

only funds may be in effect by the time these words are read.

It is in the minor tragedies which result from the bad rent situation that the shock troops find dramatic opportunities for service. The policy of the Relief, up to this writing, is to pay a month's rent on eviction. That is, when a family is actually on the street the Relief will provide a minimum sum for the first month's rent in new quarters, but the family must find the new quarters and must convince the landlord that it is a desirable tenant—a job which makes Ananias of them all. Shrinking from the inevitable, clinging to the belief that God or somebody will provide, families find themselves on the street with no idea where to turn for shelter or how to transport their poor huddled possessions. In many of the settlements the Workers' Committee locals have listed all the vacant flats in the neighborhood. At the first word of an eviction the shock troops are under way with the list in their hands and sturdy backs for the moving. They fix it with reluctant landlords too: "Don't ask me how, lady. There's some things you just have to do. The landlords are sure holding the bag. But you gotta be hard-boiled these days."

In spite of the rent policy there have not been as many evictions in Chicago as one might expect. The legal process of eviction costs the landlord \$25. Naturally he tries to avoid adding this charge to his losses from long unpaid rent. And naturally, human nature being what it is, some of the fraternity resort to petty persecutions to get a tenant to leave of his own, in a manner of speaking, accord. The tenants just as naturally hang on to the bitter end. Thus it becomes a sort of cat-and-mouse business between landlord and tenant with the settlement people somewhere between, explaining and reconciling, and with the shock troops lending active comfort to the mouse. Mrs. Rosso's landlord takes down the door to her flat and carries it off. Come a couple of carpenters from the local with a knocked-up packing case and presently Mrs. Rosso has a door that answers every practical purpose. Mrs. Kelly's little boy reports breathlessly that his mother's kitchen is flooded—a mysterious hole in a water-pipe and the landlord won't do anything. A plumber, doing his tour of duty on the emergency squad, solders up the hole, obviously punched with a chisel. Mrs. Cohen is being smoked out, "Come a'runnin'." Shock-troopers climb up to the roof, remove a rough and ready

layer of bricks from Mrs. Cohen's chimney top, and life goes on.

Self-help projects such as Seattle and Los Angeles County, California, boast, have not made much headway in Chicago. The members of the Workers' Committee are pledged against "chiseling." Efforts last fall to secure surplus garden produce were not very successful. Association House still groans at the memory of some ten thousand heads of cabbage that its local hauled in from a Wisconsin farm to be distributed according to need. It took days for the House to dig itself out of what it still calls "case-work cabbages." Of course the men at the settlements barber each other and cobble each other's shoes and swap odd repair jobs in each other's flats, and always give yeoman's service to the house itself. At most of the houses there is a regular exchange of articles in the food rations—the family with only a garbage burner to cook on will trade its flour for the rice or the dried beans of a family that still boasts an oven.

Through the maelstrom into which the current event has plunged the settlements the ordinary stream of their activities, swollen by numbers, flows steadily on. The English classes and the mothers' clubs are bigger than ever, health work and young people's activities are multiplied, music and art hold their own. But even in these steady streams the pressure of the current event is felt. The women of the Jolly Mothers Club no longer compete for honors with tantalizing old-world dishes. Instead they concentrate on new ways to serve up the relief rations. The health classes talk less of nourishment these days than of fending against undernourishment. The sewing classes find tests for their ingenuity in making over the worn garments that are sent in. A blouse salvaged from an old skirt is a greater triumph than a chiffon party dress used to be. Even the children have learned new grim games out of the realities of three hard winters.

The nursery school door opened on a hubbub. Some sort of game was going on to the accompaniment of make-believe tears, groans and harsh orders and much violent shifting around of toys. "It's Eviction," explained the worker ruefully. "They're playing Eviction. They don't play keeping-house any more or even having-tonsils-out. Sometimes they play Relief, but Eviction is the favorite—it has more action and they all know how to play it."

American Relief Caravan

By RUSSELL H. KURTZ

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FROM the Emergency Relief Division of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation there issued last month a letter and set of accounting forms that puts teeth into the oft-repeated warning of the Corporation that "it is plainly the intent of the Emergency Relief and Construction Act of 1932 that funds shall be made available by the Reconstruction Finance Corporation not in lieu of but merely supplemental to local and state funds and private contributions."

This letter in effect says to the governors of the states that have received aid through the Corporation since the

Act was passed last July: "An accounting is now in order. If you are expecting to come before the Corporation for further help after January 1, 1933 tell us now how the money which you have received so far has been spent." Nothing unusual in this. But then comes the paragraph with the punch: "Many states have regular or special sessions of their legislature in prospect by which state and local relief funds can be made available. Therefore, an outline of the legislative program to produce this result is especially important in order that the Reconstruction Finance Corporation may determine its course of action."

Thus does the Corporation point up the philosophy under which it has been making available to states the Emergency Relief funds put at its disposal by Congress. The amount appropriated, \$300,000,000, "in accordance with the wording of the Act, shall, until the expiration of two years after the date of enactment of this Act, be available for payment to the governors of the several states and territories for the purposes of this section, upon application therefore by them in accordance with subsection (c), and upon approval of such applications by the corporation." It has not been administered by the R. F. C., however, with the idea that it must cover a two-year or any definite period but upon the basis of need which could not otherwise be met as certified by the governors of the several states.

Whether or not this philosophy of supplementation to state and local effort is the proper one for the federal government to operate under in the relief of unemployment is a question upon which there are sharp differences of opinion. Edith Abbott has forcefully stated the case of the conscientious objectors in a late number of *The New Republic*. These and other aspects of national unemployment, moreover, will be judicially examined by last winter's Social Work Steering Committee, reconstituted under the sponsorship of the American Association of Social Workers as the Committee on Federal Action on Unemployment. Much will be said on both sides of this subject before the winter is over. It may be pertinent, therefore, to record one observer's impressions as to how the present set-up functions, without attempting to compare it with any of the other methods that have been or may be proposed.

THE activity in the office of the Emergency Relief Division of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, over which Fred C. Croxton presides as assistant to the directors, is strongly reminiscent of that which is found in the community fund offices at budget-approving time. Hither come the governors' representatives with applications for funds with which the relief programs in their communities may be continued. The data are set up under three general headings: past expenditures and practice, current needs and resources, future outlook and plans. Supporting tabulations for each county or city for which funds are asked accompany the application.

Occasionally requests are made for grants to cover six months or a year in advance, but the policy of the Corporation has been to limit its approvals to shorter periods, pending the completion of chest drives and the arrival of states' legislative periods. Stressing the emergency and supplementary nature of its aid, it has required such applications to undergo a revision. Frequently applications have been made without careful analysis of the need and available local resources and here, too, a revamping has had to be ordered. The analogy with chest procedure is heightened by the degree of informality which pervades these budget-revising activities. Round-table methods are used and agreements reached step by step.

The Corporation has no arbitrary standards of relief to which it asks the states to conform. Past performance in the various localities is taken as the base upon which the joint program is built. Should this performance appear to approximate the need, the R. F. C. goes along with the local group in continuing on this basis with the aid of federal funds. Wide variations from past levels, on either

the up or down side, are questioned. And where the traditional relief levels seem inadequate by comparison with similar situations elsewhere, the Corporation may be found persuading the community to increase the amount asked for.

IN the matter of local administration of relief funds, the Corporation allows itself a freer expression as to required standards. In almost all of the thirty-five states (as of December 1) which have received Reconstruction Finance Corporation funds, state relief administrations have been set up or designated upon the advice of the Corporation. In some instances, these are the State Welfare Departments, in others specially designated state boards, and in still others, emergency committees. And behind the state relief administration stands a large and rapidly increasing group of county relief committees, brought into being in many states through Corporation suggestions.

From the first, the phrase "including the cost of local relief administration" has qualified the Corporation definition of relief. An impressive mass of evidence is appearing in all parts of the country as to the alertness which state relief administrations have shown in translating this policy into action in certain of their backward communities. "This is federal money you are spending," they have said to local relief officials, "and it cannot be wasted or handed out without proper investigation as to need. Provide yourselves with adequate and competent staffs." Frequently they go further and place the local units under the supervision of field workers on the state staff—an almost revolutionary step in some mid-western communities. Illustrations of this sort of development are reported from time to time in the Unemployment and Community Action department of this journal.

Compilation of the data required in support of the application for funds has been a profitable activity in most counties. Many a community has received its first composite photograph of the local unemployment situation by going through this painful exercise in self-examination. In the larger centers, where social statistics are commonplace, amazingly complete documents have been prepared, replete with tables, charts and other illuminating addenda.

We often accuse ourselves of tolerating chaotic relief conditions in this country, yet a pattern seems to be emerging. It is a pattern of county units woven into a state fabric of relief administration which promises to have more than a fleeting existence.

Federal aid has been a stimulus to the weaving of this fabric and has been providing an increasing portion of the material from which it has been woven. Now, with legislatures meeting in forty state capitals, a check-up is being made to see that there is no let-down in local activity. The Emergency Relief and Construction Act puts the obligation upon the states to make sure that their resources "including moneys then available and which can be made available by the state, its political subdivisions, and private contributions, are inadequate to meet its relief needs" before certifying the necessity for federal funds. The emphasis is now being placed upon the words "which can be made available."

And so the American Relief Caravan—composed of local, state and national forces, functioning each in its allotted turn and sphere—moves on. Congress, the social-work fraternity, or even the R. F. C. itself may change its pace if not its course. Whither is it headed?

Social Workers Hesitate and Then—?

An Inventory of Their Fears, Perspectives, Principles, Hopes

By EDUARD C. LINDEMAN

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DURING the late War I came to despise that little word *morale*. Those who employed it seemed always to infer that those who sustained a restrained mood, who failed to “boost” the War, were somehow traitorous. But, it was nevertheless a useful word since it reminded us again of the age-old fact that man’s true resources come from within, not from without, that the War would ultimately be won or lost by a test of character, regardless of who won the battles. And, that issue is still unsettled.

We are now engaged in another struggle even more important than the War of 1914–18, a struggle, indeed, of which that War was merely an interlude and a symptom. We have come to the end of an historic epoch. The foundations of our economic, political, social, intellectual and moral institutions have begun to disintegrate. With respect to economic life the disease is deep-seated and startling; our institutions of production, distribution, and credit refuse to perform their appropriate functions and consequently millions of people throughout the Western world must face insecurity and marginal starvation. But, what is of even greater significance is the fact that we have lost faith in ourselves, our intellectual equipment, and our experts.

We hesitate, and for good reason. The alternatives which confront us are not simple, despite the easy logic of extremists of both the “right” and the “left.” One of three pathways may be chosen: we may

(a) strive to reconstruct the competitive system, to return to the days of expansion, speculation, and external (though unbalanced) prosperity, or

(b) we may adjust downward to the level of a pain-economy, marginal subsistence and uncreative mediocrity, or

(c) we may candidly set to work in laying the plans for a new civilization based upon revised conceptions of economic processes and social ends. If we make the first choice, the main attribute required of us is a grim sort of stubbornness coupled with a willingness to tolerate widespread suffering; if we travel the way of the second alternative, we shall need merely a sufficient amount of cowardice to be prepared to live in a dark age; and if we step boldly in the third direction, we shall need steadiness, courage, faith, and wisdom.

And, while we hesitate I continue to search the horizon for such signs of hope as may become manifest in human personality. The portents, I must admit, are not promising. Our political and economic leadership is bankrupt, both with respect to ideas and courage; everywhere in high circles one notes vacillation, timidity, ineptness and fear, and worst of all, a stubborn unwillingness to confront the crisis in realistic terms. As the fourth winter of suffering and despair approaches we stand as impotent as at the start, no nearer a plan and a program than we were when our leaders spoke blithely of a “depression” which was to be dissipated in the soft glow of a sunrise “just around the corner.”

HOW is it, then, with social workers? What is happening to those technicians who function at that point where economic dislocation reflects itself in human suffer-

ing? Those who must see the crisis, not as a statistical abstraction but as loss of self-respect, as sickness and as potential starvation? Is their morale high or low? Have they evolved a sense of direction? Do they show signs of steadiness, courage, faith and wisdom?

Questions such as the above were in my mind as I mingled with professional workers and their lay constituents at the thirty-first annual conference of social work in New Jersey. And, finally, it became my function to summarize their deliberations, to note what had been said and left unsaid, to detect the undertones and overtones of their discussions, and to condense these observations in a closing synthesis. What I have written below is an epitome of that summary.

First of all, a word about the New Jersey Conference: it displays three characteristics which deserve emphasis, namely

(a) its consistent policy of encouraging the participation of laymen,

(b) its functional and collaborative relationship with various state departments and public agencies involved in social welfare, and

(c) its courage in actually allowing its members to confer.

Fourteen of the nineteen sessions of its recent conference were conducted as discussion groups. In a conference of this sort the observer is not limited to appraisal of individual pronouncements which may or may not be sanctioned by the group as a whole; on the contrary, one is permitted to come very near the actual thought-processes of the conferees, to learn how they confront their problems, and to discover the direction of their aspirations.

It seemed to me both convenient and meaningful to arrange the various currents of thought revealed throughout this conference under four major categories, namely: Fears, Perspectives, Principles and Hopes. Each of these I shall discuss in merest outline, omitting the designation of names of speakers and participants, and limiting myself to pointed statements intended to sharpen issues as well as convey gradients of meaning.

(I) The Fears of Social Workers

SOcial workers in their deliberations appear to express fears of at least four varieties, and in each instance one may trace their hesitation and their lack of clear-cut policy to these underlying doubts and misgivings.

(a) They fear, first of all, that privately-managed social work may soon be swallowed in the great maw of politics, government and bureaucracy. They begin to see that in this crisis social welfare has quickly become dependent upon government and its numerous agencies. They are frightened by this sudden transition because they have been taught to believe that the quality of public service in American life is unusually low.

(b) They fear that the standards of social work which have been so laboriously built up during the past fifty years will be sacrificed under the pressure of furnishing material relief.