

# Problems and trends of social welfare in Switzerland and the world today

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## I. GENERAL

1. **Definitions.**— Social welfare is a relatively recent field of activity and knowledge. The notions themselves are therefore constantly evolving. In addition to a certain number of social workers and social workers' associations, the United Nations as well as the International Conference of Social Work have attempted to define them.<sup>1</sup> There is an increasing tendency in various countries to differentiate between social welfare and social work.

By *social welfare* one means all the efforts made of a material, medical, psychical and mental character aimed at helping men to satisfy their vital needs. This, amongst other things, is a question of workers' protection, housing construction, social insurance, medical and nursing care, as well as individual aid. *Social work*, on the other hand, means the activities carried out by social workers, both male and female. This is becoming more and more to be an "aid of relationship", signifying the relationship created in the field of relief between the social worker and his or her "client".

2. **Aims.**— Institutions and interventions all of which constitute social welfare, have as their purpose, as we have already said, to provide the most favourable conditions of existence for the largest possible number of people. To this end men should not only have the right to the material comforts of this world, but they should

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<sup>1</sup> The Swiss National Conference of Social Welfare, the organization which coordinates all Swiss social institutions set up, some time ago, a working party charged with the question of defining terminological terms.

also be able to choose them of their own free will, consciously and in accordance with a scale of values which takes spiritual values into account. One should also therefore develop a man's personality and increase his freedom. This implies an effort towards more social equality, that is to say, for the improvement of social conditions, a balance between rights and duties and, consequently, a restriction of privileges. All countries, with more or less successful results, have made this their aim.

The role of social work is to encourage the integration of individuals and groups in society, or better still, their interpenetration, and prevent their living on the fringes of the community. It should also foster the development of different communities and prepare new structures and forms for them, without too much dislocation.

**3. Problems to be resolved.**—The problems facing the social welfare services today are multiple and complex. In the first place, it is undergoing constant transformation and, according to present-day fashions, change is the rule.

This certainly applies above all to the *population*. In most countries this is constantly increasing on account of increases in the birth-rate which reach explosive proportions in the developing countries, a smaller number of deaths and due finally to immigration. A strong movement of migration inside many countries can also be observed. Displacement of the population takes place not only from the country to the towns and from mountain areas to the plains, but also from one urban centre to another. People move house more often than before. In the United States, for example, one speaks of the "nomadism" of the American community. Furthermore, movements there and back, either daily or at weekends, are more and more frequent over ever increasing distances. Categories of age groups are constantly being modified in view of the fact that the proportion of aged persons is regularly increasing.

Rapid and radical changes are also occurring in the *economic sector*. Whilst agriculture is mostly in regression, industry, on the other hand, is developing often at an ever progressively accelerated rate. Furthermore, the so-called "public services", such as commerce, the administration, banks, insurance companies and social

institutions assume more and more importance. The result is a concentration of the population in towns and urban areas. Advancing industrialization has led and continues to lead to a rise in the cost of living. The developing countries often experience, it is true, an increase in the number of town dwellers which remind one of the early days of capitalism in Europe and North America, with the result, according to indications from the United Nations General Secretariat, that the gap between them and the developed countries is widening rather than decreasing.

As regards the *structure of society* one can observe a growing levelling process. In spite of this phenomenon, present-day society is still formed of different levels, although these are no longer differentiated by social rank, but by professions and wealth. To the horizontal migratory movement has been added a vertical movement known as "mobility". Thus an ever increasing number of people very rapidly climb the social ladder only often to fall as speedily. There is also a weakening, in certain cases, even the dissolution, of so-called primary groups, the large family, local environment, the village. In their place secondary groups, communities of a political character, economic ties, cultural associations, etc., gain in importance. One speaks of a transition from the "affective" to the "reflective" society. All this also leads to a transformation of community standards and of the conception of social values. Another important indication of the changes undergone in the social structure is the present situation of women, so different from the past. For women are ever more enmeshed in professional work and are often more or less deprived of family life.

The problems raised in the field of physical *health* and above all of psychical and mental balance are multiple, giving cause for anxiety. With an increase of the number of aged people more cases of *chronic illnesses* can be observed. It has become difficult to face the increasing and changing demands of our period, the accelerated tempo of life and this shows itself in a greater number of cases of mental and nervous disorders, suicides and drug addiction. Sexual obsession, the increase in divorces and crime are all part of this pattern.

In the developing countries whole groups of the population are particularly threatened. These are the ones who, in a short space of

time, torn from the relatively sheltered tribal life which they had led since the stone age, in one step pass into a stage of development which would normally extend over several centuries to be precipitated into the ant heap of the large modern town.

**4. Methods.**— The problems and tasks which social welfare has to face today have become too complex for them to be resolved simply on an ad hoc basis. *Social planning* (la planification sociale, Sozialplanung) is therefore necessary. By this is meant, first of all, the drawing up of plans for all social welfare. This should also be done in conjunction with economic planning, failing which society cannot progress in a harmonious manner. Social planning is acquiring more and more importance. This is above all true for the developing countries in which it is systematic and is based to a large extent on scientific facts. In a highly developed country as Japan, for example, it is at a very advanced stage.

In Switzerland also it shows itself to be more and more necessary, since financial resources are lacking there, as are, above all, the necessary land and manpower to enable several important tasks to be carried out at the same time. Moreover, as in all planning, the question of priorities must be taken into account, which means that those responsible must decide which tasks require to be dealt with first. In countries in which the social structure and that of common law are complex, as in Switzerland, for example, such decisions are difficult to impose, because it is not merely objectivity which is the determining factor but also political reasons. In the developing countries opportunities for work, accommodation, hygienic facilities and a general aid service must first be created. Only then can the question of social insurance (social security) and of specialized social aid services (such as for the handicapped or potential alcoholics) be considered. It should be realized that social planning is especially necessary in new urban centres.

Alongside planning of social welfare, there is also that of the social work, that is to say of the social service institutions. Here again, a list of problems and requirements should be drawn up for a decision to be then made as to which are the priority tasks. The planning of social work has already been started in various countries. This is often in the hands of bodies co-ordinating the social

services which will be dealt with further on. In Switzerland, the National Conference of Social Welfare has formed a "planning" group. On the cantonal level we would mention the "Office social neuchâtelois" and that in two or three places a few social workers have also formed independent study groups. Planning of homes and reception centres is also most important and in this respect the Netherlands have realized model results.

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*Social research* is at the basis of all planning and also of measures which will subsequently be taken as regards social welfare. It has therefore become indispensable and its importance is recognized today throughout the world. In view of the difficulties of the tasks, how can one still be satisfied with practical experience gained from day to day? Thus, to quote only one example, a "Swiss Society for Practical Social Research" was constituted some time ago, thanks to private initiative, and which includes representatives of the economic sector and public administration. Use is made of precise methods in which the choice of persons to interrogate plays an important rôle.

In the sphere of social work in its restricted sense mention is made of *social work research*. This could have as its purpose, for example, the urgency of social needs and the effectiveness of methods employed in order to satisfy them. This also consists in making inquiries about the needs and availability of future social workers. In Switzerland, social institutions of some importance make occasional inquiries which can, to a certain extent, come in the framework of research in the social services. We would finally mention the different schools and university institutes of social studies whose students prepare work on these subjects with a view to their obtaining diplomas.

In social welfare and especially in social work it is more and more important to establish *public relations* in a continuous manner and to make its activity widely known, which is still not the case. One should, to use a modern expression, endeavour to give social work an up-to-date "image". It should be explained, amongst other things, that social work does not consist in the first place of pro-

viding material aid, but that its object is rather to establish "relations of aid" between the social worker and his client; that it is a question, according to circumstances, of preventing people from breaking all ties with their own community or of intervening so that they may be reintegrated therein, that it is not humiliating to have recourse to the social services and that foster-parents and homes are indispensable factors in the action of the social work. The general public must also be told that donations and personal co-operation are required of it.

There is an ever-increasing need for social workers and publicity on behalf of this profession is part of the purpose of this article. Everyone now recognizes the importance of publicity, the explanation of social welfare, and this also applies to Switzerland. Several years ago the "National Conference of Social Welfare" set up a commission of information and publicity which was later to become a working party entitled "Public Relations". This group attempts furthermore to train directors and collaborators in social work and in the administrative services, whom they can in their turn help in matters of publicity.

In addition to the methods we have just mentioned and which apply to all social welfare, there are others which more especially concern the relations between the social worker and his or her client and which consequently are employed in social work. These are chiefly *casework*, *group-work* and *community organization*. Originating from the English-speaking countries, the United States in particular, they are above all based on applied psychology, social psychology and sociology. They aim at creating a climate of broad confidence and even, as far as possible, at collaboration between workers and those being aided. Casework operates on behalf of individuals and families, group-work in favour of certain categories of persons (adolescents in peril, divorced women, the aged), whilst community organization, which also includes elements of social planning, aims at threatened communities (villages, for example) or those which have need of measures to be taken for their development (industrial districts, new urban centres, housing estates, satellite towns). Social work dealing with individual cases or groups on the one hand and the community organization on the other hand intervenes at the same time, since the present social

problems have to be broached by taking into account the individual one wishes to aid as well as his surroundings.

Since the end of the Second World War and in all countries these methods have been considerably developed, thanks to the efforts of the United Nations (exchanges of social assistants, study-groups) and of the International Conference of Social Work. In the emerging countries and in regions tending to "urbanization", the intervention of the community organization which has been known for a long time in Great Britain (settlements) and the United States, is especially desirable. It has also been introduced in the Netherlands in the polder districts (land reclaimed from the sea).

In Switzerland, one finds above all social work for individual cases. This is essentially the province of the younger generation leaving schools of social studies which tends towards the introduction of new methods of social work.

Interest has also begun to be taken in this question, however, by public assistance, the official bodies of individual aid. The group-work method is less wide-spread, although it is gradually developing and a training centre for the application of this method has recently been set up near Thun. As regards the community organization, this is only in its initial stages, no doubt for the reason that until quite a short time ago there was no community which had any particular need of it. This situation has however completely changed as a result of the rapid growth of industry and urbanization.

**5. Social welfare: those in charge, its structure.**— Those responsible for social welfare are everywhere either *public* institutions, as in Switzerland for example the communes, cantons or the Confederation itself, or else *private* bodies of public interest such as societies, foundations or co-operative institutions. The churches, according to their legal position should be included in one or other of these categories. At the outset there were first of all private works. In Great Britain, North America, Switzerland and also in the German Federal Republic, France and the Netherlands, they are considerably widespread and possess the experience of many decades. They have frequently taken part, as they do at present, in the thorough study of social problems, thus providing the State with practical bases for social legislation and public social institu-

tions. In the emerging countries also private social work is constantly being undertaken because its pioneering role finds an excellent environment in which to operate, since the State is unable always, with its own institutions, to keep abreast of the rapid pace of development. The previous antagonism between the public and the private sector, whose functions are moreover complementary, has diminished and has been succeeded in many places by most satisfactory co-operation.

The more people there are responsible for social welfare, the more is *co-ordination* necessary, if one wants to avoid both duplication and gaps. This applies first of all on the local level. This task is carried out in Switzerland amongst others by the "Commission de coordination des institutions sociales genevoises" and the "Zentral-kommission für soziale Fürsorge" in Bâle. In districts of lesser importance, communal social services have been created. These co-ordinate not only the individual social services, but also deal, as far as time permits, with the community organization and planning. It is in this direction in which the "Councils of Social Service" operate in Great Britain and Australia (in the United States the "Community Welfare Councils"). In Switzerland the co-ordinating bodies on a cantonal level are the Social Welfare Office of Neuchâtel and the Cantonal Social Aid Office of the Grisons. Furthermore, in several countries there have for some time been national co-ordination commissions which, to a greater or lesser degree, have also been dealing with social welfare policy on the national level. Amongst these mention should be made of the "Deutscher Verein für öffentliche und private Fürsorge", the "British National Council for Social Service", the "Nationale Raad voor Maatschappelijk Werk" (Netherlands), the "Nationaler Bund für Soziale Wohlfahrt" (Finland) and the "Conférence nationale suisse de travail social".

Since the end of the Second World War, national committees of the International Conference of Social Work which exist in some forty countries, have also formed a sort of national co-ordinating body, insofar as they do not restrict themselves to carrying out tasks allotted to them by the International Conference. Generally speaking, co-ordination is assured by the latter and the corresponding institutions of the United Nations.

**6. Finance.**—Public social welfare is financed by taxes and other State receipts, whilst private social welfare is supported by subscriptions, endowments, donations and collections. However, in all countries private works are also being more and more subsidised by the State and local councils. The collections system varies greatly according to place and the methods employed are constantly being improved. In a small number of countries, as in North America and Japan, these collections are organized in common by the works concerned (Community chests) and the product is divided according to a fixed scale, although in Switzerland such a procedure would be difficult to apply. In order to standardise the position, special offices have been created in several European countries, partly supported by economic circles and included in the “International Commission for the control of donations”. In Switzerland an information office for welfare work (Zewo) deals with these tasks in Zurich.

**7. Personnel and training.**—Social welfare personnel and especially that of social work consists partly of social workers, that is to say of professionals and partly of volunteers. The latter have existed ever since man has carried out works of aid whilst *social workers* have been known only for a few decades. That is the reason that their profession does not yet enjoy the necessary esteem with the general public and they have to struggle to have it recognized. In order to increase its reputation and improve working conditions, the “Institute of the Industrial Organization of the Federal Polytechnic” in Switzerland has recently made a survey of employment. In addition, the professional associations of social workers are attempting to draw up a set of professional ethical principles such as have existed for centuries for doctors.

As regards the various categories of social workers, a distinction should be made between the social secretary dealing with administration and planning, also with the community organization when required, and the male or female social worker in charge of individual cases and of group-work. Social work in reception centres is in the hands of educators and directors (internal service), of both sexes.

In most countries and for each of these functions there is a shortage of personnel. In the Netherlands, the Ministry of Social

## SOCIAL WELFARE

Security has opened a wide inquiry on the subject. The "Public Relations" working group of the Swiss National Conference proposes to do likewise for the canton of Zurich. The shortage of social workers makes itself felt in a particularly acute manner in the reception institutions.

It should be added that the training of social workers is carried out by special schools, schools of social work, where instruction is given either during the day or in the evening. Efforts are made in all cases not only to prolong the period of training but also to raise its standards and increase knowledge.

Although a tendency to "professionalism" is also manifest in the social sector, *volunteers* retain all their importance. Their activity is however orientated in a different direction. If formerly it happened that a volunteer concerned himself occasionally with individual cases, he has today to be entrusted to a male or female social worker, since the problems raised and, consequently, the appropriate measures to be taken in the treatment of each case have become more complex. Volunteers may find themselves entrusted with partial tasks of well defined social aid which they carry out under the direction and supervision of the social worker as, for example, the effecting of simple controls and preventive surveillance, co-operating in the directing of youth groups, taking charge of the aged, foreign workers' families, etc... Today, as in the past, social administration requires the co-operation of volunteers for fund collecting and in emergency relief actions. More and more often social works and the administrative services which occupy them initiate them in their tasks. Social welfare cannot and must not discard volunteers if one wishes to maintain the sense of responsibility for others in a state of alertness. One cannot but take pleasure, indeed, to observe that voluntary aid is everywhere in demand and that it enjoys the same esteem as in the past.

### II. VARIOUS FIELDS OF SOCIAL WELFARE

1. **Aid to youth and to the family.**— It is not possible, and this one realizes more and more, to assist children and adolescents without remaining in constant touch with their families. For this reason parents are encouraged to prepare themselves for their

responsibilities (parents' schools), one tries to give them advice on matters of education and that attempts are made also to exercise some influence over the family circle when youth is being threatened. This intervention is all the more necessary when it appears that there is an increasing number of maladjusted children. Similarly, "parents advice services" have also been created, dealing not only with material matters, but also with problems raised by life in common inside the family itself.

There is thus need to deal with the "mother-child" group, in the first place divorced or separated women and the children entrusted to their care. In many countries the forming of bands of hooligans and juvenile delinquency are a serious problem. The origins of this must no doubt be attributed to improvements in living conditions and the development of the Welfare State, which shelters the young from struggling for existence and consequently deprives them of engaging in positive activities. These phenomena, however, can also be found in the urban centres of the emerging countries. On the national level, aid to the young is encouraged by certain States in a systematic manner. Mention can be made, by way of example, of a law of the German Federal Republic ("Jugendwohlfahrtsgesetz") and of a plan ("Bundesjugendplan" to which "Landesjugendpläne" have recently been added) from which it emanates.

**2. Aid to the aged.**— On account of an increased number of aged persons, the problem of old age today imposes itself everywhere, with the rare exception of regions where large families exist of a patriarchal character which themselves look after their members in advanced age. From the economic point of view and where compulsory official old age insurance exists, the aged are today protected to a considerable extent. On the other hand the possibilities of placing them, whether in lodgings or in old people's homes, are still partly lacking. Frequently, especially in towns, this category of persons is in need of protection or even finds himself in danger. More must therefore be done to give them advice, take care of them and organize their leisure. Those benefitting from these services would find advantage in organizing these themselves, as is the case for the old people's clubs in Great Britain and the "communities"

in Federal Germany. Furthermore, only to take one example, the house-help service which aids the aged living in their own homes, by devoting a certain number of hours to them, a system first introduced in Scandinavia, has been of great benefit.

It has become a matter of urgency to increase the number of personnel entrusted with caring for the bed-ridden in hospital or in their homes. Training is therefore now given to male nurses and nurses specialized in giving care to the aged, aid programmes for the old are being carried out and commissions set up to pursue work in the field of geriatry.

**3. Material Aid.**— As a result of the dangers to which man is exposed in the modern world, psychical and mental distress certainly take an ever increasing part and of the first order. But material aid remains no less important amongst which are measures aiming at maintaining purchasing power. The fight against the cost of living is often an important part of social policy.

In a number of countries can be found a more or less complete system of social insurance, also known as “ Social security ”. In this connection, it should be recalled that in 1930 the United States of America, under pressure from the economic crisis, introduced the “ New Deal ” and took a considerable step by going from Manchester liberalism to the Welfare State. Similarly, the English system, based on the Beveridge plan, is unified and centralised, whilst in Switzerland the various branches of social insurance are independent although they are fairly well co-ordinated.

In spite of progress achieved in the question of “ Social security ”, general social assistance retains its importance. For there are always men and women whom neither social insurance nor special assistance can preserve from distress. This is the case for social misfits, divorced women bearing the charge of children alone, unmarried mothers, numerous families with a mental defective on their hands, etc. These people who have need of help are taken charge of by official individual assistance. This, still sometimes called “ Public Assistance ”, finds itself having to follow up difficult cases. In Great Britain it is regulated by national laws as it is in Federal Germany (Bundes-Sozialhilfegesetz), whilst in Switzerland it is still in the hands of the cantons. However, these (with one exception) have

now acceded to an agreement which regulates assistance at the dwelling place.

As a result of the rapid increase in the population, and especially because of migration to the towns, the problem of accommodation is becoming ever more acute in nearly every country. Nowhere can building really meet growing demands for accommodation. Attempts are being made, however, to attenuate this situation with the allocation of housing allowances, as is now the case in several countries.

**4. Medical aid.**—In spite of progress, a considerable number of illnesses remain virulent throughout the world. In succession to the epidemics which have been eradicated to a large extent, cancer, rheumatism, chronic physical and mental sickness, in particular have made their appearance. In many countries alcoholism is in progression and is prevalent amongst women and youths. Water and air pollution are other sources of danger. Finally, one problem poses itself above all in the emerging countries, that of birth control. In order to find a solution, practical methods are not sufficient, a sense of sexual responsibility must first be awakened. This task now devolves on schools and on the family.

Health education shows itself to be necessary when it is not introduced everywhere in a systematic manner. On the other hand, psychical and mental troubles being frequent today, mental health assumes increasing importance as do those activities whose purpose it is to reintegrate into the community people who suffer from or who are predisposed to nevroses. The "open" treatment of this category of the sick (placing in reception centres, by day or by night, and in "supervised workshops") has made great progress during the course of the past few years. We would mention as an interesting example of medical aid, the British National Health Service with its widely extended free medical charges. In the emerging countries, it is the National Red Cross Society which often assumes important tasks in this sphere.

**5. Moral and spiritual aid.**— It is difficult to master all the problems which this period raises for each of us, and all are not able to do so. There is therefore need for advice of every description. The

British "Citizens' Advice Bureaux", some of which have been organized in the framework of the communal organization, are of interest in this connection. Mention should also be made of "The outstretched hand" in Germany and Switzerland which is becoming increasingly effective. This service, in reply to a telephone call, comes to the aid of all in despair, whoever they may be. Similarly, the welfare service helps the homeless and participates by its moral and social action the fight against prostitution.

**6. Aid in special situations.**— The problem of immigration is the concern of a number of countries, such as notably Israel, Canada, the United States, Australia and also Great Britain. The integration of immigrants into the community indeed demands, in addition to official measures which are evidently effective, an understanding attitude on the part of the population. Immigration sometimes creates minority problems and to those immigrants who have definitely been established in the country are added others who are staying there on a more or less temporary basis, such as foreign workers. Such a situation also demands important measures to be taken which, without having at all times and in all cases to aim at assimilation, have as their object to facilitate a partial social adaptation. The case of families who have remained in the country also have to be considered and who often have to be taken charge of by the social services. Furthermore, the reintegration of emigrants returning to their own country is not often effected without difficulties.

In certain areas there arises the problem of mountain dwellers. These will continue to migrate as long as the standard of living and conditions of existence in mountain districts remain lower than those for the inhabitants of the plains. The tasks to be accomplished is therefore a vast one, of long duration. Financial measures are not sufficient to overcome the distress of these populations. There must also be action by the community social services, which also intervenes in order to face problems arising from increasing urbanization.

One of the most recent tasks of social welfare has been to bring aid to the emerging countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The work which missions have been undertaking in those areas for many years, is carried to completion and multiplied, thanks to bi-

lateral aid between the "donor" States and the "beneficiary" countries, as well as through the United Nations specialized agencies throughout the world.

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In conclusion, we can see that in spite of considerable and continuous progress, the field of activity for social welfare is by no means contracting. Needs which can be satisfied are replaced by others created precisely, at least in part, by civilization itself. It is sufficient to mention in this connection mankind's growing isolation and the resultant insecurity especially in the towns. Therefore, it is essential that all who deal with social welfare, above all social workers, should continuously follow developments in process, discover new tasks and be prepared to undertake them.

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