

News Herald Jan. 18, 1944

# ● In Our Time . . . . By BARRY MATHER

It has been said that if Christ returned to our 1944 world and resumed his healing he would soon find himself up before a magistrate, charged with practising without a licence.

There is something in that contention which reminds me of my friend Ernie Winch and his well meant plan for the establishment of a mental rehabilitation centre in Kitsilano.

Winch tried to do the patients at Essondale and the general public a good turn. The community responded by giving him a rap over the knuckles of his helping hand. The way things are it was to be expected.

Ever since he entered the Legislature about a decade ago, Winch has made the conditions at institutions like hospitals, jails and asylums his particular study. He has devoted a great deal of time to the betterment of these places and their inmates, and even his political opponents admit that he has done some good work.

Recently, concerned by conditions at busy, crowded Essondale, he decided to establish a non-profit centre for discharged patients. He believed that a rehabilitation home would speed the return of many to a useful place in the community. With the help of friends he planned to set up his centre in Kitsilano. It was really a public-spirited gesture.

But when the people of Kitsilano heard about the Winch plan they were up in arms. The city council may veto the project because, under clause so and so of the zoning bylaw, you just can't establish a mental institution in Kitsilano.



All that is natural enough. A mental institution sounds like a grand idea—for Grandview or Point Grey or any other district but our own. Let Winch come into our block with his centre and most of us will act like the people of Kitsilano. A mental home is a fine thing for the patients. Any real estate agent can tell you what it is to property values. If you have struggled to get a home together you don't have to be told that that is where charity begins.

It is not that the individual citizen is callous or anti-social. It is that the social and economic conditions which surround him frequently dominate his course of action.

Ernie Winch, who beside being a humanitarian, is also what used to be called a "Marxian Socialist," understands that.

He understands, too, that neither the establishment of voluntary little mental institutions nor the enlargement of big, official ones is the real answer to the growing problem of mental disease.

He will tell you that you can no more eliminate insanity by building bigger asylums than you can cure unemployment by establishing nice soup kitchens.

It is much more useful to keep people employed and sane than it is to make room for the unemployed and the mentally deranged.

From Winch's point of view, the answer to such social evils as poverty, insanity and anti-social acts by property-owners is a co-operative economic system in which men will work together for the common good. But he is too much of a humanitarian to sit down and wait for the coming of a better world. Winch wants a better world now.

Well, maybe he can't establish a mental institution—but he can make people think.