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PUBLIC WELFARE AND SOCIAL WORK

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SOCIAL WORK TODAY

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT are some of the highlights in social work today and where does the profession seem to be going? There are developments which are of major importance to the profession and to broad community welfare; there are others which are less so. Both demand attention but first let us consider those which appear to have greatest significance. It seems to the writer that there are four developments in social work which are important for the total welfare of human beings and not just for social work performance. They are: (1) the revived interest of social workers in social movements, social action, social reform; (2) the cooperation of labor and social work; (3) the adaptation of social work to new settings; (4) the weaving of the profession of social work into the community fabric. Let us consider briefly each of these points.

First. Social work is experiencing revitalization. It is looking at itself critically and constructively; it is adapting itself to a rapidly changing milieu; and it is restating its philosophy. In the early years of what we now call social work, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the leaders, not yet having formulated many techniques, did not worry too much about them but put major emphasis on the social situation of the persons with whom they worked. If the environment was inadequate and unsatisfactory, they had the courage fearlessly to expose it and to attempt its change. In time, however, almost total consideration was given to techniques and methods, an inevitable and even desirable phase of any profession provided the forest is not lost sight of, which unfortunately happened in social work. Techniques became masters

instead of servants. A depression and a war have made that point of view anachronistic. Today social work is less self-conscious and introspective and more aware of its place in a larger setting. Its objectives include not only providing technical skills to individuals with problems but also the prevention of distress. This implies knowledge of economic and social conditions and of national and international problems.

Innumerable illustrations might be given to make this point. For example, the Emergency Committee for Social Work comprised of seventy social workers from all over the country, published in the April 1944 *Compass* an article entitled *To Social Workers: A Call to Action*. Their objectives for social action are as follows: (1) full development and equitable distribution of national and international resources; (2) full employment and balanced wage price system; (3) extension of education, health services, housing, recreation, and social security, (4) racial and ethnic equality. At least two meetings at Cleveland during the 1944 National Conference of Social Work were given over to this subject.

Again illustrative of the emphasis on causation and prevention of social and personal problems are the topics of some of the speeches given at Cleveland, such as: "War and the Social Services," by Elizabeth Wisner, President of the Conference, with her emphasis on the need for full employment; "A Nation Worthy of Heroes" by Max Lerner of *P M* magazine with his emphasis on the three goals most wanted by our Armed Forces: a busy America, a warless world, a belief or faith; "The Social Responsibility of Labor in Postwar Society" by two labor leaders from the AF of L and the CIO;

"Needed Amendments to the Social Security Act and Their Achievement" by James E. Murray, co-author of the Wagner-Murray-Dingell Bill; "A Health Program for the Nation" by Michael M. Davis, Chairman of the Committee on Research in Medical Economics; "International Migration: Displaced Persons" by Mary E. Hurlbutt, of the New York School of Social Work; "Equality of Opportunity" by Lester B. Granger, Secretary of the National Urban League.

Again, Gordon Hamilton, an outstanding case worker and teacher in the New York School of Social Work, in a recent article in the *Social Service Review* placed a strong emphasis on the need for reconceiving the curriculum of schools of social work in terms of world human needs. In such planning she believes it necessary that the subject matter, philosophy, and technical skills be related to a positive program for an adequate standard of living, to a world point of view, and to a philosophy of racial and cultural democracy. In her words, "Our students must assimilate fully the tremendous concepts of rights, of needs, of responsibilities, of tolerance, self-direction and participation and translate these tremendous concepts into skills."

All of this seems to indicate that the social worker is again willing to be a reformer—not in the sense of muckraker or uninformed zealot or bigoted missionary, but in the sense of combining a knowledge of facts with a faith that a better world can be achieved. There need not be a separation between good professional practice and earnest striving for a good life anymore than what Harold Laski calls the divorce between scholarship and life. In his words, "The abyss which separates the intellectuals of the main world of scholarship, above all in the academic world, from the main problems of their time is as grave in its implications as it is wide in its extent."

Carr-Saunders and Wilson in their book, *The Professions* regret that the professions make progress but only in their own grooves, that they do not grasp the essential features of social and economic situations, that they treat superficially the remainder of life outside their special activities. The remedy for this lack of vision is the use of their own organizations not only for the consideration of technical problems but for the determination of the place of the particular professional group in society. This is now being done by numbers of social work groups.

Second. The next development, and directly linked with the first, is the alliance of labor and

social work. In the language of Dr. Ellen Potter, 1944-45 President of the National Conference of Social Work, "From the point of view of the incoming President, the most profoundly significant development [at the Cleveland meetings] was the presence of organized labor in strength, AF of L and CIO registering as members, attending meetings, speaking from the floor, asking pertinent questions and speaking formally from several platforms." The Joint Committee of Trade Unions in Social Work and The National Social Service Division of the United Office and Professional Workers of America are strong forces, especially in the east, in welding closer this relationship. A strong precipitating factor in this welding process has been joint participation in war relief campaigns but the depression hastened an inter-group consciousness. Labor and social work share the same interest in the common man—in his economic, social, and political welfare wherever he may be. It is inevitable that labor and social work organizations increasingly work together and often in the face of opposition from politicians, boards of directors, and vested interests. It is quite possible that some such heckling group as the Dies Committee will come forth with the accusation that the labor movement is the left wing of social work or social work the right wing of labor. The truth of the matter is that because of similarity of objectives there must be a closer tie-up between these two large organized groups. It is even possible that from these two groups will come the main pressures for directed social change.

Third and fourth. Since these developments will be discussed in considerable detail in the body of this paper it is unnecessary to do more than briefly refer to them here. The various methodologies of social work, case work, group work, and community organization are making striking adjustments to changing conditions and are doing it far more easily than they did during the depression. The tremendous amount of attention that has been given to social work skills and to the broad social services since 1930, means that there is less resistance today to the profession, in part because social workers are not so technique-minded and paradoxically have become better technicians, and in part because the people who need the social services understand them and want them. Even the Army has found itself using case workers, whom it ambiguously calls field agents, to gather mental, physical, and social histories on potential inductees. Although social workers are still ridiculed or

berated, and although relatively few people have much insight into their purposes and processes, there is general acceptance of their indispensability and the war is greatly increasing both acceptance and understanding.

CASE WORK

Having set out a brief general introductory statement of developments and challenges in social work, let us now proceed to observe activities and trends in the areas of case work, group work, community organization, public welfare administration and social action.

Until very recently such organizations as The American Association of Social Workers and the American Association of Schools of Social Work built their membership and curricula requirements on the theory that the primary skills of social work are those of case work. In fact a case worker, Mary Richmond, is responsible for the first comprehensive formulation of social work and case work principles. Upon her formulation successive workers have built additional principles. Many of these principles and techniques are equally applicable to the other areas of social work. For example, all social workers must learn how to gather data, analyze, evaluate, and use it. All social workers must understand that behavior is symptomatic and purposive and may express deep conflict; that it may be consciously or unconsciously motivated; that it has a history. All social workers must appreciate the significance of the cultural environment to the development of personality. All must recognize that the family as a unit of interacting personalities is the primary institution in the formation of personality and character. All must develop their professional selves. All must believe in the democratic principle of the right of self-determination and apply it. Such principles as these permeate social work activity and are part of the daily performance of all social workers. Case work has been the means by which many of these ideas have seeped through all professional social work practice.

Case work, however, is not occupying the same limelight today as ten, fifteen, or twenty years ago. This is undoubtedly due to many factors, in part because the other areas of performance are more aware of the contributions they have to make and are making them, and in part because the youthful phase of case work when it talked and thought constantly of itself is superseded by a more adult

period when it considers realities other than itself. Dr. Ellen Potter made a similar observation when she wrote in a little article, "The President Speaks her mind." in the July *Conference Bulletin*, "There was a shift in emphasis in the section programs [of the 1944 National Conference of Social Work] which was of historic significance. Case work did not hold the spotlight to the same degree as in recent years. Its techniques and psychiatric refinements gave place to adaptation of skill to new needs, in new settings, and shortcuts to goals which must be quickly reached."

The present most significant developments in case work appear to be three: (1) counseling; (2) extension into new fields; (3) leadership in the reconception of function.

First. Vocational and industrial counseling, marriage counseling, counseling in clinics are not new processes. The first has not usually been done by professional case workers, the latter two often have. For the purposes of this paper counseling means a person to person relationship with one individual seeking help from the other who is prepared to give the help without superimposition of opinion or act. Suddenly counseling has become a popular function, often performed by persons or agencies wishing to be helpful but not quite knowing how. PTA's, AAUW's, Rotary Clubs, Junior Chambers of Commerce develop a counseling program for soldiers or soldiers' wives, refugees, or migratory workers or whomever. It is as though there were magic in the word and hence in the activity.

The rapid growth of counseling in both new and old settings as in unions and in industry, in the administration of the social insurances, in employment and rehabilitation agencies, in USO's, in settlements, Y's, Scout organizations, and in correctional institutions, inevitably means much inadequate and some competent service. Many of the people in these organizations are counseling in the sense of prescribing and dictating, not in the sense of helping the client work out his own destiny. The principles of case work should be the principles of counseling or in other words, counseling is case work most frequently on a short contact basis. It seems clear that counseling will come to be considered an aspect of case work if case workers function unobtrusively and without smug superiority of language, performance, and principle.

Second. Case work has always been used in numerous settings. The recent rapid extension of case work to new fields has come about largely

through the expansion of counseling just discussed. Perhaps the most important extension of case work methods is taking place in labor unions, in war nurseries both in the admission processes and in the treatment of the children themselves, in USO clubs and in USO Travelers Aids, in public housing ventures, in the rehabilitation agencies, in information centers for returning veterans, and with the old services of the Red Cross including Home Service and medical social service. In most of these areas the contacts of the case worker or counselor are short and considerable adaptation of techniques is necessary.

Third. The expansion of the horizons of social work, referred to in the introduction of this paper, has been precipitated in large part by case workers. This is not to say that there are no leaders in this new activity from the areas of group work and community organization but that numbers of workers from the case work area, as Bertha Reynolds, Gordon Hamilton, Fern Lowry, Clara Rabinowitz Antoinette Cannon, Dorothy Kahn, Constance Kyle, took the initiative in drawing attention to the interrelation of person and environment before the revived interest in consciously directed social change virtually became a social movement. Even though that proportion of the total number of case workers performing this function is small, still it is the case worker who has helped give new dimensions to the familiar social work job.

GROUP WORK

What are the most significant developments in social group work? They are several: *First*, the recent careful formulation of methods and principles, a phase which case work has been going through since 1917 and the publication of *Social Diagnosis*. Such books as *New Trends in Group Work*, *Studies in Group Behavior*, *Creative Group Education* illustrate this development. None has yet done for group work and social work what *Social Diagnosis* did for case work and social work. The creation of the American Association for the Study of Group Work, comprised of anyone interested in the field, and its organ, *The Group*, have focused attention on professional group work problems and now there is discussion of forming an organization comprised exclusively of professional group workers.

Second, the mutual understanding of group workers and recreation workers, who may or may not be competent in both areas of performance. It

seems clear that recreation workers who are usually considered to have a program-centered interest and group workers a person-centered interest cannot well do without the other. Even such organizations as the USO, where most of the activities are planned for participation by thousands of service men, carries on group work activities. Not only are some of the activities adapted to small numbers of participants but many leaders consciously and carefully employ the techniques of group work. In a USO known to the writer, which makes some 50,000 contacts a month, one staff member trained in peace-time group work gives special attention to craft, music, art and discussion groups; incidentally he is the most resourceful member of the staff in planning programs for the multitudes.

Third, a tremendous growth of interest in recreation, particularly youth activities and largely because of greatly increased delinquency. Hundreds of communities have not only expanded existing recreation and group work resources, but have set up youth centers and councils. Innumerable articles on youth activities with a juvenile-delinquency-prevention emphasis appear in magazines of as divergent types as, *The Survey*, *Recreation*, *Time*, *Life*, *Vogue*, *Mademoiselle*. Evidence accumulates that police departments throughout the country are becoming increasingly interested in the provision of recreation as one method of preventing delinquency.

Interest in leisure time activities for youth as a means of preventing delinquency has been so emphasized that some communities are in danger of forgetting that younger children, adults, and the aged also have recreational interests and needs. This overemphasis is not so likely to occur in those communities which appreciate that the teen-canteen should be managed by youth and only sponsored by adults, that the youth center is only a part of a total community leisure-time program, that such purposes as relaxation and rest, personality growth, the expansion of interest horizons are as important as delinquency prevention. It is probably true, however, that too many people have benefited by new or expanded programs and by the wide use of such resources as schools and churches, for leisure time activities to experience sudden diminution in the postwar period. What form that interest will take and its extent are difficult to predict, but it does seem clear that many hitherto uninterested persons now believe that both public and private funds should be provided

for leisure-time activities for all age groups and for very diverse interests.

Fourth, extension of and adaptation of group work knowledge, techniques, theory to new fields and agencies, similar to the same development in social case work. The noticeable areas of new activity in recreation and group work include trade unions and cooperatives, housing enterprises, military organizations, churches and student religious centers, campus unions. To illustrate, the University of Wisconsin offers field experience to group work students with student churches, a USO, a military camp, a hosteling agency, hospitals, an industrial school for delinquent girls, and also with the older organizations as Scouts, a Settlement, Y's, etc. Recently a student who did her field work with a campus religious center and who wrote a paper on group work in churches pointed out the extent to which group work principles can be applied to the recreation and leisure time programs and to the religious and educational programs of churches. Such a new organization as the USO has been responsible for extensive "retooling" of group work practices. An organization that catches thousands of men on the fly must modify not only program techniques and content but also human relationships.

Fifth, individualization of group members. A considerable number of articles have recently been published on the contributions of group work and case work to each other and on individualization in group work. Among these are "Methods of Record-Keeping of Group Behavior and Individual Contacts," "Interplay of the Insights of Case Work and Group Work" by Gertrude Wilson, "Case Work and Group Work Cooperation" by Hester and Thomas, "The Group in Development and Therapy" by S. R. Slavson. In 1943, the book *Personality and Social Group Work* made its appearance. Its thesis is that group workers attempting to change activities and behavior in the interest of social welfare must individualize group members very much more than has been customary. The introduction of an individual approach and increased skill in the methods of guidance will immeasurably help the group worker in attaining his goals, says Everett DuVall, author of the book. Critics have reacted negatively to the emphasis rather than to the general thesis. It is agreed that the group exists for the individual and not vice versa, but it is also maintained that the primary relationships in group work are not the face-to-face ones of the case worker, but group-leader

relationships, and that guidance or counseling or individualizing is in order that the group may be more effective in the life of each individual member. The narrative and chronological records of Grace Coyle and others show how necessary it is, if the group is to serve an educational and recreational purpose, that the members be understood as individuals; that the backgrounds, the resistances and interests, the personality organization be understood. This does not mean that the leader will spend the largest part of his time fraternizing with and studying individuals but that he will observe each member of the group carefully, acquire information about him, and conduct such outside-the-group interviews as seem necessary to make the group most beneficial.

Sixth, the greatly expanded use of volunteers and changes in the training methods of both lay and professional personnel. A war always brings myriads of laymen into the community service picture. This war has used millions of volunteers on selective service and ration boards, on war chests, in Travelers Aids, youth centers, scout organizations, USOs, hospitals. The large percentage of these recruits will go back to their peace-time pursuits when the war ends; some will not; many of the total will have a new appreciation of the knowledge and experience of professional social workers. Recreation and group work have probably used more volunteers than any other area of social work activities.

War-time use of volunteers has required adaptation in teaching and supervisory processes. The professional worker has had to accept less competent performance than he associates with professional experience and even at times to appreciate the fact that laymen may perform with remarkable understanding and ability. Condescension and impatience have no place in work with volunteers. War activity also has shown that professional education can be speeded up and produce informed and even adequate performance. The USO, for example, has taken men and women from many different activities and after short courses sent them to difficult jobs involving skills in subject matter, administration, and community relations. This need of producing professional and lay competency as rapidly as possible will undoubtedly continue to affect curricula of schools of social work. Modifications include the extension of social work practice into new areas of activity, a hardening of the core of course content, a closer tying together of social work knowledge with that of politicians,

economists, political scientists, sociologists, psychologists.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

The professionalization of community organization, like group work, is a development of the last one or two decades. Although social workers have always been active in community organization, carrying on many of the processes as incidents of other functions, only recently has there been any agreement on a definition and any considerable amount of analysis of problems and techniques. There is now fairly general agreement on the nature and function of community organization, but still controversy about acceptable techniques.

Wayne Macmillan in a recent *Social Service Review* article, gives a good definition of community organization. "The primary objective of the community organization process is to help people to find ways to give expression to (their) inherent desires to improve the environment in which they and their fellows must carry on their lives." The community organization process involves relationships between and among groups through two basic processes, first to evoke and cultivate the inherent desire of people to work together for community welfare, and second to assist in the development of the process by supplying the technical services required. This then is the *first* major development in community organization, the acceptance of definition, analysis of practice and theory, and the realization that many of the methods used are common to all social work.

A *second* major development in community organization is the rapid expansion in number of war chests. Sometimes this has meant an enlargement of the existing peace-time chest to include war agencies, sometimes a new and supplementary agency for war relief purposes. The President's War Relief Control Board, created by executive order in July 1942, with its predecessors, was responsible for eliminating a large number of small or unreliable foreign relief organizations attempting to raise funds in local communities. The National War Fund, a private corporation organized in the winter of 1942-43, is the agency which counsels with local communities on their war relief campaigns. These two organizations, the Federal agency giving its stamp of approval to certain war relief agencies and the national private agency stimulating local war relief campaigns are, in part, responsible for the great growth

of war chests and have done much to integrate war relief and regular welfare activities.

A *third* development worthy of discussion here is the growth in community planning. Two primary causative factors in this development are the OCD with its stimulation of physical and social protective resources and the multiplication of services with the attendant overlapping of costs and personnel. The block plan of the OCD successful in relatively few communities, projected the idea of neighborhood organization for community war activities. The emphasis of the OCD on community and state councils and on the block plan focused attention on planning. The permanence of the organizational aspects of this Federal agency are probably due (1) to the fact that they were federally stimulated and many feared that "Government" would intrude on their personal lives, and (2) that the impact of the war never reached large sections of the country. Functional councils, councils of social agencies, civic planning groups, have been outgrowths of war interests and many of them will continue into the peace-time period.

The most important public planning organization was the National Resources Planning Board. Congress was sufficiently suspicious of it to deny it appropriations and thus to abolish it. Social workers know the reports of the Board best through the monumental volume, *Security, Work and Relief Policies*. It was the function of the board through a staff of experts to obtain data on many physical and social problems and to suggest recommendations for meeting them. It was not the function of the board to blueprint rigid plans to be inflicted upon the people of this country as some people feared. It is to be hoped that a similar body will be revived in the postwar period.

A *fourth* important phenomenon in the area of community organization has already been referred to, namely the activity of labor which is calling for more aggressive action from social workers, is seeking and obtaining representation on public and private welfare boards, and is drawing social work skills into its own organizations. Since social workers and labor are working for identical goals of better standards of living and security for the bulk of the American people, social workers and labor must coordinate their efforts. This was eloquently urged at a recent institute of Wisconsin County Public Welfare Administrators by Professor Selig Perlman, a student of labor movements for thirty-five years. In his talk on the social

psychology of the labor movement he showed how social workers as the healers of personal wounds must also interpret one group to another; an especially important function in relation to labor activities. Social workers are the general practitioners and family physicians working with the total person in distress and with the total community in its intergroup relationships in contrast with the analogous medical specialist who deals with a segment of a person's problem and a small part of a community. Social workers, continued Professor Perlman, are being required to study, interpret, and integrate community thinking and activities at four focal points: labor, housing, health, and veterans, and not the least of these is labor.

A *fifth* development is organization for increase of racial and religious understanding and for dealing with the problems of groups having unfamiliar backgrounds and culture. International migration, actual and potential infiltration of refugees, labor problems, courageous fighting for their country by racial minorities are responsible for serious consideration of the problems of discrimination. President Roosevelt's Committee on Fair Employment Practices, the objective of which is to provide full utilization of all available manpower and to eliminate discriminatory employment practices is a manifestation of governmental concern with this aspect of human relations. Another agency is the War Refugee Board set up by executive order of the President in January 1944, and designed to consider the refugee problem, particularly the needs of dislocated Jews and to find means of meeting the needs of some percentage of this vast group of people. The War Relocation Authority also created by executive order, primarily for the purpose of removal of Japanese from danger zones on the West Coast, has of course accentuated racial problems but, by the use of social workers, has attempted to reduce the inevitable antagonisms between groups and areas.

How best to organize the community for interracial cooperation is a moot question. The organization of groups of mixed persons for no specific purpose other than sharing of cultural interests has not been fruitful. Rather there seem to be two methods that can better be employed: (1) the creation of special committees or groups to work on some specific problem as the settlement of the Japanese in a given community or the handling of negro discrimination on a given campus and (2) the use of already existing groups by extending their interests and functions. In other words,

specific objectives and not just generous goodwill must characterize organizations for increasing racial and religious understanding.

PUBLIC WELFARE ADMINISTRATION

We have now discussed what this writer believes are the most significant developments in the three areas of social work performance which all social workers agree are distinctly social work skills. Whether administration in the public welfare field and social action are social work skills *per se* or are fields in and of themselves used in many other occupations and professions is not important for this paper. The very fact that social workers believe that administrators of public welfare and those attempting to achieve social action in the areas of health and welfare should know social work from the inside out indicates that there are aspects of public welfare administration and social action as performed by the social worker which are distinctive. Public welfare administration to this writer means administration of tax supported services and agencies not just for the delinquent and criminal, the sick and well poor, the insane and feeble-minded, the dependent and neglected child, but also in the fields of health and recreation.

The most important developments in public welfare administration seem to be: (1) great expansion of governmental services requiring large numbers of administrators; (2) the introduction of the social insurances; (3) the development of an international relief organization, the UNRRA; (4) the continuous attention to methods of improving services.

First. One of the most important developments in the twentieth century, especially in the thirties and forties, is the rapid growth of governmental services particularly social services and particularly by the Federal Government. Not until the depression and the New Deal was it possible to prevail upon Congress to enlarge the meaning of the constitutional phrase, "general welfare" for the benefit of the poor and needy wherever they might be and thus to reverse the 1854 veto of President Pierce in which he said he could not find any authority in the Constitution for making the Federal Government the great almoner of public charity throughout the United States.

It is no news that the depression brought with it such new Federal governmental services and agencies as the FERA, WPA, NYA, Surplus commodities, the Social Securities Act, and the war such agencies as the OCD, Office of Community

War Services, day nursery programs, health programs for war wives and infants, allotment and allowance provisions, the War Relief Control Board, educational and unemployment compensation programs for veterans, etc.

This great expansion of governmental social services has brought to public welfare administrators such problems as: What social services should be private and what public? Which level of government should perform what services? What are the functions of grants-in-aid and how should they be distributed? What should be the standards of public assistance? What services should be financed by government and what by recipients? What is competent performance? Typical of specific problems to which public welfare administrators are now giving their attention is whether or not all public assistance should be dispensed as general or as categorical relief, the former being the proposal of the Wagner-Murray-Dingell bill.

Second. Particularly important in the expansion of governmental services are the social insurances. The passage of the Social Security Act in 1935, with its provisions for old age and unemployment insurance offered new security to the wage earners of the country. The Wagner-Murray-Dingell bill liberalizes the already existing provisions and provides for permanent and temporary disability insurance and for hospital and health insurance. The sections of the bill having to do with health insurance have brought terrific opposition from the medical profession. Mr. John M. Pratt of the National Physicians Committee for the Extension of Medical Services, in a little bulletin entitled, "Abolishing Private Medical Practice or a Prelude to a Centralized Control of the Professions and of Industry" which has been distributed by the millions writes, "Senate bill 1161 makes provision for *free* general medical, special medical, laboratory and hospital benefits for 110 million people in the United States." He seems to have forgotten that the bill provides for a six percent tax from employees and the same from employers, and he makes no suggestion for substitute services even though his committee professedly is for the extension of medical services!

It is unfortunate that the United States is almost the only large western country which lacks a social insurance scheme sufficiently comprehensive to include medical care and disability security. The data included in many studies shows the unequal distribution of medical care and of medical costs.

Only a comprehensive and a compulsory government scheme will equalize the distribution of those services. There are, of course, honest differences of opinion as to what groups should be included, whether it should be compulsory or voluntary, what proportion of expense should be met by government, by industry, and by workers, and whether it should be federal or federal-state or exclusive state administered. It does seem incontrovertible that the people of the United States increasingly need and want more medical protection.

Third. The creation of the UNRRA, an international relief and rehabilitation organization, is a tremendously significant development in the welfare field, both because it represents a method of international cooperation and because it utilizes the experiences of skilled social workers. For example, Fred A. Hoehler, former director of the American Public Welfare Association, is the head of the Division of Dislocated Persons. Many of the principles of the organization are derived from the experience of welfare administrators. Other international conferences as the Food Conference at Hot Springs, Virginia, the Monetary Conference at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, the I.L.O. Conference at Philadelphia, the peace conference at Dumbarton Oaks, are proof of international concern with postwar economic and social problems. They are significant for social workers because they represent international effort to prevent future wars and to help the sufferers of World War II.

Fourth. During the war period, despite depletion of staffs, welfare administrators have done all they could to maintain standards of personnel and administration. They have continued to improve merit plans, to provide supervision, to offer in-service training programs, to distribute reports, handbooks, and professional literature. In short, they have made a valiant effort to protect the gains of the last decade. The Federal Employment Practices Committee composed of personnel from public and private welfare agencies has made commendable but unsuccessful efforts to obtain Federal funds for the training of social workers as for doctors and nurses. This failure indicates that social work is not yet accepted to the same extent as the medical and nursing professions. Generally speaking it appears that Congress and state legislatures value competency in the administration of the social services, although these bodies may not entirely agree with the social work profession as to what that competency involves.

SOCIAL ACTION

Social workers have a professional obligation first, to be experts in the skills of their profession and second, to work for social change in the areas where they have special knowledge. They have like all other citizens the further obligation to be aware of the economic and social forces that make for world chaos and to do something about them through political activities. When they attempt to effect community thought and action in those aspects of social disorganization where they are experts and do it through special interest and subject groups, they are fulfilling their second obligation.

The achievement of social action may be the primary, or the secondary, or only an incidental function of a social worker. It is his essential function, if, for example, he is the executive secretary of a State Welfare Council; it is his secondary function as head of a community chest or administrator of a welfare bureau; it is his incidental function as a case worker. Such organizations as the National Federation of Settlements, the Family Welfare Society of America, the National Child Labor Committee, the American Association for Social Security, the National Consumers League, and the social action divisions of the national church bodies give all or part of their time to achieving social action or social reform.

Obviously since social action is designed to effect change in social conditions, opposition which may be very influential and powerful is generated. The extent to which an agency will arouse the antagonisms of real estate interests for slum clearance or low cost housing, or of commercial recreation interests for the elimination of indecency and vice, or of the medical profession for health insurance, or of employers for higher wages, depends upon agency security, agency function, agency philosophy, and the relative strength in the community of support and opposition. The agency which exists for the purpose of achieving social change knows what it has to contend with when it is created. But the agency which has social action as a secondary or incidental function must carefully weigh the values of one or another course of action.

Social action is achieved by such processes as aggregation and dissemination of data, mobilizing of public opinion, lobbying, political action. Only recently have social workers openly and avowedly aligned themselves with political action groups. While this paper is being written an invitation has

come to join a Social Workers Committee for Roosevelt. The theory of the committee is that "Social workers have a part to play, with all other groups having the same aims, in drafting the President to carry further a program which makes it possible to have full employment, sound economic cooperation with allied nations, protection against exploitation, race discrimination, disfranchisement,—actually to realize, that is, the democracy for which we are fighting."

There will be strong differences of opinion between social workers as to whether or not they as social workers should form a political action committee, or whether as private individuals they should support political parties, or whether as experts they should join specific committees having specific purposes. Whatever may be the conclusion of any given social worker, the fact remains that social workers must increasingly assume responsibility for helping to achieve greater social security. They cannot remain quiet and indifferent concerning methods of eliminating what Sir William Beveridge calls, want, disease, ignorance, squalor, idleness. If we mean what we say when we say we wish to do away with the causes of distress which create a need for our profession we must be advocates, proponents, reformers. Were Mrs. Florence Kelly alive today she would welcome this urge to political action and perhaps feel less impulsion to berate and deride the profession for its complacent pride in expanding numbers and in widely attended conferences!

These then are the two most important developments among social workers in the area of social action: (1) They are recognizing an increasing obligation to participate in efforts for improvements in such fields as housing, employment, health, the social insurances, public assistance. (2) They are forming and joining political action groups.

CONCLUSION

Social workers have need for new faith and new hope. A depression, a war, and the fear of another depression leave them no time for idleness, lethargy, insulation. The very nature of their activities provides the incentive for consideration of motive and cause. It is a welcome trend that social workers are more and more willing to participate in the struggle for a better world. Faith that political and economic security can be achieved in this world

and in the predictable future is giving them courage to combat smugness and indifference, selfishness and vested interests. The orbit of vision of social workers is becoming wider.

In conclusion the main developments in social work in the judgment of this writer are:

1. The relative maturity of performance and attitude achieved in the last five to ten years.
2. Acceptance of social work by the man on the street although he still protests many of its methods.
3. Tremendous expansion of public social ser-

vices including the social insurances and public assistance.

4. The alliance of labor and social work.
5. The extension of social work skills into new areas of performance.
6. The great expansion of recreation and group work resources for the Armed Forces and for civilians, particularly for youth.
7. The development of international relief structures.
8. The renewed emphasis upon social planning and social action.

A COOPERATIVE PROGRAM FOR RURAL MEDICAL CARE

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IN A program which has received but scant attention, more than half a million rural people are participating in prepayment medical care plans employing the insurance principle, organized under government auspices with the active cooperation of the medical profession. As an exceptional example of cooperative and democratic effort in a field where conflict of interests has seemed to make authoritarian measures inevitable, this program has significance which far transcends the extent of its present services. Additional significance springs from the recently projected experimental extension of the program in six selected rural areas for the exploratory application of methods which might be used in the postwar period to provide health insurance protection on a voluntary basis for the entire rural population.

The program had its beginnings in 1935 as one of the tools devised by the Resettlement Administration for its attack on rural poverty. In addition to its efforts to remove disadvantaged farm families from submarginal land and the relief rolls and place them where they could gain a permanent holding in agriculture, the Resettlement Administration carried on the efforts begun by state and national relief agencies to rehabilitate "in place" such families as occupied farm units capable of providing an adequate base for family living. Low-cost credit, cooperative organization, education in farm technology, assistance in farm and home planning, and technical supervision were some of the aids extended to individual farm

families through this part of the program. It was early found that where failures occurred despite these services, the cause was frequently traceable to ill health—physical defects, accidents, chronic illnesses, or the sudden disabling attack of disease.

Investigation of a number of rehabilitation borrowers who failed to make their loan payments on schedule disclosed that nearly half of them were suffering from malaria, hernia, abscessed teeth, or some other serious illness. Often they had never been able to afford proper medical care, and in other cases they defaulted on their loan payments because they had used what little money they possessed to meet urgent medical expenses.¹ In Texas and Oklahoma, questionnaires were sent to 43,000 families on the rehabilitation program. Out of 16,000 cases of serious illness, less than half had doctors' care. Only one out of three births was attended by a physician. Yet, these families owed doctors' bills totalling nearly half a million dollars. A survey of borrower families in Michigan showed that one out of every five who failed to make a go of farming in 1940, failed mainly because of ill health. In the same year, physical examinations were given to over 11,000 persons in borrower families in 17 states. Only four out of every hundred persons—men, women, and children—were found to be in "excellent" health. There was an average of three and a half defects per person, ranging from bad teeth or varicose veins, to rickets

¹ *Report of the Administrator, Farm Security Administration, 1939.*