

A GLANCE THROUGH THE REVIEWS

The Red Cross World. *Geneva, 1962, No. 2.*

As usual, the latest number of the official organ of the League of Red Cross Societies is amply illustrated with fine photographs showing the various activities of the National Red Cross Societies in many parts of the world. The medical action organised by the League on behalf of Algerian refugees in Morocco and Tunisia is brought to notice in a series of particularly moving pictures.

This number is however more especially devoted to social work, that is to say to the aid which the Red Cross, whose rôle should essentially be pioneering, is being led more and more to undertake to bring to the sick, the mentally ill, aged people, to convalescents, as in times of major disasters. A whole category of persons previously ignored, even ostracized by society, now find themselves rehabilitated in their right to earn a living, to enjoy leisure and finally to recover their dignity. The Red Cross gives openings to the specialised services and it should be able to leave certain actions to them in order to create others.

Mrs. Léo de Bray, Secretary General of the Study Centre of Juvenile Delinquency in Brussels, has written an article of topical interest on this subject entitled "Social work and social action", of which the following is an important extract :

" . . . The industrial revolution of the 19th century, however, was to bring about a radical transformation both of social action and help to others, which was to be given the title of social work. Industrialisation created entirely new working conditions—the artisan was changed into a workman, who became increasingly distinct from the employer ; new living conditions—many country people became townspeople ; and new social conditions—the working class came into being. In these circumstances, social action was in turn to change its tone.

The second half of the 19th century was characterised by what has been termed " paternalism " : the well-to-do members of the population considered it a duty to relieve the suffering and distress of others. The idea of the right to assistance was, however, gaining ground. Private philanthropy multiplied its activities and employers came to the assistance of their employees. The systematic organisation of assistance progressed, e.g. Charity Organisation Societies, established in 1869 in England and in 1877 in the United States.

Social action succeeded in establishing the social rights of man : the right to health, work and labour protection, education and assistance

when necessary. The recognition of these rights led to the promulgation of laws (compulsory education, labour regulations, social insurance) and the establishment of new bodies ; medical services, homes etc. State action, which is required to determine a citizen's rights, was extended not only to the " poor " but to increasingly broader social categories and for other than basic material needs.

Social action, in the most highly developed countries, was placed not only on a material level but also on a psychological level. It was no longer exclusively focussed on the welfare and social adjustment of the individual but extended its aims to social structures. This action was also characterised by the participation of those who benefited, or would benefit, thereby ; there were mass reactions, the most apparent of which was the labour movement. Such collective reactions can be considered as one of the main factors of contemporary social action. At the same time the assistance techniques were changing and were being adapted to new economic and social conditions. Scientific methods were gaining on empiricism. Help to others, now known as social work, was being organised on a systematic basis. Founded on observation and experiments, it was entrusted to salaried professionals who had made theoretical and practical studies. The first social work schools appeared. Social workers, in face of the completely novel situations in which they tried to put the ideology described into practice, had to turn to many branches of knowledge for assistance : sociology and psychology in turn supplied these resources.

Sociology having drawn their attention to the influence exercised by social factors on individual situations, social workers were to endeavour to obtain the social advantages which had become available for their clients.

Mary Richmond, who published her " Social Diagnosis " in 1917, was to guide them with genius, teaching them how to proceed to a systematic study of a case. She also supplied them with the definition of social work : a series of methods which develop personality by the conscious and individual adjustment of man to his environment. Social workers made a conscientious effort to apply the procedure which the Anglo-Saxons call " handling environment ", taking action to remedy the situation of a client by concrete measures that are not simply palliative but as far as possible, curative.

The way was thus opened up for the next phase of social work. Social legislation having improved the living conditions of large layers of the population, social work was no longer confined to indigents. The duties of the social worker were to transcend the satisfaction of material needs and his clients, coming from various social classes, no longer accepted help linked with a form of patronage or guardianship. Furthermore, the discoveries of dynamic psychology were to reveal to social workers the influence of sentiments and emotions on human behaviour. Can the similarity and the coinciding paths of the trends we have just described

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be attributed to mere chance? It is difficult to believe; they rather illustrate the close links that exist between social action and social work, which assume different forms.

Social work is constantly up against economic and social problems. It supplies social action with factual data and documents of certain value. Its rôle is to make known individual forms of distress that affect a large number of people and which general and collective measures could remedy. It can thus co-operate in establishing suitable programmes of action to this end.

Social work furnishes the indispensable executive agents for the practical implementation of the conquest of social action.

Social work softens and humanises the application of general measures resulting from these conquests. It serves as an intermediary between the bodies established in the interests of the community and the individuals who are to benefit therefrom.

Social work helps individuals, groups and communities to become conscious of their responsibilities in the treatment and solution of their problems and difficulties. It thus prepares the ground for social action.

Furthermore, social work derives powerful support from social action, which provides collective solutions that could not be reached by other means.

In conclusion, it can be said that social work is complementary to social action. They are perhaps carried out on different levels, but they pursue the same aim: to assure the material and moral wellbeing of man, to release the latent powers of the individual, the group or the community, and to develop human dignity to the utmost."

Food and Health, by Dr. M. Autret, *FAO News, Rome, April 1962.*

Today, perhaps more than at any time in man's history, people throughout the world are conscious that famine is a disgrace to humanity, that it is an offence to the dignity of all men, not merely the victims of it.

But, apart from the extreme cases of famine, there are relationships between food and health which are of far-reaching importance and are too often ignored by the majority of people. We know now that much ill health and disease is caused not only by the lack of sufficient food but also by the lack of the right sort of food. Put in another way, satisfactory health and physical development are impossible without a diet that supplies all the nutrients now known to be essential for the human organism. This has been shown by nutritional research. We also know that in many countries the usual diet of the mass of the people falls far short of such requirements, with disastrous consequences. Large numbers