

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL IS BIG BUSINESS

By H. P. Robinson

When Robert Raikes rented a room in the most congested district of Gloucester, England to give religious and secular instruction to the miserable little urchins of the street, his neighbors "considered it a wild and fruitless enterprise." It may be true that he presented a rather spectral figure with his "ragged little regiment," but little did Gloucester, England and even Robert Raikes himself realize that he had kindled a fire that would light blazing torches in every nook and corner of the Universe. Little did he realize that he was being instrumental in launching one of the noblest institutions of time and setting in motion an international enterprise that was destined to be one of the biggest businesses on earth.

Time has written the romantic story of the growth and development of the Sunday school. In a little over one and one-half centuries, the magic and magnetism of the Sunday school has so challenged and gripped the old and young alike until today it covers the earth "as the waters cover the sea."

America, the Land of Opportunity, the land of free enterprise was the land to make Sunday School Big Business. When Sunday Schools came to America, they set root in fertile soil, and as the years have passed the momentum has gathered until today the mighty army of the young moves across this land with such rhythm and unison until the very earth beneath us seems to quiver and shake with the onward surge of this big Business that is getting bigger and bigger as the days go by.

Church after church as the generations have come and gone, have caught the vision and sensed the opportunity in Sunday School. John Wesley was the first great churchman to see it. After him has come countless thousands of laymen and preachers to see in the Sunday school possibly the most effective method to evangelize and teach the world the ways of eternal life.

One of the last churches to see this opportunity and accept the challenge is our own great denomination. We too have caught the vision and have been swept into this mighty current that is calling for the best that is in us and opening a door for the spread of Holiness and Pentecost that is unprecedented.

The challenge of this Big Business can only be accepted and acted upon as we learn to:

THINK IN BIG TERMS

Sunday School, like every other business has its times of ebbing and flowing. It, too, follows a cycle. There are times when Sunday schools decline and lose their power to attract the multitudes. Fortunately, we are now in the midst of Sunday school's high tide. It is on the upsurge. It is popular to go to Sunday school. It isn't hard to get people to go the Sunday school. This is our day—our opportunity—our challenge. The time has come for us to begin thinking in big terms. If we would build a big Sunday school, we must first have big thoughts, learn to think in big terms, get out of the old rut that you have been operating in for 25 years,—get a new vision. Sit down and begin thinking; push back the horizon of your mind, claim larger territory, crack new brain cells, train yourself to think in big terms because when you are dealing in Sunday school, you are dealing in big business. Before you can actually build a big Sunday school, you have to build it in your mind by thinking in big terms.

DEVELOP BIG PLANS

Sunday schools cannot be built in the mind alone. It is true that they are built there first; but after you have done this, you must develop big plans. Many a Big Sunday school has been born, built and died in a man's mind. Thoughts must be



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put into action—ideas must take form before others are affected by them. This is the point where it takes real courage. If you are great enough to think big thoughts, you are great enough to make and develop big plans.

Sunday school is a long range program. It not only is a program of time. It has its roots sunk deep in the soil of time; but its interests, aims, and objectives belong to eternity.

A fatal blunder in planning for the future of your Sunday school is to base it on what you have done in the past. Forget the past, throw away any and everything that will hinder the progress of your Sunday school. The sky is the limit. This whole generation of men, women, boys and girls is your goal. Stop at nothing. Set such big goals that it will startle and stagger your people. Plug away at it—stay at it, everlastingly at it until your big thoughts have been put into big plans and your big plans have reached big goals.

GOD IS A BIG PARTNER

Sunday school is not only the concern and interest of the greatest and best people on earth—it is an enterprise of Heaven; God is the sponsor, the senior partner, and the leading stock holder. All heaven is behind you and therefore you cannot fail. God is your source of courage, faith, and grace. When you are in the business of Sunday school, you are in league with these venerable immortals who are most effectively fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus when He said: "Go ye therefore and teach all Nations."

Listen, neighbor, you are not alone in this work. Wherever you are, however small and discouraging your Sunday school may be, don't lose faith. **It Can Be Done.** Remember Robert Raikes. Within four years from the time he gathered his little "ragged regiment" around him in that first Sunday school class and made the announcement that he was starting a Sunday school, there was a quarter of a million members in Sunday school in the United Kingdom.

REAP A BIG HARVEST

The final and greatest incentive to building a big Sunday school is the
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certainty of the great harvest. Robert Raikes gave pennies to the boys in the slums to get them to Sunday school. He paid his teachers twenty-five cents each Sunday to teach. Long since has the Sunday school worker ceased to receive remuneration for his service. The reward they get is the joy of molding and fashioning the lives of precious boys and girls into useful citizens of this land and leading them into the conditions of eternal life.

But that is not all. Maybe it won't be straining a point to believe that for that host of faithful, tireless, self-sacrificing Sunday school teachers and workers, headed by Robert Raikes, God will have some special place or some special reward in the Glory. Or better still, what could be greater joy or a more perfect harvest than for that Sunday school teacher to meet the souls of those boys and girls in heaven who once answered to his roll call on Sunday morning in the little class room.