

## The War and Social Work

As an indication of the spirit of the leaders in the social and civic development of the United States towards the war and the responsibility of each community, the report, just published, of the National Conference of Social Work is worthy the study of every municipal man in Canada. The report is really a series of addresses and discussions by men and women especially qualified to know the subjects under discussion. The questions taken up cover social problems of the war; the family and the community, health, food economics, illegitimacy as affected by the war, state programs for child welfare, public charities, mental hygiene, rural communities, etc.

The following extracts taken from prefaces of a few of the main divisions of the proceedings of the National Conference, give an idea of the wide range of the proceedings:

### Social Problems of the War.

The requirements of mobilization and of preparation for the grim consequences of war have suddenly altered the usual proceedings of the National Conference. To this new focus are bending the lines of interest and discussion which it has taken decades to establish. This booklet, an extract from the complete transactions at Pittsburgh, reflects characteristically the attitudes of representatives of humanitarian agencies two months after the entry of the United States into the war.

An outline of the program is shown on the next page. The single question presented was: Under the accepted status of war, what adjustments affecting social work are desirable or necessary? These discussions were notable for the information they afforded about relief problems of the war, for the gauge they gave of effects of war on the usual social agencies, and for their disclosure of unprotected flanks in social organization due especially to the great industrial re-alignment.

### The Family and the Community.

The country is rushing into forms of organization that are novel and inspiring. Society must be sectioned differently when the objective is military power. What institutions will or should survive from our previous social order? Will the family go the way of ancient fortresses?

This year's discussions, at the National Conference of Social Work, were devoted in large measure to strengthening the barriers about family life. This is true especially of the division on the Family and the Community. Care for the families of soldiers, a subject on which the chief contribution was made from Canadian experience, would be picked by many as the problem of greatest present importance. However, the committee chose to discuss first the requirements and possibilities of volunteer social service. Organized social work has its own National Army to amass and train. At the general session of the division, indeed, scarcely any reference was made to the war directly. Yet what more useful technical preparation could be made for the present emergency than to establish and improve the standards of social case treatment? In similar way does the discussion of mothers' pensions relate itself to the type of social legislation of the future which we may well anticipate.

### Health.

More quickly than any other social movement, perhaps, the work of conserving the public health has adjusted itself to the requirements of the war. The place and importance of the physician and the nurse are understood at once, not only by the specialist, but by the general public as well. Armies must be kept in prime condition, and the dread effects of battle must be mitigated, even to ultimate readjustment of the handicapped to the life of peace.

The greatest gain, however, has come through the recognition of public health as being a national necessity. That this fact is quite as important in times of peace is recognized in the title of the leading paper of this handbook. Hence the idea uppermost in the sessions of the division of Health are of the nature of "stimulating reactions" for our permanent good. Nursing, economy of diet and infant mortality present war-time problems, to be sure. But these subjects are of magnified significance as peace issues, also, along with others treated in the present series: The relations of health and social welfare, the co-ordina-

tion of health activities, and the opportunity which the health movement affords for constructive journalism.

### Rural Social Problems.

For the first time in its forty-four years' history, the National Conference has given comprehensive treatment to the social problems and agencies of the country. The discussions herewith presented may appear to be somewhat general, as though the situation had been surveyed with glasses from a watch-tower—located perhaps in the city. But the description is concrete and in the language of practical social work. It harmonizes with the conceptions of both sociologist and reformer.

The participants in this series of meetings seemed to feel that they were turning over virgin soil. Too long have both field and implements been ready. The attack upon rural social problems have been sharpened and given direction by the great new necessity of the present war.

### OTTAWA COUNCIL CALLS FOR MUNICIPAL CO-OPERATION WITH FOOD CONTROLLER.

The following resolution was adopted by the City Council of Ottawa, on January 21, on a motion by Alderman Findlay, seconded by Alderman Ford:

"That this Council hereby places itself on record as recognizing the necessity for active co-operation by the people with the Food Controller for Canada in the direction of producing, conserving and maintaining reasonable prices for all food commodities.

"Considering the present need among the Allied Armies in the field and the Allied Nations in Europe for food such as Canada can supply, this Council views with favour restrictions in the use of wheat flour and of cured hams and bacon with the object of releasing for shipment overseas considerable quantities of these important food necessities.

"And that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Municipal Councils of all cities in Canada with a request that they consider it favourably and co-operate with this Council."

### CITY PEOPLE MUST HELP.

#### "Grow Your Own Vegetables" is Slogan for Urban Dwellers.

The Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture has sent a circular letter to officials of all urban municipalities in the Province, urging backyard and vacant lot cultivation, poultry keeping, etc., this year, in order that the farmers may be able to devote a larger proportion of foods for export. The letter calls attention to the vital importance of increased production. It continues: "To the farmers is committed the task of raising food for export, and their efforts should not be now hampered by our dependence upon them for things we ourselves can provide. Vacant lot gardens, home grown poultry and the humble pig sty will do war service."

The Department states that a man in the city, town or village who can assist in farm work should be on the farm but those whose occupations prevents participation in farm work can render a service of national importance by utilizing sufficient spare time to produce a maximum quantity of garden produce. The circular suggests that this is a matter of serious consideration for officials of all urban municipalities especially and that everything that it is possible for them to do to encourage this work should be done.

"There should be in every city, town and village an association which stands for food production," the circular continues, "and it should receive the assistance and support in a practical way of all municipal representatives. This movement is, in Saskatchewan as well as in Great Britain and elsewhere, of national importance. Indeed in Great Britain the producer of an acre or more of vegetables is exempt from military service while so engaged. Gardeners should devote their facilities to the production of vegetables capable of being canned or stored in their natural condition rather than to the production of flowers, however worthy the latter may be under normal conditions."