ATTACKING

on Social Work's Three Fronts

By
SHELBY M. HARRISON
General Director
Russell Sage Foundation

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF SOCIAL WORK

May, 1942

G2
15 cents

STATEMENT CONCERNING PUBLICATIONS OF RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION

The Russell Sage Foundation was established in 1907 by Mrs. Russell Sage "for the improvement of social and living conditions in the United States of America." In carrying out its purpose the Foundation maintains a staff which, among other duties, conducts studies of social conditions, authorized by the General Director, where new information, its analysis and interpretation seem necessary in order to formulate and advance practicable measures aimed at improvement. From time to time the Foundation publishes the results of these studies in book or pamphlet form.

In formulating the problem for study, in mapping out a plan of work on it, in collecting facts, in drawing conclusions, and in the presentation of findings, authors of Foundation studies, who are always either members of the staff or specially commissioned research workers, have the benefit of the criticism and advice of their colleagues in the organization. Full freedom is given research workers for the final decision on all of these steps, and in presenting and interpreting both factual material and conclusions in their own way.

While the general responsibility for management of the Foundation is vested in the board of trustees, the responsibility for facts, conclusions, and interpretations rests with the research workers alone and not upon the Foundation, its trustees, or other members of the staff. Publication under the imprint of the Foundation does not imply agreement by the organization or its members with opinions or interpretations of authors. It does imply that care has been taken that the research on which a book is based has been thoroughly done.

ATTACKING ON SOCIAL WORK'S THREE FRONTS

By
SHELBY M. HARRISON
General Director, Russell Sage Foundation
President, National Conference of Social Work

The Address of the President at the National Conference of Social Work New Orleans, May, 1942

New York
RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION
1942

PRINTED BY
WM. F. FELL CO., PHILADELPHIA

ATTACKING ON SOCIAL WORK'S THREE FRONTS

IN THIS ITS SIXTY-NINTH YEAR the National Conference of Social Work is happy to return to historic New Orleans. We sometimes think of the Conference itself as old. We no longer have with us, except in spirit, any of the founding fathers who attended that first meeting, in New York, in 1874. At that meeting the total registration was 79, including the newspaper reporters. We are told that only one woman was present. In looking over tonight's audience I am moved to remark that the Conference has made vast improvements since then.

But in New Orleans a movement holding its first meeting in 1874 must seem merely in the first blush of youth. Your organized social work began at least two centuries ago. America's first children's home was established here when children, orphaned by the Indian massacre of 1729, were brought to the nuns at the Ursuline Convent. Many of us will be visiting that historic site this week.

But tonight we leave past history to deal with our urgent present. I have chosen the subject "Attacking on Social Work's Three Fronts." Two years ago this Conference met in Grand Rapids in the week when

the Belgian army surrendered, Britain faced Dunkerque, and the fall of France was appearing tragically inevitable. That was a black week, which shadowed all our discussions. Tonight we face a situation which may seem even darker and more desperate.

For in these two years the war has spread to every continent, and today 90 per cent of all the men, women, and children in this whole world are in countries actively at war or already conquered. The tide of disaster has been running heavy and grim in these two years. France fell. Britain continued to resist, but suffered terrific punishment. After little Greece had set Italy back on her heels, the Nazi juggernaut rolled through the Balkans and down into Crete, until today only the stouthearted Yugoslavs fight on in their mountains. Then came the sudden invasion of the Soviet Union. This attack may prove to have been Hitler's costliest mistake, but in spite of the superb courage and the demonstrated striking power of the Soviet armies, portions of western Russia which are an empire in extent—a scorched empire, be it said—are under the heel of the foe.

Five months ago the unprovoked and murderous attack on Pearl Harbor catapulted us into this conflict. Despite heroic stands, much has been lost—Bataan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Java, most of Burma. The long distances have so far prevented us from balancing the odds in men and equipment, but we are now gaining striking power. Though we have no doubt of the ultimate outcome, we are now ourselves involved in this deadly business, our own blood in the front lines, our nation and our way of life in the balance of war's events.

If this war were merely a military struggle, it would concern us less in this meeting. But, however diverse and remote have been some of the factors which brought it on, the war has now crystallized into a titanic struggle between two ideologies—two ways of life which cannot both survive in this cramped world.

One is the philosophy of force, which ruthlessly crushes into the mire the hard-won freedoms of the human spirit, persecutes the weak, betrays the unsuspecting, fans race hatreds, proudly boasts of its use of book-burnings, censorship, and brazen lying as instruments of public policy. It scorns the forms of government to which we have given our allegiance. In a public speech in 1938 the Italian Dictator declared—I quote—"Liberty is a putrid corpse. Democracy is decadent. We are entering the fascist era." One wonders whether Mussolini is quite so happy today over the results of fascism as they are affecting his own country, or quite so certain the "corpse" is without striking power.

We on the other side hold different principles altogether. We believe in the fullest possible freedom for the individual, in government by consent and consultation in the parliamentary form, in the educational method of "change and progress through evolution"; we believe—to paraphrase Pearl Buck—in a single human race, working together to make a fit habitation out of this tragic globe.

These convictions must mean more than words to us today. The issue is clear, and so also is the call to action. Citizens everywhere throughout our nation, and social workers by the tens of thousands, have shown by their deeds that they recognize in this

threat to civilization their own tremendous stake and their personal responsibility.

Social work is responding by attacking along three main fronts. What these three fronts are I mean only briefly to suggest tonight, but to direct you to the sessions of the week that follows for detailed and expert discussion as to how our attack shall continue to be conducted. If I sense at all the spirit of this Conference, of those of you who at much personal sacrifice have come here in these busy times, it is a spirit which sees in your experience and equipment special opportunities to serve in these dark days, a spirit of resourcefulness in emergency, a resolute desire *to attack*.

II

Social work's first front in these times is its direct service in the immediate war program—activities related directly to the requirements of the war effort. Whether or not this will be its most important contribution through these years, only history can finally say. It is at least the most dramatic front of the three.

War on this scale requires tremendous man power, prodigious production, and vast rearrangements in the patterns of personal and community living. Foremost of course are the military forces trained for combat service on land, sea, and in the air. Back of them is the service of production—the much larger army of industrial managers and workers laboring on triple-shift schedules to produce guns, tanks, ships, planes. Transportation, agriculture, finance, the supporting

community—all have their vital parts to play. As a recent editorial in the New York *Times* says: "We must close our ranks and go forward. For one lost soldier, a thousand recruits must drill, ten thousand civilians fabricate the means of victory, other thousands cheerfully face the sacrifice of luxuries and comforts."

These rapidly expanded, drastically altered, intensely taxing services have placed new and important responsibilities upon what we broadly call social work. These responsibilities vary in each community, and it would not be possible to catalogue them all. I shall merely suggest some of the lines of social work's attack on this first front.

Services centering about the soldier himself and his family have enlisted much social work effort. These begin with assistance to Selective Service Boards, the Army, Navy, or other agencies in determining facts about dependency. The men who have been rejected for physical defects—their number is a significant commentary upon the standards of living we have tolerated in this presumably wealthy country—these men are a great challenge to the profession of medicine and to social work, both to recover as many of them as possible for active and efficient service in these critical days, and to safeguard the generation now growing to manhood and womanhood from similar remediable defects.

If the soldier is accepted, he soon comes to need many special services, in the camp, in the near-by communities, on furlough. Such services include friendly counseling, recreational facilities in camp and out, sometimes legal advice, and much else. The

American Red Cross, the U.S.O., local recreation workers, and others in camps and near-by communities are serving in these fields. For the peace of mind of the soldier, quite as much as for other reasons, we need to see that his dependents are well cared for. Such dependents, who will become much more numerous as mobilization continues, may need assistance in obtaining their special benefits and allowances—which we hope Congress will soon agree upon—may need advice as to their rights under the Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act, the National Life Insurance Act, and other legislation designed for protection of the soldier and his family, and in some cases may need direct aid in emergencies. Social work should lead the attack in this field of its special competence. I observe with some concern a mushroom growth of private organizations intending to function in these areas. Some may be necessary and important; others are well-intentioned but ill-equipped; one suspects that still others are trading upon public sympathy for their own private gain.

Then we must not forget, though it distresses us, special services for the maimed and injured as they begin to return from the battlefields, and for the dependents of those who will not return. Plans for rehabilitation, for the care of special injuries, for sheltered workshops, and recreational facilities, are under way.

In addition to duties centering upon the soldier and his family are those of preparing against bombing or other enemy action in our civilian centers. Social workers, in cooperation with civil and military leaders, are assisting in these plans. William Hodson,

Welfare Commissioner for New York City and a former President of this Conference, was telling me a few weeks ago how his Department, with its special experience in mass feeding, group shelter, and resettlement of families, was set up for possible emergency in cooperation with the local chapter of the American Red Cross, the local U.S.O. units, and other private agencies working with the Welfare Council. More extensive plans, for the possible evacuation of civilians from combat areas, and for their reception in safety zones, are being widely discussed among social work executives, although actual crystallization of these plans is lagging. Continental United States has so far not faced these emergencies in actuality, and we hope they may not come. But if come they do, social workers will be in the front lines of emergency service.

The war-disorganized community is another sector of this first front for social workers. How severe this disorganization may be is apparent to even the casual visitor to a camp town, an armament-making city, or an airplane manufacturing center. The myriad problems which such rapidly expanding communities exhibit are fitter subject for a nightmare than orderly presentation. We shall suggest only a few of the problems which social workers are helping to attack in communities which have been disorganized either through war industry or proximity to cantonments.

For the boom town, housing may often be the most critical problem, requiring both bold housing and city planning. If anyone is thinking of housing as a frill and not a direct factor in war production, let him look at the record in the last war. The Bethlehem plant at Sparrows Point, Maryland, was equipped to

produce nearly two ships more a month than it did build—because of lack of living quarters for the additional 2,500 men needed. The Department of Labor, trying to place women workers, reported that fully 50 per cent refused to take jobs because of housing conditions in places where there were war orders.

Boom towns require not merely additional housing, and special new facilities of all sorts—recreation, transportation, schools, water supply—for the new residents, but oldtime residents often need protection against boom-inflated prices, new health hazards, and other disrupting influences.

The opposite of the boom may also occur, as in the considerable change-over unemployment in the Detroit area, and on a smaller scale the priorities unemployment and other industrial dislocations which are affecting many communities. With the increasing employment of women, facilities for the day care of children will have to be vastly expanded and improved. And it requires no major prophet to predict that breakdown of family life caused by war service or the conditions of war employment are going to result in serious delinquency problems for many communities, unless they are forehanded with a positive, constructive program for their youth.

The alien family is a war-induced problem social workers need to attack in many communities. The most striking example is, of course, the wholesale evacuation of the Japanese from the coastal danger points and their resettlement, but few communities escape all contact with this problem. Discrimination against aliens does not stop with those actually opposing or subverting our institutions; it shows signs of going

on to embrace law-abiding aliens of enemy nationality and even citizens of non-combatant or allied nations; as the war spirit grows, we may need sane leadership to avoid the witch-hunts, persecutions, and violations of civil liberties which occurred too frequently in 1917–18.

Social work is equipped to attack effectively on each of these sectors of our first wartime front—services for the soldier and his family, stand-by service in case of enemy action, and help to the disorganized community. All of these things are worth doing for their own sake, but all of them together contribute importantly to a great wartime necessity—morale.

Says Dr. Willard Waller, in an unpublished manuscript: "It may seem at first that morale is outside the field of social work, but this is not so. Morale is really a result of social justice, and in the long run social workers can do more with it than orators and propagandists can, for all their circus tricks."

III

THIS BRINGS me to social work's second front against the enemies of freedom. This second front is the day-by-day performance of social work's essential duties. Less spectacular than the other fronts, this one requires the greatest man power—or perhaps I should say woman power. In the long view, it may prove to have made the greatest contribution of the three toward actual winning of the war. It is an essential part of the long supply line upon which the various front lines must depend.

It would be a poor service to the war effort to send all our physicians abroad with the troops. England, out of her longer experience, has found it not only necessary to maintain but to strengthen many of the home social services in such fields as health and medicine, nutrition, recreation, day nurseries, maternity homes, social security, education, and social welfare.

If these services are to be rendered not as mere routine, but in the spirit of attack, as an essential contribution to America at war, we may need to pause a moment for our bearings. Just what are the concepts which motivate social work, the eternal values upon which it is built? And by what means—techniques, if you will—are these concepts clothed with reality?

In his long dwelling on this earth man has been weaving a tapestry of history. It has many curious and erratic designs, and is full of wars and bloodshed and selfish action. But again and again we come upon a continuing golden thread; this golden thread is the expression in every age of the infinite value of the individual human being, echoed in the words of philosophers, prophets, and poets, and in the deeds of many humbler men.

Hear its echoes in the Mahabharata: "To you I declare the holy mystery: there is nothing nobler than humanity." Or from Homer: "He was a friend to man and lived in a house by the side of the road." Or from Jehovah as interpreted by Moses in Leviticus: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. I am Jehovah." Or from Menander, three hundred years before Christ: "To live is not to live for one's self alone; let us help one another." Or Seneca, that

old Roman: "*Ubicumque homo est, ibi beneficio locus est*—Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for a kindness." Or Epictetus: "The universe is but one great city, full of beloved ones, divine and human, by nature endeared to each other."

Hear the great Founder of Christianity: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." Or the comment of Tryon Edwards, "Whoever in prayer can say, 'Our Father,' acknowledges and should feel the brotherhood of the whole race of mankind." Or Amiel: "The test of every religious, political, or educational system is the man that it forms."

Hear Walt Whitman singing in *Passage to India:* "Lo, soul, seest thou not God's purpose from the first? The earth to be spanned . . . The people to become brothers and sisters . . . The lands to be welded together."

These, and the countless words like them, and the deeds done in their spirit, strike a responding chord in our hearts. We vibrate to the same note because it is a part of the universal harmony, and is true.

What has social work to do with this high faith in humanity, with its corollary of the privilege of service even to the humblest? Social work is the modern implementation of this faith, the modern agency for transmuting this faith into works. It endeavors to apply to the art of helping our fellow man not merely good intentions and unselfish effort, but all the skill and special knowledge which modern science can furnish. It is a discipline which seeks to serve the poor, the misguided, the undefeated, the sick, the impris-

oned, the crippled in mind and body, the jobless, the illiterate, the maladjusted, the misunderstood, and all the rest.

I shall not insist, nor would I faintly imply, that social work is the only channel by which concern for our fellow man can be transmuted into useful works. But I think that we who are social workers need to look back, each of us, beyond our daily and often dull routine to the faith that we individually hold, whether it springs from religious conviction or from a secular love of human beings. Only so can we see clearly that the eternal values from which our actions spring are the very opposite of the Nazi philosophy of a superior caste or state for which the individual must be sacrificed; of might makes right. Only so can we perform our often humdrum duties with the high spirit which will make them effective measures of attack upon fascist forces at work in our own land.

IV

LET US NOT FORGET, also, that social work stresses that word, *work*. It implies not only high sentiments, lofty ideals, but deeds. Through its developing history it has striven to find and use practical means for giving every individual his chance in life. It is a tool, designed with all the science we know, for implementing the religious and humanitarian impulse toward human brotherhood for practical achievement.

Some people suppose that social work is primarily concerned with giving relief—an activity which did indeed assume vast proportions in the depression

decade. We gave relief, through both the private and the public agencies, but as part of a much larger plan. Even in its earlier days social work assumed some leadership in reform movements, aimed, on the one hand, at reducing and preventing human misery, and on the other, toward securing more of the good things of life for the people as a whole. More recently it has recognized the responsibility, not only of crusading for higher social ideals, but for developing in pursuit of those ideals "a scientific foundation and a trained capacity for efficient practice."

Professional schools were seen as a requisite for attaining high standards in practice. The first school was established in 1907. By 1910, there were five such schools. At present, thirty-nine schools are on the approved list of the American Association of Schools of Social Work, thirty-four of which offer two years of graduate work and five offer a one-year graduate curriculum. In addition there are a large number of unapproved schools of social work, several of which have already made or will soon make application for membership in the Association. In comparison with other types of professional education, the graduate status of the approved schools in social work ranks high. Engineering education is predominantly on the undergraduate level. In medicine, although some 80 per cent of medical students are college graduates, only five out of seventy-seven medical schools in 1940–41 required the bachelor's degree for admission; one required four years of college; sixty-three would admit students after three years of college; and eight required only two years.

The programs of study in schools of social work

have steadily broadened. Today the majority of approved schools offer courses in most or all of the following subjects: (1) social case work, (2) medical and psychiatric information, (3) community organization, (4) social research, (5) social group work, (6) public welfare, (7) law and social work, (8) industrial relations or labor problems, (9) social insurance. Increasingly the schools are interesting themselves in courses in supervision of social work, health services, housing, and social work interpretation or public relations, while much needed preparation for the administrative level of social work is beginning to engage attention.

I have made this brief reference to social work education partly to suggest how seriously leaders in the profession have taken the matter of implementing this eternal and humane instinct for service to fellow men; but also to show something of the content of this thing we call social work. Expressed in the form of continuing social services within our communities, the list becomes long indeed, and to the uninitiated it may sound confusing. Such a list would include the work of the family welfare society, which seeks to discover the immediate causes of family disabilities and, by removing or overcoming them, put the family back on a basis of normal living; the social settlement, where residents and staff, cooperating in social and educational programs with less favored groups, seek to help them raise the general level of family environment; agencies specializing in adult education, supplementing inadequate training in youth and seeking to help alien and immigrant groups to adjust their lives to the opportunities and the duties of a new

land; governmental and private organizations interested in the care and treatment of defectives and delinquents; agencies for child welfare, mental hygiene, better housing, industrial safety and sanitation, social hygiene, and public health; associations dealing with probation, parole, juvenile offenders, recreation, old age and other dependency; and societies organized to promote general social betterment throughout neighborhood and community.

This list may seem exhausting, but it is by no means exhaustive. To fill some of the gaps, see in your programs the topics of the 300-odd meetings we are holding this Conference week. Mere mention of some of these activities, however, does suggest the breadth of this second front for social work—its day-by-day activities. It suggests more than the breadth of these activities: it makes it plain that most of social work is sound and valid all the time—in war or peace; that, because of its deep-rooted basis in humane aspirations and its serious intent to grow and improve its service, social work is an essential and indispensable element in modern civilized society.

Social work and democratic institutions have long had in common one basic doctrine: the recognition of the supreme value of the individual human being, great or small, with its corollary of a common obligation to work for his welfare—which in its total is the general social welfare. Social work is one of the chief instruments through which this democratic purpose is clothed in reality for many of the flesh-and-blood men and women who live in this country of ours. I hope we may be pardoned for accepting the characterization of social work recently given in a New

York speech by the Honorable Noel Hall, British Minister at Washington, when he referred to "your priceless social services."

That is why I speak of social work's going operations in terms of attack on an important front. We are not here to defend any branch of social work or any vested interest in it; some may deserve to be abandoned, others need expansion. We *are* here—I think I may speak for nearly all of us—to weld social work into an effective instrument for making our nation strong.

We are proud that social work has always been one of the handmaids of democracy, rooted deep in that respect for the personality of each human being which free governments alone are designed to nurture and defend. We are determined that in these days of war, which call for not merely the loyal but the efficient service of every citizen, social work shall perform a greater service than ever before in freeing the handicapped and the disadvantaged from their disabilities, in opening gates of opportunity for those who need guidance and help, and in assuring at least the essentials of healthful, normal living to every family in the land.

V

We must move on to the *third* front of our nation's attack—a front again on which I believe social work has contributions to make. I refer to the whole broad field of postwar reconstruction.

"But," you say, "we have a war on our hands. This is not a time for fine-spun social theories, or even

attempts at social changes which in peace would seem important. Our first job is to win the war."

Precisely.

It is in order to win this war that we must set before ourselves, before the conquered and enslaved nations, and so far as may be before the peoples in the nations with which we are at war, a clear picture of the world the democracies are striving to bring into being. Said one of our well-known journalists recently, "Whatever nation, or alliance of nations, can first offer the peoples of the world a solution of their problems . . . will win the war."

Many of us here tonight remember, too, the last war and its disastrous aftermath. However desperately we need to win the war, we need even more to win the peace—a phrase by which people mean assuring a sound, just, and durable peace, with all its implications for social and economic conditions worth fighting for. Social work, with its ultimate concern for man and his fate, can and should speak out aggressively for the needs of man, and the means for meeting them.

I do not know when this war will end; in these overcast days, to hope for any early victory seems optimistic indeed. But in the nature of all-out war of the Nazi pattern, the end when it comes may come very suddenly. Listen to these words from another President of this Conference, Robert A. Woods:

> In this great and terrible day, at what seems more nearly the crisis of the world than any other moment in history, the National Conference of Social Work seeks to gather all the resources that it can represent for their maximum contribution.

Those words were spoken in a dark day of the First World War, when the spring German drive was cutting deep into the lines of the exhausted French and British, Paris was under direct shell fire, and our own soldiers under General Pershing were only beginning to arrive in numbers; in fact, in May, 1918. Six months later, almost to the day, that war ended in the fatal Armistice, when all the nations including our own relaxed in a delirium of joy and relief and let slip the opportunity to establish a stable peace.

We should not delay. Adolf Berle, Assistant Secretary of State, said earlier this year, "The very sinew of our war effort will be affected by the goals we see ahead." Both to strengthen our war effort and to make a stable peace possible, we need now to assess more adequately than ever before the underlying world problems which lead to war and start work upon solutions which will be sound, just, and enduring, in the interests of all peoples of every creed, color, and race—whether they be Mexican workers in our Southwest, or their kinsmen across the border, the West Indian, the East Indian, the North American Indian, the Negro, or the members of any other minority group 'round the globe. We repudiate the Nazi doctrine, which has no support in science or experience, of a naturally superior race.

Our efforts must be a continuous process. What we are going to be, we are now becoming. We need not only to save from the threatening disaster our democratic institutions and services, but we need to keep on shaping them for greater usefulness in the peacetime ahead. This has also its morale value. As an editorial in the New York *Times* recently put it, "If

we of the United Nations win, [the pen of history] will say that we did so because our will to win was greater; and that our will to win was greater because we fought for reasons that the average free man was glad to accept as his own."

Yes, the first job is to win the war. All the future depends on that. There is no disposition to overlook its transcendent importance. But among thoughtful people here, and among our allies, the conviction is widespread that planning for the future world at peace must not be left as a postwar task. It should be carried on now. Fortunately, something is astir.

VI

To MY DESK has recently come a volume of 158 pages in which Dr. George B. Galloway presents a report for the Twentieth Century Fund on the research plans now being developed in the United States to deal with the economic and social problems which will face us when the war ends. He finds one hundred and twelve agencies involved. While, as he points out, much of the discussion of plans is still vague and general, it is significant that so many agencies are already focusing their thoughts on postwar problems and attempting to do something about them.

This is not the occasion nor is there time to attempt, even if I had the necessary insight and wisdom, a detailed set of suggestions for a postwar program. That may best await the results of these hundred and more ventures in research for the postwar era. One may

nevertheless indulge, perhaps, in a few convictions which are hardly any longer to be regarded as personal—convictions which have the backing of impressive congresses of churchmen on both sides of the Atlantic, of leading educators, of government officials, leaders in the labor movement, civic leaders, and social workers in many types of endeavor. First among these convictions is this, that the postwar world must solve the twin scourges of war and unemployment.

In diametric opposition to the Nazi doctrine that international justice depends on the use of force and a nation's main objective must be to assert its dominance, we look forward to an organized effort on the part of the victorious democracies which will, as David Cushman Coyle puts it, "show that they care about the fate of all men everywhere, and that they are always studying ways to improve world prosperity and world harmony." With a resolute determination to help reduce the likelihood of war, America must not again shun a place of leadership and responsibility in organized world efforts to promote economic justice on a world scale.

Although war demands have greatly reduced unemployment, the problem, everyone knows, has not been permanently solved. The loss of income to millions of workers, with its disorganization of family life, demoralization of the individuals concerned, to say nothing of the reduced production which affects the living standard of us all, will again appear as a problem of large proportions unless the wisest kind of effort is made early to do something about it. We have learned from the hard taskmaster of war that we can have full employment and even a measure of

prosperity in such days as these. Our people begin to know that American inventive genius and industrial skill have now solved, for this country at least, the ancient problem of production—of producing enough goods in mine and quarry, field and farm, factory and foundry, to meet a reasonable minimum living standard for all. That nation moves on a dangerous path which, when the war ends, fails to find with reasonable promptness a way to continue this productive employment and to bring this improved standard to its people.

For this, relief is not the answer. Important and necessary as relief sometimes is, we all would prefer to have, and to see other people have, real jobs, productive jobs, instead of relief on the most liberal basis. Everything possible must first be done to provide jobs at living wages; after that adequate relief is indicated for the destitute unemployables and also for the able-bodied, despite the threadbare objection about people who don't want work. True, a small percentage really don't want work; for always a small proportion of persons in the whole population are sick physically, mentally, or morally and either cannot or will not do their part in the community. We have to accept that, and deal with it as a part of the whole problem.

Beyond the background problems of peace and employment are the minimum standards we need to establish. In a book shortly to be published under the title *Goals for America*, Stuart Chase calls food, clothing, shelter, health service (including recreation), and education the Big Five among these standards, and declares that in postwar America definite allot-

ments in all these five essentials can and should be guaranteed to every citizen. Most of us agree with him. Indeed, definite plans toward achieving some of these minimum standards are already being made in the National Resources Planning Board; this is the list of objectives which the Board itself set up as early as August, 1941, in its publication, *After Defense—What?:* "We must plan to enable every human being within our boundaries to realize progressively the promise of American life in food, shelter, clothing, medical care, education, work, rest, home life, opportunity to advance, adventure, and the basic freedoms."

We may need to leave to economists the large problems of government finance involved in these vast programs, firmly believing that they can be solved. But let us play our own important part. Social workers know more than any other group in America about the actual effects upon individuals and families of inadequacies in the Big Five. To us, they are not statistical averages; they are sick and suffering people. Social work can carry its attack into this sector of postwar planning with a full and intimate knowledge of conditions as they do exist, and with a personnel trained in meeting those conditions. We need to guide the more theoretical planners with our practical experience.

For instance, shelter is one of Mr. Chase's Big Five: In some quarters grandiose schemes for government housing are being aired. There is undoubtedly place for a certain amount of government housing, temporarily in some of our war-boom communities, permanently in the worst of our slum areas. But I am

old-fashioned enough to believe that not all our housing shortage, nor the bulk of it, should be so handled. The problem may be better solved by improving wages, and by special devices for raising family incomes to the point where families can afford the kind of homes they need. Add to this the new techniques in pre-fabrication, mass production, and cooperative financing—and also good orientation for light and air and the benefits that go with skilled neighborhood and city planning—and while the housing problem may not be wholly solved, a long stride forward will have been taken toward assuring better homes for multitudes in a brief time.

Education, another of the Big Five, needs attention. Illiteracy is still too high in our own country and all over the world. In the United States, probably not less than 600,000 children of elementary school age are not attending school because of lack of opportunity. Even more disturbing, our illiterates outnumber our college graduates. Rural school facilities in some parts of the country are grossly inadequate; enthusiasm for the public school as the cornerstone of democracy seems unfortunately to have lost some ground. This bulwark of a free people needs new attention, understanding, revitalizing, and support.

Recreation, as social work sees it, is not to be dismissed as merely an adjunct to health service. The wholesome use of leisure time can do much to prevent or correct behavior problems, and to assist recovery from the fatigue of monotonous work. Also, for vast numbers of the people it opens new doors to self-realization, to self-expression in various arts, in handicrafts, in athletic games, in such practical and satis-

fying activities as equipping and beautifying the home, in civic and social movements, and in the cultivation of the religious life. It offers opportunity for just plain diversion, amusement, and entertainment. All of these are a part not only of a healthy life but also of a rich and full life.

Similarly, we need to bring social work's viewpoint and experience to bear upon all the major problems in the postwar agenda. In addition, we need to do some special postwar planning of our own for particular disadvantaged groups and those cankers in society which are not covered in these more sweeping categories.

VII

FINALLY, ladies and gentlemen, where do we now stand?

We meet in dark times. Most of us here tonight labor under the heavy strains of increased emergency duties, with perhaps depleted staffs. Many of us, including your President, have sons in the war, or others who are dear to us in positions of increased danger. Much of the war news still is bad, and some of it is very bad.

We stand at a crossroads in history. We are not asked to choose which road we shall take; our enemies propose to drive us down the road of their choosing. They propose to compel us to accept their New Order, which repudiates the moral responsibility of man, demands a forced and uncritical obedience to authority, resurrects the old and bloody concept of a superior

race of which all other nations and peoples are the natural slaves, and leaves to the individual only such circumscribed scope as serves the ends of military aggression.

On our side are the nations which, in the evolution of society, have become democratic states, holding to ideals of liberty, equality of rights for each citizen, and the principle of brotherhood for all.

Now we are engaged in a supreme test of the validity of these ideals. We are at a crisis when each citizen is choosing the part he would play—the service he would render to the cause of world freedom. We are met here tonight knowing that the experience of those who attend this Conference has attacking power for the cause to which we give our allegiance.

On one front are those who serve the social needs of the men and women directly engaged either in the fighting lines or in the great war production enterprise supporting it.

On a second front are those seeking to keep alive the human values and the physical, spiritual, and cultural services which are essential parts of modern organized society.

On the third front are those seeking to make as sure as can be done in advance that society shall this time get what it is fighting for—a peace-time world which will eliminate the worst foes to the general social welfare and open up new opportunities for richer and fuller living for all.

On which of these fronts the largest contributions can be made only the chronicle of time will tell; but we believe not the least of the three is the second—the permanent home and community supply line. Here is

where social work, because of its kindred purpose with democracy, finds freest play for its talents. Here is where, looking back at the past to learn from the experience, and looking ahead to the future to plan a better day, we find the task of holding firm the foundations upon which the future must be built. The future must come out of the life of today. What happens now to our social, economic, political, educational and other institutions will determine the institutions to come. As Herbert Agar puts it in Harpers this month: "What a civilization can do tomorrow depends on what it is doing today and what its ancestors did yesterday."

Over one hundred and fifty years ago Edmund Burke in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* expresses the same idea in a memorable passage, which runs:

> Society is a partnership in all science; a partnership in all art; a partnership in every virtue, and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained by many generations, it becomes a partnership between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born. Each contract of each particular state is but a clause in the great primeval contract of eternal society, connecting the visible and invisible world.

In these inspiring, not to say sublime, words we may find both a reminder and reassurance that the tasks of social work, the tasks of freedom and democracy, whose ends social work serves, in dark days and bright, have a partnership with all those forces of the past which emanated from a basic belief in the supreme worth of each human soul and a tie with all

those forces of the future which will ceaselessly strive for a truer brotherhood of man.

On every front the jobs to be done are challenging. They do not beckon to something comfortable and easy. We *are* at a crossroads in history. We are in a hard fight, and the reference to dark days and weeks and months ahead is no idle figure of speech. Win we must and win we will, but it will take from each of us the utmost in effort and sacrifice in the field where he or she is most able. Contemplation of our essential part in this conflict, the struggle to maintain hard-won cultural values and to project them and something better into the future, leaves one with no sense of complacency nor easy repose. The call on all sides is for those who would tackle a hard and complex world of needs.

We can, however, take courage. We have only just begun to fight. We not only have great material resources which are beginning to flow, but we have great resources of the spirit on which to draw.

Some of us took fresh courage from the burning words of Madame Chiang Kai-shek last month: "Full realization of the significance of China's epic fight began to dawn . . . when the [western] powers themselves felt the shattering impact of Japan's might and began to ask what secret weapon it could have been that enabled China to remain undefeated. Accustomed to view war in terms of material equipment, in the beginning they failed to understand that our weapon was the spiritual *heritage* of the Chinese race. Equipment, important as it is, is not all-powerful." We here in America have China's secret weapon of a spiritual heritage of freedom, and we begin to have

the equipment, too. Of ultimate victory we have no doubt.

For this victory social work cannot supply guns, but it can hold and strengthen our spiritual heritage. If social work is to give its best service to the nation and to the victory of democracy in this war, it needs to operate as an attacking force. This requires a certain fluidity, a willingness to change traditional forms in the face of new objectives, resourcefulness and daring in meeting new emergencies, speed and vigor in action.

I believe this will be a great-spirited Conference. In the week that is ahead of us we shall go forward to plan a yet more effective attack on all of social work's three main fronts—direct service to the war effort, faithful and undaunted performance of our essential day-by-day duties, and the setting up of inspiring and practical goals for tomorrow.

G 3

EXCERPTS from the address of the President of the National Conference of Social Work, New Orleans, May, 1942

ATTACKING ON SOCIAL WORK'S THREE FRONTS

By
SHELBY M. HARRISON
General Director, Russell Sage Foundation

We stand at a crossroads in history. We are at a crisis when each citizen is choosing the part he would play—the service he would render to the cause of world freedom.

Social work cannot supply guns, but it is an essential part of the long supply line upon which the various front lines must depend. To give its best service to the nation and to the victory of democracy in this war, it needs to operate as an attacking force. This requires a certain fluidity, a willingness to change traditional forms in the face of new objectives, resourcefulness and daring in meeting new emergencies, speed and vigor in action. . . . Social work is responding by attacking along three main fronts. What these fronts are I mean briefly to suggest.

First Front—Direct Service in War Program

Social work's first front in these times is its direct service in the immediate war program—activities related directly to the requirements of the war effort. Services centering about the soldier himself and his family have enlisted much social work effort. Then we must not forget special services for the maimed and injured as they begin to return from the battlefields, and for the dependents of those who will not return . . . preparing against bombing or other enemy action in our civilian centers . . . the war-disorganized community . . . the alien family . . . all forms of unsocial discrimination . . . violation of civil liberties.

Social work is equipped to attack effectively on each of these sectors of our first wartime front. All of these things are worth doing for their own sake, but all of them together contribute importantly to a great wartime necessity—morale.

Social work's second front against the enemies of freedom is the day-by-day performance of social work's essential duties. In the long view, this front may prove to have made the greatest contribution of the three toward actual winning of the war. But if these services are to be rendered not as mere routine, but in the spirit of attack . . . we who are social workers need to look back, each of us, beyond our daily and often dull routine to the faith that we individually hold, whether it springs from religious conviction or from a secular love of human beings.

Second Front—Performance of Day-by-Day Duties

In his long dwelling on this earth man has been weaving a tapestry of history. It has many curious and erratic designs, and is full of wars and bloodshed and selfish action. But again and again we come upon a continuing golden thread; this golden thread is the expression in every age of the infinite value of the individual human being, echoed in the words of philosophers, prophets, and poets, and in the deeds of many humbler men and women.

What has social work to do with this high faith in humanity, with its corollary of the privilege of service even to the humblest? Social work is a modern implementation of this faith, a modern agency for transmuting this faith into works. It endeavors to apply to the art of helping our fellow man not merely good intention and unselfish effort, but all the skill and special knowledge which modern science can supply. It is a discipline which seeks to serve the poor, the misguided, the undefended, the sick, the imprisoned, the crippled in mind and body, the jobless, the illiterate, the maladjusted, the misunderstood, and all the rest.

Social work is sound and valid in war or peace; because of its deep-rooted basis in humane aspirations and its serious intent to grow and to improve its service, social work is an essential and indispensable element in modern civilized society.

Social work and democratic institutions have long had in common one basic doctrine: the recognition of the supreme value of the individual human being, great or small, with its corollary of a common obligation to work for his welfare—which in its total is the general social welfare. Social work is one of the chief instruments through which this democratic purpose is clothed in reality for many of the flesh-and-blood men and women who live in this country of ours.

That is why I speak of social work's going operations in terms of attack on an important front. We are not here to defend any branch of social work or any vested interest in it; some may deserve to be abandoned, others need expansion. We *are* here—I think I may speak for all of us—to weld social work into an effective instrument for making our nation strong.

We are determined that in these days of war, which call for not merely the loyal but the efficient service of every citizen, social work shall perform a greater service than ever before in freeing the handicapped and the disadvantaged from their disabilities, in opening gates of opportunity for those who need guidance and help, and in assuring at least the essentials of healthful, normal living to every family in the land.

We must now move on to the third front of attack—I refer to the whole broad field of postwar reconstruction. In order to win this war we must set before ourselves, before the conquered and enslaved nations, and so far as may be before the peoples in the nations with which we are at war, a clear picture of the world the democracies are striving to defend and to bring into being.

Third Front—Practical Goals for Tomorrow

Social work, with its ultimate concern for man and his fate, can and should speak out aggressively for the needs of man, and the means for meeting them. First, the postwar world must solve the twin scourges of war and unemployment. . . . With a resolute determination to help reduce the likelihood of war, America must not again shun a place of leadership and responsibility in organized world efforts to promote economic justice on a world scale. . . .

Our people begin to know that American inventive genius and industrial skill have now solved, for this country at least, the ancient problem of production—of producing enough goods in mine and quarry, field and farm, factory and foundry, to meet a reasonable minimum living standard for all. That nation moves on a dangerous path which, when the war ends, fails to find with reasonable promptness a way to continue this productive employment and to bring this improved standard to its people.

Beyond the background problems of peace and employment are the minimum standards we need to establish. Definite plans toward achieving some of these minimum standards are already being made in the National Resources Planning Board; the following are the objectives which the Board itself set up as early as August, 1941, in its publication, *After Defense— What?* "We must plan to enable every human being within our boundaries to realize progressively the

promise of American life in food, shelter, clothing, medical care, education, work, rest, home life, opportunity to advance, adventure, and the basic freedoms."

But let us play our own important part. Social workers know more than any other group in America about the actual effects upon individuals and families of inadequacies. . . . To us, they are not statistical averages; they are sick and suffering people. Social work can carry its attack into this sector of postwar planning with a full and intimate knowledge of conditions as they do exist, and with a personnel trained in meeting those conditions. We need to guide the more theoretical planners with our practical experience.

* * *

Of ultimate victory we have no doubt. Win we must and win we will, but it will take from each of us the utmost in effort and sacrifice in the field where he or she is most able.

On one front are those who serve the social needs of the men and women directly engaged either in the fighting lines or in the great war production enterprise supporting it.

On a second front are those seeking to keep alive the human values and the physical, spiritual, and cultural services which are essential parts of modern organized society.

On the third front are those seeking to make as sure as can be done in advance that society shall this time get what it is fighting for—a peace-time world which will eliminate the worst foes to the general social welfare and open up new opportunities for richer and fuller living for all.

Printed at the request of the National Social Work Council and Community Chests and Councils, Inc. Copies of the complete address —a 30-page pamphlet—are available at 15c, or at 10c in quantities of ten or more, from the Russell Sage Foundation, 130 East 22d Street, New York, N. Y.