

World Wide photo

"... a surplus of love and affection must replace a family-centered social and economic way of life"

Whither Family Life?

by Bradley Buell and Marion Robinson

Some day, perhaps, the producers of the "March of Time" with their sense of the dramatic vividness, the grimness, and the comedy of change, will parade for us across their screen the evolutionary trail by which the American family has traveled from where it was three generations ago to where it is today. To the youngsters of this modern age some of the "shots" will seem sheer comedy. Our grandfathers' stern, iron, bearded visages, our grandmothers' cameo-like countenances, always in constrained repose, the almost military discipline implicit in the conventionally stiff portrayal of the family group, swollen to a bursting point by a graduated ladder of children of all ages and sizes, no doubt will touch off gales of laughter. Museum oddities in trailing skirts, or tight-fitting trousers and high choker collars, will clamber up onto the first high-wheeled bicycle; or in linen dusters, into the early horseless carriage. Hilarity perhaps will reach its peak when the Victorian counterpart of a juke box scene is shown to be a plush-upholstered parlor with very decorously attired young ladies and young gentlemen, surrounding a gasping foot-

pumped organ to the tune of "Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair."

But for the older members of the audience, other scenes well may awaken a more nostalgic emotional response. The far reach of grandfather's broad acres, spreading out from the old homestead surrounded by the barns and barnyards, corn cribs, milk house and chicken coops—the social, economic, and administrative nucleus for a complicated enterprise of which he was the titular head in that rural America where more than two thirds of the people lived. The roomy, abundant kitchen with the fires ever burning in its huge wood stove, the cool damp cellar with well stocked shelves — eminent domain of the family's distaff side.

The routines of daily life—chores at dawn for the masculine contingent, stoking up the fires for their feminine copartners in preparation for a loaded breakfast table. Plowing the south forty, mending fences, putting in the winter's wood, husking corn, shocking wheat, beating showers to the hay mow—each according to its season. Cooking, baking, canning, mending, tending the chickens and the garden.

Children trudging off for the little red school house—to an interlude from which they return to do their part in the evening chores. The trip to town on Saturdays—an eventful episode both for those who went and those who stayed at home. On Sundays everyone strangely self-conscious in his best attire, piling into the surrey and off to church; the women to congregate before and after, in little groups, to gossip about neighbors and babies; the men by themselves to talk of weather, crops, and politics; the youngsters surreptitiously pulling pigtails and trading shop talk of their own affairs.

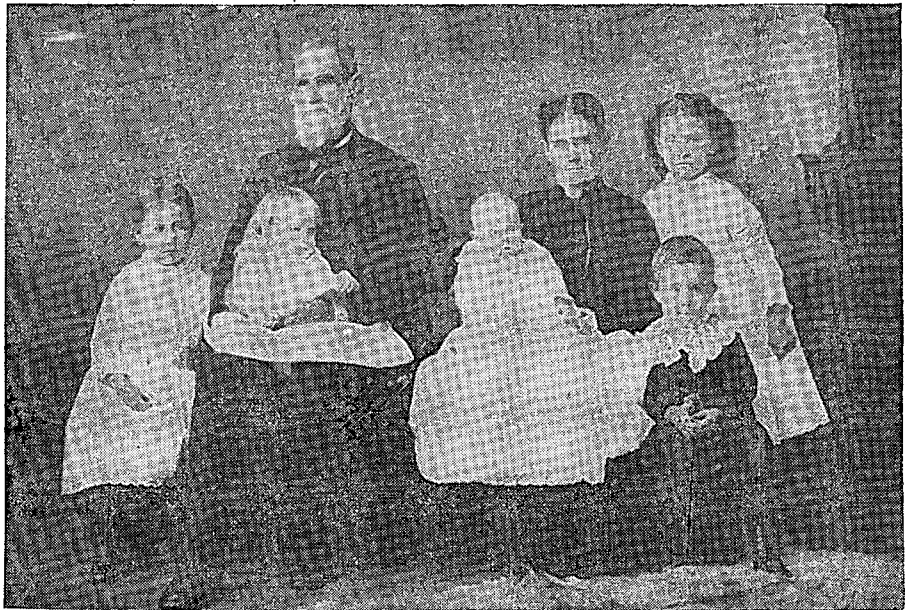
The setting will seem different, the family pattern of our forefathers colorfully varied, if the "March of Time" takes us to the East, the South, the prairie land, the turbulent and pioneering West. Over much of the land, the American family was on the move, flowing ceaselessly into unoccupied corners, adapting to circumstances and surroundings out of this world to the eyes of our modern generation. Yet underneath, the pattern was much the same. Urban life in the villages and towns was still rooted in an agricultural economy. Cities were just begin-

ning to grow apace, but their family life was bound together by outside forces and traditions, making each member dependent on the others.

"Time Marches On." Across the screen come Alexander Bell's telephone, Edison's electric light, Henry Ford's model T, Wright's airplane, smoke stacks and miraculous machines, sprawling cities, three wars, the greatest of all depressions. On August 6, 1945, the awesome beginnings of the atomic age. Familiar scenes, these, to the audience both young and old, all reflecting the patterns of fast moving, growing, insurgent, freedom-loving twentieth century America, with its vast material enrichment of life, new opportunities for freedom and flexibility in personal growth and self-expression, the pace and confusing pressures of daily living, the very absence of traditional restraints.

Then in a shot of a present day setting, the screen brings us the modern American family. The three small shelves in a frigidaire instead of a well stocked cellar. A frequent and easy trip to the corner grocer or downtown store instead of the weekly journey to the village. The graduated ladder of boys and girls reduced to a mere footstool of juvenile inheritance, traveling to graded or progressive schools by chartered bus. The homestead, if not an impersonal apartment, at least a gadget-equipped house, serving as a point of departure from which father goes to work, quite possibly mother too, the children to kindergarten, grade school, high school, college or specialized vocational training. Sunday, to be sure, will still be a day of rest, but the family will be seen engulfed by the Sunday paper and, perhaps—but only perhaps—making a brief visit to a nearby church or Sunday School, with city dwellers seeking a motor driven glimpse of out-of-doors.

Yet the screen will miss the mark if it shows these scenes to contrast a pastoral idyl with a pointless way of streamlined life. Life for many in those earlier days was hard and rugged. Minimum wages and maximum hours were things unknown. Security was a wholly personal and family problem. People became sick, got well or died, without benefit of clinics, hospitals, or modern specialists. The individual members of the family moved within an orbit restricted by its very need for self-sufficiency and self-maintenance. Their social, economic, and emotional life suffered from the liabilities no less



"Bearded visage, cameo-like countenance, and graduated ladder of children"

than it gained from the assets of an essentially collective enterprise. Each member of the family attended to the tasks assigned to his or her division of labor. Frustrations were commonplace. But in those earlier days, rebellion was not easy.

Few in our audience would, even if they could, go back to those tribulations, conventions, and restraints. Their nostalgia is for the comprehensive purposefulness, the outer forces which bound the family together as a unit, and gave more than an emotional reason for its being. They would, by looking backward, turn their eyes away from the more democratic demands of modern family life, where

marriage must be held together by the capacity to give and take, the willingness and ability to accommodate, each member to the others, where a surplus of love and affection must substitute for a family-centered social and economic way of life.

To so construct their scenes and cast their characters as to interpret the true significance of these events, the producers of the "March of Time" might well have sent their script writers last month to the Biennial Conference of the Family Service Association of America. There, for three days, over 700 people from the East, North, South and West brought their combined wisdom and experience to bear upon current family problems.

Many were practicing caseworkers, supervisors, executives, dealing daily through their agencies with the raw human materials of present day living; some were informed board members, agency policy makers.

Paralleling their own sessions and joining with them for the annual dinner meeting, were psychiatrists and mental hygiene administrators, attending the annual sessions of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene, who brought to their discussions the scientific knowledge and insight into personality and motivations which is fast pushing to the forefront of modern medical practice.

In the materials of these sessions, the producers of the "March of Time" could find drama, adventure, hope for the future. But they would also have found sobering facts, grim realities to be faced with courage and intelligence.

Counterbalances

"This is an age of mass production. I believe in it for it does and can still further raise the standard of living for all American homes. But the stability of every community in a nation, and indeed the nation itself, comes out of a balanced way of life.

"I believe that mass production needs to be counterbalanced in other fields by the highest form of individualization. This is obviously true in education and equally so in the field of social work and mental hygiene. Each human being needing any services must be understood for his unique self and helped in ways that would only fit him and him alone."

—From the welcoming address by Walter S. Gifford, Chairman of the Board, Community Service Society of New York.

I. "Shock Absorber of Social Change"

"There is growing conviction that secure families are our best guarantee to eventual social stability. *This is our conviction,*" said Frank J. Hertel, general director of the Family Service Association of America, in his challenging keynote address. "Yet widespread and deep concern for marriage, the child, and the family as a whole are apparent everywhere. The American divorce rate, already the highest in the world, has reached an all-time peak. Divorces which in 1890 had ended one out of seventeen marriages, by 1930 were ending one out of six. For 1945, there was one divorce for every three marriages. The immediate outlook is gloomier still."

This did not mean, he hastened to add, that "family life as we have known it in America, is on its way out." The current divorce figures are swollen by a normal backlog which waited for action until the war's end, and the hastily-entered-into war marriages which cannot bear the strain of postwar conditions. Nevertheless, he said, the figures are still startling, and he cited efforts being made to stem the tide, such as the bill in the Michigan legislature allowing a veteran "a year of grace" after discharge, before his wife could divorce him.

"Problem Children"

Divorce was only one of many illustrations of today's family difficulties. Mr. Hertel referred to parent-child relationship problems, "often closely bound up in marriage difficulty," thereby touching off the theme of childhood behavior which was pursued with skill and concern down many psychiatric and casework avenues. The members of this conference, rather than centering attention on the trend toward juvenile delinquency which has, until recently, received almost hysterical popular attention, or on the "demand" for child care and the pressing shortages of facilities to meet the demand, showed a more fundamental concern about children.

Dr. Frank Fremont-Smith, vice-president of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene and medical director of the Josiah Macy, Jr., Foundation, told his audience at the joint dinner meeting that the basic emotional pattern of the child is established within the individual family, "by virtue of the dynamic interplay of its

members upon the growing child," and that "this childhood reaction often determines the individual's response to adult experience." Sobering indeed was his description of men who had broken



Frank J. Hertel

under battle conditions and whose behavior was found to be "specifically related to traumatic experiences of childhood occurring almost always within the family framework."

Mr. Hertel had already underlined the strategy of this conference's attack on the problems affecting our children and youth. Just as the research of preventive medicine had been used to prevent the contraction and spread of disease, he said, "so the family service agency can become a strong force for the prevention of social and family breakdown." To these experienced practitioners, "family" and "child" were inseparable, and better, stronger family life was the sure road to a better, stronger future generation.

The Veteran Returns

Mindful also were all the members of the conference that, as one speaker estimated, 43 percent of America's families now count among their members a not so long returned veteran of World War II. Most no doubt agreed with Ralph Ormsby, Family Society of St. Louis County, who concluded in summing up one panel discussion, that service to the veteran's family is a more normal way to help him than by trying to serve him alone in a theoretical social vacuum. Yet there was

full awareness of the new factors which the veteran's return had brought to him and to countless American homes.

Men who stood military service well, may break down after discharge when confronted with their previous situations, according to Dr. Felix Deutsch, director of the Boston Psychiatry Clinic. Pointing out that it takes time for a "soldier of yesterday to become the civilian of today," he said that many found it hard to "recapture their earlier ways of dealing with others."

The high proportion of men and women rejected for and discharged from military service because of psychoneurotic difficulties shocked us into awareness of the maladies resulting from social change and of the forces which have been tearing at the roots of family and personal security.

And, according to Dr. Fremont-Smith, the psychiatric casualty of war presents a different picture from the civilian under treatment only in "the violence of the precipitating stress, and the intensity of the symptoms." However, he added, "there is one deeply encouraging fact from the newer psychiatric insight—the average person, adult or child, has unsuspected and as yet untapped reservoirs of good will, good judgment and affection. The knowledge of their presence is both the justification for our continued efforts to make a better world and our only hope of ultimate success."

Mental and "Criminal" Illness

To the picture of divorce, the impact of family trouble and disruption on childhood and youth, to the immediate and long range problems of the veteran's adjustment, Dr. Fremont-Smith added another area of social maladjustment which cannot be separated from the motivations and responsibilities of family life.

"Crime and mental breakdown," he said, "have many features in common—in many instances only a legal technicality distinguishes the criminal from the insane. These two forms of disturbed behavior can best be understood as different manifestations of similar types of personality and social conflict." The impact of these disturbed and disturbing individuals upon their families and communities as they return from periods of institutional care, "is deserving of serious consideration," he went on to say, since, on

the basis of current figures and the indicated increase, during the next ten years over 670,000 patients will be discharged from state mental hospitals, and over 750,000 prisoners from state and federal institutions. "What happens to these men and women while incarcerated?" he asked. "Do they return to their homes better adjusted, or filled with even greater hostility toward society?"

Everyone knows that the American family has been growing smaller. But only recently have we begun to be aware that it is growing older. Emphasizing the changing circumstances and new needs produced by this trend, Mr. Hertel pointed out that in 1900 "there were 3,080,000 persons of sixty-five years of age or over, residing in this country, or 4.1 percent of the total population. The 1940 census revealed 9,000,000 persons in this age bracket or 6.8 percent of the total population. It has been estimated by reliable authorities that by 1980 the aged population may consist of some 22,000,000 persons, representing 14.4 percent of the total population. The problems faced by aged persons are complicated by lack of family ties, declining physical strength, unsuitable housing, lack of financial resources and of appropriate recreation."

Human details of this picture were sketched in by Margaret Wagner, executive of the Benjamin Rose Institute of Cleveland. "The older person faces an unequal struggle in trying to maintain his self-confidence and self-esteem. He feels his loss of prestige both within his family group and in the community at large. . . . There is a very mistaken idea that little can be done with older people or that it is not worth while. . . . Modern science, however, has made the older person more active and physically more comfortable, so that he is less willing to be resigned to sitting on the side lines."

Not for Amateurs

Inevitably one came away from these discussions with a feeling that it is not for amateurs to tinker with the human emotions involved in the complex personal relations of family life. For divorce, delinquency, the problems of childhood, the adjustment difficulties of veterans, the frustrations of old age, were seen by these trained caseworkers and psychiatrists for what they really are—mere manifestations of structural weakness in personality or in its en-

vironment which only comes to the attention of organized society when it gives way under pressure.

In the discussion of marriage counseling as a means to prevent family conflict, for example, M. Robert Gombert of the Jewish Family Service of New York City pointed out: "Usually it is the wife who first comes to the agency." Some common problems which she is likely to bring up include:

The interfering relative—usually each partner blames his respective in-laws.

Conflict over the family purse.

Differences about methods of rearing the children.

Degrees of sexual incompatibility.



Sol Libsohn

Old folks are people

And in another discussion of the same subject, Mrs. Elsie Martens Waelder of the Family Society of Philadelphia noted that people who come for help with marital problems are usually troubled about some immediate current situation. But in the majority of cases "the acute infection is usually related to a chronic infection" that may go back to attitudes, emotions, habits growing out of their own childhood experiences.

Or consider, as did the group discussing the problems of childhood, the emotional effect on young children of those major crises which at some time or other confront almost every family: when a new baby is born, giving testimony to the mystery of life as well as an introduction to the competitive element in human relationships, or when the child himself, or another member of the family goes to the hospital. The inexplicable tragedy of a parent's death, or serious illness; of sustained conflict between parents, or the knife-like separation by divorce, are frightening and confusing to the young mind. The struggle for comprehension and adjust-

ment almost inevitably leaves its mark.

Again, who has not struggled through the yearnings, ups and downs, and apparent inconsistencies of adolescence, with the question, "What makes up maturity?" which was posed by Mary Rall of the Family Service Bureau of the United Charities of Chicago in a discussion on adolescent problems. And who would not have found satisfying, the answer that "self-security (or maturity) is the capacity to appraise the true nature of the problems of everyday living and to act accordingly. . . . The beginning struggle to achieve mature self-confidence, to reach out for love . . . to become an independent personality . . . almost inevitably is fraught with fears, gropings, and unarticulated experimentation."

Complex, Indeed

Complex indeed are those neurotic persons, who may hold a job and achieve some economic security, yet remain in a perpetual emotional turmoil. Discussion of the psychoneurotic veteran identified several familiar "types" of personalities—the "run-away" type who must escape success, the self-deprecating "nobody" type, the overtime-working "exhaustion" type, the sensitive type, who finds his co-workers unkindly. Here we may feel, but for the grace of God—and perhaps a more secure upbringing—go you and I. At least we may be sure that sympathy is useful only as it is accompanied by skill and scientific knowledge.

Nor would the members of the conference let us rest on the easy assumption that the tribulations of the aged members of our families can be met in a spirit of sweet simplicity. "In planning for the aged," said Mr. Hertel, "individual communities and the state and national governments have concentrated mainly on financial support." Yet in the forum discussion directed to the problems of this group it was made clear that the insecurities and frustrations of childhood are duplicated in old age, with the added barrier of no long vista of future opportunities to work them through.

These things indeed are not the province of amateurs. The march of time through three generations of family life has left the American family still functioning as the nucleus around which revolve the most important segments of our personal lives, the social unit in which children are born,

brought up, passed on to families of their own. About its central core of affectional, social, even economic ties, about the indestructibility of its basic functions, no one at this conference voiced doubt. But the social changes of these three generations have washed up myriad problems for the family as a whole and for its individual components, which will disappear by the use of no simple solvents. No less than the engineer, the chemist, the physicist hold the key to material economy of our age, do the psychiatrist, the caseworker, the sociologist, the physician hold the key to the human economy of its family life.

"Help Wanted"

The difficult experiences of the war years, members of the conference testified, brought home to the American family its need for expert help, and spread awareness of the special services on which it could call in time of trouble. To be sure, during the Thirties an increasing number of families were coming to psychiatric clinics and social service organizations; from all walks of life and for help other than financial assistance, the traditional requisite which brought clients to the agencies of an earlier day. But the

social upheavals of the war period deepened and accelerated general awareness of the basic problems of individual behavior, of family and social adjustment.

The language and terminology of the psychiatrists came into common usage. "Neurosis," "psychotic," "mental illness" found comfortable resting places in the pages of the daily press or other current literature.

The vast concern not only for the large number of "neuropsychiatric" veterans but for the more general "adjustment" problems of all veterans helped sharpen, for the man in the street, the difference between those difficulties which are largely economic or financial and those stemming from social, personal, or family breakdown.

The migration of fifteen million people, from their previous homes, to locate in war industry towns brought practical frustrations with shortages in housing, transportation, and almost everything else; the difficulties which they experienced in adjusting to new environments and conditions, contrasted sharply with problems of "economic need" characteristic of the previous depression decade.

Moreover, as Robert F. Nelson of the United Charities of Chicago pertinently pointed out, vast numbers of

people for the first time became aware that services were available to help them in connection with their problems. "The size of our armed forces and the size of the war related industrial job was such that its mechanics penetrated almost every area of the country. Many special services were needed to keep the program running smoothly. A great many of these were *personal* services, day nurseries, travelers services, services for families and men connected with the armed forces. People's need for and use of these services [resulted in] an acceptance of and reliance upon them. . . . It is now more socially acceptable to seek and use help [in connection with] human, emotional problems.

"Traditionally, family agencies have been and still are the keystone on which we have built social services to individuals in the community social work pattern. They have ranged from meeting needs of purely financial nature to giving service to persons with serious mental, emotional, and physical problems. The years have seen them slowly develop many social and valuable techniques for helping people.

"Thus as we enter the postwar decade," concluded Mr. Nelson, "it is this question of demand which poses our most practically serious question."

II. The Prevention of Family Disorganization

Members of the conference found no reason to believe that either the current demand for service, or the underlying forces creating it, were likely soon to diminish or abate. Raising a family has never been a matter for light consideration, but we have now come to the point where the venture is more fraught with risk. The increasing emphasis on individual freedom, the relaxation of traditional social restraints, the violent outward symptoms and the subtle undercover pressures of the worldwide evolutionary change, all make it probable that family trouble will increase.

And so the conference devoted many of its sessions to a consideration of this theme, taking its cue from the earlier report of the association's committee on future planning, which had defined "the prevention of family disorganization and breakdown" as the basic reason for the existence of the family agency.

Three main lines of action emerged,

in each of which the family service movement must play a stellar role. The first is directed, as family casework has always been directed, to the skillful diagnosis and treatment of individual family and personal troubles, using to the full the steadily advancing knowledge of modern psychiatry. The second is concerned with a broad educational

program about family life and family living, paralleling in many ways public health education for better health. The third is the effective development of the family agency's capacity to exercise leadership in organizing the community's total service, educational, and financial resources to implement both of these basic approaches.

Diagnosis and Treatment

Diagnosis, according to Webster, is "the art or act of recognizing the disease through its symptoms," or a "conclusion arrived at through critical perception or scrutiny." Treatment in our sense means "to care for a patient" or "to seek a cure, or relief of a disease."

Certainly, the caseworkers at this conference had long since demonstrated their capacity to arrive at significant conclusions about the troubles of their family clients, through the use of critical perception or scrutiny. In the symptoms of family disorganization

they find the materials of their daily practice. More and more, it was clear, are they able to see beyond these symptoms and identify the reasons for them. So also is it their task to care for their family "patients." And, to casework's traditional ability to relieve a family's social ills, was added abundant evidence of increasing ability to cure the underlying difficulties.

Rightly, therefore, the family service movement regards professional competence in diagnosing and treating the disrupting troubles of its family clients as the first and most fundamental line

of defense against increasing family disorganization. Complete comprehension of the nature of this diagnostic and treatment competence could come only by a duplication of the caseworker's own years of training and experience. No more than one expects to understand all that a doctor or an engineer or a chemist knows and does, should one expect to understand all that a caseworker knows and does. The lay person must judge their professional purpose and procedures mainly by results which he can comprehend.

Yet the dynamic of this professional philosophy is clear. Just as the physical scientist tries to release the elemental forces of nature and turn electrical (or atomic!) energy to productive use, so in the families which come to them for help the caseworker and psychiatrist are striving to release the energies and forces in human nature that can be turned to good account.

As Dr. Fremont-Smith pointed out, casework shares with psychiatry a conviction, born of experience, about the powerful impulse of human beings to grow and achieve. Time and time again they have seen troubled people rise to meet and overcome difficulties which threatened to swamp their family, personal, or vocational lives. The caseworker knows that in the human beings that make up each family there are strengths and forces which, if they can be discovered and released, will attack whatever virus is infecting their social life and unity. That is what caseworkers mean when they say that their essential skill lies in "helping people to help themselves."

Knowledge

Knowledge of human nature and the interplay of environment upon it is the first key on which the caseworker must count to unlock the constructive forces in the families or individuals among his clients. This is not merely the rule of thumb understanding of people and predicaments that all of us have or like to think we have, by reason of native insight and knowledge picked up from general reading.

The astonishing advance in more precise understanding of the phases of human growth through childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age, is a development to which professional caseworkers themselves have contributed greatly. They have drawn upon medicine, psychology, and psychiatry to enrich findings from their own professional experience. Because their train-



Courtesy, Community Service Society of New York

Family budget planning is not just a cut-and-dried proposition

ing synthesizes for them this accumulated knowledge of why people act as they do, they are able to replace the intuitive flashes of insight which come to many understanding folks, with a steady light which is safer to work by.

Many of the conference sessions were clinical discussions based on the presentation of firsthand case material. Revealing indeed was the intentness with which the participants searched for the clue by which to untangle a complicated skein of personal involvement or social trouble. Observable, too, was their skillful evaluation of the subtle interplay of environmental and personality factors in the particular situation.

A homely illustration, it seemed to us, of the contrast between lay and professional perception was to be found in discussions about "money," as related to several different problems. "We know," said Dorothy V. Thomas of the Washington (D.C.) Family Service Association, "a child's first experience with money is in terms of affection, gifts, prestige, and authority, and that the experience is intensified during adolescence in the struggle between dependence and independence, in rivalry and power." Later, as an adult, when he is unable to earn and needs financial help, "he may revert to some of these earlier patterns." The caseworker's approach to any troubled adult involves an attempt to support his capacity for independence in solving his problem. But, for example, in work with an unemployed client who has been the wage-earning head of a family, the countless ways in which he

is shown by the caseworker that he is regarded as having the same status as before, both as a person and as a family member, become the means of preserving his personality balance during a crucial period.

The knowledge of the caseworker comes not only from the synthesis of the cumulative experience of casework and its allied professions, but also from ability to get systematically pertinent facts about the family or individual client. The routine investigations of earlier days have changed as the utility of facts relevant to problems has become better understood. Getting "history for the sake of history" especially from so-called "objective" sources (sources other than the client himself) "has become outmoded," said Marguerite Meyer of the Boston Family Society. "Skilled caseworkers are looking to the client as the primary source of information. It is much less important that a client exaggerates his situation . . . much more important to know why he does."

How far caseworkers should go in encouraging clients to reveal information about their early lives was another point discussed in the session on marriage counseling. Mrs. Waelder felt that this was usually necessary. Often the immediate conflict can be understood, she said, only in terms of the past experience of one or both of the two personalities involved. Sometimes, however, this is not the case, as in the instance where recently developed health and financial problems were clearly at the root of the difficulty.

This same question came up in the

discussion of casework for the aged. Here Miss Wagner stressed what information one gets from the client himself must *always* be determined in the light of his particular personality and situation. "We hesitate to open old wounds if we cannot do anything about them," she said.

The elements of the first equation in diagnostic and treatment competence can thus be easily understood—cumulative professional knowledge about human nature and environmental interaction plus relevant facts systematically procured about each troubled situation which presents itself.

Skill in Treatment

As revealed in these discussions, the casework treatment process seems close to the process of living itself—a means of bringing about change within the person and within his environment. The dynamic center around which change occurs lies in the quality of relationship between the caseworker and the client. Understanding of human behavior, knowledge of the client and the facts of his situation, information about community resources, and awareness of his own psychological strengths and weaknesses—these are the caseworker's tools. But they assume meaning only in terms of the relationship which is established.

One of the ways in which this two-way relationship can be used to effect constructive change appeared in a case discussion of a fifteen-year-old delinquent girl to whom the relationship provided emotional support during a crucial period. The mother's obvious preference for her two younger children had left the girl in great need of an adult on whom she could depend, as well as producing anger and fear which this youngster expressed in anti-social behavior. The successful change wrought in this instance lay in the skill with which the worker was able to fill the gap in the girl's life while she helped mother and daughter to an improved relationship through recognizing and preserving what warmth of feeling they had for each other.

The leader of this discussion group, Miss Rall, pointed out that the adolescent's troubles are usually due to the fact that his family has failed him, and he needs more than he can get through normal social life with his own age group. Though the caseworker must supply his need for someone to depend on, it takes real skill, for the adolescent usually feels that he must

disguise his need and appear to be independent.

The use of the treatment situation to help troubled folk find a measure of self-understanding came out at many points. One could visualize the parent who comes to the agency in a turmoil of shame and conflict at the behavior of his problem child, and who is eventually able to come to see how his own secret attitudes have gotten communicated to the child and helped to produce the behavior; or the worried wife who appeals for help out of fear that her husband's affections have dwindled and who, with the worker's understanding and skillful interpretation, gradually becomes aware that she has expected her husband to be a kind of "indulgent father" to her, and that, in not assuming her share of the responsibility within the marriage, she has brought about the thing she most feared.

In describing the treatment relationship in marriage counseling cases, Mr. Gomborg said that typically in marital discord, "the lines of communication between husband and wife have been torn down," and that the caseworker uses his own skill to help to break the deadlock and rebuild communication.

Establishing a constructive relationship in the instance of marriage conflict poses a special difficulty, for usually only one of the partners comes to the agency requesting help, and often the other partner feels that the caseworker has already lined up against him. This raises a difficult technical problem for which two solutions were offered. Some have found it best for the caseworker to consolidate a good relationship with the ap-

plying partner before suggesting contact with the other. Others believed that early relationships with both should be established and that this should be suggested in the initial interview. Both approaches had met with success in individual cases.

In situations of parent-child difficulties, establishment of a treatment relationship is complicated by the fact that, in contrast to a marriage conflict between equals, the parent is responsible for the child. Thus the caseworker must decide whether there should be—or can be—contact with the child at all. Opinion in this discussion seemed to be that where the problem was primarily the parent's, or where contact with the child seemed distasteful to the parent, work might be exclusively with the parents. Quite frequently, however, the school age child, as well as the adolescent, has been found to respond well to direct treatment relationships. Such work with children under the age of six is still in an experimental stage.

The group discussing this subject felt that treatment should be undertaken on the basis of clear indication of the child's need for help; that both parents and child should understand the purpose and nature of the interviews; that the child's confidence should be respected; and that the parents should be prepared for slowness of change.

Skill in Using Resources

Finally, there is the situation where constructive change is brought about through the caseworker's skill in using other experts and resources to provide a specialized service needed by the client. A "homemaker" is provided to keep house and care for children while a mother goes to the hospital for an operation. Arrangements are made for a restless youngster to join a supervised recreation group where he can get a new lease on life in activity with others of his own age. The caseworker uses skill in drawing upon these and many other resources—those offering legal aid, public assistance, medical care, and specialized care for children.

The ability of the caseworker to establish good working relationships with practitioners in other professional fields has increased and developed over a long period of time. Of special interest in this conference, was the forum given to cooperation with the clergy. Robert Morris, chaplain of the Philadelphia Episcopal Hospital, said



PM photo by Martin Harris
Learning to "get along" comes hard!

that too often social workers overlooked the importance of religious counseling to the clients with whom they worked. The true purpose of religion, he said, is to free people, not to burden them, and he felt that social workers should look upon the religious resources of the community as a constructive force in helping people. He reminded his audience that the visiting minister has a chance afforded no other outside person, to discover family problems in their incipient stages, and thus he should be a fruitful source of referral.

Education for Family Living

The case records of social agencies are full of sad histories where troubles began because men and women were uninformed about and unprepared for the responsibility of family living. Hasty marriages, consummated in a haze of romantic involvement without mutual understanding of feelings about money, bringing up children, relationship to in-laws, in a high percentage of instances have ended in the divorce courts. High spirited adolescents have found themselves in the juvenile court because their struggles to be independent were incomprehensible to their parents. These same records show that many of these troubles could have been avoided if young people had been better prepared for marriage, if parents had known more about how to bring up children, if there had been more understanding of the inward ties that hold families together.

This conference gave recognition to such need by identifying broader education for family living as the second major defense against the further disorganization of family life. The role which the family service movement needs to play in such an educational effort was defined by Mr. Hertel in the following quotation from the report of the committee on current and future planning: "The accumulated experience and observation of the family agency could not only continue to be used as a basis for treatment of individual situations but could also be used as a basis for community education on the personal attitudes, environmental factors and social requirements that make for sound, satisfying life."

He noted further that a number of family agencies have already taken leadership in this direction. In the San Diego family agency, one staff member has been assigned to plan group discussions and study classes in various

Here, then, is the family service movement's first line of defense against the forces which are today making for family breakdown. "I recognize," said Dr. Fremont-Smith, "that the good social worker is a true therapist in the best sense of the word."

And as this conference showed, that line of defense, the capacity of the professional caseworker to diagnose and treat the infectious troubles of their family clients is, beyond question, being steadily strengthened and deepened by advancing knowledge and practice.

aspects of family life; the New Orleans agency is sponsoring a two-day institute for parents; Miami has conducted an experimental project for mothers with children under the age of six.

The latter project was described later in detail by Dorothy Cason, executive of the Miami Family Service. Fifteen mothers of children under the age of six were invited to come in for a series of individual consultations on problems involved in the care and training of children in this age group.

Representing a wide range in education, employment, social status, and income, these mothers were recruited from groups with which staff members had natural contact—the agency's board, union groups, YWCA young matrons' group.

The individual consultations were assigned to five staff members who planned their work together. A bibliography was prepared, and notes from school training courses and materials from institutes and conferences were used in putting together background subject matter. The proof of the pudding is to be seen in the fact that after the conclusion of the consultation project itself, thirteen of the fifteen mothers expressed interest in further use of the services of the agency.

Everyone seemed to agree that more and more people are groping for a better understanding of how to bring up their children and meet their family responsibilities. But many are going to the wrong places for real help. Cited as examples were the popularity of the "advice to the lovelorn" columns and other newspaper features; the commercially profitable radio programs which deal with family problems either in fictional form or in the "court of human relations" manner; the rapid increase in the number of private "counselors."

A first plank in any educational program, therefore, must be something like a "when in doubt, consult your doctor" campaign. Frances Levinson, of New York's Jewish Family Service told conferees that the time was ripe to build "a psychological bridge" between the modern family and the modern family agency. People are beginning, albeit reluctantly, to recognize that they need to delegate responsibilities to specialists whom the family once considered intruders into its own affairs. "Today," she said, "the family sees itself as the setting through which its members receive their emotional education for living . . . a practicing and testing ground for the individual's capacity and ability to develop, to change when necessary and to learn to take and carry the various roles assigned in a lifetime."

But if family agencies are to persuade the community that seeking professional help may be a mature and responsible act, rather than an admission of personal failure, caseworkers must get their own psychological houses in order, a number of speakers stressed. That is, they must show confidence in their own capacity, they must cease trying to hide their light under a bushel, for fear that illumination in the public eye will reveal some of their shortcomings as well as their successes. "It is time for us to take a place in the world," declared Miss Levinson, "along with other professions and give up our 'perfectionist' goals. Doctors and lawyers do not guarantee success in every case they handle, they freely acknowledge their need for more experience and research. But social workers act as if any unsuccessful case were a black mark for the profession."

Believe in Own Competence

Clare M. Tousley, director of the department of public information of the Community Service Society of New York, urged that "the main thing is not to doubt our knowledge as family social workers as much as we do, but to sort out the things that are within our competence, and then go ahead and talk about them."

Another and different sort of fear, obviously was in the minds of many who discussed this question. That was that they might be swamped with applications for advice and help, beyond any realistic limitation of funds and trained personnel. Orville Robertson of the Family Society of Seattle, however, suggested that this liability

might be turned into an asset—increased demand could be used as demonstrated evidence of increased need for funds—although he admitted that the staff would have to be willing to go through a period of strain and pressure while the “evidence” was accumulating.

Admittedly, the whole concept of better and more general education for

family life is new. Public education has a methodology of its own, and its application in this field will call for experimental demonstrations of many kinds. But the family service movement is beginning to see clearly that education together with diagnosis and treatment are inseparable twins in the approach to the prevention of family breakdown.

Community Leadership

The members of the conference patently realized that plans to extend the quality and reach of family diagnostic and treatment service and to provide better education for family living must depend on broad community leadership and support.

Mr. Nelson, succinctly illustrated one practical aspect of this dependence when he said: “Community chests have made great gains in finding new money during the war years. For 1946, they raised and allocated to local services 46 percent more money than in 1941. But the fact is that in 1946 chests allocated to the family field, including all types of family service, only about 16 percent more than they did in 1941. If the family field is to motivate its present plans as outlined by the report of the committee on current and future planning and as discussed at this biennial meeting, it must have a greater share of this new money, or more new money must be found, of which the family field will get a greater share.”

Community support, however, has broader implications than the allocation of additional chest funds. With the recognition that other groups and other agencies have important roles to play in the organization of the community's total resources for better family life, members of the conference moved into consideration of what was involved in their own particular role and responsibility.

Citizen Strength

What makes for a family agency, strong enough to play a leading role in the community's program for better family life? Of and by itself, the leaders of various discussion groups agreed, professional competence is not enough. First of all, the agency must have a representative and interested membership constituency, a capable board, and good public relations.

The agency needs a membership constituency not only to give it legal status, explained Margaret G. David-

son, of the Scarsdale (N.Y.) Community Service, but to provide a group of people who can interpret its work to their friends and to the community. In reverse, they can also serve to interpret the community to the agency—that is, become a sounding board for community reactions to the agency's work, to new policies that it may be considering, to old policies that may need to be discarded.

The vital role of the board of directors and the responsibilities of its individual members were well canvassed in a discussion group for board members, led by Ralph Uihlein, president of the national association. Pointing out that the board not only sponsors the agency, but is legally responsible for its work, he suggested that its members should all have an interest in people, “a conviction about the worthwhileness of the function of the agency,” time to devote to its work.

Selection of board members should be made with an eye to the capacity of each person to make some special contribution to the agency, and also to their leadership in industry, labor, religion, geographical areas and other major factors in community life. By planned procedure they should be given opportunities to become thoroughly familiar with the agency's purpose as preparation for effective leadership.

“The basic purpose of public relations,” said Miss Tousley, “is to create community good will and understanding. No agency can be adequately financed and staffed without enjoying this. Nor will the sort of clients you can serve appropriately use you if you do not stand well in community opinion.” And she strongly backed up Mr. Hertel's earlier advice to strike a new keynote in the enlistment of community good will. “It is time that we talked not so much about what our agency is doing but what we know about family life. Our staff knows a great deal about this, about parent-child relations, about the causes of

marriage breakdown and many related subjects.”

The contrast between public relations objectives of a decade ago, mainly aimed at the group of large contributors, and those of today, reaching out to the whole community, was stressed by Mr. Robertson. And in these attempts the “whole community” must be analyzed for public relations purposes said Sallie Bright, director of the National Publicity Council. Selected groups, such as the schools, unions, and churches, must be studied in terms of their varied receptivity or hostility to the agency's program. Practical plans made on this basis will prevent ineffective results.

“The family service movement in this country is on the threshold of a great advance,” Mr. Hertel had predicted in his keynote address. It was clear from these discussions that the “service of supply,” so essential to the maintenance of this forward movement, must draw the manifold resources which it needs from as yet hardly tapped reservoirs of community leadership and good will.

Scope and Function

Also, if the family agency is to play a leading role in the community's advance toward better family life, it must be clear about what that role should be.

No less than the American family has the family service movement itself been buffeted about from the even tenor of its ways by three decades of wars, booms, and depressions. Within itself, great changes in function and outlook have come as a result of steady professional advancement. The pressures of the last decade have pushed this agency in one direction, that agency in another. Differing schools of thought in respect to casework practice and agency functions, are in seeming conflict at major or minor points.

Yet certain areas emerged in which family agencies soon will have to make important decisions of policy, if they have not already made them. The first is in an area where the issues already seem largely settled. The trend of the Twenties away from preoccupation with relief was set back on its heels by the overwhelming relief needs of the depression which, in its early days, fell largely on the shoulders of the private agencies and from which they had not wholly escaped even by the late Thirties. But ten years of a national social security program, ac-

accompanied by the general acceptance of the principle that economic need is a government responsibility, and half a dozen years of full employment drastically reducing need, have changed all that. Indeed, a representative number of agencies now are charging modest fees for consultation and service, in cases where the client can afford to pay—a far cry from the practice of the relief days.

This conference, therefore, could be taken as a celebration of the severance of the umbilical cord that has attached the modern family agency to its material relief progenitor. Not, to be sure, in the sense that it refuses to give service to families in need of material assistance. But the modern family agency is no longer to be looked upon by the community as a vehicle through which it may discharge its responsibility for caring for families whose primary need is material assistance. Instead, the community must regard its public welfare services as the main instrument through which to meet that obligation. Relief given by the family agency to its clients is incidental to its treatment of the variety of problems that must be met through a comprehensive rehabilitation plan. Yet the family agency, it was agreed, must still serve as the community's watchdog for the public welfare program.

Not only is aggressive support of public service important to the community, but it is important to the protection of the private agency's own program. Particularly in times of eco-

nommic emergencies, an adequate public program to meet relief needs is the family agency's only safe guarantee that its own private funds will not be diverted into meeting elemental demands for food, clothes, and shelter.

This growth from the cradled infancy of relief administration to the accepted maturity of its diagnostic and treatment function forces into perspective another area of policy in which decisions are only now beginning to take form. In earlier days, the need for relief provided a simple and easy basis for determining whom the agency would serve. But as more and more families apply for diagnostic and treatment service, the agency must either presume to meet all of those needing such service or define in other terms those whom it can and will serve and those whom it will not. And not only must these decisions be made, they must be interpreted successfully to the clients and to the community, if confusion and ill will are to be avoided.

Moreover, with casework's increasing capacity to deal with other than economic or environmental problems, it has become increasingly desirable to make contact with families in the early stages of the development of their difficulties. "We must learn to get across to people," said Miss Levinson, "that it is not a sign of weakness to have a problem." Otherwise, families "will only use us after their strength has been destroyed through the long wear and tear of a deteriorating marriage or a bad parent-child problem.

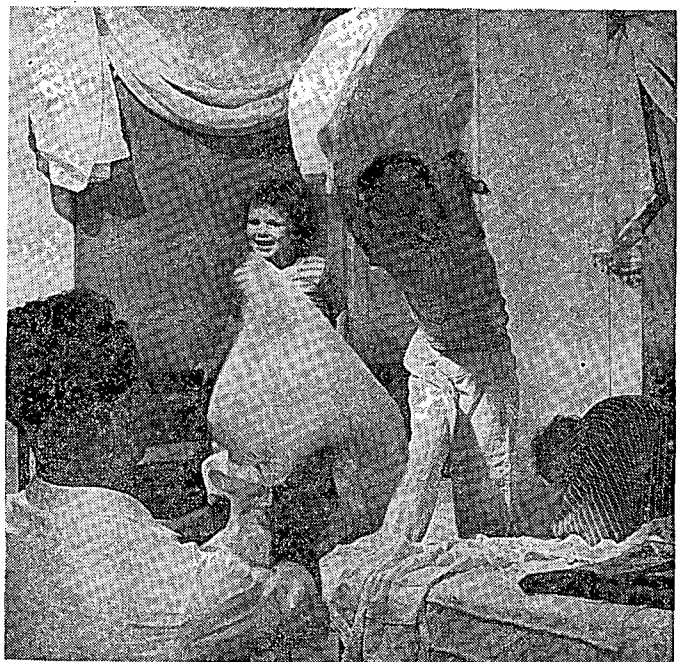
They will not use us when their problems are new and when we stand a chance of helping them meet their problems with their strength intact." But such a policy of discovery, of reaching out for families that need service is difficult to manage unless the agency has the whole community as the objective for its program.

Again, as Mr. Hertel implied in his opening analysis of the issues facing the family service movement, if the family agency does not provide service for which there is a community demand, and which is related to its basic purpose, other resources and facilities will spring up to meet the demand. "For many years before the onset of what has become popularly known as the United States divorce wave, counseling and education for family living . . . has commanded the attention of various groups and organizations both within and without the general field of casework practice." But, he went on to emphasize, "In the opinion of the committee on current and future planning, it is not logical to separate marriage counseling from other types of family counseling. . . . Yet by and large, family service agencies have not achieved wide and general acceptance as major community resources for marriage counseling."

Issues which are somewhat different but no less difficult grow out of the multiplicity of specialized services in the present day community setting, in which the family agency must operate. Public welfare services, juvenile court



Happy family life means sharing chores with mother—



—and a romp with father after bedtime stories are over

services, foster home and protective services for children, medical social services, services to transient families, psychiatric services, assistance to veterans, the aged, and the like, all offer specialized service in connection with particular difficulties confronting a family or its individual members.

A Comprehensive Approach

Generally speaking, the family service agency is equipped to diagnose and plan treatment for a very wide range of problems, and by virtue of that comprehensive approach, to identify and treat the *central difficulty* making for the disintegration of a family's life. But the successful discharge of that function now involves a whole series of relationships and understandings with other agencies of the community—no easy task at best.

Hence, the structure of family agencies at present is somewhat fluid and of necessity varies from community to community. For example, Mr. Hertel pointed out that "family agencies have always focused on the needs of the *whole* family and their current practice reveals increasing attention to direct work with children in families using their services." He added that in approximately 30 percent of the association's membership, child placement is also a part of the agency's work.

Underlying all of these issues of expansion and relationship is the practical problem of personnel. On the one hand, the demand for assistance by families and individuals with adjustment and emotional problems has steadily increased; on the other, increased knowledge and the perfecting of practitioners' techniques, putting an ever greater premium on graduate training and supervised internship, lengthens the time and increases the cost of acquiring standards of professional competence. These twin trends inevitably color practical and realistic consideration of all the issues of revised scope and new functions, with which the whole movement is struggling.

Just how they will be faced and solved during the next decade seems as yet uncertain. Experimental developments in relationships, with intake policies, in coordinating and cooperative devices, with mergers, in interpretation, were reported from many different angles at the conference. One can hardly doubt that, in time, they will be faced and solved with a for-

ward look. Indeed, the careful report of the committee on current and future planning, prepared in advance of the conference, had already taken this position:

"The family service agency, given relatively adequate staff, should endeavor at all times to be available to families in trouble. On the basis of careful evaluation, it should either assist such families within the framework of its own service . . . or make appropriate referral to another, or other agencies. . . . To cut off the flow of applications to the agency results in denying persons help when they need it most and when family casework can have its greatest preventive value." In other words, while the family agency must exercise discretion in choosing the care of families or individuals to whom it offers extensive service, it must also strive to retain a diagnostic and steering service for all those who turn to it for help.

One final area of community organization for the prevention of family disorganization had been earmarked both by Mr. Hertel and this same committee. Undeniably, today as always, many of the factors disrupting family life have their roots in the social and economic milieu in which we live. Bad housing, low income, unemployment, race prejudice are continuously breeding social and emotional disorders. What is the role of the agency in the community's and the nation's efforts to modify and remove these basic social ills?

Social Action

The presentation of facts about economic conditions, standards of living, housing, health, and so on, in the families which they serve, has been a traditional means by which family agencies have brought to the attention of their boards and to the community, basic needs that can be met only by social or political action. Many now well established health and social movements such as antituberculosis, housing reform, child labor, and the like, sprang from knowledge of underlying problems gleaned by the early family agencies from their contacts with low income and underprivileged sections of their community.

G. Howland Shaw, board member from the Family Service Association of Washington, D. C., noted that board members can "participate effectively in social action and in efforts to obtain appropriate legislation."

Morris Zelditch of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, New York City, brought out that by social action we invariably mean political action, because legislative or administrative action within the legislative framework usually seems to offer the best opportunity for successful effort. He added that it is equally incumbent on social workers, as citizens, to join with other social action groups, civic organizations, unions, special care organizations in bringing public opinion to bear on the improvement of social conditions.

While it was clear that in connection with this, as with many other matters affecting the conditions of family life, the family agency has no exclusive responsibility, a considered agency policy is nevertheless important. Some agencies, it was noted, have legislative or social action committees.

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This annual conference of the family service movement, held in the 69th year of its organized history, was predominantly a conference about methods, goals, and content of social casework. The depth of its findings was a tribute to its maturing professional capacity. The cautious and experimental determination with which the professional caseworkers present were reaching from the known to unknown areas of social causation and human motivation testify to a scientific spirit attacking problems of the humanities.

One felt that in this fundamental characteristic, perhaps lay the greatest hope for the eventual arrest of forces which seem to be making for instability and insecurity in American family life. Witchcraft gives way to science. Professional skill drives out black magic. Knowledge is the great antidote to fears, prejudices, and popular hysteria. The American family can be helped through the tempestuous seas of social change by nothing less than full navigational understanding — an understanding of changing and often divisive currents, of the direction of its modern objectives and responsibilities, of its own intrinsic motor power and complicated relationships.

From the essence of their daily tasks, the practice of their profession as social caseworkers, the men and women of this conference are adding bit by bit to this essential understanding. Eventually, after the fashion of all scientific knowledge, this will become an inherent part of our newer, positive, modern philosophy of family life.

THE COMMON WELFARE

World Relief Confusion

Confusing to most of us these days must be the picture of world relief needs and plans that comes through the maze of controversy, news stories and special releases emanating from UNRRA, the United Nations, and the many voluntary agencies raising funds in this country to send supplies abroad. Yet the underlying facts are relatively simple.

For many reasons, the problem of "displaced persons" has a first priority. There are still about 1,000,000 of them in Europe. Seven hundred thousand are in camps. About 143,000 of the total are Jews, most of them in the American Zone. An estimated 250,000 Chinese were moved out of China and have not yet been returned home. The prospect for "resettling" these displaced persons is a matter of some debate, one important segment of which hinges upon national immigration policies, including our own. Some feel that the problem of these displaced persons must continue for a generation.

In addition to displaced persons, all peoples of eastern Europe and China still have great need for food supplies and equipment of all kinds. UNRRA reports that the 1945 harvest was "disastrously low." The yield for 1946 is higher, but still substantially below prewar years. None of the countries assisted by UNRRA will be self-sufficient during 1947.

Plans to meet these worldwide needs are, to put it mildly, uncertain. UNRRA, which will have furnished about three and a half billion dollars of supplies, expects to complete the liquidation of its European program by the end of this year, and its China and Far Eastern program by the end of the first quarter of 1947. Fiorello H. La Guardia, director general of UNRRA, has promised to turn over \$550,000 to the United Nations for an International Children's Fund to establish child feeding centers.

The proposed International Refugee Organization under the United Nations, however, is still being buffeted about on the gridiron of international politics. One obstacle is the Soviet Union's refusal to support a program for people who do not wish to return

to their home countries. Another is the budget. The United States and Britain have agreed to take 71 percent of this, but on condition that contributions from other countries are made obligatory. It seems clear that a program of even minimum adequacy will be dependent on effective UN action.

Into this prospective vacuum, American voluntary agencies are rushing daily with the announcement of relief programs and money raising plans. These include not only the organizations previously financed through the National War Fund but church groups, clothing drives by the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, and the like. No complete list of these drives is yet available.

No doubt much of this confusion was inevitable in the transition from war to peace. One may only hope that the pressures of public opinion and of human need itself will speed the acceptance of orderly and adequate responsibility by voluntary agencies, no less than governments.

From the City Fathers

Offsetting, to some degree, the day-by-day news of disturbed race relations, comes announcement of specific steps taken by several cities to combat discrimination. In San Diego, the city has sponsored a study made by the American Council of Race Relations to determine causes of increased racial and religious tensions. The survey showed the need for study of housing, work, and community interests of the cultural groups which had moved into the city during the war. Specific recommendations were made regarding intensification of the city's intercultural education program and discipline of police officers who practice racial discrimination. One result of the survey is formulation of a plan to mobilize volunteers and governmental units to help solve the city's housing and employment problems.

Chicago's new civil rights bureau is acting to make prevention and prosecution of discrimination a function of the city law department. The major activity is enforcement of the Chicago fair employment practices ordinance adopted last year. Two other ordi-

nances now being drafted or discussed concern prohibition of defamatory statements against religious or racial groups, and insurance of full privileges of public buildings and conveyances for all citizens.

In New York City, councilmen recently voted unanimously to appoint a nine-man committee to investigate alleged discrimination against students seeking admission to professional schools. If the committee's probings show discrimination that violates laws now in effect, offenders will be turned over to the district attorney for prosecution. The committee may also propose new ordinances to correct conditions which they find in their inquiry.

Not So Local

Local responsibility for public health service has been so long a tradition in this country that few people realize the extent to which the federal government has now become a partner in this enterprise. No complete national data are available, but a tabulation from the local counties in twenty states participating in the American Public Health Association's annual local evaluation plan shows that 27 percent of their total expenditures came from federal sources. In isolated instances this amounted to as much as two thirds of the total spent; in several, more than half.

In these counties, also, federal subsidies accounted for a larger proportion than did state monies which amounted to only 17.7 percent of the total. But the two together paid for nearly 45 percent of the local service. Moreover, state health departments themselves also are receiving federal money for their own administrative budgets. This, of course, does not find its way down to the county level.

The bulk of these funds comes from congressional appropriations to the U. S. Public Health Service for general as well as special purposes such as venereal disease control, and to the Children's Bureau for maternal and child care. But they do not reflect an accepted over-all grant-in-aid policy, and it is clear that a federal retrenchment trend would find a good many local communities hard put to it to make up the difference.