SETTING UP A PROGRAM OF WORK RELIEF

1. Concepts Underlying Work Relief

THREE major premises have been discernible in the thinking of the various groups which have sponsored work-relief projects during the past winter. Briefly stated, they are:

a. Direct relief on a large scale to people who are able to work is demoralizing and not in keeping with the spirit of America. People who are not willing to work in return for relief should be forced to do so.

The extremists in this minority group make frequent reference to the supposed pauperizing influence of the English "dole," and imply in their discussions a return to the precept of our forefathers that "those who will not work shall not eat." It is evident that this disciplinary attitude is based on a profound distrust of the independence and eagerness for work of the majority of the unemployed. We still hear occasional statements from a few of the proponents of this point of view that "anyone who really wants work can find it," but the facts so patently controvert this statement that it is not nearly so frequently heard as in former depressions.

Projects sponsored with these underlying conceptions have taken on the aspect of work tests, the principal emphasis being to force the unemployed to demonstrate their willingness to take any work offered. Along with this has gone a disbelief in their ability or willingness to spend thriftily the wages earned, and a tendency to supplant cash wages with food orders and other necessities "in kind."

b. The second major premise has been less actuated by the emotions of fear and distrust. It is the expression of the views of the business man—that large sums are going necessarily to be expended to prevent suffering, and that it is fair for the community to secure as large a return as possible by way of permanent improvements.

This concept has produced some of the very large projects, with competent planning from the engineering standpoint. The effort has been to compete as nearly as possible in accomplishment with commercial construction work. The largest numbers of men that can conveniently be handled and supervised have been put as promptly as possible to work. Wage scales have been kept low, and the selection of workers according to skilled social work standards has not been a prominent feature. The advantage has been that these projects closely duplicated the conditions of real public work, in the efficiency with which they were directed. The treatment of the men as gangs of laborers has been similar to that followed in construction jobs let by contract.

The returns from work relief on a cost-accounting basis are bound to be

disappointing to those who look at it from this angle. The reasons for this are amply set forth in Part III.[1]

c. The holders of the third concept do not believe that the unemployed have to be driven unwillingly to work. When supervision has been wise and kindly, and the purposes explained to the workers in such a way as to make it seem a privilege to participate, the savage theory of "work or starve" has been completely discredited. Men have stormed the bureaus for a chance to work for a few hours a week; they have labored willingly, at unaccustomed tasks, and cooperated in the project as far as they were encouraged or permitted to do so. When allowance is made for poor physical condition and unhandiness at unfamiliar tasks, they have displayed as much industry and zeal as any group of work-people.

Neither do the holders of the third point of view feel that efficiency and financial returns should be the major emphasis, though they believe that it is desirable to have good business management and planning in the picture. Efficiency is certainly one of the goals in a work-relief program, though it should be by no means the only one.

They realize that a relief fund can be made to go farther when spent as direct relief on a basis of individual needs, than when it is spent on a flat wage basis, and that consequently a work-relief program, when properly administered, is an expensive form of relief. But they feel that there is a differential involved, which must be given primary weight and importance, if the expenditure of funds for work relief is to be fully justified. This factor is the preservation of morale.

This third concept places the primary purpose of relief in this form squarely in the field of spiritual values, and points toward a program administered so as to exclude such unfortunates as have no longer any morale to be preserved. We have recommended elsewhere that a work-relief project should be made a volunteer enterprise.

"The aristocracy of the unemployed will choose it, if they are given the choice. . . . They will not then have to be herded in with those who do not want to work and who will pull down the morale of the group by their efforts to avoid making a fair return. In the end, the higher prestige secured by those who elect to work, will create a more effective social pressure on the rest, than all efforts at coercion. . . .

"The purpose of such a scheme as that outlined above should be not to establish a forced labor colony, not to return *quid pro quo* to the community for the relief offered; but rather to do a piece of preventive work with people exposed to the degeneration incident to loss of work, of status, of morale.

"That it is a relief program, is shown by the fact that the 'basis of need' is insisted upon. It cannot be made a money-making scheme for the community; even with the best will in the world, inexperienced men working

[1] Reference is to the forthcoming volume.

part time cannot be as efficient as 'old hands.' It will be expensive; and the returns will be imponderable—to be stated only in terms of salvation.

"When such as these whom we have been considering regain their place in industry—become once more the solid citizens whose contributions we ask at Community Fund time—will they look back on these bitter years with a feeling of shame and defeat, or will they feel a rising sense of co-partnership in the community that extended when they needed it a helping hand which they could grasp without loss of self-respect?"[1]

The corollary is, of course, that direct relief should be relied on for those not participating in the work-relief program, and that the major portion of funds available should probably be turned into that more economical form of assistance.

2. Auspices and Finances

Good projects have been developed under both public and private auspices, and there is no reason to recommend one of these sources as opposed to the other. When the community's limit of taxation or borrowing has been reached, or when, as in the case of Pennsylvania, there are constitutional limitations in the way, reliance must perforce be placed on private funds. It has so far been comparatively easy to raise contributed funds for work relief; there is the suggestion of an economy program attached to it which appeals to donors. The danger is that such emergency campaigns will overshadow the continued need for funds to support the regular program of relief and service in the community.

Funds privately raised are usually expended on a more flexible basis, for the routine of city expenditures does not have to be followed. It is possible also to transfer entirely the cost of materials to employers.

Expenditures from public funds, on the other hand, can usually be more adequately planned, since the sum which will be available can be estimated in advance. City departments, which have supplied most of the work opportunities, can be woven into a unified scheme.

In the latter case, we would, however, make several strong recommendations.

a. The administration of the fund should be through an organization or department separately created; and city officials assigned to direct the enterprise should be freed as far as possible from other duties. Confusion between the direct-relief function of the Department of Public Welfare and the work-relief unit should be avoided by placing them in separate quarters and if possible at separate addresses.

b. The city should not rely for its supply of workers entirely on its Department of Public Welfare. A definite proportion of applicants should be received by the Work-Relief Bureau from this agency, and from the private relief agencies as well; but residents of the city, who have not yet

[1] "This Winter's Work Relief," by Joanna C. Colcord. In The Survey, September 15, 1931, pp. 541–542.

been obliged to receive home relief have a right to apply for work relief, and a definite proportion of work opportunities should be reserved for them. In order to determine that they actually need this assistance, one or more trained social workers should be employed to interview and to inquire into the circumstances of individual applicants.

c. Any suspicion should be avoided that the recommendations of persons seeking election are considered in the assignment of work. Aldermen and councilmen are frequently well informed about the needs of residents of their districts; but the connection between favors extended and votes obtained is too serious to be risked.

d. Legal requirements that city employes must be citizens of the United States should be waived for those employed on work relief. Many bona fide residents, eligible for other forms of relief, do not have citizenship papers. There is no reason to deny them this particular form of relief.

e. A city government undertaking work relief will do well to safeguard itself against criticism and add to the prestige of the project by associating with it an advisory committee composed of disinterested persons such as social workers, members of the citizens' committee on unemployment, if one exists, and labor leaders. The policies and procedures should be developed in consultation with this body.

3. Advance Planning

Before the doors are opened procedures should be carefully thought out and determined as to registration, selection and assignment of workers, integration of the project with the other resources for relief in the community, kind of jobs available, and general office routine and procedure. The staff should be in readiness, so far as skilled personnel is concerned, though lesser clerical jobs can and should be filled from among the applicants. Foremen who will have direct supervision of workers should have the plans, purposes, and methods explained to them. Forms should be in readiness, and in a large city, letters of instruction should be sent out in advance, both to the prospective employers and to those who will have the privilege of sending candidates for employment. In a small city, a greater proportion of the preliminary work can be accomplished by informal conference.

The kind of advance publicity that is given out is very important. Care should be taken not to overstate the possibilities, or convey the idea that jobs may be had for the asking. It should be emphasized that those who have other resources should not apply for work relief. It is desirable to have the office open for a week or two, and get the machinery in running order, while receiving applicants referred by the social agencies, before giving out any public notice of its location or its readiness to receive independent applications.

4. Location and Equipment of Office

The office should not be contiguous to the offices of any agency, public or private, which dispenses direct relief. It becomes too easy for clients who are refused work to go next door and prefer a request for other assistance. Every effort should be made to give the quarters the aspect of an employment agency rather than a relief bureau.

There should be private rooms or screened-off cubicles for interviewing, and ample waiting space, with benches or chairs for the applicants. In practically every case, it has been possible to secure quarters rent-free, and to fit up the office with suitable furniture and typewriters on a loan basis.

Telephone facilities can usually be secured at a reduced rate from the telephone company. In large cities a direct-wire connection with agencies frequently called, such as the Confidential Exchange, or the switchboard at the City Hall, has proved to be a great time-saver.

5. Personnel

Three varieties of skilled professional service are needed in a properly set up work-relief project.

a. For Direct Employment Service. There is an endless amount of detail connected with the assignment of men to suitable jobs. Arrangements with employers will have to be made in advance, and interlocking time schedules prepared so that delay is avoided. Someone will have to see that materials, tools, and trucks are on hand when and where needed. A system of checking the presence of the men on the job will need to be set up, and reports on their efficiency secured. Simple and effective records of the assignments made will have to be devised. Complaints and misunderstanding between employers and employes will need to be adjusted. In small cities, the part time of a good personnel man may be sufficient to direct this end of the work; in large cities, it may demand the full time of one or more than one. Public utilities and mercantile and manufacturing concerns have been very generous in lending the services of skilled employment managers to these projects.

b. For Social Service. Work relief is still relief; and it requires no laboring of the point to state that all relief-giving involves the determination of need. This is within the peculiar province of social work; and the ordinary procedure of an employment agency does not suffice. There is ample evidence in the pages which follow,[1] that when skilled and experienced social workers have been busy at the source of applications, the selection of workers has gained greatly in effectiveness. Persons unskilled in social work may fill in a schedule of information, writing down the answers routinely as received; but the experienced social worker knows what supplementary questions to ask and how to ask them. Not only do

[1] Reference is to the forthcoming volume.

applicants receive more considerate treatment from social workers than from inexperienced interviewers, but the process is considerably shortened by the application of previously acquired skills.

In the work-relief program, the social worker serves as the natural channel of communication to and from the social agencies interested in some of the workers. By furnishing them prompt reports on assignments, she helps them to avoid inadvertent duplication of work-relief wages by home relief. Where such supplementation is necessary, she secures it from the appropriate agency. She refers other serious problems, such as need for medical care, personality difficulties, or domestic discord, to the agency that will undertake to help. In the frequent cases where, after having been assigned, the worker fails to show up on the job, she investigates to learn whether the reason was a legitimate one. Complaints that a worker's wage is not going to the support of his family are referred to her for adjustment. She may attempt to make some further plans for those laid off on account of unsatisfactory conduct. The testimony of public officials and others who have received this sort of assistance from social workers on a work-relief program is that they "would never try to get along without them."

It is obvious that competent social workers cannot be drawn from the ranks of the unemployed. They are one of the few over-employed groups in the community in times of depression. They will have to be engaged and paid by the agency administering work relief (after consultation with the social work leaders in the community who are able to pass upon their competency); or borrowed from the social agencies, the latter continuing to pay all or part of their salaries; or secured on a volunteer basis. Not all competent social workers are paid professionals; a person might be found in a small community who had devoted a large share of his or her time to direct work with individuals in distress under the direction of a social agency of good standards, and who was willing to transfer time and skill to developing the social work end of a work-relief project without compensation. The ordinary amateur doer of good deeds has not had the experience, however, to meet the requirements of the task.

c. For Accounting and Clerical Service. In a large project, the mechanics of making up the payroll and paying off require the services of a trained and responsible head. This is a vulnerable part of the organization, any charge of mismanagement of funds being serious to the continuance of a work-relief program. On city-managed projects, the ordinary machinery of the municipality can be extended to cover this project also. On those privately managed, it will be necessary to hire or borrow a competent business-trained executive.

All necessary clerical help—stenographers, filing clerks, work inspectors, timekeepers, and so on—can be found among the ranks of the "white-collar" unemployed who loom so conspicuously in the present depression.

Their salaries should form part of the wage-bill chargeable to the work-relief fund; but in most cities it has been found necessary to employ them on a full-time basis, the operation of two shifts being inexpedient in the management of the work bureau itself.

6. Office System

In Appendix II[1] will be found reproductions of selected forms which have been used in the cities studied. The nature and size of the projects will determine whether a simple system will suffice. The minimum requirements would be (a) an application-registration form, preferably in duplicate, which should call for occupational history, to assist in the *determination of fitness*, and social and financial data to assist in the *determination of need;* (b) a requisition for workers, to be sent in by employing agencies; (c) an assignment card, to be given to the worker and by him presented to the foreman or supervisor; and (d) a payroll sheet, with spaces for proper checking and signatures.

It is important that the division of office duties be clearly understood by those participating; and that filing equipment be adequate, so as to avoid errors. Too many people clustering about the files impedes progress. The records of completion of employment assignments should be entered on the back of each registration card at night, or at some time when the cards are not otherwise in use.

7. Registration of Applicants

Attempts to register all the unemployed should not be combined with a work-relief program. Applications for jobs will need no stimulation of this sort, once the news gets about. On the other hand, not all the unemployed are resourceless and in need; and a general registration of these would only clog the machinery.

There are two main sources of labor supply:

a. Reference from Private Social Agencies and Public Relief Departments. These agencies should be able to give verified facts about their candidates. Ordinarily, no further time should be given to investigation in these cases, though a supplementary interview with the client is desirable.

b. Independent Applications. A careful interview, a home visit, and some checking of resources should be made if possible in these cases.

A third method, pursued in some cities, we can unreservedly condemn. This is the acceptance without investigation of persons who come with letters of recommendation from individuals. We have already commented on the improper use of recommendations for political advantage; but it has been found in practice that the ordinary citizen of high standing in the community is a very free giver of letters of recommendation; and usually has no very precise knowledge about the person he sends. Any semblance

[1] In the forthcoming volume.

of "pull" creates distrust in the community and among the applicants themselves; and such practices should be resolutely avoided by those in charge of work-relief projects.

The policy as to what circumstances shall include or exclude the applicant from participation should be as far as possible determined in advance. No rules can be laid down for every community, but these are some of the governing principles which have been developed.

(1) There should be no discrimination on grounds of race, religion, or nationality. Non-citizens who are residents should participate.

(2) It seems fair to exclude non-residents, particularly homeless men, from participation. The community should develop other means for handling these problems.

(3) Preference should be given to heads of families with dependents. Women and single men who are responsible for the support of others should receive the same consideration as male heads of families.

(4) Resources should be interpreted as available resources. The homeowner who can neither sell, rent, nor borrow upon his property, and who is behind on tax and interest payments, is for all practical purposes resourceless.

(5) Total family income should be taken into consideration, and a maximum decided upon which will exclude an applicant from participation. In some cities where a comparatively high wage-rate was paid, this was placed at the amount the person could earn on work relief.

(6) Not more than one person from the same household should ordinarily be employed on work relief.

It will be possible on the first interview to sift out a number of applications which should be eliminated as not meeting the conditions laid down for participation. The reasons for elimination should be carefully explained to each applicant, and if necessary, he should be referred to some other source of assistance for consideration of his problems.

Those who pass the first test will then remain for further consideration. In Louisville, where social workers were employed in the Work-Relief Bureau, a scrutiny of the 13,000 applications received resulted in the non-inclusion of over one-half without the necessity of further investigation. Home visits disclosed information that reduced the remainder by nearly one-half again; so that less than one-third of the original number of applicants remained to be placed, and jobs were found for all these.

8. Determination of Need

As has been stated, the determination of need in each instance requires the participation of social workers. We strongly advise, however, against the method, employed in some communities, of "farming out" the task of investigation to the social agencies. The agencies are engrossed with their own task of administering direct relief in the home. Their burden is appallingly

increased by the depression, and their resources increased in no such measure. If the position is taken, as in Chicago, that only persons proposed by the social agencies will be placed at work, a strong incentive is created to apply to these agencies, ostensibly for direct financial assistance but actually in order to secure work-relief jobs. It is far better to maintain a direct channel for applications, instead of forcing all applicants for work relief to apply first to a relief agency. From the point of view of the agencies themselves, it is more advantageous to release social workers to the Work-Relief Bureau or to lend them for a period, replacing them with less highly trained personnel, than it is to permit themselves to be used either as the sole investigating arm of the work-relief enterprise, or as the only avenue through which jobs may be secured.

Social workers employed by a work-relief bureau will make it their first procedure to "clear" a new application with the Confidential Exchange.[1] This is a central card-file, maintained for the use of the social agencies which deal with families and individuals, each card relating to a particular family. The only information which these cards contain, in addition to names, addresses and other identifying information, is a list of the agencies which have registered their interest in the family. Agencies that inquire are given the names of agencies previously interested; and a report of the registration of the newcomer is made to such of the latter as desire this service. This simple mechanism enables the group of agencies interested to get in touch with one another, supplement one another's information, and make sure that the plans they are putting into effect are not in conflict. It is important, therefore, that the Work-Relief Bureau not only inquire at the Exchange, but register its connection with its applicants, in order that it may be "geared in" with the group of social agencies which may have previous or subsequent dealings with the same people.

By means of sources of information learned in this way, and through the interview with the applicant, the process of investigation can be foreshortened as an emergency measure, the social worker going unerringly to the source best calculated to furnish the needed information. Home visits are necessary unless recent information can be secured from a social agency as to size of family, resources, and occupational history.

Let us digress at this point to discuss why the applicant's own statements are not always sufficient. This is not due to deliberate fraud; there are instances in which a panic-stricken individual thinks his situation worse than it really is. Enterprising and energetic citizens who have resources to tide them over may nevertheless feel that they have a right to participate in the work project if they are willing to give full value for the wage received. One city which relied on the very nature of the hard outdoor labor provided,

[1] Variously called Social Service Exchange, Central Index, or similar terms. Complete directions for establishing one of these bureaus may be obtained from the Association of Community Chests and Councils, Graybar Building, New York City.

When the applicant possesses some special skill, a canvass should be made in order to find some job for which his qualifications will be most useful. It is wasteful to employ the time of a draftsman in picking up litter in the streets, when the city engineer could use him on interesting and important work. This, however, leads directly into our next topic.

10. Choice of Work Projects

The most important principle to be kept in mind here is a negative one. No work-relief project must be allowed to reduce by a dollar the money available for real wages. For this reason no workers paid from work-relief funds must be supplied to any concern operating for profit, even though the employer claims to be "making" work he would not otherwise have done. If workers are supplied to do odd jobs for householders, it must be at the householders' expense.

It is, moreover, necessary to scrutinize carefully the nature of the jobs offered by non-profit-making agencies to be sure that these are things the department or agency has no funds in its budget to pay for through commercial channels. The anticipation of work that would have to be done and paid for as a matter of necessity in a few months or a year is of problematical value. When that time rolls around, some independent worker will be deprived of a real job, and unemployment is therefore only postponed. Agencies and departments anxious to reduce immediate pressure upon their budgets do not always see clearly on this point. Those in charge of a work-relief project have the duty laid upon them to see clearly and to speak clearly, demanding the most explicit assurances that all jobs provided be those that the agency has no means to pay for and no intention of undertaking with its own funds in the immediate future. This applies equally to city departments and to private agencies. Any complaint that a person has been "laid off" from a regular job to make room for another on work relief should be given serious and prompt attention, and the workers withdrawn if the complaint is found to be justified.

A diversified program of work is more valuable than concentration on one type of labor, even though it is more difficult to deal with many employers than with one or two. The "concentrated" type of program usually means that the source of all the jobs is in one or two city departments, such as parks or streets. This means that only men capable of hard outdoor labor can be used; and the Work-Relief Bureau will have nothing to furnish to women and delicate men, who are nevertheless responsible for the support of families.

We recommend careful perusal of the account of the Philadelphia experiment,[1] where the program was so diversified that not only the "white collar" group of office workers, but many professional people, were employed at tasks that would utilize their best powers.

[1] In the forthcoming volume.

The list of projects carried out in Philadelphia might be indefinitely extended. Few public departments are able to carry out all the studies they would like to make, and with the example of Philadelphia's Traffic Department to quicken their imagination, might develop similar pieces of work.

In one county, the registrar of deeds was years behind with his filing, and thankfully accepted office men on work relief to help him. In other places, the museums have used college women with laboratory experience to prepare, mount, and catalogue specimens. Libraries have used people to repair damaged books, catalogue, sort out duplicate pamphlet material, and have even provided less skilled work for delicate women in the form of removing the dust of ages from infrequently consulted books in the stacks.

It is quite possible that the Department of Health could use laboratory assistants, if qualified chemists or biologists turn up. The Tenement House Department might use additional inspectors. The Department of Street Cleaning might be willing to experiment with the new unit cost-accounting system which is being tried out in some cities this winter, if qualified personnel could be furnished them free. The Municipal Research Bureau might be another source of jobs or suggestion. Additional nurses and orderlies might be supplied to the hospitals. Musicians and entertainers could be employed in recreation programs.

At the same time, projects of public works, where large gangs of men can be used, with supervision from regular city employes, will doubtless continue to be the main dependence of a work-relief program. Part III[1] instances many types of work of this sort, which were undertaken in the several cities. The diversion from the relief fund of large amounts for the purchase of materials ought to be avoided, however. They are a legitimate charge upon the budgets of the city departments which profit by the work.

Wherever possible, emphasis should be placed on new construction. Clean-up and repair work, while necessary and useful, resemble too closely the old-fashioned "made work" to be good morale builders. Rochester, which undertook a large amount of permanent construction, reports that the workers, particularly the skilled men, took a great pride and interest in the projects, and in some instances came to work without pay on an off-day, in order not to hold up a piece of work on which the jobs of other men depended. The experience of Kansas City, Kansas, shows that the interest and participation of the men employed can be secured even on the cruder operations of logging and wood-sawing.

11. Work Assignments

Certain cautions are suggested by the experience of several cities in the mechanics of assigning people to work.

When a group of assignment cards have been made out, it is natural to mail

[1] Reference is to the forthcoming volume.

them to the men selected. In practice, however, this has not always worked well, especially in cities with a large foreign population. The names men give on application are frequently not the names by which they are known in their neighborhoods, and the postman may be unable to locate them. Tenement mail boxes are not well protected, and work orders have been known to be abstracted from them. There is even some trading about of work permits—John Jones has got a real job since applying for work relief; or he is ill when the permit arrives. He sees no reason for wasting it, and so gives it or sells it to Jim Smith in the same house, who "works out the time" instead, under Jones's name.

A few instances of this sort have caused some cities to adopt the plan of mailing a postcard directing the applicant to call for his work permit at the office. He signs the permit when it is given to him, and his signature is later compared by the clerk with that appearing on the payroll when he receives his pay.

The system of having the men come for their work permits at a given time is useful also when gangs are to be transported by bus to the outskirts of the city. They can thus be assembled in one spot and taken out together. A few extra men are usually summoned, in the expectation that some will not appear, and any left-overs are used to make up vacancies in other gangs.

12. Transfer and Dismissal

The transfer of men to other jobs, on the basis either of their aptitudes or their weaknesses is to be encouraged. Such requests coming from foremen should be given special attention. It is necessary to discipline and effectiveness that foremen and supervisors should be given the right of dismissal for misconduct; but in all such cases a special report should be sent to the Work-Relief Bureau, and the discharged employe called in and interviewed. Experience has shown that franker explanations for dismissal are received from foremen if they are requested to send them in by mail, and not allowed to transmit them by the discharged employe.

Since work relief is granted only to people with dependents, it goes without saying that failure to use the money earned for the support of those dependents constitutes a breach of faith which cannot be tolerated. Drinking or gambling under these conditions constitutes aggravated non-support, and should be dealt with promptly and severely when a case has been proved.

13. Re-assignments

When a job has been completed, the question of re-assignment of the workmen arises. One of the most debated questions connected with work relief centers about continuity of employment. The social agencies involved have stood as a unit in pleading for the re-assignment, week after week, of the same group of people as long as they are out of regular work, those who cannot be given work being carried on a home-relief basis. They

point out that insecurity and fear are destructive forces; and that the first duty of a work-relief project is to give assurance to the persons for whom a responsibility has been assumed that their small earnings will continue as long as the funds last. It is a traditional attitude among social workers not to "spread thin," and not to withdraw from a situation until all has been done that is possible. This attitude we respect and share; but we think it is necessary also to give the arguments on the other side, and to admit that they have weight.

Work relief is strictly an emergency measure. It is not designed to bring about a permanent solution for the troubles of the unemployed. It is rather intended to give them a breathing-space while they search for the more lasting security of a real job. It is undesirable that an emergency stop-gap should become a life habit. People may have their morale sapped instead of strengthened, by becoming inured to three days on and three days off at $12 a week! If carried too far, this means the creation of a contented pool of casualized labor.

Moreover, there is a strong feeling among the labor group—as witness the decision made by some of the Chicago labor unions[1]—that work-relief jobs ought to be passed around so that each man who needs work gets a little. If individual morale suffers, group morale is heartened by this method.

The man who feels that he had the same chance as the next man cherishes a kindly feeling toward the community that offered him assistance—even inadequate assistance. The man who sees his neighbor no needier than he working week after week, while he is rejected merely because the other fellow got his application in first, feels himself justifiably aggrieved.

We confess that we cannot reconcile these divergent points of view. We can only present them for the consideration of the Work-Relief Bureau that has more qualified candidates for jobs than it is able to place at work.

14. Wage Rates and Hours

The daily or hourly rate should not be conspicuously below the rate current in the community for the kind of work performed. The work-relief project ought not to be responsible, as some have been held to be, for a general lowering of wage rates.

The amount of weekly earnings need not vary so widely, however, as the foregoing statement might lead one to suppose. Weekly earnings are controlled by the number of days the person is permitted to work. A basic weekly wage should be aimed at, which will cover the necessities of life for the ordinary family, with such supplemental wages as the members who are of working age can pick up.[2] Suppose it is decided in a given city that

[1] Described in the forthcoming volume.

[2] In a few smaller cities the number of days a man is allowed to earn is decided by the number of his dependents. This attempt to apply the principle of the "family wage" has not met with general favor, however, because of the complexity introduced when it is attempted to run two-day, three-day, four-day, and possibly five-day shifts simultaneously.

$12 a week shall be the basic wage. If common laborers customarily receive 50 cents an hour, the men assigned to these tasks should work three days of eight hours each per week. This permits the operation of two shifts a week, and introduces no serious difficulties in management.

But suppose the job in hand calls for the additional services of carpenters and bricklayers, and the "going rate of wages" for these skilled trades is from $11 to $13 a day? In this case, one day's work a week at the rate the man is accustomed to earn will produce somewhere near the basic weekly wage. It must be taken into consideration, however, that the higher scale of wages has created a somewhat different standard of living in the families of skilled men; their rents, for instance, are higher and cannot be readily reduced. A four-day shift once in three weeks might be a fairer arrangement for them.

But it is often better to let a skilled man finish a job he has begun. In Rochester, it was found that if one man began to build a chimney and another finished it, the difference in individual technique caused a poor-looking job. Chicago solved the difficulty by letting such a man work till he had accumulated about $120 in wages, and then laying him off for two months. Such flexible arrangements, while they introduce some difficulties in bookkeeping and assignments, have decided advantages in dealing with skilled workers.

They have added advantages in smoothing otherwise troubled relations with the labor unions. The vexed subject of union rates can be handled in this way so that the cooperation of the labor group is retained. It is not so much the weekly earnings that the unions are militant about, as protecting the daily rate of pay. A man ought not to be forced to choose between food for his family, and the loss of his union card, which will imperil his chances of securing independent work later on.

In general, however, it is better to permit men to work only part of each week, since this leaves them some free time in which to look for real work, and to pick up odd jobs here and there. They should be encouraged to secure an extra day's work occasionally if they can, and not discouraged by having their hours on work relief reduced accordingly. The system occasionally met with of forcing men on work relief to report daily to the Bureau on off-days simply to prove that they are idle, is a pernicious one and should be avoided.

15. Method of Payment

During the past winter, the method of payment has differed as widely in the several cities as the wage scale itself. The main groupings are as follows:

a. Payment with Money. This may be either by checks issued by the Work-Relief Bureau, or by cash. Under the latter method, the pay envelopes are made up at the Bureau, and either handed to the men when they call for them, or distributed by paymasters on the job. In some cities

where the work was done for municipal departments, the men were paid off at the same place and time as regular employes of the department, and the corresponding amount transferred as a bookkeeping entry from the unemployment fund to the credit of the department.

Chicago developed an interesting method of dealing with the numerous institutions and agencies to whom workers were assigned. These agencies were requested to set up revolving funds out of their own treasuries and pay the workers off in cash at the completion of each shift. The certified payrolls, bearing the workers' signatures, were accepted as vouchers, and a check mailed by the Work Bureau to reimburse the agency.

b. Payment with "Scrip." Scrip consists of printed slips in various denominations, exchangeable for goods on presentation. Two varieties of this system were found in operation; the "restricted" system, when the scrip has to be redeemed at a commissary store operated by the municipality, and the "unrestricted" system, when the scrip is simply a general order on any merchant to supply necessities according to the holder's wishes, the dealer later presenting the bill to the city for settlement.

There can be little objection to scrip provided it is allowed to circulate as legal tender, with the credit of the city behind it; though even then it is a cumbersome and expensive way of distributing wages. When, however, the attempt is made to center its redemption at a city commissary store, we can find no good to say of it. Diverting the purchase of groceries to the city store interferes with normal trade, and deprives dealers of profits from customers whom they have carried in many cases for long periods on credit. More serious still, it deprives people who have earned something in exchange for their labor of the right to dispose of their earnings in the way that seems best to them. The natural human reaction to such an interference with self-direction is to "beat the game" in any way that can be devised.

A further objection, which applies to the commissary system rather than to the scrip system *per se*, is that it forces people to make public acknowledgment of their condition when they enter a place which is known to serve only the recipients of relief and depart laden with a basket. Good social practice protects the poor from humiliations of this sort.

c. Payment "in kind."[1] This method has been used only where the Department of Public Welfare has been closely tied up with the work-relief program. Many public departments still cling to the method of giving direct relief in goods rather than in cash; and they have in many cases transferred the practice without change when their clients become the wage-earners in a work-relief project.

Relief in kind is sometimes given out direct from a city commissary, when the same objections attach to it as those just advanced against the restricted scrip system. Less objectionable is the practice of giving out orders on specified dealers for the goods needed. But this, like the unre-

[1] That is, in food, clothing, or other necessities.

stricted scrip system, is cumbersome and involves both increased bookkeeping and some element of overseeing the worker's use of his income. It has the further disadvantage of placing considerable opportunity for favoritism in the hands of city officials as to the dealers on whom orders are drawn.

We would recommend that all payment of work-relief wages be made in cash or by check, and on the job if possible, to avoid unnecessary loss of time to the workers.

16. Protection against Injury

No city has reported an unusual number of serious accidents.[1] This is surprising, in view of the inexperience of many of the men and their "soft" physical condition. Nevertheless, it is strongly recommended that Workmen's Compensation insurance be provided for all persons on work relief. Work relief is employment as well as relief; and either the bureau that assigns the workers or the agency to which they are assigned ought in justice to carry the employer's risk as provided in the laws of the state. It is also a protection to the work-relief agency itself, which might otherwise be liable for heavy damages in case of serious injury or death.

17. Variations on the Work-Relief Theme

Some confusion has arisen about just what projects should be included under the term "work relief." As used herein, it means useful work projects for which men are selected on the basis of need, their wages being paid from relief funds contributed or appropriated for the purpose. It does not include the following:

a. Advanced Public Works. This is a phrase intended to mean special public works projects, even though they may be embarked upon as an unemployment measure, when the work is let out to contractors in the customary way, and when they hire their employes without reference to need and pay them directly.

b. "Staggered" Employment. Such a plan was adopted in the cities of Akron and Toledo. Here the regular force of city laborers was put on half time, and an equal number of new men hired, their need being one of the considerations. No new work was attempted and no additional funds were required under this arrangement.

c. "Odd Jobs" Campaigns. In the "Make-a-Job" canvasses undertaken in numerous cities, the men are assigned on a basis of need, but the employer pays the wages, while the unemployment committee functions only as a specialized employment bureau.

d. Street-selling. Here the relief is confined to providing men with initial

[1] Springfield, Massachusetts (not one of the cities studied), reports many more layoffs due to strains and sprains among men on work relief than among regular city laborers.

stocks of apples or other commodities. Each man is then launched upon a private business venture and turns over his capital like any merchant.

e. Woodyards and Other Work Tests. The woodyards operated by agencies caring for homeless men, when the furnishing of meals and lodgings for short periods is contingent on the men doing a few hours of work at sawing and splitting wood, are outright work tests, and these enterprises make no claim to be included in the field of work relief.

f. Man-a-Block Plan. Our definition of work relief could be stretched to include projects like the Man-a-Block plan in Buffalo where the committee in charge secured regular contributions from the householders employing the men, and paid them off at a wage rate previously agreed upon. It would have to stretch almost to the breaking point, however, to include the Louisville Man-a-Block plan under which the blocks were organized and men assigned as in Buffalo, but thereafter each man collected his own wages from his several employers.

18. Relation of Work Relief to the General Relief Program

An attempt should be made at the outset of a work-relief program to envisage it as a part of the total relief efforts of the community. The money available locally for all relief purposes constitutes in reality a single pool. If one portion of the program is stressed, there will be less to spend on the others. A rough appraisal should therefore be made, in conference with chest executives and representatives of public and private charity, to arrive at what will be an equitable amount to divert into work-relief channels.

The Welfare Federation of Cleveland has given much thought to this problem, upon the premise that work-relief funds should be expected to lessen the burden upon private charity by removing certain families from its lists. It arrives at the conclusion that funds go much farther in meeting relief needs when expended for direct relief than when used to pay work-relief wages. The director writes:

> The factors which go to make up this additional cost are as follows:
>
> 1. It requires more money in work-relief wages for a given family than in home relief . . . due to the difference in attitude toward the family by the landlord, the grocer, and other creditors, and the difference in attitude of the family itself toward the income from wages as compared to home relief.
>
> 2. The average case worker will recommend many families for work relief which she would not recommend, at least not as soon, for home relief, due to a difference in attitude by the visitor toward work relief compared to home relief as a resource.
>
> 3. A man doing work relief has less time to pick up odd jobs or to look for partial or permanent employment than a man who has all his time free to look for work.
>
> All of this refers, of course, to communities where funds are so limited or the need is so great that the expenditure of money for work relief cuts into the amount available for home relief to such an extent that relief funds may be inadequate to meet total relief requirements. Where a community either has so much money or so