

MONTREAL COUNCIL OF SOCIAL AGENCIES.

A REPORT OF THE SECRETARY FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF
THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. APRIL, 1923

SUBJECT - VOLUNTARY SERVICE IN SOCIAL WORK.

The acid test of Federation as a principle is going to be here in Montreal as elsewhere its ability to secure more and better service for its social service Agencies.

More and better service implies something more than the paid service of professional social workers.

It is possible for a year or two, under the influence of its novelty and whilst the machinery is new, to secure the funds necessary to pay for service; but it is safe to assert that if the relief from financial worries during these first years does not result in more and better service to our agencies by Board members and other volunteers, the time will come, when the machine of Federation will be powerless to secure even the necessary financial support.

The Cleveland Federation has succeeded because it recognized this fact from its inception.

What does more and better service from volunteers mean?

TRUSTEESHIP.

The Trusteeship of a Charity is in some essentials entirely different from the trusteeship of a commercial or business undertaking.

The success of a charity or group of charities depends in the last analysis on the extent to which they are educating public opinion.

Charities are unconsciously defining what is "legitimate dependency". Unconsciously, considerable groups of people who live on the border-line of dependency are influenced by the expectations which these definitions raise. There is as much danger in a situation which creates the feeling amongst border-line people that they will be looked after under all circumstances, as there is in a situation which only offers assistance when complete poverty and sickness have reduced their victims to a hopeless and helpless state of dependency. In either case the vital thing that is lacking is an intelligent understanding of the problems involved.

Mothers' Allowances (Pensions) will cost the Province of Ontario in 1923 more than a million and a half dollars. The Province of Quebec will not spend one cent in this way.