

EDITORIALS

OUR CONFERENCE

In many respects the Des Moines Conference was a pleasant surprise to its participants because of the intimate character of the meetings due to a comparatively small attendance, which again was due to its location—so far in the middle west. With fewer people in attendance, there was a better chance to get together, a better chance for private lobby discussions so valuable to everyone. There was less rushing from one meeting to another. And yet, one should not be too selfish. The inconvenient location remained a serious problem because so many had been deprived of going to the conference who could and should have done it. But no matter how much thought is given to the problem, there seems to be no real way out of a difficulty like this once in a while. For the remedy of an entire separation from the National Conference is worse than the disease. If this isolation of the conference occurs only once in a few years, the problems created are not of a permanent gravity.

The decision of the Jewish Conference to become a kindred group of the National Conference, though involving on the face of it no more than a contribution of \$25, was a decision of very great importance. More and more do the Jewish social workers feel that they must take an active part in the conference as a whole. Of this more presently.

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The National Conference, as a whole, enjoyed the same advantages and suffered from some disadvan-

tages of the choice of a meeting place.

It was much smaller than usual, but for that reason more intimate, less distracting. Perhaps the number of meetings was equally great, but somehow or other it was less unwieldy. There was less of a struggle for room in hotels or in the lecture halls, less loss of time in getting back, more opportunity for a healthy amount of recreation. For all these reasons and because of the very large number of excellent papers presented, the conference was to be voted a success at least qualitatively if not quantitatively.

Though no statistics are available, general impressions seem to indicate that a larger proportion of Jewish workers remained for the general conference or at least for a part of it than is usually the case. Or perhaps because of a smaller general registration, the Jewish workers were somewhat more in evidence. This was commented upon favorably by many members of the general conference. It is reported—I don't know how authoritatively—that when the decision of the Jewish Conference to become a kindred group was announced in the Executive Committee, the reaction was somewhat as follows: "At last! It was about high time." If true, the comment is significant and it explains a good deal.

For a good deal has to be explained. During one of the meetings, which happened to be less interesting than most, the editor with his statistical proclivities indulged in a few computations, with somewhat startling results. The subject of his

inquiry was—the amount of participation of Jewish social workers in the conference as a whole. Though the record of the program as printed in advance is not quite complete and some changes and additions were announced at the sessions, nevertheless the printed program can be accepted as a fairly good indication of what the Jewish social workers have contributed this year.

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Now then—

There were 219 persons presenting papers or participating in the general meetings of the 12 official sections of the conference. Of these 219 names, only 10 were Jewish, or less than 5 per cent. Of the numerous kindred groups, 12 included their programs in the general program of the conference. These 12 groups registered 139 participants, of which only 6 or a little over 4 per cent were Jewish. The total, therefore, for the conference itself and for the kindred groups is 358 participants with only 16 Jews, or 4.5 per cent. Surely, this does not correspond to the part Jewish social work and Jewish social workers play in the profession as a whole.

Even that is a somewhat exaggerated account of the participation of Jewish social workers. Here, for instance, are ten names appearing in the program of the conference itself.

Rabbi Abba Silver, Professor Joseph Jastrow, Dr. Emil Frankel (twice), Rabbi Manheimer, Dr. Herman Adler, Miss Jeannette Regensburg, Miss Grace Marcus, Miss Dorothy Kahn and Miss Cecelia Rasovsky. At other meetings, Mr. Harry Lurie, Mr. Jacob Kepecs, Miss

Luba Jaffe, Miss Alice Seligsberg, Miss Harriet Goldman and Mr. Bruno Lasker participated.

Now then, the striking fact which is disclosed when these Jewish names are examined is that most of them are not Jewish social workers. Some are not social workers at all as, for instance, the two rabbis or Professor Jastrow or Dr. Frankel, the statistician. Others, while well known in the field of social service and while they are Jewish are, nevertheless, not "Jewish social workers" because they are not identified with Jewish social work. This statement, without any implied criticism, would apply to Dr. Adler, Miss Regensburg and Miss Marcus or Mr. Bruno Lasker. Thus, the active participation of Jewish social workers in the program of the National Conference is strikingly and pitifully small. Surely, that is not a situation that we can pass by with equanimity.

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What's the cause? Now, let us be careful and not jump at conclusions. It is very easy to say that they don't want us. The National Conference is antisemitic. But personally, the editor is convinced that this would be a puerile and untrue explanation, a very transparent defense reaction. There is nothing in the make-up of the Executive Committee or the various section committees of the conference to justify so harsh a conclusion.

As a matter of fact that, too, was statistically studied by the editor. The various central committees for the Conference at large contain 106 names, of which 7 were Jewish, or 6½ per cent. The 12 division committees contain 257 names, of which

20 were Jewish, or nearly 8 per cent. Altogether, 27 names out of 363, or 7.7 per cent, is a much larger representation than the actual programs indicated. Perhaps we are entitled to a larger proportion on committees, but I am sure that that could have been easily obtained if any kind of an effort were made or any desire shown to participate in the arduous work of running the Conference. Again, it is significant that perhaps the majority of these 27 Jewish names do not belong to Jewish social workers. Names like those of Professor Leiserson (two committees), Dr. Bernard Glueck, Dr. Louis Dublin, Professor Yarros, Professor Peixotto or Mr. Sidney Hillman or Rabbi Abba Silver are names that every Jew has a right to be proud of. But they have not come out of the profession of Jewish social work. There is no discrimination against Jewish names. The presence of Mr. Karpf (two committees), Mr. Lurie (three committees), Mr. Kepecs, Miss Kahn, Miss Rasovsky, Mr. Teller and others, is an indication that there is no discrimination against Jewish social workers. And it seems at least a logical conclusion that if we do not take a sufficiently active part in the proceedings, the fault is ours and nobody else's. . . .

This, we submit, is a very serious situation. Is it because we have nothing to contribute or that we do not care to make our words heard beyond the somewhat narrow limits of our own Jewish field? The volumes of our proceedings, and if the editor may say so, the Jewish Social Service Quarterly during the three years of its existence, offers at least some evidence that we are capable

of constructive thought. Some of the best-known non-Jewish social workers have gone on record in saying that in some lines of endeavor, as, for instance, in our relief work, in methods of child care, our standards are high and occasionally high enough to offer an example to emulate. If it be true that in general literature of social work, particularly in the more weighty book literature, the Jewish contribution as yet is slight, that may be explained by the comparative youth of our movement and also the comparative youth of most of our workers. Surely, the entire tradition of the Jewish people throughout the world in the field of social thought and public effort does not indicate that we are willing to remain far behind. On the contrary, from Russia to America, Jews only too frequently have been charged or credited with forcing themselves into the advance guard of each and every movement.

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If that be so, what is the trouble with the Jewish social worker in America? For the situation as described is certainly not normal and certainly is no credit to us. Isn't, perhaps, the true diagnosis just there—that we have allowed ourselves to become too isolated with our own very grave and very pressing problems—How to stimulate the Federation movement, how to react to community chests, how to organize collections for national and international causes. Problems of this kind—most of them with a financial background—occupy perhaps entirely too much a part of our attention at our Conferences, as an examination of our proceedings of the last few annual Conferences will

show. Problems dealing with the substance, with the very essence of social work, frequently are disregarded. Sometimes we complacently say: "These matters of social case work technique, problems of psychiatry, mental hygiene, broad economic problems, health problems, delinquency, etc., not being specifically Jewish problems, may be safely left to the National Conference as such." And after having arrived at this plausible conclusion, we get together for our own conference, spend three strenuous, exhausting days and then run home for a much needed rest. Not because we are not interested in the Conference which is to follow, but because we are too exhausted either to contribute to it or to profit from it. The thousands of social workers who come in on Wednesday, all fresh and full of energy, know nothing of this, they only see our flight and they are irritated, with good cause.

Something radical must be done about this. We need the stimulus and the training that the Conference with its professional discussion can offer, particularly to our young workers. And we believe the Conference, too, needs the contribution that we are capable of making. That is perhaps the most important problem that will confront the new President and his Executive Committee. Fortunately, there is reason to believe that Mr. Morris Waldman is fully cognizant of the situation, that he desires a *rapprochement*. His very thoughtful address at the meeting when he was elected clearly indicated that. Let us hope, then, that joining the Conference as a kindred group will not remain an empty formality. Let us hope that the

whole situation will become a matter of very careful discussion between Mr. Sherman Kingsley, the new President of the National Conference, and our own Mr. Waldman. And at the next Conference the anomalous situation indicated above will cease to be.

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RACE RELATIONS AT THE CONFERENCE

The selection of Memphis as the next meeting place of the Conference raises a very serious problem. Perhaps it is unfortunate that the problem has been raised, but there seems to be no way of avoiding it. And that is the old American problem of the Negro. (Thank God we have gotten over the hypocrisy of speaking of "colored people," and the Negro no more shrinks from the appellation than the decent, self-respecting Jew when he is called a Jew and not a Hebrew.)

Memphis has invited the Conference for next year and the invitation was accepted. The acceptance raises the problem as to what will be the position of the Negro delegate in a southern community. An invitation had come from a southern city a year ago and the same question had then arisen. All honor is due to Mr. Kenneth L. M. Pray, Director of the Pennsylvania School of Social and Health Work, for having raised that question at the time. The reply of the southern delegates was very clear and specific. Negro delegates would have to abide by the social standards of the south. That simple and plausible formula, however, may cover a multitude of sins. There are legal and also extra legal means of discrimination against the Negro below the Mason-Dixon line. There is a question of

Pullman transportation, the question of the Jim Crow car. It may be reasonably argued that it is not up to the National Conference of Social Work either to violate or to criticize this sort of legislation while they are in a southern community. There may be also the difficulty of obtaining decent hotel accommodations.

But there are other equally obvious difficulties. In most southern assembly halls, whether they be theatres, hotels or even churches, Negroes are not allowed to sit throughout the hall. In some places, admission will be entirely denied them; in others, there will be restricted sections, usually the least desirable sections. And, of course, a southern "gentleman" refuses to eat at the same table with a Negro who doesn't touch his food, though he has no objection to the Negro cook and waiter, who, unfortunately, do. Because the southern community last year refused to modify any of its attitudes, the Conference very properly, we believe, refused to accept the invitation which, if accepted, would necessarily mean a series of insults to every Negro delegate.

The situation resulted in an impasse. "We cannot change the entire attitude of the south to the Negro," said the southern delegate. "But we cannot accept or share this attitude and, therefore, cannot accept your invitation," said the Conference. "Does that mean that the Conference will never meet in the south?" asked the southerners. "Not until you have changed your attitude," seemed to be the implied answer of the Conference.

The insisting invitation from Memphis and its acceptance by the Conference this year seem to indicate that one of the two things has happened. Either one of the sides has given in or there has been a compromise, a getting-together, a mutual yielding. Which is it?

Official information is lacking. It is fairly certain, however, that Memphis has not seen a sudden change of heart, has not yielded all along the line. Its very invitation which had originally mentioned the necessity of accepting the social standards of the south, even though that phrase rumored to have been taken out after some heated discussion, is evidence that no such change of heart has taken place. Has the Conference humbly receded from the position of last year or have they gained some partial victory?

Rumor has it that it has. But as to its appraisal, opinions will differ. Difficulties of transportation to and from the Conference, difficulties of transportation in the city, whether in street cars or in taxis undoubtedly remain, or some difficulties of providing decent housing accommodations for the Negro delegates, are legislative and obviously beyond the control of the Conference. It is stated that discrimination against Negroes in meeting halls will be waived for the short time of the Conference by the community, but that the difficulty of a common dinner table was admitted to be unsurmountable, which means that no Negro delegate will be admitted to any luncheon or dinner meeting, and certainly will not be allowed to participate in any social function

as they did participate in Des Moines.

In favor of this compromise, some friends of the Negro insist that it is a victory, that conditions cannot be changed in a day, that the position of the Negro in the south will be aggravated by the action of the National Conference in refusing every southern invitation until complete social equality of the Negro has been established. That the ways of social progress are necessarily slow and devious, that impatience in this matter can only have sad results.

Perhaps it is difficult for a Jew to view this thing altogether impassionately, for he is sensitive toward discriminations or similar situations perhaps never so acute. We are trying to be as objective as we can in this matter, but it seems to us that if the reported compromise is correct, entirely too much was yielded by the Conference to southern prejudice.

What would be a rational basis for any kind of a compromise? This might be formulated approximately as follows, speaking for the Conference.

"We know your attitude. We do not approve of it. But we cannot force a different attitude upon you. It is true that it is not within our power to change the southern attitude toward the Negro, much as we might desire to do so.

"On the other hand, you have no right to demand of us that we insult our colleagues, the Negro delegates, simply because we happen to meet in the south. You need not extend any courtesies to them and you cannot change your laws in their favor. But we must insist that

if we meet in your city, this 'we' includes the Negroes as well as the white members of the Conference. It follows, therefore, that we must insist that the Negro be allowed in any place in which we have to be because of our business. Meetings are our business. Luncheon and dinner meetings are and always have been a part of our business. We shall not force you to sit at the same *table* with the Negro if it is so obnoxious to you, but we cannot exclude any delegate from any official function or meeting of the Conference." That and that only should be the minimum compromise to which the Conference should agree. Is it too much to expect that the Jewish Conference as a kindred group, and the Jewish members of the Executive, Program and other committees should voice their opinions in this matter openly and without fear? No Jew can afford to accept the anti-social attitude of race discrimination without a protest.

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Incidentally, this subject recalls one of the most pleasant incidents at the Des Moines Conference. On Thursday night, quite spontaneously, a social gathering was held in one of the large ballrooms of the main hotel. At this gathering, the Jewish and Negro delegates got together. We believe that the initiative came from a small Jewish group. The Negroes accepted it with alacrity. There were about 50 delegates from either side. National songs constituted the main part of the entertainment and we hung our heads in shame when contrasting the crude performance given by the Jews as against the harmonious singing of the Negroes. Stories fol-

lowed at which the Jewish showing was perhaps a little more favorable.

As far as one could observe, no moral or mental damage was sustained by any one, though incredible as it may seem, two or three delegates withdrew from the room, resenting the color scheme. How quickly the most objectionable prejudices may be acquired. How particularly objectionable such prejudices must appear when shown by a member of the Jewish race. What right have these Jews and Jewesses to object to the very worst aspects of the Dearborn Independent propaganda?

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A FEATHER IN OUR CAP

The April issue of the Monthly Birth Control Review is entitled "Family Rehabilitation Through Birth Control" and is, therefore, of special interest to social workers, particularly so to Jewish social workers for the names of several of our colleagues appear among the contributors to that issue and admittedly the entire issue was suggested by the Jewish Social Service Quarterly. Though running the risk of appearing vain-glorious, we venture to reproduce the first editorial from that issue.

"This number of the *Birth Control Review* is dedicated to social workers and to those who have the welfare of the working class at heart. In it we publish the study of results in 48 cases of the pioneer experiment with Birth Control by a social agency; together with Harry L. Lurie's report on three years' experience of Birth Control in family case work. The editorial from the *Jewish Social Service Quarterly* reprinted in our pages, we believe to be one of the landmarks in the progress of our movement, in the light it gives on the spread of interest and belief in Birth Control among social workers. On the day, which is not now far distant, when we have on our side at legislative hearings the weight of labor leaders and others who work among the poor, the sick and the unfit, we shall have no trouble in passing our Birth Control bill through State Legislatures."

Said the immortal Goethe: "Nur Lumpen sind bescheiden" — "Only rascals are modest." Moreover, excessive modesty would appear to be an altogether inappropriate attitude in the discussion of Birth Control.

BOOK REVIEWS

"SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT." By Robert Clautman Dexter, Ph.D. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1927. XII. Pages 424.

The older students of economics and social science will remember the flood of English books on poverty, destitution or misery, which appeared on the market some 15 years ago. This was followed by a respite which might have induced the optimist to think that we have solved the problems and the pessimist to worry lest we ceased to care. Within the last two or three years, however, the topic has appeared on publishers' lists, albeit, under different names. Witness Queen and Mann's "Social Pathology," which appeared a little over a year ago. And now the comprehensive tome of Professor Dexter's under the enticing title "Social Adjustment." That much must be granted to the latest authors, that as a result of 15 years of development of social service theory and practice, the conception has broadened considerably and one cannot any more think of human misery as exclusively, or even predominatingly, the question of economic poverty.

Like Queen and Mann's book, this latest work of Professor Dexter's is admittedly a text book. On the very first page, criticism is disarmed by a frank admission that the book does not "pretend to be a contribution to theoretical sociology." One is almost inclined to feel that the author was too modest when he insists that "Social Adjustment was not written primarily for professional social workers." Theoretically, if by a professional we should mean a properly trained social worker, then the book covers the field that he or she should be familiar with. But in actual practice, the profession is still made up very largely of young people to whom the book will be a liberal education. The field covered is extensive. Comparisons with Queen and Mann's book force themselves upon the reviewer's attention because they deal with the same problem and in a somewhat similar manner. There is, however, no harm in having more than one text book on the subject, because it is likely that an inquisitive worker might read both books where she would not re-read the same book twice.

The book covers general discussion of Poverty and Poor Relief (chapters 1-4), problems of Child Welfare (chapters 5-6), Feeble-minded (chapter 7), Old Age (chapter 8), the problems of Illness, Physical or Mental, and the Physical Handicaps (chapters 9-13), Sex and the Family (chapter 14), Crime and Punishment (chapter 15), problems of Migration (chapter 16), and the Theory and Practice of Social Work (chapters 17-19). The arrangement of topics will not impress everyone as logical, but the field of social work or at least the problems underlying social work are fairly well covered. Of course, in turning to any chapter, the better-informed student may frequently be somewhat disappointed with the brevity of treatment. But this serves as a most useful lesson in indicating how vast the field of social problems is. For with such brief treatment of each individual topic, we nevertheless have a large volume of over 400 pages. Thus, for instance, the whole problem of Probation is treated in less than two and a half pages. Accident Compensation is given less than one page. More space, and perhaps properly so, is devoted to Child Welfare—nearly 90 pages.

The style is very readable and attractive, though it perhaps lacks the charm of the method used by Queen and Mann in injecting case studies among theoretic treatment. Dr. Dexter's book is more didactic. Sub-headings to chapters and paragraphs somewhat interfere with the reading as they force the text-book character upon the reader's attention, but on the other hand, make the use of the book for reference purposes very much easier. There is nothing startlingly new or revolutionary in the handling of the various subjects, but the point of view throughout is a wholesome and moderately progressive one. Even a conservative Board will not be afraid to put this book in the hands of its trainees, and there are only occasional evidences of a philosophy that a radical might find reprehensible. Perhaps this steer between Scylla and Charybdis is necessary in a text book.

Where one student endeavors to cover so vast a field, occasional inaccuracies are inevitable. It is in no spirit of carping