spirit of this association is well expressed in the words of Daniel Webster which Mr. Rich quoted the other evening as describing the Civic Club: "This is a Senate; a senate of equals, of men of individual honor and personal character and of absolute independence. We know no masters; we acknowledge no dictators. This is a hall for mutual consultation and discussion, not an arena for the exploitation of champions."

And its effect on the community is indicated by the words used by Alderman Frank Ward. When at the close of his address on "The Duties of an Alderman," he responded to the vote of thanks tendered him by the club, he said: "You have given me a vote of thanks. I feel that I want to give you a vote of thanks for the privilege of speaking to you and hearing your frank discussion of my

words. If you have been benefitted by my coming here, I have been benefitted more. If every member of the Common Council and every other public servant had frequently such opportunities as this to discuss public matters with those to whom he owes his appointment, it would mean that we would have much better, more intelligent representation of the people's interest and a cleaner government."

In his series of "Adventures in Contentment" in the *American Magazine* last winter, David Grayson had one article on the fine public spirit that came in his little back country place through the meetings of the men of the place in the little red school house to talk over their common business. He ends the article with the statement that there isn't any thing in city life to correspond with those school meetings and until some thing like them is developed we can never hope to get back to the same spirit of open hearted sincere fellowship in public burden bearing and question solving that was theirs. David Grayson had not, when he wrote that statement, heard of the Civic Club Movement in Rochester. I am sure that when he does hear of it, and he will pretty soon, for I shall send him a copy of this issue of the Bulletin with this paragraph marked, he will say that this movement not only does correspond to that which made the real popular government of the past, but is the same thing simply transplanted to the larger sphere of modern life, and that it is bound to have the same good effects on the communities in which it grows to-day that those old school meetings had in a simpler time.

Last year when the matter of appropriation for Social Centers and playgrounds was up before the city government, the Civic Club sent the following letter stating their idea of the effect of the Social Center on the community. And these men were in a position to know:

To the Honorable, the Mayor and Common Council of the City of Rochester:

Knowing that the question of extending the Social Center work of the public schools is now before you, and believing that the judgment of men who have frequented the Social Center at No. 14 School may be of value in this matter, we, the undersigned voters, residing in the neighborhood of No. 14 School, and members of the Men's Civic Club of the

Social Center, declare that, in our judgment, the opening of the public schools in the evening for recreation, reading and club meetings, so far as it has been tried at No. 14 School, is an unqualified success.

Not only does it give opportunity for wholesome athletic exercises, literary culture, and training in good citizenship to the older boys and girls and young men and women of the community, and, in its free lectures, afford opportunities for entertainment and instruction to all the people, but especially in its clubs for men and women it is of great value as a place for the discussion and understanding of civic questions and the development of a good community spirit.

In our opinion there could be no more wise and economical investment of the city's money than in the extension of the Social Center movement, and we do most heartily endorse the recommendation of the Board of Education in this matter.

SUNSHINE CLUB

Another year has been credited to the Sunshine Club. It has been a good year—good in friendships, good in efforts, good in sunshine. We have learned many new things, while one old thing has been even more deeply impressed upon our minds: that this old world is hungry for sunshine, and needs it for its health.

Aside from some philanthropic work at the Thanksgiving season, and at other times, our club work has consisted of lectures, receptions and study. We gave six general lectures, open to the public, which were well attended. Following each was a pleasant social occasion for our friends and ourselves—a period of sunshine spread. We also had various receptions, parties, occasions—call them what you will—when we and some of our friends drank from the well of sunshine, and grew stronger for life's work.

Study has been mentioned. We did study more or less systematically. Immigration was our topic—a subject close to the hearts of all true Americans. Week after week we met and discussed the various phases of immigration, and its influence upon our country's destiny.

And as for the future? Let it be bright. Let it be full of friendship and joy and kindness and good deeds: that is, full of sunshine.

Settlement Bulletin

*Issued nine times a year in the interest
of the Social Settlement of*

ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

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TELEPHONES.

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Vol. II. November, 1908. No. 6.

Editorial

The Bulletin Board begs to report that after its unavoidable but refreshing sleep it resumed its normal life last February, and up to date has proved its right to survive by overcoming many difficulties in the struggle for existence.

As you know, the Bulletin is governed by a committee of five acting with Mrs. Stewart, and re-acting against the literary modesty of those who could co-operate in making the paper a success, but whose promises to write are as soap-bubbles, full of beauty until they are left to soar for themselves! The Committee has had to act as truant officers, ever running after these mischievous promises, and it has certainly been up-hill chasing.

However, the purpose of the Bulletin is to furnish a vehicle of communication between the Settlement and those who are interested in it, and though it has some of the attributes of an airship it has served its purpose, and is therefore justified not only in existing, but also in begging your earnest support.

We would say, too, that our generous advertisers enable us to keep the wolf from the door, despite the fact that many of our subscribers accept our attentions without any thought of the modest fee. If it's so easy to forget to pay a quarter it should be just as easy to remember it. Though we sent out about five hundred copies of each issue, less than one hundred and forty were paid for! In other words, while our respiration and inspiration are good our circulation needs stimulation.

Some appreciative subscribers, however,

sent more money than was "nominated in the bond," and them we have to thank for the Bulletin Milk Fund, to which all the money beyond the stipulated amount was contributed. This fund will be used during the winter to supply pure milk to a few sick babies.

So you see our work, though small, is in the right direction, and with the proper encouragement and assistance, may some time develop into an institution that will be a credit to the Settlement, and a pleasure to those interested.

One little, two little, three little children, one little crib, one chair plus the floor; one stove, one window or a pane in the door; one mother, much noise, sewing, cooking for more, for brother and sister work out in some store—what an ordinary picture, with a background of shattered nerves of the mother, weak constitutions of the children and a foreground of discomfort and lack of ventilation. This is a problem that is easily worked out, i. e., we know a means for its solution, and we can bring it at least partially to a solution:

Small room—2 babies, equals more air for mother and third child.

Small room—2 babies, equals less noise for mother and third child.

Small room—2 babies, equals less care for mother and third child.

But how are we to eliminate the two babies? Nothing inhuman need suggest itself when it is so simple to furnish a couple of cheery rooms with a few cribs, a nurse, fresh, soporific air, and perhaps the Bulletin Milk Fund! Think it over—you furnish the feathers and the babies will do the nesting, or in other words: You provide the means and the babies will do the resting!

GOOD TIMES.

The Kindergarten had a fine party Thursday morning, the twenty-second of October. All the little new pupils of this fall came and received their first really warm welcome and had a taste of the fun interspersed through the games and marching that represent difficult work for them. The children enjoyed ice cream and cake for refreshments.

In August the Ladies' Friendly Society gave the children at the Vacation House a party that they will long remember. It consisted of a spread, with all sorts of good things to eat, including a watermelon of incredible dimensions. After the luncheon there was candy for the children, and each one received a pretty book or some other little gift as a souvenir.

Hallowe'en comes on Saturday the thirty-first of October, and that is when the girls of the afternoon classes have their Harvest Festival. Each girl brings fruit or vegetables, and together they will do these up in dainty baskets to be given away. The girls will sing some song of harvest and hear a Hallowe'en ghost story that will give them all the shivers appropriate to that most ghostly day.

THE KINDERGARTEN

When our Kindergarten opened last fall, the class-rooms at the new Number 9 were not all ready for use, and a good many of the children were going only half a day, to allow others to fill their places the other half day in the over-crowded school. In consequence, several of our little six and seven-year-old neighbors were able to attend the Settlement kindergarten in the mornings, complicating affairs there considerably as the ages ranged anywhere from two to seven; from the age of "Ring-around-a-rosy," much weeping, and no possible discipline to the age of "London Bridge is Falling Down" or "Hide the Thimble," with many original ideas, objections and scraps involved and strict discipline necessary. There were about twenty children in all, then. The older ones gradually evolved into our main props and supporters who went through the games with enthusiasm and order—well, sometimes order—while the little ones followed them in dumb amazement.

When the school was completed after Christmas and ready for full all-day sessions, we missed our big girls and boys very much, but another curious evolution took place to compensate us for their loss. The babies of the old regime, who had moved mechanically and watched their elders with large-eyed surprise, began to

take an interest in the songs and games. They fought for first place; they showed traces of infant minds; the infant minds began to bud and the buds blossomed most wonderfully. As more and more very little children filled in the vacant places, and the number became even larger than before, those little products of the year's training came in turn into their heritage as leaders and led the new-comers through the period of wondering dullness till they too showed interest, activity and mental growth.

In the work, we followed in general the calendar of the public school kindergarten. We made "The Family" the subject of the fall work, singing "the Happy Family," talking about the domestic happiness of the birds and animals, playing house sometimes, and thinking how comfortable it was to have Mother and Father and home to protect us all winter long. When the snow came we sang and talked about the beauty of it and of how it was tucking the grass and flowers safely away out of the cold, and of how they would finally wake up again, until by spring we had grown quite excited to see if they really would.

The first thing that little children have to learn as social beings seems to be to accept defeat at each other's hands and to play together without fighting, letting small injuries and disappointments pass, for the sake of peace. Marching and kindergarten games ought to be a good training in these things, and we kept this always in mind.

We tried to encourage in the children imagination that can transform later school work from a routine into an exploration of curious and interesting things. They told stories, drew pictures, played "shopping," and even acted out such simple tales as "Goldilocks and the Three Bears."

BOYS CLUB

The third year of our Boys' Club showed an enrollment of 62 boys.

On Thursday evening of each week willing helpers found an enthusiastic lot of little chaps anxiously awaiting the time for admission to their club.

We have aimed to make the boys feel that the club represents to them something

peculiarly their own, a place where they will not be told to "move on," where they may make a reasonable amount of noise and not be frowned upon.

At 7-30 p. m. they present their cards of admission at the door, leave their outer garments at the proper place, then turn their attention to the librarian, who furnishes them with their favorite books, which in most cases are the "Algers;" in the words of the boys they are "dead swell," and while to some extent their interest is turned towards other books "Alger" has the call. These books they are allowed to take for home reading during the week.

Next on the programme is a scramble for favorable seats in the story-telling corner, a most popular place, as the boys thoroughly enjoy a good story. There a young lady is always waiting for them every week with a different story, just the kind they like, and of the best, which are both interesting and healthy.

After this they are allowed to indulge in all kinds of light literary and entertaining games, which are provided, and willing helpers always ready to assist them. This is followed by indoor athletics of different kinds, properly supervised to prevent over exertion, and which are entered into with great enthusiasm.

In a way we have endeavored to develop their physical as well as moral being.

On several occasions, ice cream and cake have been served, and on others fruit or candy have been distributed at the conclusion of the evening session. Comment on the extreme popularity of these functions is unnecessary.

Our season closed in June in the usual way, with a field day at Maplewood Park. On this occasion, athletic events of all kinds were indulged in by the boys, blue and pink ribbons being distributed to the winners of first and second place in the different events. Ice cream and cake was also served on this occasion.

In our boys club we have endeavored to provide a pure, social atmosphere, right enjoyment, and to promote a spirit of "fair play" among the boys.

It is to be regretted that with this report is tendered the resignation of our leader. We hope that a new leader will soon be found to direct the boys in their work and play.

THE SUMMER AT THE VACATION HOME

The time of all the year when everyday work and life in the city are most unendurable and a change of some kind is most appreciated is in the hot summer days. Many families could get away for a week, perhaps, at this time of year, if there were a place near at hand and inexpensive enough to suit their means, but many are deprived of their vacation for lack of such a place. When the Vacation Home, near Pittsford, was started by the Settlement last summer, it meant a great deal to those families in our neighborhood who felt the need of a rest and change. Only a dollar a week was charged for board, and this put the opportunity within the reach of many.

The visitors were all women or children, so in most cases it was the mother and children of a family that came to enjoy their week's visit together. Often they came especially for the sake of the smallest baby, who usually revived perceptibly in the purer air, while its bigger brothers and sisters played and grew tanned and healthy out in the fields. Sometimes illness in a family made the parents glad to be free of the care of their children, who could be sent to enjoy the country and be among friends out at the Vacation House. Other children came alone, whose parents were too busy to join them. There were also a good many invalids of all ages visitors at the Home; usually those who were convalescent after an operation.

The Vacation Home was a country house, with enough rooms to accommodate about twelve people at a time. It had a pleasant porch, a garden of lilies in front, and lawn space enough for the children to swing and romp in. The meadows, with clover and tall grass and daisies, lay on every side of the place, and in these there were shady places where one could rest or read. The children loved the wild flowers, and they liked most of all to go to the woods nearby where they could dig up big ferns out of the damp earth. The brook that ran through the fields was another source of delight, and was used for wading, bathing and falling in. It was a splendid place for summer fun.

The house-work was all shared equally. Friends of the Home almost every day

brought gifts of good things to eat, so that there was always some special delicacy for the table.

About a hundred and fifty enjoyed a pleasant vacation at the Vacation Home last summer, and they certainly would vote it a successful plan for another year.

THANKSGIVING.

Thanksgiving is coming! Why is it that we are all glad? From the old to the youngest—those to whom it means vast preparations in the kitchen, and those to whom it means gigantic preparations in the dining-room—all, except perhaps the turkey, who does his gobbling beforehand.

There is something in the air besides frost; something in the wind besides the approach of winter. Shall we say that the animal in us is laying up a store of nuts against the shortage of the cold season? Shall we say that the animal in us is craving a final sport or run before the winter's nap? Of course, a few of us stop to think of the why and wherefore of the day, but many of us don't know the reason, and many of us are too busy to think back of last season's clothes or under this season's bonnet.

It seems reasonable that since it is a national holiday, and since we all belong to this big home-providing Republic, we ought really to inquire into its origin, approve of its institution, and be thankful that Indians in the red, white or black are held in check by the Red, White and Blue.

Let's all celebrate Thanksgiving, not only because the Pilgrims were thankful several hundreds of years ago, but because we ourselves are full of thanks not only for the fertile land and prosperous nation that gives us our livelihood and protection, but for the privilege of living where one may think, feel and hope without any interference.

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