UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF IN PERIODS OF DEPRESSION

A Study of Measures Adopted in Certain American Cities, 1857-1922

By Leah H. Feder

With each depression emergency measures are embarked upon—and the results generally forgotten. This study recovers and records significant experience in previous depressions for its bearing upon present and future policies.

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UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF
IN PERIODS OF DEPRESSION

A Study of Measures Adopted in Certain
American Cities, 1857 through 1922

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CHAPTER I
THE PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

STORED away in widely separated, dust-covered files and out-of-print publications, the source material for an account of unemployment relief in the United States has remained scattered throughout the country. No short cut has been disclosed whereby the material could be centrally assembled in libraries. In investigating the subject, therefore, it has been necessary almost literally to "dig out" the story from the record vaults of social agencies, from old newspaper files, and in part from the recollections of persons still living.

With each depression, emergency measures were embarked upon, quite evidently without adequate understanding or appreciation of previously tried remedies. The present study, it is hoped, will make past experience available, in so far as it presents changes in methods and objectives as they reveal themselves in general practices during succeeding periods of unemployment. In recurring seasons of hard times, relief efforts emerge in singularly clear patterns of characteristic organization and administration.

Primary consideration has been given in the study to the development of methods of relief administration from depression to depression. Emergency activities of both permanent and temporary agencies have always, however, been closely related to the social work and social thought of the particular period and community, so that a history of unemployment relief is bound to be in many aspects a history of social work. Unfortunately emergency relief has usually assumed a more important role than have measures for the prevention or handling of future emergencies. Recommendations for the future, although put forward in print after each depression, have been left unheeded until the stress of another period demanded action to meet community needs.

For purposes of this study, unemployment relief is defined to include actual aid from public or private sources in cash, in kind, by
wages, credit, benefit funds, or the providing of shelter. Planning, organization, and administration of such relief, under whatever auspices, include attempts to measure the problem and to co-ordinate the resources of communities. Services and the attempts to improve conditions through social case work, the planning for leisure-time recreation, education, industrial training, health supervision, and care are noted where evidence marked their importance. In treating the data of any particular period, an attempt has been made to emphasize the outstanding unemployment relief measures devised during that period rather than to analyze all the aspects of the problem.

The period selected for study began with the year 1857 and continues through the depression of 1920–1922. It thus corresponds to the era during which social work arose and became well organized in the United States.

Much as one might wish to record experiences of the depression that began in the autumn of 1929, the scope and intensity of which are beyond any before known to us, it was not possible to do so. At the time of writing this book the depression was heavy upon us. The measures and methods being used to provide relief or employment could not be appraised, nor could even reliable information be assembled. It only remains, therefore, to signalize with regret the omission of any discussion upon the years through which we are still passing and to offer the hope that the lessons learned may sometime be set forth by a discerning student of the history of the period.

For purposes of clarification, a period of depression is defined in the present volume as a general falling off in business and industry serious enough to require unusual relief measures. Specifically, the depressions treated are those recognized by standard authorities1 as of major importance in the United States during the periods covered; namely, 1857–1858, 1873–1879, 1893–1897, 1907–1908, 1914–1915, and 1920–1922.

As pointed out in Chapter XI, because of the authoritative pre-

sentedation of relief in the depression of 1920–1922 by Philip Klein in The Burden of Unemployment, published by the Russell Sage Foundation in 1923, that period is only briefly discussed, although as extensive a study of available sources was made of it as of the other depressions. The writer’s conclusions were in substantial agreement with those reached by Mr. Klein.

The scope of the study is necessarily limited by omission, first, of critical discussion of the economic causes and remedies of depressions; second, of detailed description of relief brought about through unemployment reserves, or through the stabilization and regularization of industry. Fundamentally, the latter methods offer a preventive of unemployment rather than emergency relief. Similarly, legislative reform and suggested radical changes in society call for broader handling than is included under such a title as unemployment relief. Only one instance of a “barter” plan during the periods of depression was found. Unemployment insurance, except that occasionally offered by trade unions, did not then exist.

Deliberate limitation in the consideration of certain subjects, such as public employment agencies, was necessitated by the fact that they were pertinent to this study only as they originated in or were reorganized to meet unemployment emergencies. For quite different reasons trade union relief for the unemployed, either on an insurance basis or from funds contributed by employed members, also received inadequate comment. International, national, and local unions all participated in giving relief, but records, where they existed at all, were too incomplete for use. The presence of numerous unco-ordinated local unions made it impossible to secure a complete picture of union relief in even a single city for any one depression, although the amount provided was undoubtedly large. Relief given by religious groups presented the same difficulty. Where churches shared in a community relief program an evaluation of their work was sometimes possible. Often, however, they carried on independently, and no way of measuring the extent of their relief expenditures, breadlines, or shelters existed.

In preparation for the study much material was examined which furnished considerable data about a large number of communities. Outstanding features of each depression in the country as a whole
were thus discovered, isolated, and studied in further detail. In addition, visits varying in length from three weeks to over a month were made to six cities, and information gathered in each concerning relief measures during the whole period under consideration. The cities selected were Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Indianapolis, New York, and Philadelphia. They offered, in contrast to the more recently settled communities of the West, adequate and continuous records in social agencies or public departments for practically the entire period. Cities of the East and Middle West were chosen, moreover, because of their predominantly industrial character.

In the municipalities selected organization for unemployment relief was typical in a general way of that found elsewhere during the depressions, although outstanding differences in organization for social work existed among them. Boston, for instance, had a strong public department throughout the period under discussion, while Philadelphia’s experience in 1873–1879 offered proof of corruption and waste in public relief that later contributed to its abandonment in that city. In 1914–1915 a special appropriation of $100,000 was expended through a private emergency agency. In 1921–1922, however, efforts were made in Philadelphia to place major responsibility for assistance of the unemployed upon the public department. In several of the depressions also certain cities made notable contributions to methods of unemployment relief—for instance, Indianapolis with its “Indianapolis Plan” of 1893, and New York City through the work carried on by its Mayor’s Committee in 1914.

Sources examined included books as well as articles in newspapers, magazines, and conference proceedings. Printed annual reports, or reports on special subjects were also helpful, but the most valuable data were discovered in the Charity Organization Department and in the Library of the Russell Sage Foundation in New York City; in the Family Welfare Association of America, housed within the same building; and in the local agencies in the six cities visited.

Not available for general use, but assembled through the kindness of many persons, correspondence, newspaper clippings, minutes of board and committee meetings, and mimeographed reports revealed the contemporary point of view and presented the issues at
PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF STUDY

stake as they had been lived through by participants in the organization of emergency measures. Wherever possible, written material was supplemented by interviews with social workers, public officials, trade union officers, and lay persons who willingly contributed from their experience.

It is hoped that the range of information for each depression has insured a balance of different points of view; and, as a matter of fact, characteristic and quite different standard practices did seem to emerge as data concerning the several depressions were arranged and analyzed.

Perhaps the fact that the research was undertaken during another long depression kindled the imagination of those who helped to assemble material. Without exception, librarians in state, public, and historical libraries, busy social workers, and lay persons in numerous cities spent tedious hours searching for long-forgotten material, explaining apparent contradictions, filling in gaps in sources, and suggesting other sources. Old books of clippings were unearthed from closets, long unused piles of reports and correspondence were dusted and brought forth, volunteers culled newspapers and minute-books, and people who had practically forgotten other depressions in the throes of the present period recalled with apparent satisfaction what had been done earlier in their communities. Had it not been for their generous contributions, the following pages would be less realistic than it is hoped they will be found. Equally encouraging was the spontaneous recognition by these colleagues of the value of a historical outline of unemployment relief, and their often shamefaced admission that they themselves had plunged into present hard times without a thought of what had gone before.

The study was undertaken at the suggestion of Joanna C. Colcord, director of the Charity Organization Department of the Russell Sage Foundation. Its plan and preparation were under the joint direction of Miss Colcord and Professor Susan M. Kingsbury, director of the Carola Woerishoffer Graduate Department of Social Economy and Social Research, Bryn Mawr College. It was accepted by Bryn Mawr College in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.
CHAPTER II

1857-1858: THE PUBLIC-PRIVATE CONTROVERSY EMERGES

THE FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION

For fifteen years previous to the panic of 1857 the country had enjoyed increasing prosperity. General conditions in the United States during 1857 are difficult to interpret briefly. Gold discoveries in the far West had precipitated the gold rush of 1849 and encouraged movement of population from the cities. Migration accelerated demands for transportation. Railroads expanded rapidly. During the years just preceding 1857, in spite of a marked recession in 1855, widespread conditions of comfort existed.

The nation, in a word, was never before so rich in population, in manufactures, in internal improvements, in minerals and precious metals, and in whatever tended to progress, and to the uses and embellishments of a high state of civilization . . . the demand for labor was greater than the supply. This has been shown by the constant increase of wages; the unsupplied demand for labor at the south and west; and the endeavor at the north to cheapen the cost of human toil, by the introduction of labor-saving machinery.¹

Nevertheless, and with spectacular suddenness, the summer of 1857 saw an epidemic of bank and other business failures, particularly in the new and over-expanded West.²

Not only was there deep concern over the situation in this country but gloom prevailed throughout the world. Harper's Weekly, in an editorial on October 10, 1857, made the following comment:

Not for many years—not in the life time of most men who read this paper—has there been so much grave and deep apprehension, never has

¹ New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, Fifteenth Annual Report, 1858, p. 16. Henceforth in the footnotes of this study, this Association will be referred to as the New York A.I.C.P.

1857–1858: PUBLIC-PRIVATE CONTROVERSY

The future seemed so incalculable as at this time. In our own country there is a universal commercial prostration and panic. . . . In France the political caldron seethes and bubbles with uncertainty; Russia hangs as usual, like a cloud, dark and silent upon the horizon of Europe; while all the energies, resources and influences of the British Empire are sorely tried, and are yet to be tried more sorely, in coping with the vast and deadly Indian insurrection and with its disturbed relations in China.

The good years just preceding the panic had given many workers reserves upon which they could draw. The destitute were probably not a heavy proportion of the unemployed. Various references are to be found to estimates of the extent of unemployment in particular cities, but they cannot be regarded as representing more than crude guesses. Thus in Philadelphia, discharged operatives were said to number between 20,000 and 30,000,¹ and in New York toward the close of October, 1857,² there were estimates of “not less than 25,000,” and “from 30,000 to 40,000” persons out of work by early November.³ Many skilled workers found themselves without work or money and were forced to apply for the first time for work or material relief from public agencies, private agencies, and soup kitchens. In the Middle West, notably in Chicago and Indianapolis, newspapers showed that the depression created less distress than in the East. Financial worries there were, but the unemployed seemed to be able to manage alone or with the help of neighbors and without any outstanding attempts at relief measures. By the first months of 1859 the hard times were at an end.

EARLY RELIEF METHODS

Emergency relief measures can be considered only against the background of the capacity of existing agencies to meet the social needs of the community. Equally important is the community’s attitude toward such organization and toward other social ques-

¹ Union Benevolent Association of Philadelphia: 1831-1931. A History Com¬memorating the Centennial Anniversary of the Founding of a Society for “Amelio¬rating the Condition of the Poor.” Board of Managers, Philadelphia, 1931, p. 29.
UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF IN PERIODS OF DEPRESSION

In 1857 public outdoor relief was frequently found in operation, as well as numerous so-called "relief societies" which opened their doors for a few hours daily during the winter months. There were also well-established private relief agencies already operating in several of the larger cities. For example, in Boston the Society for the Prevention of Pauperism, established in 1835, and the Boston Provident Association, organized in 1851, were active; in Baltimore the Association for the Improvement of the Condition of the Poor had been organized since 1849; in Philadelphia the Union Benevolent Association made its Twenty-seventh Annual Report in October, 1858. Perhaps the most interesting agency from the point of view of its relation to depressions was the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, which had been organized in 1843 to combat the questionable relief measures that had prevailed since an earlier depression, that of 1837. The effects of these measures are thus described in its report issued in October, 1855:

Soup houses, and analogous modes of relief were resorted to, because of their convenience and supposed economy. Large sums were thus expended, and multitudes assisted; but so revolting were the results, both on the poor and the community, as to furnish conclusive proof that false and dangerous methods of relief had been adopted, and the proper ends of true charity defeated. . . . Mendicity, vagrancy, and able-bodied pauperism, with their attendant evils, consequently increased to such an alarming extent, as to call forth those protracted and elaborate investigations which resulted in the establishment of this Association.

By 1857 this agency had struggled with indifferent success for over fourteen years to impress upon the citizens of New York the desirability of an organization to investigate real need and prevent the spread of indigency. "Works of mercy by machinery and through frigid laws of economic science do not meet the wants of newly awakened humanity," one critic complained. When the depression of 1857 began, the editors of Harper's Weekly in an issue of October 17, expressed the popular point of view:

There is merit in organizations for the relief of the suffering and there is merit in the secret charities of the Christian almsgiver. . . . asso-

1 New York A.I.C.P., Semi-Centennial, Fiftieth and Fifty-first Annual Reports, 1893-1894, p. 34.
1857–1858: PUBLIC-PRIVATE CONTROVERSY

Ciation kills individual responsibility and that is the best guarantee of honor, probity and zeal. . . . Relief associations may be advantageously organized, and food, clothing, and fuel distributed by persons whose business it is to inquire into the wants of applicants for aid; but the heat and burden of the work of relief will still fall upon individuals.

Considering its origin, it is little wonder that the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor in its Twelfth Annual Report, 1855, expressed itself in vigorous terms against soup kitchens:

They [soup kitchens] have been tried over and over again, until their mischiefs have been so fully ascertained that they now find favor nowhere. It is now a recognized principle among sound social economists and philanthropists, that the poor should not be aided in promiscuous masses at soup kitchens, but by personal visits at their homes.

In other communities besides New York City, however, the depression opened or strengthened soup kitchens and breadlines. In Philadelphia, for instance, soup societies established long before the emergency arose met from six different parts of the city to adopt uniform plans. Boundaries were settled for each society and it was decided that bread should be distributed not oftener than once a week, because it was considered expensive and attracted people who might become paupers. "Bread was a very inviting kind of food, while soup was not, though it would sustain life."^2

RELIEF MEASURES

Public Relief

Public funds were used in meeting the emergency. What took place in Boston and Chicago illustrates two different methods of using public money. Boston increased its expenditures for outdoor relief from $44,107 in the year ending September 30, 1857, to $62,800 in the year ending September 30, 1858. The Boston So-

1 The first soup society in Philadelphia had been established as early as 1803 and others followed soon after, so that the attempt at unification was in reality an effort to co-ordinate the work of existing agencies. See Scharf, J. Thomas, and Westcott, Thompson, History of Philadelphia, 1609–1884, L. H. Everts and Company, Philadelphia, 1884, vol. 1, p. 1,471, for date of first society.

2 Philadelphia Public Ledger, November 19, 1857.
ciety for the Prevention of Pauperism made the following comments:

And how was it disbursed? By the members of the Board [of Overseers] themselves? Officially, technically so, indeed. They issue the orders; but with scanty knowledge, we fear, in many cases, of the characters and claims of the multitudinous beneficiaries on whom they are bestowed. . . .

The changes of parties, popular favor and caprice, yearly effect correspondent changes in the personnel of the Board. The books of a former incumbent are handed over to a successor. The stock-list is kept up, with rare exceptions. New names are added, perhaps by means of outside pressure, or as clamor and squalor and wretchedness may prevail. Officers of police are called in—they themselves subject to periodic or fitful changes—to make visitations in their respective beats, and report their impressions of real or simulated distress.

This condition might be remedied, the Society believed, by the appointment of a salaried board of overseers who would devote their whole time to dispensing relief funds.

In Chicago, on the other hand, the Common Council recognized the valiant efforts being made by private agencies to relieve the situation, but felt them to be inadequate. On January 5, 1857, $500 was placed in the hands of a committee of three aldermen and the mayor for immediate expenditure, with the statement that "while the city government is thus engaged in affording relief, we trust that the fortunate and wealthy of our citizens will contribute their individual aid in the same humane cause." Two weeks later an additional appropriation of $1,500 was made. In a spirited and lengthy discussion centering about a proposal to entrust the money to the Chicago Relief and Aid Society for administration, one alderman attacked this agency as a "first-class nuisance, sectarian, illiberal and anti-Irish." Politics was undoubtedly behind this statement, for an arrangement by which the Society would have handled the money "would very materially restrict the electioneering finances of certain members of the council." In the end, the larger sum was also disbursed by the committee mentioned above, although the vote for this alternative was only eight to seven. Chi-

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3 Chicago Democratic Press, January 20, 1857.
1857-1858: PUBLIC-PRIVATE CONTROVERSY

Chicago sought also to secure the co-operation of various railroads (to which the city had been generous in granting privileges) in freighting wood free of charge, the city officials thus being able to offer fuel at cost, or free where the recipients could pay nothing. The Michigan Central Railroad agreed to this arrangement and the cost of wood was accordingly reduced to $1.75-$2.25 a cord. Applications for wood were made at the police office, where the decision as to who could afford to pay was also made. By the middle of February, 1857, the city had spent $708 in giving free wood.

Even in the depression of 1857 administration of public relief either through an already established public agency, as in Boston, or through an emergency set-up, as in Chicago, raised doubts in the minds of those concerned. Each system involved danger of political patronage, which resulted in suffering on the part of the needy. Inadequately equipped public officials were entrusted with the expenditure of large relief funds. The controversy over the superior advantages of public or private relief, which was to be prolonged over many decades, had already begun.

Established Private Agencies

The Chicago Relief and Aid Society and the Depression

Private relief agencies were in certain instances the outgrowth of emergency measures undertaken for a depression period. Occasionally a tradition as to such an origin seems to have developed which more careful search of original sources does not warrant. The Chicago Relief and Aid Society (now the United Charities of Chicago) furnishes such an instance. According to Edward T. Devine, its form of organization was undoubtedly influenced by the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor and other similar societies, but the widespread belief that the Society originated from increased demands due to the depression seems hardly justified. Frank D. Watson writing on the subject, states: "In 1857, following the financial crisis of that year, the 'Chicago

1 Chicago Daily Journal, January 6 and 16, 1857.
2 Ibid., February 17, 1857.
Relief and Aid' was organized, and even more definite statements on this point have been made.

To meet the situation (particularly among those who had never before sought aid), a group of leading citizens, desirous of handling the crisis in a manner which would most quickly place the families again on an independent basis, formed in 1857, "The Chicago Relief and Aid Society." 

Unfortunately, early reports of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society were destroyed in the great fire of 1871, nor can any trace be found of its annual reports to the City Council. The origin of the Society is first mentioned in its Twenty-seventh Annual Report, that for 1883–1884, and the account repeated almost verbatim at intervals in later reports. The report reads:

In the great financial panic of 1857 there was much suffering everywhere among a large class of persons who had never sought or accepted aid, and who were not embraced in any theories or plans [of work] for the permanently indigent [such as the county authorities offered in the poorhouse or through public out-door relief] . . . appreciating these facts, a number of gentlemen organized in that year the Chicago Relief and Aid Society, for the express purpose of relieving this class of cases with such delicate and timely assistance as would not humiliate the recipient or lessen his self-respect, and with such aid or advice in procuring suitable employment as to enable him to again become self-supporting.

As a matter of fact, the Society existed without formal charter as early as 1851–1852, when newspapers occasionally mentioned its activities. During the winter of 1856–1857 monthly reports of its activities and accounts of benefit performances to raise money for it appeared in the daily press. On February 15, 1857, the Illinois legislature granted it a charter, and it is therefore impossible that the depression which followed the financial crash in August of that year could have influenced the step toward a more permanent structure. Actual organization of the Society under its new charter did not take place until November 14, 1857, but the announcement makes no mention of the existing unemployment being a reason for

3 Chicago Daily Times, November 17, 1857.
organization except to remark that, "The suffering which winter always brings will this year be much increased by the unusual stagnation of business." On the other hand, evidence that organization under the new charter was the outgrowth of a slow development away from casual and often inefficient charitable methods, comes from a letter sent to the Chicago Daily Democrat on November 17, 1857, by the Committee on Organization. It was signed by the Rev. J. C. Burroughs, William H. Hadley, and H. Wardner and read as follows:

Your Committee attribute the loose manner in which disbursements have been made to the spasmodic system by which the Society has been conducted. It has sprung up at the sound of distress as the winter advances, elected its officers, secured such agents as could be obtained, and worked with eagerness until the opening of spring, when it has ceased acting entirely and remained perfectly dormant until winter again, when it wakes up as before. It is our opinion, that the unsatisfactory results have been owing entirely to this manner of conducting it, rather than to the proper object in view, when it was first originated. It has thus been managed by those who felt but little interest, or had but little time to devote to it. The visitors employed have been more or less inexperienced and consequently inefficient.

*Trends in Private Agencies*

Increase in work rather than modification of function or method, however, characterized the activity of most private agencies during this period. They were trying to prove the efficacy of investigation in discriminating between the needy and imposters; and to demonstrate through the flexibility and economy of their methods that the creation of emergency agencies was unnecessary. The New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor was perhaps most articulate in proclaiming the capacity of the private agencies. Its report for 1858 contains the following paragraphs:

The responsibility, therefore, of providing for the needy, on a scale commensurate to the extraordinary demand, necessarily devolved upon the existing charitable organizations, and especially upon this Association, which offered, in the completeness of its machinery, the number of its visitors, and in the extent of its ramifications, just the minute arterial system, which the exigencies of the city required. . . .
UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF IN PERIODS OF DEPRESSION

But now it is a matter of demonstration and grateful record, that, in order to meet such trying visitations, we need no special municipal aid, no monster meetings, no public parades, no truckling politicians—for all these have been tried, and proved themselves not only worthless but positively injurious. Experience on the contrary has shown that this Association, and kindred societies, afford, in the completeness and extent of their arrangements, the full assurance, if sustained, of their competency to meet any emergency that is likely to arise in the line of their operations.

Increase in the work of private agencies is difficult to estimate because existing records for the most part are inadequate and confusing. Applicants for assistance included not only unskilled laborers but also many persons from the manufacturing, commercial, and mechanical fields, entirely new to social agencies and, on account of being accustomed to higher standards, requiring more relief than the usual client. The Boston Provident Association reported for December, 1857, a total of 1,562 applicants, an increase of 1,164 over those of the previous December.¹

The New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor in its annual reports presented detailed figures concerning the number of different families and of persons relieved both by months and for the year as a whole. These figures show that there was a great increase in the Association’s work in the fiscal year 1855, which was also a depression year, and again in the fiscal year ending September 30, 1858. Families on relief rose from 8,154 in 1857 to 13,842 in 1858 and then dropped back to 9,281 in 1859, tapering off gradually during the following three years. A true estimate of work of the Association during 1857-1858 must take into consideration that:

Not more than twenty-five per cent of the applicants received assistance or needed it. Hence, to each proper recipient was given a larger allowance than the funds of the Association would otherwise have afforded, whilst the remainder were saved from the injurious effects of indiscriminate aid.²

This involved much interpretation to donors as to why all persons referred to the officers were not helped.

Money-Raising. Funds to carry on the increased volume of work

¹ Boston Daily Journal, January 11, 1858.
were difficult to secure. Agencies in various cities complained in terms similar to those used by the Union Benevolent Association of Philadelphia that the effects of the depression had "fallen with most fatal force upon many of the best friends of this society and some of its most liberal subscribers." The New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor commented upon the great generosity of its contributors in meeting increased needs. In Boston, however, where the Provident Association began its fiscal year on October 1, 1857, with a deficit of $829, according to its Sixth Annual Report, the decreased means of contributors led to new methods of money-raising. The Boston Daily Journal of the winter of 1857 and the spring of 1858 records the activities of the people of Boston to raise money. The Handel and Haydn Society gave a benefit performance of The Messiah, a lecture by Edward Everett added over $1,400 to the Association's treasury, and the ladies of Boston held a huge Fair and Levée at the Music Hall in March, 1858, the net receipts from which, amounting to nearly $20,000, were given to the Provident Association.

Modifications of Method. Certain modifications in methods of work and personnel practices are evident. The New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor had at its establishment divided its territory into districts corresponding to city wards with an advisory committee for each, making every volunteer visitor responsible for a certain section of a district. In November, 1857, 16 offices were established in different parts of the city for the convenience of applicants. A district secretary was put in charge of each district office, and a committee was given power to employ assistants at salaries it considered necessary for whatever periods of time seemed advisable. The committee also supervised the staff's activities. Marking as this step does the establishment of district offices, it is to be regretted that the annual report records the discontinuance of this emergency measure after a few months, with the brief remark that it did not fulfil its promise.

The Boston Society for the Prevention of Pauperism placed both men and women in jobs of various kinds. Lack of employment opportunities led them to spend in advertising the unheard-of sum of $100. As a result, partly through filling jobs which offered only

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1 Union Benevolent Association of Philadelphia: 1831-1931, p. 29.
board in return for work, they were able to place more people than in the corresponding quarter of the previous year. Strangely enough, the administrators of this non-profit-making employment agency seemed not at all concerned with the effect such placements might have upon existing wage levels. Some applicants refused these opportunities for “self-subsistence” or even those offering moderate wages, preferring to beg for a living.¹

Personnel. Personnel practices are not frequently mentioned, but some attempt was made to reward staff members for their work during the strenuous winter, and plans were discussed to lessen the strain by employing additional people. The New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor had a “reserved corps of assistants,” whether volunteer or paid is not clear, on call in case the pressure became too great.² In January, 1857, before the depression, the yearly salaries of the 18 district secretaries then employed were raised $50, making their compensation $250 a year. Later, in the spring of 1858, “in view of the increased labor and expense of our district secretaries, growing out of the establishment of Reference Stations and the severe pressure of the past winter,” the treasurer was authorized to set aside $500 for distribution as a gratuity among the secretaries according as a committee should direct.³ The Boston Provident Association recommended the appointment of an additional paid officer to help direct the staff of 170 volunteer visitors. It was believed that the additional salary would be justified by savings due to systematized investigations, particularly “such authentic and exact returns as should form the basis of a complete registration of the poor of Boston.”⁴ This is the earliest mention of the desirability of a clearing bureau in a depression.

Emergency Agencies

Undoubtedly emergency agencies in cities all over the country carried on their winter’s work in a great variety of ways. Some of them had to fit into a previously established community pattern for relief; others were the first efforts for organized relief of any

¹ Boston Daily Journal, April 15, 1858.
³ Idem, Minutes of the Board, January 12, 1857, and May 10, 1858.
⁴ Boston Provident Association, Seventh Annual Report, 1858, p. 9.
kind in their particular community. In Somerville, Massachusetts, an attempt was made to form a “Provident Society” so that benevolent citizens could care for the poor, although the offer by the selectmen of work to the unemployed was also approved. In Malden, Massachusetts, feeling ran high at a meeting of about 200 people, one group contending that the existing religious and charitable societies were competent to handle the emergency, while the victorious opposition insisted upon organizing a new society to collect funds and to distribute aid. In Medford the Young Men’s Relief Society was organized to dispense both public and private relief in addition to maintaining a soup kitchen which was open between 6:30 and 7:30 in the morning one day a week. The energetic members themselves split wood for the 20 or more families they helped weekly during the winter. A combination of public funds and private administration was effected in Fall River, Massachusetts. The mayor and aldermen appointed a Citizens’ Committee to cover the 30 districts of the city, each district containing about 30 families on relief. This Committee received applications, visited the families, and reported sums needed to the mayor and aldermen, who thereupon granted the necessary funds to be disbursed by the Committee.

The most comprehensive emergency set-up was in Philadelphia. Encouraged by the press, independent “ward associations” sprang up all over the city. Accounts in contemporary newspapers indicate that failure to form such an organization in the Seventeenth Ward, where there was more unemployment than elsewhere in the city, led to meetings of idle workers culminating in a great demonstration in Independence Square. Twelve such ward relief societies are mentioned; the unusual needs of the winter were the sole reason for their origin, and the money was raised from dwellers within the boundaries of each ward. Provisions of various kinds were also accepted from grocers and truckmen, and stored, together

1 Boston Daily Journal, November 24, 1857.  
2 Ibid., December 4, 1857.  
3 Ibid., December 2, 1857; December 19, 1857; January 16, 1858; February 26, 1858.  
5 See p. 32 for description.
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with purchased supplies, in warehouses from which they were given out to needy families. Where the whole ward was poverty stricken, the "philanthropic of other wards" were urged to swell the meager fund.\(^1\) At the first meeting of the Twenty-Fourth Ward Association in West Philadelphia $2,000 was raised. With an eye to the future, however, it was suggested that "each family in the ward that is able, should during each week between November 1 and April set apart an amount however small, toward a general relief fund, and be invited to make this society the instrument of their liberality."\(^2\)

Methods of distribution varied only slightly. The general practice seems to have been weekly issues of food from a warehouse upon order of the volunteers who visited the families. One society retained the services of a physician to care for sick clients. According to newspaper reports, the Tenth Ward Association in the two months following its inception visited 473 families of whom 394 were accepted for assistance; altogether 1,293 orders for groceries, shoes, and coal were issued to these families. Another ward association, the Nineteenth, reported:

Relief [on] seven consecutive Saturdays to all worthy applicants; heads of families, 2,071; number of persons, 9,200. There were given 1,191 pounds of pork and other meats; 1,700 pounds of codfish; 8,300 pounds of Indian meal; 1,764 pounds of flour; 659 pounds of rice; 38 bushels of beans; six tons of coal in half bushels; one cord of wood by armsful.

The Fifteenth Ward Association in the first three weeks of its existence relieved 391 families at an expense of about 95 cents a week per family. Each precinct committee within the ward was allowed to draw $20 worth of orders on the store each week. By a resolution of the committee the amount of relief to each applicant was fixed at 50 cents a week, sugar and oatmeal being given only to invalids to supplement the regulation salt, beans, flour, and cornmeal.

The emergency groups, according to a report of a meeting of the Twenty-fourth Ward Association, did not conflict with the function of the permanently organized benevolent associations already in existence, but as far as was practicable availed themselves of the experience and co-operation of the established agencies in distribu-

\(^1\) Philadelphia Public Ledger, December 5, 1857.  
\(^2\) Ibid., November 3, 1857.
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These agencies approved the praiseworthy efforts of citizens in establishing the ward organizations, but one at least feared that the unusually large sums of money raised for this purpose would divert contributions from the other agencies. Actually this very agency, the Union Benevolent Association, raised more money that winter than in any previous year of its existence but one. The Twenty-fourth Ward Association also urged

... our public authorities to exercise such a wise liberality in expenditures upon our streets, docks, station-houses, and other municipal improvements as shall give occupations to the unemployed poor of our city, believing that it is better to maintain the independence and self-respect of the laboring man by such timely aid than to degrade him into pauperism—and perhaps crime—and thus ... add to the expense of supporting our poor-houses, asylums and prisons.

The significance of the emergency ward associations lies in the fact that they became the acceptable form of organization for a great deal of later relief-giving in Philadelphia. Evidence is lacking as to how many continued their work uninterrupted after 1858, but a pattern of decentralized units had been established, raising their own funds and caring for their neighbors. When the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity was formed in 1879, these individual societies had gained such strength that it was a slow task, covering years, to induce them to relinquish their own methods and transfer their loyalty to a single system designed to meet the needs of the whole city.

PUBLIC WORKS AND WORK RELIEF

Public works were used as a means of relief for the unemployed as early as 1857. The difficulty of differentiating this method from work relief paid for by public funds becomes apparent as soon as

1 Sources for information on the Philadelphia ward associations are the Philadelphia Public Ledger, January 28, 1858, November 3, 1857, and December 5, 1857.
2 Philadelphia Public Ledger, November 3, 1857.
3 Public works as used in this study are needed public improvements, which may have been advanced to give work in times of unusual unemployment, but which must have been undertaken in the near future regardless of the depression. Selection of workers for true public works is made on the basis of competence, not need; the work is full-time and the wages those commonly paid on public construction.
Work relief consists of operations definitely undertaken to provide employment for those whose need of relief has been established, and who are expected to make a
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one attempts to describe the various schemes. Newton, Massachusetts, came nearest to the conception of public works, previously planned but begun at this time in order to give work to the unemployed. The work involved the building of a new road, giving employment to 60 men and 25 teams.¹

In Philadelphia 10,000 workmen appeared in Independence Square on November 12, 1857, "to stimulate their representatives in the State-House to an appreciation of their troubles."² The Twenty-fourth Ward Relief Association supported their plea, urging extensive municipal improvements as a means of employment. Mayor Vaux believed that it was the duty of the city in the emergency to spend its money freely; but the City Councils passed resolutions over the mayor's veto warning department heads to "exercise the most rigid economy in the future expenses of the city." Suggestions to put additional men to work on highways and parks, or to limit city laborers to an eight-hour day in order to furnish work to more men on a "share-the-work" basis, were lost in committee.³ Finally both chambers of the city government authorized the building of four large culverts and the construction of additional reservoirs "to such an extent and amount as money can be provided to pay for . . . without impairing the public credit."⁴

In New York, Mayor Fernando Wood, in a message to the Common Council on October 23, 1857, recommended improving Central Park and building new streets and a new reservoir as public works for the unemployed. He further urged that:

The comptroller be authorized to advertise for estimates for furnishing the corporation with 50,000 barrels of flour and a corresponding quantity

Footnote continued from page 31.

return for it through the work thus performed. Hours of work or rate of pay or both are thus more or less arbitrarily fixed in relation to the supposed or determined relief needs of the workers selected.


of corn meal and potatoes to be paid for by the issue of a public construction stock, redeemable in fifty years, and bearing 7 per cent interest; these provisions to be disposed of to laborers to be employed upon the public works referred to, in lieu of money, at its cost price to the corporation. Twenty-five per cent could be paid in cash. Critics of the plan questioned both its legality and soundness:

The poor should receive cash for their labor, and not be obliged to take anything else; the city has no right to open a provision shop, nor to engage in a trade at the expense of thousands who gain a living by it; nor yet to adopt a system of relief which would require a troop of dealers, whose probable peculations between it and its workmen would absorb more than the scheme saved.

These recommendations, supported by a petition from a group of workmen, were referred to the Committee on Finance, which recommended using for the purpose the proceeds of a $250,000 bond issue already authorized for Central Park, and a tax levy of $50,000 to finance additional work on streets during 1858. Mayor Wood's suggestion for payment in food was disapproved. Pending the flotation of the bond issue, Comptroller Flagg expedited the work by making interim advances to the Park Commission of $1,000 a day, or $6,000 a week. From these sums, 1,000 men were to be employed at $1.00 a day for six days' work, and paid off each week. From 600 to 1,100 men were employed in Central Park during the winter of 1857-1858. It is not clear whether this was weekly or during the entire season.

The project as it was carried on met with many difficulties and was of less assistance in meeting unemployment than the record would indicate. The Common Council was a legislative, not executive body, and while it might direct that certain work be done, failure or inability of the city departments to act was not its responsibility.

The Central Park appropriation, for example, was long delayed, and, after being made, so much time was required for the issue and sale of the

3 (New York) Commissioners of Central Park, Minutes for November 10, 1857.
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bonds before the money was available, that the season became too far advanced to carry on the work with advantage. The work on the New Reservoir was interdicted, in consequence of existing litigation . . . So in respect to the Street Department, which controls at least one-half of the executive duties of the city government; all its operations were also under judicial restraint, in consequence of a contest in respect to the proper appointing power between the City and State Executives . . . No extra amount of employment was supplied, and . . . the working men were thrown back upon the existing charitable organizations for relief.1

DEMONSTRATIONS OF THE UNEMPLOYED

In both Philadelphia and New York demonstrations of the unemployed were instrumental in getting the city to undertake public works. In New York frequent gatherings of this nature preceded the election in December, in the effort to make the needs of the unemployed an issue between candidates for office. Mass meetings and street parades alarmed the authorities to such an extent that United States troops were called out to guard the Custom House and the Sub-Treasury as a precautionary measure.2 On November 3, a gathering of this type demolished fences and seats in Tompkins Square, and about a hundred persons visited the homes of political candidates for office, demanding food in exchange for their votes. Wagons containing provisions were seized in the street.

Mayor Wood of New York in a message to the Common Council had stated that “those who produce everything get nothing, and those who produce nothing get everything;”3 and that when even their work was taken away from them, he feared that “not a few would resort to force and violence, rather than submit to the humiliation of relief from public or private charity.”4 The New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor felt that such words excited the harassed unemployed, but it is unlikely that the

1 New York A.I.C.P., Fifteenth Annual Report, 1858, pp. 31-32.

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mayor's statements exerted as important an influence in the ensuing disturbances as the Association believed. The fears of the wealthy members of the board of this Association, together with political issues involved in the election and now obscured by time, probably underlay such strictures as that the mayor "hoped thereby to increase his popularity for personal ends."

MIGRATION

There was work, as well as fuel and food, in country regions if the unemployed could only secure them. Farm-hands were at a premium with wages even as high as $16 to $20 a month and board, while female help was almost impossible to obtain, at least in one section of Indiana.1 Two organizations were established to send women to the country as domestic servants. The Women's Protective Emigration Society of New York sent one party of 60 young women to homes in Joliet, Bloomington, and Springfield, Illinois, and regretted that lack of funds prevented further assisted migration for the more than a hundred applicants who registered.2 The Philadelphia Western Women's Industrial Association placed 70 "respectable girls and women" in families in the West, and found places to which it could have sent 40 to 50 more. This agency criticized the work of the New York society in advancing money to transport women to the West and trusting to luck that they would find a place after arrival; and itself obtained for each girl a direct application from a prospective employer who advanced money for the passage, the girl agreeing to work this sum out or to repay it in cash received from wages.3 The New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor was skeptical of migration to rural areas, feeling that such methods were unsuited to their clients, who were not interested in agriculture, and who represented for the most part the less enterprising and industrious classes of the population.4 Furthermore, many families applying to the Associa-

2 Report of the Massachusetts Board to Investigate the Subject of the Unemployed, March 13, 1855, Part IV, Appendix A, p. 11, item from the Boston Transcript, January 23, 1858.
3 Philadelphia Public Ledger, January 22, 1858.
tion lacked an able-bodied male head, so that it was doubtful whether they could hope to establish themselves in the country. This agency joined with other leading charitable societies in issuing a circular to farmers, mechanics, and housekeepers urging them to employ some of the city's idle, but was not surprised at the meager results in comparison with the mass of destitution in the city.¹

¹ Ibid., p. 23.
CHAPTER III
1873-1879: BEGINNING OF SOCIAL PLANNING

THE DEPRESSION

The prolonged hard times of the seventies were ushered in by a series of bank failures, precipitated by the closing of the banking house of Jay Cooke and Company in Philadelphia in September, 1873. Fear spread throughout the country. Threatening competition of railroads in long-distance freight hauling revealed the political corruption which had for years characterized the vast expenditures for maintenance and enlargement of the Erie Canal. In New York City the Tweed Ring was broken following the arrest of the commissioner of public works whose name it bore. Under his rule a group of influential politicians had gained control of the city’s finances and stolen millions of dollars from its treasury.

The financial crises resulted in 1873 in a panic which was followed by disturbances in trade and industry that did not begin to subside until after the first six months of 1878.

There had been a period of excessive speculation, especially in railroads and real estate; large failures following that of Jay Cooke, inflation of currency, high protective tariff, large immigration, and the unnatural stimulus given to industry by the [Civil] War, brought the monetary affairs of the country to a crisis, resulting in general distrust, fall of prices, apprehension, and all the train of evils which follow such crises. The result was an industrial depression... far more severe than any that preceded it.

The widespread distress led Congress to appoint two committees to investigate the causes of the depression. Later, the Senate


Committee on Education and Labor investigating the condition of labor and capital also heard testimony bearing upon the depression. Numerous causes were indicated, some contradictory, some illustrating that the complex economic structure could not be reduced to rigid formulae.

ESTIMATES OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Methods for gauging the extent of unemployment were even more inadequate than they are now. Available figures covering a single aspect of the field were used as a basis for general statements. Gross exaggerations of the number of unemployed were current. Although the lapse of years has obscured other factors which undoubtedly affected the value of the available statistics, unwarranted conclusions and comparisons are apparent.

Local Estimates

The extreme unreliability of estimates of unemployment at that time is illustrated by figures frequently repeated for Massachusetts during the depression of 1873–1879. A widely circulated report placed the number of unemployed in the United States at 3,000,000, and the number of unemployed in Massachusetts at 200,000 to 300,000. Carroll D. Wright, chief of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, decided to ascertain the facts concerning unemployment in the state. Here was a genuine attempt to estimate unemployment, and if the results were not all that were to be desired, at least his methods signalize a noteworthy development.

Between June 24 and August 13, 1878, police in 19 cities were used as informants, since they were "the only body of any size so organized as to be of service." In addition a letter of inquiry was sent to assessors of towns, and after a month a follow-up letter, explaining that failure to reply would be construed to mean that there was no unemployment in the community. Fifty-one towns were included in the latter category. Altogether information was available from 19 cities and 325 towns throughout the state on the basis of which the total number of unemployed males

and females was estimated at 28,508. A second canvass made in November, 1878, to bring out changes due to seasonal employment resulted in an estimate of about 23,000 unemployed. The discrepancy between these figures and the "reckless assertions" that 200,000 to 300,000 were unemployed in the state was further indicated by the 1875 Census, carried out by the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, which estimated that only 316,459 persons considered themselves ordinarily engaged in manufacturing and mechanical industries. A revival of industry was under way in the latter half of 1878, which affects any comparison of the Massachusetts survey results with figures assumed to apply to dates earlier in the depression.

In Boston the increase in applications for lodgings at police stations indicated the pressure of dull times on the homeless. In October, 1873, these were 3,793 as compared with 2,574 in the corresponding month of the previous year. The first twenty days of November, 1873, brought 3,512 persons for shelter to the police as compared with 3,283 for the whole of November, 1872. The increase over November, 1872, would have been much greater had not the 1872 figures included a large number of applicants for shelter who had been fire victims of a severe three-day conflagration in a poor district of Boston.

In New York the "business and working force" of that city in 1873, based on the returns of the United States Census for 1870, was assumed to have increased in the ratio of the population and their number estimated to be 375,000. In the latter months of 1874, in the absence of statistics, the number of persons unemployed and dependent was variously estimated as ranging from 75,000 to 105,000.

Statistics of a Relief Agency

Relying upon the reports from its 400 volunteer visitors, the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor estimated that in New York City during 1873, the first year of the depression, one-fourth of the working force, or about 93,750 persons, were thrown out of work. The conservatism of this figure

1 Boston Daily Journal, November 21, 1873.
rested, the visitors believed, upon the fact that "the Association had relieved 88,473 persons that year, leaving but 5,277 persons of the aggregate that were not aided by this association." Without recognizing their errors they had counted each person they assisted as unemployed, not realizing that many were children and housewives, and had, moreover, in this year for the first time, assumed that the number of families and of persons assisted during the year was the sum of the numbers assisted in each of the twelve months. Unfortunately this latter error persisted in the reports of the Association for several years. Further misinterpretation of the statistics might be made from the marked decrease in the work of the agency in 1878. Instead of reflecting the diminishing severity of the depression, this decrease in work was, however, the result of an arbitrary limitation of activities occasioned by a diminution of income. Careful study of the statistics of the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor during this period illustrates the need to understand the basis for the figures it presents if one is to avoid possible error and unwarranted conclusions.

Less specific signs of distress due to the depression were also manifest. The severity of hard times may be indicated to some extent by the number of skilled, better-paid laborers who finally lose their jobs and use up their comparatively wide range of resources. In the seventies social agencies carried a large number of mechanics and skilled workers who had never before needed relief. The pressure was also indicated in the "doubling-up" of families in inadequate quarters, sharing a fire and whatever food could be secured. "As a question of morals, or as a sanitary measure, there are objections to this mode of herding together; but the fact reveals the destitution which has prevailed in some of the crowded, less favored parts of the city."^{2}

^{1} Idem, Thirty-first Annual Report, October, 1874, p. 29.
^{2} (Boston) Overseers of the Poor, Thirteenth Annual Report, May, 1877, p. 8.
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SOCIAL ATTITUDES OF THE PERIOD

RECOGNITION OF COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE NEEDY

Communities were more aware of their responsibilities toward the poor than in the earlier depression. The increase in urban population had made personal charity less possible. The distinction between voluntary and involuntary unemployment had wider recognition. Those who would not work, it was said, were "impoverished by their indolence and vices, for which they are responsible, [but] the involuntary poor... have been reduced to distress by unavoidable or Providential causes."\(^1\) Such classification of the needy did not, however, entirely clear away the belief that relief was potentially a dangerous expedient. The apprehension lest "temporary aid might end in permanent support and that the habit of receiving without rendering an equivalent might sap the foundation of that independence of character, and that reliance on one's own resources"\(^2\) so highly valued, lurked always just behind plans for relief in the emergency. While the rich were commended for their generosity, they were reminded in the depression that often their charity might weaken habits of independence and lead people to grow accustomed to supporting themselves from the bounty of others.

ATTITUDE OF LABOR AND THE UNEMPLOYED

Efforts of labor unions were concentrated upon securing higher wages and reduction of the working day to eight hours. During the depression of 1873-1879, not only was the working day lengthened, but wages were reduced; and workingmen, faced with the struggle of meeting the cost of food and shelter, went on strike all over the country. Among the employes of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad the ill-feeling came to a head in July, 1877, when a second wage reduction of 10 per cent was ordered. The mob in Baltimore prevented the National Guard from leaving its armory to protect the property of the railroad. Fighting their way foot by foot the soldiers reached the railway station only to find it in flames.

\(^1\) New York A.I.C.P., Thirty-second Annual Report, October, 1875, p. 33.
\(^2\) (Boston) Overseers of the Poor, Tenth Annual Report, May, 1874, p. 6.
UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF IN PERIODS OF DEPRESSION

Not until President Hayes sent federal troops in response to the governor's telegram did the battle end.¹ Strikes of railroad employees occurred throughout the country; they were characterized by violence especially in Pennsylvania, New York, and West Virginia, and for the first time in the history of the American labor movement federal troops were called out in time of peace to suppress strikes.² In New York during 1875 employes on public works, the shoemakers of the order of St. Crispin, "longshore union" men, and coopers struck for better wages or against a reduction of wages.

Those attempting to raise funds for the unemployed, many of them employers, had little patience with the efforts of the workers to retain such rates as the $3.00 to $5.00 daily wage for mechanics and the $2.50 daily wage for laborers current in New York City just prior to the depression.

Labor was in struggle with capital against a lowering of prices. Charity assisted labor in the combat. The soup-kitchens and relief associations of various names became thronged with mechanics. Some of the best workingmen in the city ate and lodged at the public expense. Thousands of able-bodied artisans, young and skillful, were fed by alms. The idleness and the dependence injured many among them irretrievably. The whole settlement of the labor question was postponed by the over-generous charity of the city.³

Meetings of the unemployed were held in many cities.⁴ General opinion seemed to classify such meetings into those held by "honest workingmen," often trade union members, to consider ways of relieving unemployment, and those called together by "the Communists, the Internationalists, and Freethinkers, with their various confederations or associations... affiliated with European organizations, for the diffusion of their Socialistic views in America."⁵ It was the more peaceful groups that were represented in

² Ibid., p. 191.
⁴ See p. 52 for demands of unemployed group upon the Chicago Relief and Aid Society.
deputations to the mayors of cities, as in Boston, where they requested public work, and if funds for this were lacking, agreed to accept in pay for work scrip or certificates of indebtedness from the city at par with currency, which might be used to pay taxes or other obligations owing to the city. The public saw a more dangerous element represented among those who attempted to hold a meeting in Tompkins Square, New York City, January 13, 1874, under the name "Committee of Safety." Revolution was considered by these men the only possible remedy for the sufferings caused by the depression, and their discussions of plans for the relief of the unemployed were believed to be merely a cover for radical propaganda. The Department of Public Parks, fearing a disturbance, had withdrawn permission for the meeting, but 10,000 to 15,000 people gathered and had to be dispersed by the police. Some arrests were made and one policeman was injured.

**Effect of Publicity**

Publicity for unemployment relief plans and appropriations was believed to have augmented the number of applicants. Newspaper stories increased applications from persons who still had a few resources but felt themselves entitled to whatever was being given out. In New York City, when the Board of Estimate and Appropriation appropriated $2,400 in December, 1878, to the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, the number of applicants rose from 108 to 188 daily, and the increase was attributed to the "injudicious publication" of the amounts of the grant.\(^1\) Feature stories intended to arouse interest in the suffering of the people also aroused the "natural sympathies of those who were . . . uninformed of the amplitude and completeness of the provisions already available for the indigent."\(^2\) During the first year of the depression particularly, these incidents led to independent, poorly planned, and unorganized efforts to relieve need on the part of a number of individuals.

\(^1\) *Idem*, Thirty-sixth Annual Report, October, 1879, p. 15.
AGENCIES FOR PLANNING AND CO-ORDINATION

The Indianapolis Committee

Unusually comprehensive efforts to co-ordinate plans for relief of the unemployed were made in Indianapolis. On November 7, 1873, an active organization for meeting the crisis developed at a meeting of business men and ministers at the Chamber of Commerce. Some members were at first unwilling to admit that an emergency existed, but finally accepted the estimate that 500 to 1,000 families would be likely to need care. The group, meeting with representatives of the private societies, agreed that the magnitude of the emergency demanded public funds rather than private solicitation. The Common Council was requested to appoint "some citizen of high character and undoubted business qualifications" to give his full time at a liberal salary as commissioner of charity having charge of administration of the funds of the Common Council, of the Township Trustee, and of the relief societies of the city. The money was to be raised by taxes and spent, so far as was practicable, through public works. Of the two newspapers published in the city, the Indianapolis Daily Sentinel favored this plan and suggested a candidate; the Indianapolis Journal in an editorial under date of November 13, 1873, summarized the opposition point of view as follows:

We do not believe the various societies and organizations of the city would heartily cooperate with such an officer; . . . the Council has no authority to make such an appointment . . . it has no right to appropriate the public money for payment of such an officer; . . . such an office, if created, would undoubtedly prove an expensive piece of machinery. . . . The probability is that with such a commission every dollar dispensed for real charity would cost two for dispensing. Besides many of the deserving poor who have been in the habit of receiving unostentatious charity from their own church organizations would reluctant against taking from a Commissioner of Charity.

Compromise resulted in a public appropriation to the two largest private agencies, and left the Citizens' Committee to handle differ-

1 The Indianapolis Journal of November 12, 1875, lists the societies as the Indianapolis Benevolent Society, Ladies' Relief Society, Church Benevolent Society (Episcopal), Hebrew Ladies' Benevolent Society, Indianapolis Masonic Relief Board, Methodist Ladies' Relief Society, Young Men's Christian Association.
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ences which might arise between the two agencies in the administration of the fund, to attempt reduction of overlapping applications, and to deal with landlords who until now had not been lenient with delinquent tenants. After public appropriations for relief were secured, however, this co-ordinating committee apparently no longer functioned.¹

THE NEW YORK BUREAU OF CHARITIES

In New York City a conference of representatives of public and private agencies met on November 20, 1873, “to ascertain whether existing organizations are adapted to meet existing wants or whether special and extraordinary provision is required during the winter.”² Data from 158 societies indicated that $4,325,604 were available for relief, to which amount was added an estimated sum from those agencies which did not reply, bringing the total to a little over five million dollars. The Commissioners of Charity and Correction were authorized to spend an additional $1,460,000. The total was considered sufficient to meet the emergency, and the efforts of the group were therefore directed to the establishment of a social service exchange.³ Henry E. Pellew, in charge of the work, describes it as:

One complete and accurate register of all applicants for relief in the city of New York—their names, addresses, character, and the sources from which they were aided—the detection by this means of imposters and rounders, and the restriction of the great stream of charity to its legitimate object of assisting without pauperizing the deserving poor.⁴

During the winter of 1873-1874 nearly 1,400 cases were registered by agencies or individual benefactors, and whenever the cards indicated a duplication, visitors from the Bureau themselves investigated. The organization functioned for two years before loss of interest or unwillingness on the part of member agencies to send in reports necessitated its closing. The withdrawal of the Association

¹ See p. 51 for a fuller discussion of this experience.
² New York (City) Bureau of Charities, Report of October 1, 1874. The agencies represented were the House of Industry, Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, Children’s Aid Society, City Mission, Commissioners of Charity and Correction, Commissioner of Emigration, Young Women’s Christian Association.
³ Ibid., p. 20.
⁴ “Out-Door Relief Administration in New York City, 1878.” In the Proceedings of the Conference of Charities, 1878, p. 68. (Name later changed to Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction.)
for Improving the Condition of the Poor, the largest relief-giving organization in the city, was the real cause of the failure of the Bureau of Charities. The Association, at first enthusiastic, disapproved the Bureau’s standards of work, feared it would encroach upon the independence of member agencies, and felt that the expense was too great for the returns. It, therefore, was not willing to debar the deserving poor from obtaining help from more than one institution, when their pressing needs were greater than any single source could satisfy, and when the recipients were honest in making known their condition to all the contributors. Every case ought to be left to the discretion of the visitor, under the general instructions from this association.\(^1\)

While these two attempts to bring all the agencies of a city together to meet an emergency took different forms, both included the joint effort of public and private agencies. In view of the strong feeling against public relief which existed at this time, such combination meant more than appeared on the surface. In Indianapolis the group was frankly organized to meet a temporary need. In New York, however, the Bureau of Charities might have been developed into a permanent agency, welding together the 150 or more agencies which were still working quite independently. It was apparent that antagonisms and jealousy stood in the way of successful community planning. These two brief experiments had done no more than show what might be accomplished through joint effort.

**RELIEF MEASURES**

**Public Relief**

One of the main purposes of private agencies which were in process of organization all over the country, was to combat inefficient and demoralizing expenditure of public money. It was little wonder that the increased needs of the depression either sharpened criticism of public relief or rallied its loyal supporters. Feeling was particularly strong in Philadelphia, where outdoor relief during depression years amounted to well over $500,000 annually.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) New York A.I.C.P., Report Explanatory of Its Relation to the Bureau of Charities and Other Charitable Organizations in This City, 1875, pp. 16–17.

\(^2\) Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity, Seventh Annual Report, October, 1885, p. 8.
Experience proves that the public money voted for such relief is often wasted and sometimes stolen. Even when dispensed by honest officials it aggravates the evil it is presumed to relieve. Out-door relief can scarcely ever be discriminate, and is always a strong temptation to imposture. Its effect on taxpayers is misleading, for they suppose their duty to the needy is discharged when they have paid their tax bills. At the same time it directly encourages the idle, the shiftless and degraded to live at the public charge rather than earn their own bread. We maintain that almost everywhere intelligent and hearty cooperation in charitable work would find means to provide for the really needy (except proper almshouse cases) without calling upon contributions from the public purse in the form of Out-door Relief.¹

In addition, the legality of the use of public money was questioned, and the encouragement given to homeless persons to settle in benevolent cities was stressed.

Administrators of public relief where it existed tried various expedients to meet these criticisms and to improve their organization to carry the additional load of the depression. The Indianapolis Committee on Benevolence of the Common Council refused to consider the establishment of a soup house because it was impossible to discriminate between worthy and unworthy poor, and charity would be dispensed to undeserving and dissolute persons; the tendency of such an institution would in some degree at least be to encourage general pauperism, and the soup house would in many instances utterly fail to aid the deserving poor unable to come to it.²

In Boston, where the police had been distributing soup since 1868, the Overseers of the Poor and social agencies also condemned the practice, holding that distribution of soup encouraged pauperism rather than relieved the poor, but a citizens' meeting criticized their stand and retaliated by demanding more complete reports of the work of the Overseers and the admission of the public to their meetings. During the winter of 1873–1874 the police distributed no soup, but the next winter an appropriation of $5,000 was made

¹ Monthly Register of the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity, vol. 6, March 15, 1885, p. 33.
² Indianapolis Journal, November 25, 1873.
UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF IN PERIODS OF DEPRESSION

for this purpose and continued annually.¹ Few people consumed this food at the police stations, most of the 28,000 to 31,000 gallons distributed being taken home for family use.² The distribution lasted usually for three months, or until the demand lessened or the money gave out. Even the committee appointed by the aldermen to investigate reported in 1878 that this inadequate relief only put off a more satisfactory system of public aid.

TABLE 1.—CASES RECEIVING OUTDOOR RELIEF FROM BOSTON OVERSEERS OF THE POOR, 1874 TO 1877, CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO SETTLEMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement status</th>
<th>Fiscal year ending April 30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases having settlement in Boston</td>
<td>1,465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases residing in Boston, settlement elsewhere in state</td>
<td>454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick state paupers (aid refunded by state)</td>
<td>576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-settlement cases (aided temporarily)</td>
<td>759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total cases</td>
<td>3,254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total persons</td>
<td>9,762</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The statistics of the Boston Overseers of the Poor for the years 1874–1877 show a large increase in the numbers receiving public relief, which was probably in part the result of a change in settlement laws in Massachusetts in 1874, increasing the numbers having legal claim upon the public treasury.³ Table 1, however, prepared from figures taken from reports of the Boston Overseers of the Poor, shows that the number of non-settlement cases increased from 1874 to 1877 in about the same proportion as those having settlement rights. These transients in the eyes of the law may have been attracted in part by Boston's generosity, but the more compelling attraction was doubtless the hope of finding work. In

¹ (Boston) Overseers of the Poor, Eleventh Annual Report, May, 1875, p. 13.
² (Boston) Board of Aldermen, Minutes of City Council for April 5, 1875, p. 192; Boston Daily Journal, April 18, 1876; April 4, 1877.
³ (Boston) Overseers of the Poor, Eleventh Annual Report, May, 1875, p. 6. The changes reduced the period of residence necessary for eligibility to public relief from ten years to five, and the previous payment of taxes for three years instead of five. Women were granted settlement rights apart from their husbands.
either case the depression rather than the new settlement laws would have accounted for this increase in their numbers.

To meet the increase, additional office interviewers and visitors were employed, and although some undeserved assistance may have been granted, the Board of Overseers in May, 1875, were convinced of the value of their system of "close and constant visitation" in controlling the expenditure of public relief.

Boston's maintenance and strengthening of its previous method of public relief forms a sharp contrast to the frequent changes resorted to in Brooklyn. There, work of the Commissioners of Charity from 1872 to 1877 increased 100 per cent, until in the latter year, one person in every ten was receiving outdoor relief. With paid investigators employed in 1875, it was found that the expenditure of every dollar for food or fuel cost 60 cents. The next year the visiting system was abandoned and applicants were compelled to take oath that they were paupers. In 1876-1877 a corps of 200 to 300 volunteer visitors was organized, but the following year the whole system was found to be illegal and was abandoned. One wonders what unemployed men and their families thought of such vacillation in administration. Such lax methods had undoubtedly encouraged indiscriminate giving.

In 1874 the Commissioners of Public Charities in New York City suspended outdoor relief during the summer, as had been customary, but they extended the period of inactivity to January, 1875, because their appropriation was exhausted. The result was that the unusual distress of the early winter had to be met by private relief, in large part by the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor. The shortage of public funds continued through the next year. Money collected from the Excise Fund was distributed annually on a pro rata basis to private relief agencies and institutions by the Board of Estimate and Apportionment. The Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor heretofore had declined to accept such public money, but in December, 1876, it was thought that as its treasury had become exhausted by the heavy drafts made upon it in the previous two years, and as the continued

1 Ibid., The various funds and classes of expenditure are so complicated it is not possible to state the amount of relief spent for these families.
UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF IN PERIODS OF DEPRESSION

depression of business had lessened the power of steady contributors to continue their donations, with the unusual distress prevailing throughout the city, the Board would be remiss in their duty if they should refuse.¹

In the winter of 1876–1877, the Association therefore accepted $19,000 from the city and gave it to investigated families mainly as food tickets in amounts from 25 cents to $3.00. A sum of $2,400 was accepted and similarly spent the following year.² Later in that year the organization shared with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul the task of investigating cases that applied for free city coal. This, however, was not an outgrowth of the depression, but rather the means by which the private agencies attempted to show the public agency the evils of its system.³

In Indianapolis, as has been stated, the city issued funds to two of the private agencies to meet the emergency. Newspapers record the appropriation of $1,250 to each society during 1873–1874.⁴ Other public money may have been used to eke out contributions from individuals. In the winter of 1874–1875 each society received $3,500 from the city, given "with the understanding that the recipients were hereafter to give the city fathers a rest."⁵

No common pattern can be traced in the methods used by public departments to meet the emergency. The existing set-up was strengthened in one city; another tried a confusing variety of practices; a third, suffering from lack of funds for outdoor relief as such, continued to appropriate its Excise Fund to private agencies; while still another, failing to secure approval for the appointment of a commissioner of charities, gave public money to the leading private agencies to meet the city’s needs.

PRIVATE RELIEF

Established Agencies. Modifications in the function of established private agencies to meet the emergency had their origin in three different sources:

1. Community needs were ascertained, and by general agree-

² Idem, Thirty-sixth Annual Report, October, 1879, p. 15.
³ Ibid., pp. 35–36.
⁴ Indianapolis Journal, December 2, 1873; Indianapolis Daily Sentinel, March 3, 1874.
⁵ Indianapolis Daily Sentinel, February 23, 1875.
ment the field of activity of each agency was fixed, with subsequent modification according to the trend of pressure;

2. Demands from single groups in communities required changes in the scope of the work;

3. Diminished income in the later years of the depression led agencies to limit the extent of their work without relation to the needs of the whole community.

Indianapolis is an outstanding example of modification resulting from community planning. The city had grown so large that friendly neighborliness, and the collection of supplies for central distribution by going from door to door with a basket were no longer feasible. The Indianapolis Benevolent Society and the Ladies' Aid Society for the Relief of the Poor were jealous rivals, and several efforts to combine them had failed because the latter agency did not wish to lose its identity. The planning committee, as earlier described, finally designated these two societies to receive public appropriations from the City Council. In early December, 1873, the city was divided geographically between the two agencies, a redistribution later in the month again equalizing the load, as each agency watched the other carefully to make sure that the burden was carried equally. Supplementing their efforts, an observer, in the Indianapolis Journal, under date of December 13, 1873, stated: "Other societies are also doing noble work in their respective districts, but none will be conducted on such an extensive scale as the two named, which reached every part of the city." The Ladies' Aid Society opened two supply houses in their section of the city, members volunteering to act as distributors. The expenditures of this Society in 1873 were $4,361. In addition, 1,500 pieces of old clothing and 400 yards of new goods were distributed. In the period December, 1874, to October, 1875, the burden had increased so that "between six and seven thousand dollars in clothing, fuel, and provisions were distributed." The large number of applicants from the better classes was noted.

In Chicago a clash with a radical labor group brought about a change in policy and scope of work for the Chicago Relief and Aid Society. After relieving the sufferers from the Chicago fire of 1871,
the agency found itself in 1873 with a balance in a special Fire Fund collected from all over the world, which, with accrued interest, amounted to $700,000. The agency intended holding this sum for possible future needs of the fire sufferers, and had made no plans to use it to relieve unemployment. The Socio-Political Association, an “Anarchist” group so called, organized 20,000 marchers, who appeared before the Common Council on December 22, 1873, and complained that relief societies did not reach those in need, as they extended aid more generously to those referred to them by persons of influence. Public work sufficient to employ 500 men was called for by the workmen, who also demanded representation on the committee to select the workers, as “they knew who was hungry.” Since no municipal money was available, the mayor agreed to ask the Relief and Aid Society to lend the city the necessary amount from the Fire Fund. A conference of the mayor, a committee from the Common Council, representatives of the workingmen, and the Executive Committee of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society met on December 26, 1873. The relief agency refused to place funds in the city treasury to cover work-relief expenditures, but in answer to charges made by the workingmen that money for the fire sufferers had been diverted to personal use by members of the Board, offered to produce the whole $700,000 in cash. The Society further offered to extend its work in any way suggested.

No doubt the Society was justified, legally and otherwise, in refusing to lend its relief funds to the city. The plan proposed offered no guarantees that workers would be selected on a basis of their ascertained need; and the presumption was that contracts would be let, as usual, to contractors who would select their own employes. Commenting editorially the Chicago Daily Tribune in its December 27, 1873, issue said:

As the Society never has raised more than $44,000 a year in any year except the fire year when the whole world came to the help of the city, where would the poor be if, with cold weather not at hand yet and spending $1,200 a day, it were not for this relief fund and for the prudent management who has surrounded it. The cry of “bread or blood” might be raised in our streets this winter or might still be, if the Society were weak enough

1 Chicago Daily Tribune, December 27, 1873.
to pour it all out in the form of two weeks' wages . . . and leave the destitute to shift for themselves thereafter.

The meeting with the mayor on December 26 was followed by a mass demonstration; 1,000 workingmen applied for assistance at one time at the office of the Relief and Aid Society. The staff of the agency was swamped. Hoping to discourage a few, the desperate superintendent informed them that it would be necessary, before relief could be given, for each one to produce a statement that he had been vaccinated, or to undergo vaccination in the doctor's office on the floor above. The crowd ascended to the doctor's office in such numbers that the safety of the building was threatened, and police had to be called to eject them, with the promise that provision for relief would be made for the most needy by that afternoon and the others visited later. Several days afterward a larger crowd of 2,000 applicants appeared. They were told that 50 new visitors were already in the field making the necessary investigation. These visitors reported 600 visits in their first day, and the officers stayed late to decide on the applications. Persons "deserving relief" were found to be about 40 per cent of the applicants, the accepted cases being mostly unemployed men and their families. Again quoting the Chicago Daily Tribune: "The present policy is to give relief in all doubtful cases, where the necessarily hurried visitation has failed to produce a very decided opinion with regard to the applicant's claims to charity." To relieve the crowded building and streets

[the Superintendent] through the press, and by placards in different languages was [directed] to give notice that . . . applications received by letter can receive more prompt attention than those made in person, and all who can do so are requested to apply through the post with the recommendation of some well known citizen. Persons receiving aid from the county and single able-bodied men are not aided by this society.¹

During the next twelve months the Society spent $383,678, and had under care 9,719 families, about half of whom were recorded as fire victims.² In 1875 expenditures dropped to $149,196, while families cared for numbered 5,984.³

¹ Chicago Relief and Aid Society, Minutes of the Board of Directors, January 2, 1874.
³ Idem, Eighteenth Annual Report, December, 1875, pp. 9, 11.
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After the first winter's forced expansion the Board of Directors set about evaluating the experience of the Relief and Aid Society and planning a future program. The continued presence in the treasury of a large sum from the Fire Fund might tend, they felt, to "release our citizens from their obligations to give to the poor." Administrative difficulties in keeping the money permanently invested exclusively for fire victims would be augmented by the public criticism that no large sum was required for this particular purpose, while the need in the city remained great. It was decided, therefore, to transfer the money to the Society's general fund, which would arouse "no more public criticism than is always connected with the custody of large sums of money."

The lean years of the depression had so marked an effect upon contributions to social agencies that they were forced to resort to new expedients for raising money. The Union Benevolent Association of Philadelphia had cared for over 6,000 families during the year ending May, 1878.\(^1\) "With the large showing of work performed, they were unable to meet the demands upon them, and were compelled to borrow several thousand dollars to carry them through the season."\(^2\)

The Boston Provident Association, whose administrative expenses were paid from income of invested funds, used its contributions for relief only. During the first winter of the depression the Society was forced to use $6,500 from a reserve fund to meet its expenditures, which amounted to $29,500.\(^3\) In the next year contributions to the society were "greater than ever before," but about $2,500 was borrowed from invested funds to meet increased expenses.\(^4\) Finally, in 1877, continuous drawing upon reserve funds had been so great that bankruptcy was feared and more careful management was undertaken in order to reduce expenditures for relief. Such management included hiring another paid visitor, for the depression years had shown that decreases in relief might result from the employment of experienced workers. Their famili-

\(^1\) (Philadelphia) Union Benevolent Association, Forty-seventh Annual Report, May, 1878, p. 10.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 15.
\(^3\) Boston Provident Association, Twenty-third Annual Report, October, 1874.
\(^4\) Idem, Twenty-fourth Annual Report, October, 1875, p. 9.
arity with conditions among the poor and their skill in detecting imposters enabled them to save money for the agency.

The New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor resorted to a three days' appeal in six daily papers early in 1874 with gratifying increases in contributions. By the fall of 1876, however, gifts had been so diminished, and continued withdrawals since 1873 from the reserve funds, built up from bequests of earlier years, had reduced reserves to such an extent that it was feared the work of the winter could not be undertaken. Retrenchment took several forms. Efforts to limit work in 1875 and 1877 were directed toward defining more closely the type of distress which the Association was willing to accept for care. In its 1875 report it states:

Aid was consequently limited ... to the sick and disabled—not by their vices and thriftlessness—but by the providence of God; and to special cases of distress coming within its design, needing temporary assistance.

No further definition of these classifications is offered, but when the volunteer visitors received instructions to reduce the number of beneficiaries, they begged to continue relief to a few who did not come within the new rules. The necessity for retrenchment prevailed, and the administrators remarked in connection with volunteer visitors that "familiarity with distress does not, as some suppose, necessarily harden the heart, or blunt its sensibilities ... sound principles are a safer guide in a benevolent work than unreasoning impulse."

Two other means of reducing expenditures were tried. A specified monthly sum for relief was apportioned to each of the districts of the Association in accordance with each district's expenditures for the preceding year. This monthly budgeting of relief, quoting the Association's Thirty-fourth Annual Report, 1877, "has surely, though unconsciously, led to greater discrimination and circumspection in the disposition of the fund, with the still further advantage of placing the responsibility of refusal where it belongs," that is, on the district visitors instead of on the central office. The visitors were urged to consult the Directory of Benevolent Societies and Charities of New York so that the applicants who were turned away might be referred to other agencies. In 1878 "publication
of the names and addresses of visitors was discontinued, as it was believed that practice had encouraged unnecessary application."

In the Chicago Relief and Aid Society which faced diminishing funds in the fall of 1875, clearly defined policies in the classification of cases are to be found. Relief was to be given only in urgent cases not within the category of those eligible to assistance from the County Agent. Further directions as given in the Society's Minutes of the Board of Directors, under date of October 4, 1875, were to

1. Close the account and decline to open it where we have helped a family for a series of years and they still ask assistance, except only cases where, with temporary help, they will become self-supporting.

2. In no case reopen an account where parties return after being sent out of town at our expense.

3. From this date, aid will be rendered only to families or persons who, by temporary assistance, will become self-supporting. Exceptions may be made by the Superintendent in cases of sudden calamity, extraordinary sickness, age or infirmity.

The emergency had brought enough pressure to bear upon the agencies so that classification of their intake and functions was begun. While the conclusions may not always seem logical to us, the process of analysis must have been of permanent value in defining functions which had never before had limits. Relief, if insufficient, was to be saved for those who would most profit by it, and the unemployed were accepted in the group of those temporarily in need of help. To make certain that there were no imposters among the latter, emphasis upon "visitation and thorough investigation" is frequent. Visitors were instructed to find out whether the clients came within the agency's field of activity

... to ascertain the last place of employment of the applicant and the rate of wages paid, and to visit the employer and ascertain the fact as to wages, time of employment and character of the applicant and why he left work. Also to carefully investigate the actual condition of the applicant and report what supplies are found on hand of fuel and food.


2 Chicago Relief and Aid Society, Minutes of the Board of Directors, February 2, 1874.
The New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, while it had disapproved of the work of the local Bureau of Charities, accepted the principle of registration, for in the summer of 1877 it established an alphabetical list of former applicants for relief. The list, “strictly private,” revealed nearly 2,000 who were not entitled to relief “because they had ‘received aid for two successive years’ (and therefore were presumed to be dropping into the ‘chronic’ category), or because they were unmarried men, or because they came properly under the jurisdiction of the Commissioners of Emigration,” for deportation.

Current thinking on the form in which relief should be given was expressed most clearly by the Chicago Relief and Aid Society at the beginning of the depression. Following the Chicago fire, supplies had been purchased wholesale and stored, but “the inevitable waste and loss in handling, and the numerous complaints as to quantity and quality,” led to a change in policy. A shift was made to “regular dealers in different parts of the city, who delivered goods directly to applicants on our order.... Complaints were very frequent of ill-treatment and of neglect in delivering, and the old charge of fraud in quantity and quality of goods ordered was no less frequent than before.” Finally cash was given, except for fuel, blankets, and shoes, and all ground for complaint was removed.

The applicants can in most cases make as good or better use of the money in providing only that which they most need, and being obliged to receive nothing they do not want. The principal objection to the cash policy is the possible abuse of money by some. The proportion of such cases is small, and any kind of goods can very readily be diverted by the intemperate. The mass of worthy, honest, and economical poor should not be treated as thieves and paupers, because large numbers of these last classes attempt to defraud us, or because a few of them may possibly succeed in doing so.

There seems to be nothing to add to such a sound and thorough philosophy of relief. While most agencies still used some relief in

2 Chicago Relief and Aid Society, Sixteenth Annual Report, December, 1873, p. 6.
3 Ibid., pp. 6–7.
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kind, in numerous places cash was given to clients during the seventies. Volunteers were still doing most of the visiting. The trend toward employing more paid workers to head up sections or districts became apparent during this depression. The increase in need brought exceedingly heavy responsibilities to the volunteers. To this fact the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor bore ample testimony in its 1874 report:

The system itself was found adequate to the emergency, and to any that was likely to arise under the action of its long-tried principles. The visitors, stimulated to special efforts by their increased responsibilities, were never before more faithful and devoted. In proof of their fidelity it was shown, that in no previous winter were there so few complaints, either in errors of judgment or of inattention to duty.

This enthusiasm for volunteers of tried experience did not carry over into the new order in this particular agency, for when Robert M. Hartley, the executive of the Association since its beginning, resigned, the new secretary, John Bowne, revolutionized the method of administration. In the fall of 1877 he recommended dividing the city into four or more districts with a paid worker in charge of each district and responsible to Central Office. The expenditure of $75 a month for the salary of a worker and $25 for overhead expenses he felt would be saved through a more discriminating expenditure of relief.\(^1\) The plan was put into operation in the fall of 1878. Since the salary of the executive was reduced by $500 during 1878, “in view of the general reduction in salaries and the falling off of receipts of the Association,” the policy of employing a paid staff in the face of necessary economy seems all the more far-sighted.

Differences in social practice between the seventies and the present time may make it difficult for the reader to realize that the established private agencies made a conscious attempt to fit their resources to emergency needs. Relief per family was, by present standards, low. The record of the public departments had demonstrated clearly the dangers of pauperism from relief. However, the societies did not hesitate to break with long-established custom;

\(^1\) New York A.I.C.P., Thirty-fourth Annual Report, October, 1877, pp. 46–47.
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the future was mortgaged by the use of capital funds; and a definition of the limits of function was clearly articulated. Whether such action was forced upon the agencies by drastic cuts in income, or by demands from the community, the process of analysis shows a hopeful flexibility in thinking. There is a present-day familiarity and soundness in the principles evolved that mark the quality of leadership. The trend in the depression was toward unified organization for social action. As the United Hebrew Charities of Philadelphia remarked, unified work had shown the people "not only throughout the United States, but throughout the world, what can be accomplished by thorough organization, and the formulation of a simple yet comprehensive system of relief, under one directing mind.'\(^1\)

Establishment of New Private Agencies. The establishment of charity organization societies in various large cities, as differentiated from agencies patterned after the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, began in the seventies. A broader approach than relief of the poor alone was indicated by the founders of the new agencies. The whole community was to learn the conditions under which the poor lived and the principles of relief-giving. Emphasis was laid upon co-operation in all charitable efforts, and upon reforms to eliminate the causes of poverty. "The desire to discharge more effectively the social obligations of neighborliness incident to citizenship even in the complex and unneighborly city"\(^2\) was frequently expressed.

Prevailing methods of handling public outdoor relief, as has already been indicated, were arousing much criticism because of their inefficiency and the increase of mendicancy that accompanied them. In Philadelphia not only the disintegrating effect of the public "dole," but the haphazard distribution of private charity had led to the establishment of the Germantown Relief Society in 1873 and the Society for Organizing Charity in 1879 by those who sought "a method by which idleness and begging, now so encouraged, may be suppressed and worthy self-respecting poverty be discovered and

\(^1\) (Philadelphia) United Hebrew Charities, Fifth Annual Report, May, 1874, p. 10.

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relieved at the smallest cost to the benevolent."1 Previous to this, relief funds raised through entertainments reached the poor of Germantown in the form of bread and meat delivered by wagons having "bells attached to the horses. . . . so that the wagon was known to all over town. Many refused to accept such help."2

In some instances a union of smaller existing relief agencies was formed to meet more effectively growing distress among the unemployed, as in the case of the United Hebrew Charities of New York, founded in 1874, and the Organized Charities Association of New Haven, begun in May, 1878. The former organization was the outcome of dissatisfaction with relief distributed by a number of small societies that did not keep in touch with their clients nor work together. The union was not the result of the depression, but was the climax of some six years' agitation on the part of the Hebrew Benevolent and Orphan Asylum, which was the leader in bringing about the change. The depression was under way, however, before the new agency was organized. Realization that federation might bring greater income with which to meet increased needs in the Jewish community during the depression undoubtedly influenced this joint activity. Its rapid growth was shown by the receipts and expenditures for the early years of its existence, as given in the annual reports of the United Hebrew Charities for 1875-1877:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal year ending</th>
<th>Receipts</th>
<th>Expenditures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>$37,007</td>
<td>$29,312</td>
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<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>42,495</td>
<td>39,075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>49,693</td>
<td>45,859</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The increase in expenditures was due partly to unemployment but also to growing demands from the community upon the agency, which were so heavy during 1877-1878 that relief had to be refused in several instances when funds ran low.

The influence of what was happening in England and Germany in organization for work among the poor reached this country. Octavia Hill, best known perhaps for her interest in better housing


for workingmen, was an active district worker in the London Charity Organisation Society. Her writings carried the authority of first-hand knowledge. Dr. Thomas Chalmers, a minister of the Free Church of Scotland, had also become known through the introduction of district visiting in his parish in Glasgow as a protest against mass handling by public relief officials. Experiences with the Elberfeld System of outdoor relief were reported by persons who had visited Germany; others active in the new movement had personal acquaintance with the work of the London Society. Thus the Rev. Charles Gordon Ames, a Unitarian minister, who had recently taken up his duties in Germantown, Pennsylvania, attended a meeting of fellow-citizens called in 1873 to determine the best way to meet the unusual want of the winter with a "plan in his pocket" which included division of the territory into districts with a committee of volunteer visitors for each, and a paid superintendent at a central office to take applications. With the adoption of this plan the Germantown Relief Society became the first agency in the United States to follow charity organization principles.¹

In Buffalo the depression years accentuated the evils of outdoor public relief, so that when the Rev. S. H. Gurteen established the Buffalo Charity Organization Society in December, 1877, his former association with the London society of that name led him to copy many of its principles and to insist that relief in the homes should be left to private charity. In Boston the European and English systems had influenced the formation of the Co-operative Society of Volunteer Visitors among the Poor in 1875, and the Registration Bureau opened in 1876, the latter aiming to put different societies or individuals helping such a person [an applicant applying to several societies for aid] into communication with each other, to possibly lessen their labor, give each the benefit of the other's experience in the case, and it is hoped, sometimes allow of help reaching a person through one instead of several channels.²

These two organizations combined in December, 1879, to form the Associated Charities.

² (Boston) Associated Charities, Tenth Annual Report, November, 1889, p. 18, quoting a memorandum at the time of the organization of the Bureau of Charities.
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Behind this activity in the establishment of new societies were the increased demands of the depression years. The pressure served to crystallize desire to secure a better administration of relief, accompanied by some understanding of other services to the poor. Hard times accentuated the need for new ways of functioning in the field of social service and accelerated the development of the charity organization movement. The exact form taken by this movement was, however, the result of methods pursued abroad rather than the outgrowth of the depression at home; foundations for such organization had been laid before the lean years came.

Emergency Measures. Social agencies of the seventies lost no opportunity to condemn the soup kitchens, free lodgings, and other forms of relief, well intended but poorly administered, which sprang up to meet the emergency. "New organizations it was feared would be served by inexperienced hands subject to the importunities of the imposter and vicious; and a large appropriation would invite the same class to claim a share in its gratuitous distribution."¹ Existing channels of assistance to the poor, if judiciously enlarged, many felt, could have been properly directed to cover the need.

In several parts of New York "a number of small eating-housekeepers, who had made an honest living by their occupation, were almost thrown into bankruptcy by the competition of certain soup kitchens established by religious associations."²

The misery of the poor presented through the columns of The World newspaper in New York City, led to a gift of $30,000 by James Gordon Bennett, to be distributed to the destitute, from engine houses and municipal buildings. In the city of New York 34 soup kitchens, free lunches, free dormitories, and other agencies of this temporary nature were opened. It was said that from 5,000 to 7,000 persons were fed daily from the soup kitchens alone, the most popular form of such liberality.³ In Indianapolis the employes of a theater and of the Indianapolis Journal contributed a part of their weekly wage to funds for the unemployed.

¹ (Boston) Overseers of the Poor, Tenth Annual Report, May, 1874, pp. 6–7.
² Davis, Robert T., "Pauperism in the City of New York." In the Journal of Social Science, July, 1874, p. 77.
³ (New York) A.I.C.P., Thirty-first Annual Report, October, 1874, p. 34.
While it is impossible to measure accurately the number and work of these temporary agencies, there is evidence to show that they existed in many cities. In Boston the South End Bureau of Charity organized in February, 1874, established two bureaus in different parts of the city for the distribution of cast-off clothing, fuel, provisions, and money to the "really destitute and deserving."\(^1\) The Relief Committee of East Boston, probably organized to meet emergency needs, closed its work of 1875–1876 in April, having spent $1,290. Families helped numbered 287, almost one-third of whom were assisted not more than twice with groceries, clothing, or fuel.\(^2\)

In Philadelphia the emergency relief agencies again took the form of the ward associations which had flourished in the depression of 1857–1858. Claiming that public officials were unable to meet the extraordinary demands, the Fourteenth Ward Relief Association held its first meeting on November 4, 1873. The 11 precincts of the ward were divided into sections, each in charge of two women and two men, who raised funds and took care of the families through orders upon a steward in charge of supplies for the whole ward. As many as 251 orders a week were issued and the pressure continued until after the middle of March, 1874. During the winter 747 families had been relieved, of whom about 250 were considered under "regular care" by the agency, each having received an average of 17 orders. The Committee on Supplies decided upon the following articles as "wholesome, nutritious, easily prepared for the table and within the scope of the object of the Association: Flour, corn meal, prepared mush, beans, rice, sugar, tea, coffee and potatoes. To these herring and codfish were subsequently added." Bread, meats, and vegetables were frequently contributed and coal was purchased. Physicians and druggists gave their professional services and medicine when required.

To the ladies was assigned the arduous, responsible and not infrequently unpleasant duty of visiting families and individuals, reported or presumed to be in distress and demanding relief. Their mission was one of exceeding delicacy, requiring the exercise of that tact, discrimination and womanly sympathy which was necessary in order to protect the Associa-

\(^1\) Boston Daily Journal, February 18, 1874.
\(^2\) Ibid., April 21, 1876.
tion against imposition and at the same time extend needed relief to all the deserving poor.

The men of the Precinct Committee solicited subscriptions.

The regular, frequent and kindly visits of the ladies; the close circumspection manifested by them in the granting of orders; the economy practised in the purchase of provisions, coal and other needful supplies, and the comparatively few cases of imposition, justify the assertion that pauperism received no fostering help from this source.¹

Organization in the Eighth Ward was similar, although it was not begun until January, 1877. Relief was extended to residents in 16 wards other than the eighth, in the form of coal, clothing, and groceries.² Undoubtedly such emergency organizations were of an entirely different character from the soup kitchens and lodging-houses. Their organization was carefully thought out, and the principles upon which relief was administered were very like those of the charity organization societies. Thoroughness, careful planning, and widespread interest characterized the Philadelphia movement, based as it was upon small units and frequent home visiting. The experience of Philadelphia seems to show that not all emergency agencies needed to function in the haphazard harmful way of setting up soup kitchens and breadlines.

CARE OF THE HOMELESS

At the beginning of the depression the prevailing method of caring for the homeless was to put them up overnight at the police stations. Gradually public realization developed of the need for more adequate care and for some form of work in return for shelter and food.

In New York City during the first three months of 1874, lodgers in police station houses, according to the Thirty-first Annual Report of the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, numbered about 30,000 a month, of whom more than two-fifths were women. About 22 per cent of them were natives, over 52 per cent were immigrants from Ireland, and among the

¹ The material on the Fourteenth Ward Relief Association of Philadelphia is from the Report of the Executive Committee of that Association, 1874.
² (Philadelphia) Eighth Ward Relief Association, Report, 1877, pp. 5-6.
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remainder were 37 different nationalities. Mere numbers do not indicate the wretchedness of their condition.

[They were] called "revolvers" because they were not [sic] allowed to spend but one or two nights a month in each station-house. This rule, however, did not hurt them much, for we had just enough station-houses to provide for them by this system of revolving, which gave to them their distinctive name. These places were filthy in the extreme. The casuals slept on planks, of which there were two tiers. The atmosphere was so foul that it made the policemen, who occupied another part of the building, sick.¹

When the chief of police, under pressure, sent these habitual tramps or "revolvers" to the workhouse as a means of forcing them to work for their lodging, the number seeking shelter dropped in one week from 850 to 250.

In Boston also, at the beginning of the seventies, men were lodged in police stations although women were sent to the Chardon Street Temporary Home, operated by the Overseers of the Poor. The Home not only cared for 1,124 women during 1873–1874 but also looked after children, including lost children, and secured employment for some of the lodgers. It sent some applicants to the Tewksbury Almshouse. The Temporary Home fed all who came to it, furnishing 20,030 meals during 1873–1874, an increase of 8,000 over the previous year.² In an inquiry covering four months, from December 11, 1873, to early March, 1874, it was learned that only about 20 per cent of those who came for meals were residents of Boston.

The arrangements for shelter in the police stations were far from satisfactory. Those who wanted only shelter objected to sleeping side by side with those who were confined for drunkenness or some other violation of the law.

[The men] were huddled together in their damp, reeking clothes, no bed but a hard bench, no food if hungry, turned out at daybreak into the snow of a winter morning. . . . this method of caring for the poor tramps was utterly barbarous and heartless, and was imposing upon the police a dis-

² (Boston) Overseers of the Poor, Tenth Annual Report, May, 1874, p. 10.
agreeable duty, for which no pretense of accommodation was made, either in the way of furnishing bedding or . . . food.\(^1\)

Recalling the fact that the police in Boston were at this time also supposed to be distributing soup to the poor, we must presume that time for their regular duties must have been hard to find.

Under the Massachusetts Laws of 1875, Chapter 70, the Overseers of the Poor were given full charge of the homeless. They were disturbed by the increasing number of applicants and by the demanding manner of these able-bodied men who sought food and shelter. A woodpile was installed at the municipal centers and two hours' work required before dinner could be obtained. Later, persons applying at the police stations for shelter were also required to chop wood.\(^2\) Many appreciated the opportunity to work, but so large a number refused to make this effort that nearly 10,000 fewer meals were served than during the previous year. Satisfaction with the labor test led to its more extensive use. The more permanent guests at the Temporary Home were employed in carrying on the work of the institution, and it was felt that if there had been available more varied work, both indoor and out, which was fitted to all conditions and seasons and to both sexes and every age, the results would have been even more satisfactory.

During 1877–1878, at the request of the Boston chief of police, a schoolhouse damaged by fire was repaired through a special appropriation and homeless men were sent for shelter to this Wayfarers' Lodge instead of to police stations. Although the depression was still apparent in industry, the expenditures of the Overseers of the Poor during this year decreased because of the effectiveness of the labor tests. Not only wood-cutting but breaking stone for the roads was undertaken, and for those less fitted for severe labor, chair-making and other light work was provided.\(^3\)

The depression years in Boston resulted, then, in more carefully organized and effective care for the homeless, no longer under the police department but entirely under the Overseers of the Poor. Introduction of the work test in spite of widespread unemploy-

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\(^1\) Ring, Thomas F., "The Boston Wayfarers' Lodge." In the Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction, 1885, p. 321.

\(^2\) Boston Daily Journal, March 24, 1876.

\(^3\) (Boston) Overseers of the Poor, Fourteenth Annual Report, May, 1878, p. 11.
ment, greatly reduced the number of applicants for city shelter and food.

PUBLIC WORKS AND WORK RELIEF

Public works, not previously planned, but projected especially to care for the unemployed, were looked upon in the seventies as one way of keeping families off the "charity lists." Public works consisted of road-building or other outdoor work requiring unskilled labor. No mention was made of the large number of skilled workmen who could be benefited only to a limited degree by such enterprises. In fact it was the Indianapolis Trades Assembly, representing 3,000 skilled trade union members, that requested the Common Council to provide public works for the unemployed. Regretting the action of workingmen in other cities whose demands had been "bread or blood," they asked employment

... for the numbers of workingmen now suffering destitution and almost starvation, by causing to be prosecuted certain public works which are a necessity to the city, and which can be done cheaper now than the same labour can be performed in the spring, such as building sewers, bridges, repairing streets, and so forth, thereby doing a charity to many impoverished families and at the same time rendering a benefit to the taxpayer.¹

In 1877 the New York State legislature granted the city of Kingston permission "to raise funds to employ idle men in breaking stone for public roads" as a direct means of ameliorating unemployment.² In Boston in December, 1875, the Committee on Paving, at the order of the Board of Aldermen who were concerned over the necessity of furnishing work for the unemployed, made arrangements for labor on the streets, breaking stones, grading streets, and removing rock from ledges. Citizens of Boston with dependent families, upon application to the Overseers of the Poor, were eligible to such employment at a wage of $1.00 a day. This wage, it was felt, would provide their families with the necessities of life and prevent them from "losing their self-respect" through the acceptance of charity. Later a limit of 300 daily was placed on the

¹ Indianapolis Journal, December 22, 1873.
number so employed. The wages paid were properly charged off against the appropriation for paving.\(^1\) An item in the Boston Daily Journal for January 3, 1876, gave the number employed a few weeks later as 126 and complained that the men did not even earn the small amount they received. On the other hand, general approval of the effort was indicated in a report the next fall, signed by Edward Everett Hale as one of the vice-presidents of the Industrial Aid Society, a private agency much concerned over the employment of those thrown out of work and itself the sponsor of several work-relief projects. Dr. Hale wrote in regard to wages as a substitute for alms:

In the nature of things, there is no reason why street-mending should be a work of charity. Still, as the city of Boston is, by its Street Department, a large employer of unskilled labor; as a great deal of work, in the breaking of stones and perhaps in other lines of street work, might be done in winter which would naturally be done in summer,—it does not seem unreasonable to ask that early arrangements may be made for taking on as many laborers as possible in the winter months.\(^2\)

The low daily wage of $1.00 during the winter was justified by Dr. Hale on the ground that in summer the competition of farm work and other lines of active industry was large, a point hardly applicable, however, to the state of industry in the seventies.

Work relief provided by the Industrial Aid Society of Boston initiated in the winter of 1875–1876, was undertaken mainly as a test of the willingness of the unemployed to work, and in the belief that any work, no matter how little, was preferable to charity. The agency started a wood yard and work in moving gravel. The Protective Union of Sewing Women, an organization of working-women, was given $200 with the understanding that they would raise a similar amount. Before the group disbanded it had developed an active employment office, a soup kitchen where soup was sold at cost, and had hired a group of women to do the work, although at very low wages. Looking for a larger project upon which the unemployed might be used, especially in winter when so

\(^1\) (Boston) Board of Aldermen, Minutes of City Council for December 27, 1875, p. 753.

many avenues of work were closed, the Industrial Aid Society made special arrangements with the Fitchburg Railroad and other steam and horse railroads to furnish workers at any time of the day or night to clear away snow and ice from the tracks. Ten cents an hour was paid for day work and 15 cents an hour for night work. The railroads, when convinced that the work could be done satisfactorily in this way, reimbursed the society for wages paid out. The amount of employment depended entirely upon the number of snow storms severe enough to require large squads of men. During the year ending October, 1876, only 177 men had been so employed, but during the next year the railroads gave work to 569 men, not all of whom were employed shoveling snow.\(^1\)

A few of the men proved to be unworthy; but the great majority did well and some of them came from quite a distance, in order to meet the early train that took them to their work. In this way the sincerity of those was tested who applied for assistance and who asserted that they only needed work.\(^2\)

The Boston work-relief project was perhaps open to criticism on the grounds that it provided workers for a particular group of employers in one field of industry and for other reasons noted in the following quotation:

> What more has been effected by all this special array of machinery and effort, than to divert work from one channel through which it was employing the poor into another channel, through which it is accomplishing a like purpose? In other words, what more has been done by this well-meant movement than to monopolize an amount of work for the special benefit of certain [workers], to the injury of others equally needy and deserving.\(^3\)

Irregular work for necessarily short periods, and with such low wage rates, took on the nature of a work test, but the agency felt that employment was the best form of charity, even if the wages were not a full equivalent for a man's services.

The Industrial Aid Society also opened a workroom for women where under volunteer supervision they were employed cutting,

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\(^1\) (Boston) Overseers of the Poor, Fourteenth Annual Report, May, 1878, p. 48.


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sewing, and knitting garments which were later given to the women. Since no wages except the finished garments were given, the workroom was in fact a sewing school rather than a work-relief project. Many of the women did not know how to sew; they were eager to learn, and quiet when "lady-teachers read to them stories that they could comprehend, as is done often in a family circle."\(^1\)

\(^1\) Boston Industrial Aid Society for the Prevention of Pauperism, Forty-first Annual Report, October, 1876, p. 6.
CHAPTER IV

1893–1897: STUDY AND MEASUREMENT BEGIN

THE COURSE OF THE DEPRESSION

On November 20, 1890, the greatest banking house in England, Baring Brothers, failed. Apprehension seized the markets of the whole world and precipitated a liquidation of merchandise and securities that developed into a rapid decline of prices in the United States markets. Excellent crops, especially wheat, and improvement in industry brought a revival in the latter part of 1891. The re-election of Grover Cleveland as president in 1892 stabilized political unrest but fundamentally business was still in a precarious state, apprehensive of the effect on foreign trade consequent on high tariffs and of further troubles due to depreciation of the national currency. Heavy speculation resulted in a flood of bankruptcies among business firms and railroads, which began early in 1893.

Conditions in 1893 were described as follows:

Trade and industry were disorganized, and every department of industrial life was affected. The price of silver fell greatly, owing to the closing of the India mints; western silver mines were shut down, and their employees thrown out of work. During the year 573 banks and banking institutions failed, mostly in the West and South. Gold and other forms of currency were hoarded and a premium of 4 per cent was offered by money-brokers for cash. Commercial failures increased greatly; from 4,171 in the six months, April 1 to October 1, 1892, they grew to 8,105 during the same period in 1893, with liabilities of $284,663,624, as against $41,110,322 in the previous year. Several important railroad systems—the Philadelphia and Reading, the Erie, the Northern Pacific, and the Union Pacific—failed; one-fourth of the railway capital of the country was in the hands of receivers; earnings fell off and new construction was suspended. The production of both coal and iron declined in consequence of the lessened demand. Finally, the farmers were involved in the general distress by the ruinous failure of the corn crop in 1894, and the falling
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off of the European demand for wheat, the price of which fell to less than fifty cents a bushel.¹

Among workingmen, the struggle for recognition of labor unions was intensified by suffering from low wages and unemployment. Strikes of the United Mine Workers in Ohio and of employees in the Pullman Company in 1894 resulted in failure for the workers. At the Homestead plant of the Carnegie Steel Company a strike over wages culminated in a battle between the company's Pinkerton detectives and the workers, in which a dozen men were killed and large numbers on both sides seriously wounded. The union was broken.² Numerous other attempts by workmen met with similar failure.

EARLY MANIFESTATIONS OF NEED IN MINING STATES

The effects of the depression struck first in the mining states, especially in Michigan and Colorado. In two mining counties of Michigan, where operations were of recent origin, the "degree of stagnation and poverty [was] quite beyond anything (in proportion to the number of their inhabitants) that we find elsewhere."³ With a total population of approximately 32,000, $90,000 was spent to care for 17,000 inhabitants during the winter of 1893–1894. The amount of money spent per person was thus comparatively low, but the total relief expenditure was impressive for those days.

In Colorado the sudden decline of silver closed mines, smelters, and factories. Many unemployed throughout the state drifted to Denver, where between July 1 and September 1, 1893, the state commissioner of labor estimated that 14,000 were thrown out of work in the city, while other estimates of the total number of unemployed varied from 10,000 to 20,000. To meet the situation temporarily, "Camp Relief" was maintained for a few weeks in the summer. The Denver Trades and Labor Assembly began the pro-

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ject but the state, county, and city soon came to its assistance. Under military discipline the camp, constructed and maintained by the labor of the unemployed, was equipped to shelter about 1,500 men at a time and to give them two meals a day. The cost of its maintenance for the seven weeks of its existence was $4,000 plus contributed provisions, furniture, and tents, the value of which was not easy to estimate.¹

Under the circumstances the camp seemed an absolute necessity, but it existed only long enough to give Denver a chance to consider a wiser plan of relief. It took but a short time to convince the management that with an increased distribution of alms invariably comes an increased outcry for more alms.²

The city therefore appropriated $15,000 for paving from funds on hand, the work to be done by married men at a wage of $1.50 for an eight-hour day, and also let contracts to the amount of nearly $500,000 for the building of sewers. The latter while not an emergency measure helped the situation.³ Such employment together with work on ranches, a revival in gold mining, and free transportation offered by railroads in returning 1,500 to 2,000 men to their homes in states east of Colorado lessened the numbers of those in need.⁴ Thereafter the unemployed were cared for by the Charity Organization Society and through the enlarged activities of two gospel missions, one of which opened a wood yard where three hours' work entitled the men to three meals and lodging. The latter plan superseded one by which charitable people had purchased five-cent meal tickets and ten-cent lodging slips and had given them to those begging on the streets. With the opening of the wood yard it was felt that street-begging had disappeared. The lodging-house and restaurant remained in operation 222 days, feeding an average of 460 persons a day and lodging 40 at night.

⁴ Shaw, Albert, “Relief for the Unemployed in American Cities.” In the Review of Reviews, vol. 9, January, 1894, pp. 32–33.
Recoveries and Recessions Reflected in Relief Work

In most sections of the country unemployment relief measures were not necessary until the late autumn and winter of 1893–1894. Improvement in the iron and steel industry, rise in commodity prices, and revival of imports indicated a slight upturn in financial conditions in 1895, followed by a slump in industry which lasted until the middle of 1897. Evidence of these fluctuations exists in records of the relief measures for the period. Several of the central relief committees, so numerous in the depression of the nineties, functioned only during the first winter or two, leaving the distress of the later years to agencies already established.

In Philadelphia, for example, where the Permanent Relief Committee ceased its activities after the first winter, the Twenty-third Ward Association, according to its annual report, found numbers of families in need during the revival of 1895, and "there being fewer charitable organizations in existence, this Association . . . felt the drain." Also in that city almost the whole of 1896 was characterized by losses in trade, scarcity of employment, and low rates of wages, with the result that applications at district offices of the Society for Organizing Charity totaled 27,685, a number only slightly below that of 1894 and larger than the numbers applying during any earlier year.¹

The report of the New York Charity Organization Society for the year ending June 30, 1897, stated that it was not in a position to determine the exact amount of distress. It expressed itself as follows:

Many sensitive persons will suffer rather than accept charity, even from their relatives and neighbors; while there are many more who would refuse to apply for assistance at an office. Social Settlements, Day Nurseries, Mission Churches and Labor Organizations are best able to gauge the extent of this poverty, but there has been no general attempt to gather and formulate their experiences.

With such limitations in mind, however, the agency's report covering the eighteen months ending July 1, 1896, comments upon the more favorable conditions among the poor indicated in the "ma-

¹ Monthly Register of the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity, vol. 18, February, 1897, p. 28.
1893–1897: Study and Measurement Begin

Materially lessened” demands upon the charitable resources of the city. In February, 1897, a report authorized by the Conference of Charities, estimated that

The amount of destitution during the present winter has been somewhat greater than at the corresponding period of '96 or '95, but not as great as in '94. Neither the number of applicants for relief nor the amounts distributed by relief giving agencies showed any material increase over that of either of the two preceding winters.¹

In spite of reported improvements in general conditions during 1895, the Boston Associated Charities' statistics showed a “greater continuance of distress” than general opinion indicated. There were differences among various sections of the city due to more activity in certain industries than in others, but the average for the city as a whole, even allowing for the increasing proportion in which cases were referred to this agency, showed the presence of great need. Applications to the agency noted in the following table indicate the seasonal as well as yearly changes.²

**TABLE 2. APPLICATIONS RECEIVED BY BOSTON ASSOCIATED CHARITIES IN 1894 AND 1895 COMPARED WITH AVERAGE FOR PRECEDING SEVEN YEARS, BY MONTHS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Average seven years, 1887–1893</th>
<th>Fiscal years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1894</td>
<td>1895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>1,046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Entire year | 1,534 | 3,557 | 2,175 |

In 1896 in Boston, paralysis of business and unemployment were so marked that the situation was likened to the financial crisis of

UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF IN PERIODS OF DEPRESSION

1893, although the sad experience with emergency relief work carried on in 1893–1894 was still so vivid that public officials and established relief-giving agencies were allowed to carry on their work quietly and effectively "without interference on the part of the sympathetic but inexperienced public."¹ Almost a year later the same prostration in business was noted and the same distress among the poor, still handled by existing agencies as best they could without recourse to new organizations.

CONTEMPORARY ESTIMATES OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND STUDIES OF RELIEF MEASURES

ESTIMATES OF UNEMPLOYMENT

In the first year or two of the depression of the nineties, widespread efforts were made to ascertain the extent of unemployment. In previous depressions estimates had been numerous. One person's guess seemed as good as another's, whether that person had had access to authentic and significant sources or merely presented general figures based on a small area of a city. During the nineties methods used had at least a semblance of scientific approach. Reliable sources of information were sought, compared with one another, and causes of discrepancy considered. Figures for the same area still varied, but there was at least frank criticism of their accuracy and of the reliability of methods used in gathering data. On the whole, however, the difference between the situation in this and earlier depressions lay more in the amount of interest and effort than in the quality of the results.

For one thing, unemployment was recognized as existing at all times, varying with the seasons and with the occupation.

This problem must be looked upon as a more or less permanent one, and one that must be attacked, if attacked at all, by slow and patient methods. Evidence is too clear that even in so-called normal times there is an amount of non-employment which occasions suffering.² Again, the difference between the wilfully idle and the unemployed was brought out. Dr. James W. Walk, general secretary of the

¹ (Boston) Board of Overseers of the Poor, Thirty-third Annual Report, February 1, 1896, to January 31, 1897, p. 13.
² Report of the Massachusetts Board to Investigate the Subject of the Unemployed, March 13, 1895. Wright and Potter Printing Company, Boston, 1895, Part IV, pp. iii and iv.
Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity, commented that while a conservative estimate of those out of work in his city on November 1, 1893, would be 40,000, a “large majority of these people were thrifty and had made accumulations during prosperous times upon which they now depend for subsistence,” so that those in actual want would not reach this large number. Charles D. Kellogg, general secretary of the New York Charity Organization Society, was also conscious of necessary precautions in estimating unemployment due to the depression:

At all times and especially in winter there is a considerable number of people [ten per cent at his guess] accustomed to work who are [now] temporarily idle as the normal condition of their crafts and pursuits. . . . Moreover there is always in a great city a considerable ratio of people who are chronic idlers.

Furthermore the value of a yearly industrial census as an index of unemployment was clearly brought out. The Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor had been collecting annual figures from the manufacturing industries, by years from 1886, and by months from 1889. Data on employment for the state as a whole were available on the monthly, seasonal, and yearly variations in factories. The returns represented nearly 70 per cent of the industrial output and capital of the state. The sample of establishments reporting monthly figures included 3,041 plants in 1889 and 4,397 in 1893, with a range of employes from 264,834 in the earlier year to 319,818 in the latter. In each of the years shown in the following table 100 per cent is set as the aggregate number of persons engaged in the month of greatest employment. The percentage figures of the table represent the extent to which aggregate employment in factories in each month fell short of aggregate factory employment in the month of maximum employment in that

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1 Shaw, Albert, “Relief for the Unemployed in American Cities.” In the Review of Reviews, vol. 9, January, 1894, pp. 33–34.
UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF IN PERIODS OF DEPRESSION

year. This is a crude method of depicting the monthly fluctuation in employment, but the percentages are not in any sense a measure of unemployment because of the uncertain significance of the base chosen for the percentages of each year. They do show the rapid decline of employment during the latter half of 1893.¹

TABLE 3.—PERCENTAGES OF "UNEMPLOYMENT" IN MASSACHUSETTS FACTORIES, 1889 TO 1893, BY MONTHS

Figures are percentages of the number of workers employed in the month of maximum employment in each year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>1889</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1892</th>
<th>1893</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>2.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>8.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>17.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>22.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>. .</td>
<td>. .</td>
<td>. .</td>
<td>. .</td>
<td>15.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>. .</td>
<td>15.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>14.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The value of a continuous series of data is also indicated in the later use made of figures collected in the Massachusetts census of manufacturers to compute an index of employment in that state for the years 1889–1925.²

Recognition of the need for continuous employment data grew out of an unemployment survey conducted early in 1894 by Chicago Health Department inspectors in packing houses and factories. Plans were discussed for an annual collection of statistics from all business, industrial, and transportation establishments. The data were to be sent in by mail on regular forms, tenement house inspectors or policemen following up delinquents.³

¹ Ibid., pp. 124–125.
³ Chicago News Record, January 20, 1894. Census of the Unemployed.
Estimates of numbers unemployed in the country as a whole during 1893 varied from one million to four and one-half million, the latter based upon trade union figures. Bradstreet published returns from 119 cities in December, 1893, showing 801,055 unemployed, with about 1,956,110 persons dependent upon them. Carlos C. Closson, Jr., of the University of Chicago, relying often on a single correspondent, except in larger cities from which several replies were received, found 523,080 persons idle in 60 cities during the second and third week of November, 1893. His data were supplemented by newspaper items down to the fifteenth of December. The two surveys were therefore made within a few weeks of each other. Although they were made independently, it is possible that the same sources were consulted in the individual cities. For 38 cities from which estimates were obtained by both Closson and Bradstreet the respective totals were 491,000 and 581,950. Even had the results been closer, it would be necessary to recognize the unreliability of this method of estimating the number of unemployed. Certain cities from this group are selected to show the results of the two surveys.\(^1\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Closson's estimates of unemployed</th>
<th>Bradstreet's estimates of unemployed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>38,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>85,000</td>
<td>80,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>62,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indianapolis</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>65,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through reports on relief from individual cities a group of economists also attempted at the time to get a general picture of conditions throughout the country. The data in Table 4 were gathered during the winter of 1893–1894, by sending a schedule of questions to about 50 cities and counties in about 20 states. The table is introduced here not because of any intrinsic value in the figures,\(^1\)

\(^1\) Closson, Carlos C., Jr., "The Unemployed in American Cities." In the Quarterly Journal of Economics, vol. 8, January, 1894, pp. 257–258.
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but merely as an illustration of the poor methodology of the time.¹

TABLE 4.—STATISTICS OF RELIEF IN CERTAIN AMERICAN CITIES DURING THE WINTER OF 1893–1894 COMPILED IN A CONTEMPORARY SURVEY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Population in 1890</th>
<th>Number of persons</th>
<th>Sum paid</th>
<th>Average sum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allegheny City, Penn.</td>
<td>105,287</td>
<td>2,119</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>$18.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>434,439</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>448,477</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>13.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooklyn</td>
<td>806,343</td>
<td>25,353</td>
<td>56,550</td>
<td>2.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>255,664</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>8.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charleston, S. C.</td>
<td>54,055</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>1,100,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cincinnati</td>
<td>296,908</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>114,876</td>
<td>11.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland</td>
<td>261,333</td>
<td>9,086</td>
<td>37,365</td>
<td>4.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>106,713</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Wayne, Ind.</td>
<td>35,393</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartford, Conn.</td>
<td>53,230</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indianapolis</td>
<td>105,436</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>18,718</td>
<td>7.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrence, Mass.</td>
<td>44,654</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>13.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisville, Ky.</td>
<td>161,126</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn, Mass.</td>
<td>55,727</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mansfield, Ohio</td>
<td>13,473</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan counties</td>
<td>32,000</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>91,300</td>
<td>5.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Haven, Conn.</td>
<td>81,298</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>15,050</td>
<td>2.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>1,515,301</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>1,046,664</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>250,000</td>
<td>16.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pittsburgh</td>
<td>238,617</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>250,000</td>
<td>16.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providence</td>
<td>132,140</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis</td>
<td>451,770</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>65,000</td>
<td>10.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Paul</td>
<td>133,150</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>208,097</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syracuse, N. Y.</td>
<td>88,143</td>
<td>1,147</td>
<td>5,472</td>
<td>4.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, D. C.</td>
<td>230,392</td>
<td></td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterbury, Conn.</td>
<td>28,646</td>
<td>1,150</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>13.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ "The Relief of the Unemployed in the United States during the Winter of 1893–1894." In the Journal of Social Science, no. 32, November, 1894, pp. 6–12. The questions asked were the following:

1. During what months and for what length of time was special relief thought needful?
2. What was its direct occasion and object?
3. (a) About how many persons were applicants for special aid?
   (b) About how many applied for work, how many for other relief?
4. Of those who received aid, how many were women? Men? Children?
5. (a) How many were actual residents of the city? How many strangers?
   (b) How many were recent immigrants or their children?
   (c) How many had before been paupers? or private beneficiaries?
   (d) How many were also aided at the cost of the city? (If possible, give the sex of these various classes.)

Footnote continued on page 81
The validity of the figures was questioned even by those who compiled the table, for the report of the economists stated:

The number specially aided (beyond the common rate of relief in ordinary years) is, in most of these cities, understated, and in some of them greatly below the true number, because in few places were exact registers kept of all the funds distributed, either as wages or poor-relief, or of the persons or families to whom these funds went. But there seems to be some utility in presenting even statistics so imperfect: they will serve as a basis for future calculations and will call forth a correction of some of the chief errors.

A few of the most probable errors are apparent. Although the figures are presumed to refer to the winter of 1893-1894, the period for which the different cities are reporting may vary. Information was requested on public, private, and emergency set-ups, but the table does not indicate whether there was inclusion of similar types of relief in the replies from all the cities. Undoubtedly the caption "Number of persons" was interpreted in some instances to mean families. New York's average relief figure, more than twice that of any other city, can hardly be explained by a difference in relief policy or in number of agencies reporting. Only a careful comparison of methods used in collecting all the statistics would reveal the real significance of the data. In addition variations in relief policies and in limitations of budgets would have affected the validity of the statistics as a measure of the real need in reported areas.

In individual cities various means were used to estimate unemployment, coupled in a few instances with a plan for determining

Footnote continued from page 80

6. How much money was expended in special relief for the unemployed, and how was it raised?
7. (a) If articles were manufactured in order to provide work, how were these articles sold, and to what amount?
   (b) If unusual public work was undertaken, what were the kinds?
   (c) If private undertakings (buildings, etc.) furnished special employment, to what extent was this done and recorded?
8. (a) Did the relief, in your opinion, produce good results or evil, or, if both, which preponderated?
   (b) Did it leave a good or bad precedent for the future?
9. Was the need of the relief found to be as great as was expected, or greater? Was the demand for it in some degree factitious or political? or was the real necessity such as to warrant the active measures adopted?
10. (a) Precisely what measures were adopted? (1) By the public officers? (2) By organized societies? (3) By extemporized committees?
    (b) What amount was expended, and how many were aided in each of the three ways named?
    (c) Which was the most effective?
how many of such families should be referred for relief. The largest number of cities used members of the police force to make the surveys;¹ in New York and Boston social settlements were active in organizing a more exact study of needs. Trade union estimates and almshouse figures were quoted, and finally relief agencies, with some interpretation of the limitations of their figures, offered their statistics. In Chicago unusual conditions resulted from the closing down of the World's Fair. Workers discharged from the fairgrounds were unable to find other employment; stranded sightseers and the usual hangers-on who flock to a large city from the rural areas in the fall added to the numbers of the idle. A house-to-house canvass in the early part of September, 1893, under what auspices is not known, showed that unemployment was not great enough to warrant raising a large fund for relief.² The police census, taken the third week in September, 1893, covered 2,200 business and manufacturing establishments instead of homes. Finding 40.3 per cent of unemployment among the 186,000 ordinarily engaged in these establishments, the same percentage was applied to the total number of persons ordinarily employed in the city, and the number without work was fixed at 180,000 persons. At the same time Mayor Carter H. Harrison estimated that 200,000 persons were idle.³ These crude estimates which were far in excess of the numbers said to be unemployed by Bradstreet and Closson a few months later, emphasize again all variety of probable errors in the methodology.

In New York Mayor Thomas F. Gilroy ordered a survey by the police in January, 1894, purposely selecting the month in which applications to relief agencies were heaviest. The patrolmen of each precinct were instructed to make a house-to-house canvass on a certain afternoon, "using their own judgment as to private houses in which they might have cause to presume that there was no need

¹ Closson, Carlos C., Jr., “The Unemployed in American Cities.” In the Quarterly Journal of Economics, vol. 8, July, 1894, pp. 500–502. Professor Closson mentions the following cities: Boston, Cambridge, New York, Brooklyn, Syracuse, Pittsburgh, Scranton, Baltimore, New Castle (Del.), Roanoke (Va.), Zanesville (Ohio), Terre Haute, Freeport, Milwaukee, Duluth, Louisville, Butte. The writer has found police survey returns also in Chicago, Cincinnati, Buffalo, New Haven, Philadelphia.

² Trusdell, Rev. C. G., “Public and Private Relief in Chicago.” In the Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction, 1895, pp. 70–71.

The University Settlement and the College Settlement of New York, feeling that exact information was needed, early in December, 1893, joined in a canvass of 500 families living in their neighborhoods. Their careful inquiries in the crowded districts of the East Side revealed that 40 per cent of the wage-earners were unemployed, that 40 per cent more were partially employed, and that the average time out of employment was four months. A much more complicated study was undertaken in October and November, 1893, by Andover House, now South End House, Boston, under the direction of its headworker, Robert A. Woods. Settlement workers secured replies from 37 organized crafts, representing such a diversity of occupation that they were felt to form a fair basis for an estimate. The unions reported 37 per cent of their 26,645 mem-

1 New York World, January 24, 1894.


bers out of work. The Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor had estimated the aggregate number of wage-earners in Boston and classified them according to general occupational classes as engaged in government service, professional service, domestic service, personal service, trade, transportation, and manufacturing or laboring. The Andover House survey applied the 37 per cent unemployed among union members to the estimated group of employees in manufacturing and laboring. For the other classifications, arbitrary percentages of unemployment were assumed on the basis of general conditions known to exist. For example, few in government or professional service were considered likely to be affected, while 10 per cent of the persons in domestic service were estimated to be out of work. On the basis of these various percentages applied to the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor figures, 38,390 were estimated to be unemployed out of about 200,000 employees. Figures were also collected from the non-commercial employment agencies and charitable institutions in Boston, which confirmed the opinion that there "was a large increase of unemployed wage-earners." The figures for the Boston survey are certainly far from reliable, but the study indicates an increasing interest in the subject. At least an attempt was made to break down the problem, and different rates of unemployment among different groups of unemployed were recognized.¹

The estimates of trade union officials on the unemployment of their members were quoted frequently in numerous cities, but Boston was the only city which attempted a systematic study of the field. Usually one or two unions gave the percentage of unemployment of their members and the general picture was left to the imagination.

In all these efforts to measure unemployment, difficulties of statistical accuracy became evident. The methods, it was hoped, would prove to be exact. The results nevertheless indicated possible errors and apparent limitations. The gain lay in the painstaking and widespread attempts to approximate accuracy, in the discovery of available sources of data within trade unions, employ—

ment agencies, social agencies, the house-to-house canvass of families and business establishments, and in recognition of certain inherent weaknesses in the methods used.

**Studies of Relief Measures**

A more precise method of surveying the extent of unemployment was only one manifestation of the closer relationship between different sections of the country. In social work and social reform regular channels for the exchange of ideas had been established. Magazines in related fields had carried articles on social work during the preceding twenty years. Local agencies issued bulletins such as the Monthly Register of the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity, which usually printed news from other cities. Papers read at the National Conference of Charities and Correction were available in print. Gradually a realization of common goals had developed, so that in this depression attempts to get a picture of the emergency relief movement as a whole came to be understood. Cities were interested in plans which had been successful elsewhere. Was their local organization the best to be found? Did it follow new trends?

Three studies of relief measures were made during the winter of 1893–1894. The Department of Social Economy of the American Social Science Association sent 10 questions to a group of cities with the idea of securing a general picture of conditions. Professor Closson analyzed and published replies to his inquiries from 300 cities incorporating summaries of magazine and newspaper articles.¹

¹ "Relief of the Unemployed in the United States during the Winter of 1893–1894." In the Journal of Social Science, no. 32, November, 1894, pp. 1–51. The questions included information on

1. Special relief measures for the unemployed both public and private
2. Work relief and public works
3. Evaluation of relief measures
4. Summary of the measures and expenditures of (a) public officers, (b) organized societies, (c) extemporized committees


1. Enlarged efforts of permanent charitable organizations: Relief, loans, work relief, employment.
2. Enlarged efforts of established public relief agencies.
3. Relief measures undertaken by citizens' committees or other agencies called into existence to meet the special exigency.
4. New public works or the acceleration of those already begun.
A thorough and monumental piece of work was done in Massachusetts on a study of the unemployed. On February 20, 1894, a group of persons out of work had presented petitions to the Massachusetts legislature requesting action on public works to relieve unemployment. The public works already proposed by the Metropolitan Park Commission, however, were all that the legislature felt it could authorize. The same group also petitioned at this time for "a permanent Commission on the Unemployed to carefully investigate the evil and prepare recommendations for its further treatment." Although a permanent commission was not approved, three paid members of a board were appointed and authorized to spend as much as $15,000 on the project. This board began its work on July 1, 1894, and it submitted the last of the five parts of the study in March, 1895.

The report covered more than 850 pages, including not only material from public hearings and visits to Massachusetts communities, but also data from other cities in this country and Europe and valuable material on earlier depressions culled from contemporary newspapers. It is impossible here to give any idea of the vast amount of information packed into its pages. Systematic study of actual conditions, opinions of large numbers of people qualified on the particular subject under discussion, and material from current printed reports, were all used. The subjects covered were relief measures for unemployment, care of wayfarers and tramps, public works, and causes of unemployment. Some of the hearings were summarized in order to avoid duplication of material in the body of the report. Those whose opinions were quoted represented employers, employees, labor unions, political parties, poor board officials, police departments, and interested laymen.

The social work group, not often called upon for such a study, included Helena S. Dudley and Robert A. Woods from the settle-
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ment group, Zilpha D. Smith from the family agency, and Robert Treat Paine and Francis G. Peabody representing citizens actively interested in the social work and welfare of the community. In one section a large number of case histories were given in detail to show what happened in families six months after work-relief projects were closed. A careful unbiased approach added value to the study. The report stands as evidence of what can be done in a state where there exists a consciousness of the need for information and a traditionally high standard of public performance. It offers the most significant data on relief measures of the nineties, and so far as is known is the only state study of unemployment relief in any depression before 1929 covering so wide a field.

Reactions Within Communities Toward Relief Measures

Differentiation of Unemployed and Improvident

Before the panic of 1893 the standard of living among working-men had reached a high point. Increased wages with reduction of working hours had led to greater consumption. In many cities workers had begun to use their savings to purchase homes, but the interest, taxes, street assessments, and the payments due upon their properties were heavy burdens. Fear of losing their savings caused great distress. Communities were aroused not only by the plight of these workers, but also by that of other self-supporting families who were suffering hardships from the exactions of instalment houses and the exorbitant charges of storage companies who offered to lend money upon furniture which families were forced to store. Mrs. Josephine Shaw Lowell stated that the acute distress, broadly speaking, was among men and women who had always supported themselves, and who had done their best to provide for the future of themselves and their families; that the want in which they found themselves was “not due usually to moral or intellectual defects on their own part, but to economic causes over which they could have had no control, and which were as much beyond their power to avert as if they had been natural calamities of fire, flood or storm.”

Recognition of such a group clarified the difference between the

1 “Methods of Relief for the Unemployed.” In the Forum, vol. 16, February, 1894, p. 659.
improvident pauper class (the voluntarily idle) and those unemployed through no desire of their own. While the effect of idleness is likely to be the same on individuals of both categories resulting in "a degeneration, physical, mental and moral which perpetuates the condition that begets it,"\(^1\) treatment may well be distinguished. Direct relief of temporary and pressing needs was demanded for the unemployed rather than the "training" necessary for the improvident. Both groups sought assistance from the same agencies, but recent recruits from the unemployed were not to be confused with the long familiar "paupers." Naturally such a classification affected the form taken by unemployment measures.

**Capacity of Established Agencies to Meet the Emergency**

By the nineties charity organization societies and settlements had been in existence long enough to have some influence upon the social thought of the times. In large cities, at least in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, the lay group was familiar with the principles and policies of existent agencies. The whole-hearted childish enthusiasm of the public during earlier depressions for all relief measures, with the exception of the most unorganized and irresponsible emergency agencies such as soup kitchens, was superseded in most cities by a more critical attitude toward experiments. Miss Mary E. Richmond complained later that the self-congratulatory reports of the special committees of the period gave an erroneous picture of the success of the measures adopted. She felt that the trend toward mass treatment, especially the wholesale adoption of work-relief plans, was disastrous.\(^2\) Some contemporary records, however, show not only an eagerness to have emergency measures meet the accepted principles of social work, and thus preserve the self-respect of the unemployed, but they reveal as much self-criticism as self-praise.

The necessity for establishing special committees or agencies to

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meet the emergency was widely discussed. Conscious only of the strength of existing agencies, their advocates felt that additional financial support for their expansion was all that was needed. The situation in 1893–1894 was after all no different in quality from their customary task. Rather than new methods, it required a strengthening of the hands of those who for so many years had been in close touch with poverty and pauperism. This point of view finds expression in the following excerpt:

If the various societies dealing with the problem . . . will by independent or concerted action increase the numbers and efficiency of their workers, at the same time calling upon the public for increased donations, the question of how to care for the unemployed during the coming winter will be in a fair way of solution.¹

Even the extensive work-relief program of 1893–1894 in Boston was considered unnecessary during the later years of the depression when the existing charities felt they cared adequately for all “without interference on the part of the sympathetic but inexperienced public.”² The agencies did not find the strain too great, and the undeserving among the poor were more readily detected.

Different reasons for this point of view were discovered in a letter from Dr. James W. Walk to the Philadelphia Record, under date of September 30, 1893, which had begun to raise funds for the unemployed in the Kensington mill district. After describing the work of the paid superintendent of the society in that district who had had “long experience in working among the poor,” the letter offered to place at the service of the charitable public the facilities, skill, and experience gained during “more than ten years’ charitable labor.” A newly opened soup house was deplored because of the publicity it brought to those who were obliged to stand in line for their loaf of bread and pint of soup. Dr. Walk added:

These remarks are not made in criticism . . . but as explaining why the Organized Charities have always considered it best to furnish relief to the poor at their own homes, purchasing the food and fuel from merchants in the locality.

² (Boston) Board of Overseers of the Poor, Thirty-third Annual Report, February 1, 1896, to January 31, 1897, p. 13.
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The notion that this is an expensive method is incorrect. At this time, particularly, when so many provision dealers are compelled to sell much on credit, the retail merchants are exceedingly anxious to secure some money for urgent payments and will sell to charitable associations, who pay in cash, at very low prices.

It would be a good thing if all who are interested should meet in conferences, so as to insure mutual cooperation. In this way it will be possible to insure the greatest efficiency and to be certain that every dollar given by the benevolent public shall go as far as possible in the relief of our unfortunate fellow citizens.

Social agencies possessed not only a long familiarity with the work and the set-up necessary for investigation, but also had in their possession case records of value in the emergency.

On the other hand, many felt that conditions arising from the depression were unusual enough to call for special measures. Robert Treat Paine, president of the Boston Associated Charities and a member of the Citizens' Relief Committee which carried on work relief, testifying before the Massachusetts Board Appointed to Investigate the Subject of the Unemployed, stated that there were not enough relief societies in existence to do the work necessary.

The problem of employing the unemployed and of relieving distress and treating pauperism had better be, so far as possible, kept absolutely distinct. I do not, therefore, see how it would have been wise to have sent all the unemployed men and women who fell into want in the emergency of last winter to the various societies all of which are organized to deal with distress and want and suffering to have obliged the laboring men and women out of work last winter to submit to the ordeal of the usual charity application.¹

The point of view expressed above upholds the need for the elaborate work-relief plans carried on during the first year of the depression and questions the desirability of classing the unemployed with the needy poor to whom it was felt there still clung personal blame for their condition.

The consensus of opinion, however, was that "societies whose work is thoroughly systematized upon the principles of organized charity are peculiarly adapted to deal with emergencies like the

¹ Report of the Massachusetts Board to Investigate the Subject of the Unemployed, March 13, 1895, Part V, p. xii.
 Charity organization methods had proved their value; only wider co-operation in the community and greater support were necessary. In fact, demands arising from the depression succeeded in breaking down some of the objectionably rigid policies of the charity organization movement.

**ATTITUDE OF THE SOCIAL SETTLEMENTS TOWARD RELIEF MEASURES**

When the depression struck, settlements in Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, and Boston were included among the established social agencies. Although their neighborly relation to their families had a somewhat different purpose from giving assistance during an economic disturbance, they assumed a leading role, not only in the administration of relief and work relief but also in those movements that sought the eventual eradication of unemployment.

The depression of 1893–1897 was the settlement’s baptism of fire. Any lurking element of sentimentality, of superficiality, of mere palliation, was burned away. Those who came through these four years were convinced of the crude and vast insufficiency of the old individualism whose sanctions had been so deeply wrought into all that was American. . . . To a small group of residents, in the end, there appeared no possibility of amelioration short of the administration of industry by the state in the interest of all citizens. These withdrew to devote themselves to the propaganda of socialism. . . . The main settlement contingent, holding long-range hopes and postulates of their own as to a better order of society, saw it as a duty and an opportunity to exercise the “passion of patience.”

Settlements shared the feeling that relief agencies, caring for “the pauper class,” wrought hardships upon the recently unemployed. But they believed that their own members were not “fitted by training or maturity to carry on relief work.” The responsibility for relief administration was not sought by the settlements, rather

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1 Monthly Register of the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity, vol. 15, February, 1894, p. 89.
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it was forced upon them as one of the expedients of the emergency. In Chicago the activity of settlement workers led to the establishment of the temporary agency which became the United Charities. In other cities they shared in unemployment surveys, evolved schemes for work relief including papering, painting, carpentering, and snow shoveling around the settlement, planned loan funds for neighbors, and helped to establish and administer trade union relief funds and second-hand clothing bureaus. In Philadelphia the College Settlement served as a center for work-relief sewing-rooms, sponsored by the Citizens’ Permanent Relief Committee which furnished materials. In other words, settlements functioned as emergency unemployment relief agencies at the same time that they retained their own identity, operating in those areas in which they were peculiarly equipped by virtue of their familiarity with neighborhoods and group movements.

Effect of Publicity

During the first year of the depression, in particular, extensive newspaper publicity complicated problems of unemployment relief. In the absence of authentic statistics, sensational stories of distress and loose conjectures as to the extent of unemployment increased the public interest; colorful accounts of relief enterprises and sentimental appeals for funds assured readers that there was ample provision for all comers. Such publicity might easily have stimulated the needs it sought to meet. The Boston Overseers of the Poor, in their Thirty-first Annual Report (1894–1895), stated this clearly in the following:

The stress of last year was so largely artificial and so much increased by factitious causes, the most potent of which was the great amount of newspaper advertising, that we anticipate a much quicker recovery than if the distress had been more real in its nature.

While newspaper activity did not cause distress, it augmented the numbers of those seeking relief and made extraordinary measures seem almost imperative. After the first year of the depression, however, established agencies in most cities were quite able to carry, and with little publicity, the heaviest part of the load.

Before the popularity of emergency funds had wrought havoc,
17 existing agencies in Boston had prepared an appeal which was widely distributed as a circular and published in the newspapers. In it the public was urged "to contribute more liberally than ever before to the organized and existing charities and to give both money and personal service." Funds and assistance, however, were not forthcoming. In Philadelphia, on the other hand, where newspapers had not advertised, as in Boston, that great things were being done for the poor, fewer applications from those who did not really need help were stimulated.

Widespread publicity undoubtedly attracted the indolent and unworthy. Chicago became the Mecca for tramps and vagrants when it advertised free food and lodging. Its "cheap lodging-house population diminished appreciably, if the reports of newspapers are to be trusted, and the small dram shops did an unusually flourishing business." Only when the Central Relief Association took on the administration of unemployment relief, including work tests, was this practice changed. Not only vagrants but persons properly a charge upon other communities, were attracted by newspaper accounts of large funds in any community.

Difficulties were created for established agencies by the publication of details in regard to certain funds. In Boston a collection of second-hand clothing, announced to be distributed through the Provident Association, resulted in such a large "motley crowd of applicants" that the staff had to be increased for six weeks in order to handle the legitimate business of the agency. So few of the applicants could present credentials from previous employers as to their unemployment and good character, which were conditions of receiving clothing, that, in order to get rid of the large stock on hand, some had to be given to "objectionable people."

The New York Herald Clothing Fund referred its applicants to a district office of the local Charity Organization Society. In ten days about 4,000 people had applied. The Charity Organization Society, understaffed for such a task and disapproving such emergency measures, contemplated declining to investigate applications,

2 "Relief by Extra Public Service." In the Charities Review, vol. 3, January, 1894, p. 132.
but finally agreed to do so fearing that the newspaper would interpret refusal as a boycott of their particular emergency fund. Possible future antagonism from that paper involved too many risks. In characteristically vigorous fashion, Mrs. Josephine Shaw Lowell scored the newspapers, and while she referred particularly to the journals of New York City, her point of view was one shared by leaders everywhere in large cities.

Whether, in any degree, a desire to help those in distress was blended with the advertising indulged in at their expense, it is impossible to say; but, however that may be, there can be no doubt that immense harm was done by the sensational articles and by the various "Funds." The anxiety and distress of mind of those who were out of work were increased by the lurid articles written about them; while the prevalent tone of the newspapers that the only natural and proper thing, if one were in distress, was to get "relief" from some source, could not fail to cause a general weakening of the moral fibre of our people.

**Attitude of Labor, and Coxey's Army**

Labor was divided into two camps during the hard times. The conservatives held to slow action through trade unions. The majority of organized labor, zealous for the prestige of their organization, felt that the future of the movement demanded slow, persistent effort along established lines. Opposed to such tactics, the radicals, for the most part unskilled laborers and agitators in the Socialist group, endorsed quicker methods for obtaining their ends. Demonstrations by labor groups sometimes led to real achievement, as in Massachusetts where a group of unemployed people had secured the appointment of the Board to Investigate the Subject of the Unemployed. More often their activities culminated in a clash with the authorities.

The conservative element triumphed in the 1893 annual convention of the American Federation of Labor, which felt that private effort to relieve unemployment distress should be secondary to public auspices in giving "immediate and adequate relief." When the private employer cannot or will not give work, the mu-

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1 (New York) Charity Organization Society, Minutes of the Executive Committee, January 9, 1894.
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municipality, state or nation must.” On this basis, the convention of the next year endorsed bills pending in Congress for appropriations to provide road building for the idle. The Danbury (Connecticut) hatters, on strike at this time for continued recognition of their union, won the consent of the town meeting to appropriate $50,000 for relief and temporary employment. Although the selectmen had no funds to carry out the orders, the apparent victory was significant in demonstrating in practical fashion the trade union attitude toward public responsibility as a means of maintaining gains on the labor front.

Early in the fall of 1893 Chicago witnessed several formidable demonstrations in its parks when the police were forced to interfere. These ended in a peaceful meeting of 10,000 people, addressed by Henry George and Samuel Gompers; representatives from among the men assisted a Mayor’s Committee in putting 1,400 men to work for a month on the Chicago drainage canal, and in arranging for street repairs that would employ 2,000 men at $1.00 a day. After spending $25,000, the Committee was succeeded in December, 1893, by other groups organized for the permanent assistance of the unemployed.

In size, area covered, and public acclaim, the most notorious demonstrations of the unemployed were associated with the so-called “petition in boots.” Recruited from all sections of the country, except in the South where unemployment was less acute, groups marched to Washington during the spring of 1894 to present to Congress in person their platform for unemployment relief. Their demands concentrated upon fiat money, appropriations for building good roads, and, to satisfy municipalities, long needed public works. Estimates of total numbers included in the “industrial armies” varied from 5,000 to 10,000, but the shifting personnel of the groups made any accurate roster impossible. The armies were recruited by Jacob S. Coxey and Carl Browne in Massillon, Ohio, Lewis C. Fry in Los Angeles, Charles T. Kelly in San Francisco, Morrison I. Swift in Boston, and numerous other leaders from the Northwest and Middle West.1


2 McMurry, Donald L., Coxey’s Army. Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1929. Except where otherwise noted, material on the industrial armies is from McMurry, who has covered extensive newspaper and magazine articles.
The armies included not only vagrants, professional hoboes, adventurers like Jack London, and the expected proportion of anarchists and revolutionists, but in large part earnest, thoughtful, skilled workmen, machinists, and miners who hoped to achieve real gains for themselves. Women were occasionally observed among the groups. But the hardships endured, the poor food obtainable, and the pace maintained by the leaders undoubtedly restricted the number of women. The pressure also checked those who had hoped the commissary departments would furnish food with less effort on their part than begging required.

Jacob S. Coxey, a quiet, dignified employer and farmer in Ohio, had long been interested in currency reform. A self-made business man, he had accumulated a comfortable fortune which he gladly spent on the movement he organized. With him was associated a man of compelling religious zeal, by name Carl Browne, who fostered the religious aspect of the movement and gave to the early group of marchers the title The Commonweal of Christ. This body led all the armies in a picturesque march eastward. Coxey’s name is sometimes given to the whole movement because of his drive, his insistence upon sound method, his leadership, and his firm belief in his goals.

At various points the groups commandeered some 40 trains to carry them on their way. Without popular sympathy they could not have been moved and fed, but

An army was a source of much embarrassment to the locality in which it camped. It was expensive to feed it, but humanity and local pride forbade that it should be allowed to starve. An army was a potential danger, especially if starved or thwarted into desperation. Workingmen saw possible competition in a labor market already sadly overstocked, and property owners feared depredations. Thus sympathy, where there was any, was reinforced by interest in the army’s departure, and the expedient course was to feed it and speed it on its way, even if transportation had to be paid.¹

Meetings held in towns where the armies camped overnight enlisted sympathizers and brought in small sums of money from collections. The American Federation of Labor never officially endorsed Coxey’s

¹ Ibid., pp. 261–262.
program, but Samuel Gompers, the president, was active in urging Congress to grant the army a hearing.¹

Washington police warned Coxey that the law prohibited parades and speeches on the Capitol grounds. After a triumphant parade witnessed by 20,000 people, Coxey left his 500 "soldiers" outside the grounds. When he and several leaders entered the Capitol enclosure and Coxey tried to speak from the Capitol steps, they were arrested. Perhaps the wild enthusiasm of the spectators had made the police fearful of the outcome of the demonstration. At any rate authorities were criticized for their brutality in handling the situation. After being sentenced to a short imprisonment and a small fine for "walking on the grass" and carrying banners, Coxey was refused a hearing on his bills by the House Committee on Labor. After his defeat in May, 1894, the whole movement collapsed. Remnants of other armies straggled into Washington, but public attention by this time was absorbed in the strikes of the American Railway Union under Eugene V. Debs.

Coxey and his followers had created a unique method of bringing the plight of the unemployed before the country, a method used in later depressions and receiving the same colorful publicity. Authorities were disturbed. Underneath the showmanship they knew lurked the makings of a revolution, and local police and United States Army units kept themselves in readiness. The progress of the industrial army was not unmarked by clashes with those responsible for maintaining public order.

CHAPTER V
1893–1897: THE HEYDAY OF EMERGENCY RELIEF COMMITTEES

CENTRALIZED relief committees, work relief on an extensive scale under either public or private auspices, and projects for the planting and cultivation of gardens were the outstanding developments in relief methods for this period. In many cities the relief committees organized and managed work relief. Some issued elaborate printed reports, others left no record except that in contemporary newspaper files. The committees were varied in organization and function. Generally speaking, however, they sought to integrate relief work for the unemployed, to raise the funds necessary, and allot the money to other agencies or to spend it for such plans of their own as the emergency seemed to require.

The extensive and rapid development of relief committees throughout the country makes a complete picture impossible. Analysis shows, however, that by far the greatest number functioned, at least in large cities, only during the winter of 1893–1894. By the next winter temporary revival of business in some places made emergency work unnecessary. In other places dissatisfaction with results, or insistence of the established agencies that they could now carry the burden alone, caused the work to cease. In smaller communities, where other relief measures were lacking, committees were retained, but available documentary material on relief committees is concerned largely with the first winter’s efforts.

VARIETIES OF ORGANIZATION DETERMINED BY COMMUNITY CONDITIONS

The particular form a relief committee took depended upon local needs, measures already under way, and the degree of enlightened leadership in the community. Mr. Watson reports that in 1893
There were still less than one hundred [charity organization] societies throughout the entire country. The oldest of these were not two decades old, while more than half the number of societies had been in existence less than a decade.¹

Not only had there been too little time for widespread development of strong charity organization agencies, but those in existence spent much energy investigating cases for relief agencies and concentrating upon the elimination of the unworthy. Even in cities where charity organization societies were well established, as in Boston and Baltimore, relief committees were formed because the strain of the situation proved too great. In places where inadequate distribution of relief and wasteful duplication among numerous smaller agencies were apparent, the relief committees often represented path-finding efforts to formulate a centralized plan of social work activity.

The way in which social forces in a community might determine the organization of a relief committee and direct its structure and function is well illustrated in two places where the final goal was quite different. In September, 1893, on invitation of the New York Charity Organization Society, 17 relief agencies issued a statement to the public through the press. It stressed the probable demands during the winter and the necessarily increased support required for established charities of the city rather than an indiscriminate almsgiving which would “tend to pauperize the recipients as well as to attract to the city an army of vagrants in addition to numbers of unemployed of other places.” But the group was not well enough integrated to bring about any real co-operative organization to cope with the problem as a whole. When cold weather brought great numbers of applicants, each society went its own way and gave relief indiscriminately without due consideration for the real needs of the unemployed.

In Baltimore, however, the Central Relief Committee was organized early in December, 1893, as a result of a meeting called by the Charity Organization Society. Not only were the relief agencies of the city included, but leading citizens and representatives of

the municipal administration were present. Concern over soup kitchens, police administration of relief, and care for the homeless during the previous winter had led to the formation of this Central Relief Committee. Urging adequate support of the existing agencies, it accepted as its function the supplementary effort necessary to care for the homeless and to provide both a work test and work relief for the unemployed. The police were willing to relinquish the increasing burden of their makeshift care for transients, and the Committee therefore raised funds to increase shelter facilities for the homeless in the city. Stoneyards were established, the city purchasing the crushed stone. Resident family men were given opportunity to work here for their relief money. If relief had to be used, work relief was felt to be the surest way of preventing pauperism. Baltimore's purpose in forming a new body was to cover specific needs not otherwise provided for in the city; to accept the challenge of the police department to make the exigency "the occasion for a better administration of the customary poor relief"; to demonstrate the value of good care for the homeless coupled with the work test as a means of reducing the number of vagrants in the city, and to set up a well-organized work-relief unit. The expenditure of $15,000 raised by public subscription permitted a demonstration of work relief and care for the homeless in which both public and private groups participated. The structure of social work in Baltimore was strengthened, although the efforts of the Committee were definitely limited to these two fields of endeavor.

The origin as well as the function of relief committees seems to have been a factor in their efficacy. The extent to which they integrated principles then considered sound depended somewhat upon the familiarity of their leaders with current practice. A hurriedly organized group was less likely to begin its work with an awareness of all the factors involved than was a permanent body established for a somewhat different purpose but accustomed to demand certain minimum standards before giving its support.

1 Report of the Central Relief Committee of Baltimore May 1, 1894, p. 1. The group represented the Association for Improvement of the Condition of the Poor, The Charity Organization Society, St. Vincent de Paul Society, Friendly Inn, German Society, Hebrew Benevolent Society, St. Andrew's Society, St. George's Society, Board of Trade, Merchants and Manufacturers Association, Lumber Exchange, Corn and Flour Exchange, and a number of influential citizens.
Where experienced leaders took hold, the dangers of an emergency set-up were lessened. The New York East Side Relief Committee, planning work relief for a limited neighborhood, functioned smoothly under the able direction of Mrs. Josephine Shaw Lowell and the settlement workers in the vicinity, whereas organizations led by well-meaning citizens who had never before been concerned over the suffering of the idle were likely to make many mistakes.

Another factor was the pressure felt by committees to show rapid accomplishment. Where previous efforts made available a small sum to begin the program, publicity was not resorted to immediately and the organization had time to develop sound practices. Publicity necessary to raise funds in most instances, however, increased the number of applicants and established the method of mass handling which Miss Richmond and other critics have so deplored. Such mass activity was not universally part of relief committee organization. Occasionally its adoption of work-relief plans was considered preferable to the individualized investigation of relief agencies whose goal was merely elimination of the unworthy rather than adjustment of relief according to individual need. Where committees originated as part of some larger and more vital development in the social work growth of the community, their methods reflected the adaptation of sound policies and concern for the individual client.

**Philadelphia: A Permanent Committee Whose Function Was Adapted to Emergency Needs**

The Citizens' Permanent Relief Committee of Philadelphia was an example of a long-established group whose purposes were changed to meet the local needs arising from the depression. Organized in 1878\(^1\) to raise funds in Philadelphia for relief of distress in various pestilence-stricken cities or in districts desolated by fire or flood, earthquake or cyclone, such as the Johnstown floods or the Russian famine, it assumed permanent form in 1885, holding over its funds from one disaster to the next. When the mayor called a conference of the relief agencies of Philadelphia in October, 1893,

to consider facilities available to care for the unemployed in the Kensington mill district, it was natural that this group should turn to the Citizens' Permanent Relief Committee for guidance. Experience had shown plainly the efficiency of the Committee's work, although it had never before dispensed money in Philadelphia. Even more to the point, the Committee had about $25,000 in its treasury, the residue of previously raised funds. At the beginning this sum was considered quite sufficient to meet a crisis that many hoped would be of short duration; furthermore heavy financial losses among contributors made a public appeal inopportune at the moment.

The Citizens' Permanent Relief Committee assumed control of the emergency situation in Philadelphia in November, 1893. Under the guidance of those familiar with social work in the community, it followed charity organization methods. The personnel of the Committee carried weight with those who questioned the badly organized, small, and irresponsible aid societies which had within the month sprung up among the workingmen of the mill districts.

According to the report of the Committee's work, the city was divided into 32 districts, with a highly reputable citizen resident in or closely identified with each district as president of the auxiliary branch and an equally reputable citizen, not residing in the district to which he was assigned, as the representative of the Citizens' Permanent Relief Committee. These two carried on the work with the help of a ward executive committee of five men to audit accounts and to "determine questions of doubt, dispute or irregularity arising from the operations of subordinates," and a corps of volunteer visitors. Most of the latter were women, for they were able to secure fuller and more accurate information of the household affairs than men could. Volunteers not only investigated and visited regularly families referred for assistance, but they were also expected to seek out those in distress in their districts. After the first relief grant, further assistance was dependent upon the report of the visitor, made upon the blank furnished and approved by the president and representative of the district. To avoid duplication only those resident in the district were assisted, others being referred for care to proper sources. The Central Advisory Board met twice weekly to pass upon all requests for relief from the
various districts. Although visitors were volunteers, clerical assistants were paid and selected from among the unemployed by the employment bureau of the Committee.

Close relationship was maintained between district groups and existing ward associations, now integral parts of the Society for Organizing Charity. In 12 wards covered by the latter organization the Citizens' Permanent Relief Committee functioned through the headquarters and machinery already set up. Where Relief Committee funds were administered by district associations of the Society for Organizing Charity, the “problem was still further simplified and mistakes and oversights reduced to a minimum.”

Where funds were lacking the Citizens’ Permanent Relief Committee gave ward associations additional money, but if the territory was not organized it appointed its own committee. This interchange of funds was no doubt facilitated by the interlocking directorships of the two organizations.

Funds of almost $150,000, at the disposal of the Citizens’ Permanent Relief Committee, were raised by popular subscription and through such benefit performances as baseball games, charity balls, concerts, art sales, and a Wagner Festival directed by Walter Damrosch. Expenditure for relief was $115,578; other appropriations for work relief, loans to cover interest upon property, payment of rents, and general incidentals amounted to $29,883. The small balance was spent for work relief for men with families after other activities of the Committee were discontinued in April, 1894. Relief was given to 17,908 families numbering 71,630 persons, many of them receiving help over a long period of time. In addition 3,500 men were furnished work in Fairmount Park and 2,054 women were provided with sewing at 50 cents a day. The finished garments were distributed to relief agencies. With this comparatively small fund the emergency was felt to have been satisfactorily met. Although other cities with smaller populations raised larger funds and “augmented them by the most lavish out-

2 Philadelphia Public Ledger, March, 1894.
pouring of municipal relief," in Philadelphia no move was made to
revive public outdoor relief which had been abandoned just after
the last depression.

The relief dispensed by the Citizens’ Permanent Relief Com-
mittee included money for the purchase of food, clothing, coal, and
payment of rent in advance. Back rents were not paid, and rent
money was given only upon condition that landlords permit tenants
to remain in houses without threat of eviction. Over $7,500 was
spent for rent. Grocery orders on local stores were filled out by
visitors after consultation with families as to their needs. They
were left at the grocer’s by the visitor and a complicated system of
signatures of dealer, family, and visitor safeguarded the expendi-
ture. Clothing and coal were ordered in the same way.

The Philadelphia Committee was unusual in its origin, in the
efficacy of its organization, and in the scope of its activity. Not
only did it undertake the extensive relief work just described, but,
aware that work was much more desirable than direct relief, it ap-
pointed later in the winter a joint committee from the Trades
League, the Manufacturers’ Club, and its own group to study the
possibilities of employment. As a result, an employment bureau,
the Labor Bureau, registered workers and urged employers to re-
port opportunities for repairing property, cleaning houses, cellars or
yards, painting, or regular employment of other kinds. Six thou-
sand individuals representing 24,000 dependents were thus removed
from the relief payrolls.

The interests of the Committee extended beyond the usual scope
of relief work. Rudolph Blankenburg, a lawyer and member of the
Permanent Relief Committee, became concerned over the exorbi-
tant rates which loan sharks were charging the unemployed. In-
vestigation of complaints led to the attempt to secure a legal de-
cision against one firm, 150 of whose victims appeared before the
Committee. This exposure of conditions prompted an effort to
float stock for a limited dividend loan society patterned after the
Provident Loan Society of New York. The $100,000 capital needed
was nearly all subscribed but the legislature refused to grant a
charter,1 probably because of the political strength of the opposing

1 Letter from Rudolph Blankenburg, May 29, 1913. In files of the Department
of Remedial Loans, Russell Sage Foundation, New York.
loan companies. The same angle of the Committee's work had brought to light also the necessity for a free bureau of legal advice and protection. It was suggested that younger members of the Philadelphia bar should volunteer their services to give free legal advice where clients could not afford to pay a lawyer. In view of the Committee's attitude toward the maintenance of the "independence of the unemployed in the relief of distress," loans from the Committee's funds instead of relief were frequently permitted. Altogether 184 promissory notes totaling $1,797.98 were accepted, the only security being the honor of the recipient. When the report of the Committee was printed a number of the notes had already been paid back.

The detail with which the Philadelphia Citizens' Permanent Relief Committee has been described seems warranted by the excellence of its accomplishment. Perhaps this was due to its long experience in raising money for emergencies. Unquestionably the participation of leaders in social work in the city resulted in the adoption of sound organization policies and methods. The interests of a few members directed attention to broader social needs. The Committee eased the load but did not completely relieve agencies from a tremendous increase in applications. The following year it did not again function because the need did not warrant a special relief organization. From a contemporary evaluation of its winter's work we quote the following:

It is necessarily less economical than the regularly organized and systematized agencies. We do not in these remarks mean to cast any reflection on the operations of the Citizens' Committee, which was no doubt as admirably conducted as the circumstances allowed.

The high character of those composing it was a sufficient guarantee of this. But we wish to invite attention to the dangers of overlapping and wasteful charities and to the fact that the city is thoroughly organized and canvassed by the existing Societies. . . . All they need is generous contributions to their treasuries.¹

¹ Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity: Committee on Cooperation, Minutes for November 26, 1894.
UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF IN PERIODS OF DEPRESSION

CHICAGO: AN EMERGENCY DEVELOPMENT WHICH BECAME A PERMANENT ORGANIZATION

In origin and development the Central Relief Association of Chicago formed a sharp contrast to the Philadelphia Committee. The depression furnished opportunity to bring into the open the inadequacies of the "dole giving" Chicago Relief and Aid Society. A small group on the Society's board had tried in vain since 1888, when the struggling Charity Organization Society was merged with the Relief and Aid Society, to work out policies embodying the broader principles of the charity organization movement. The narrow job of relief-giving was well done, but no co-ordination of the work of existing agencies nor prevention of indiscriminate giving was attempted through its meetings or publications. Volunteers were not used. The offices were open for only two hours daily and closed during most of the summer. Without doubt the depression made it possible to break down the old regime in the field of social work, represented by the rigidity and complacency of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society, and to organize what developed into a strong family agency whose interests extended beyond the dole to general community needs. The depression, in other words, furnished the opportunity necessary for the change which forward-looking leaders had been unable to achieve earlier. Faced with an emergency, it was necessary to provide relief through new channels.

William T. Stead of the English Review of Reviews had come to Chicago to report the World's Fair for a London newspaper. Confronted with the frightful conditions in Chicago in the fall of 1893, he called a mass meeting under the announced title, "If Christ Came to Chicago." His colorful picture of Chicago's vice and neglect of its needy led to organization of the Civic Federation for improvement of municipal conditions. While its purpose was to include education of citizens in promoting fair conditions for the unfortunate, the vicious and the defective, to encourage wise leg-

1 See pp. 51-54.

2 Chicago Relief and Aid Society. Various minutes of the Board covering the period from November 9, 1888, to January 4, 1892. The committee making the final report had as its members Jane Addams, Bishop Cheney, and the Rev. Floyd Tomkins.

3 Interview with Jane Addams, June 15, 1933.

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islation and clean politics, and to provide education for the masses, the more practical problems that it faced in the depression called for immediate action. Impulsive, unorganized, and misdirected relief measures in the early months of the depression had succeeded only in attracting to Chicago many unemployed people. Homeless men were sleeping in alleys and in corridors of the City Hall. At the second meeting of a committee to organize a Civic Federation held on December 12, 1893, before the constitution of the Federation had been formulated, the Central Relief Association was created. It represented all existing charitable agencies, both public and private. Action for relief measures being taken almost simultaneously by the Illinois Board of Charities and Correction and the City Council was abandoned,^ and all effort in the city was concentrated in the Central Relief Association. Its purpose was to raise funds to meet the present emergency and to disburse the same, as far as practicable, through the existing public and charitable agencies, creating new agencies only at points where the need arose.

With its inception so definitely traceable to a movement toward systematized organization of charity in Chicago, the Central Relief Association adopted such forms of organization as would achieve that end. Through its Registration Bureau all societies and individuals engaged in relief work were urged to report the name and address of every applicant for help. The information collected indicated what each society was doing for the applicant or the reason for refusal of relief. By the spring of 1894, when the Registration Bureau discontinued its work under the Central Relief Association, data on 23,877 families were on file, with six agencies making daily reports of their applicants.2

Under the Central Relief Association the city was divided into 31 districts, so that each district might care for its own and to some extent at least raise its own funds. Here again opposition was expressed to the concentration of clients in one central office as practiced by the Chicago Relief and Aid Society. Churches took the lead in organizing and carrying out the work in their districts, and

1 Stead, William T., If Christ Came to Chicago. Laird and Lee, Chicago, 1894, p. 142.
2 Report of the Central Relief Association to the Civic Federation, to Its Contributors, and the Public, p. 28.
17 of them assumed individual responsibility for separate sections. For example, All Souls’ Church took on the care of a thickly populated area remote from its own parish, furnishing the office and a staff of visitors and superintendent. The Central Relief Association provided the supplies for distribution. Street cleaning was undertaken as work relief by the Association both for the homeless, who were paid in food and shelter, and for men with families. Under its guidance the Chicago Women’s Clubs Emergency Association opened sewing-rooms and employment bureaus for women. The Central Relief Association also opened an employment bureau of its own to serve both men and women in securing either permanent or temporary work.

In some cases entire families were sent to farmers who could give work to the older children as well as to their parents. In several cases the employers remitted the cost of transportation. Difficulties arise in the defining of duties and the determining of wages at long range, but a permanent Bureau of this character would in time overcome these.

Unique in the work of relief committees and indicative of an interest in the individual applicant for work relief was the medical care provided by the Central Relief Association. Supplementing services available in hospitals and clinics, medical attendants at soup houses and work depots cared for the ambulatory sick and authorized change in diet or relief without work, where indicated, to the number of 75 to 100 cases a day. Doctors attached to the sewing-rooms visited those ill at home or having sick members in their families. Of the 10,000 calls for medical care, many were for infected vaccinations following enforced vaccination when smallpox broke out in the cheap lodging-houses. Reduced rates were also granted by railroads for transportation of 1,103 persons in order to secure verified employment or to go to friends who agreed to care for them.

Funds were raised through small contributions of employes and business men’s committees representing different trades from each of which a pro rata amount was expected. Publicity through newspapers informed the community of the Association’s activities, the status of its money-raising, the plans for its organization, and the

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1 Ibid., p. 29.
1893–1897: Emergency Relief Committees

procedure to be followed by the man on the street when he was approached for help. The board of the Association recognized that with such gratuitous publicity misleading statements occasionally appeared, as when an exaggerated account of the money-raising announced, “A million dollars will soon be realized” and applicants immediately increased.

A picture of the Association’s work may be secured by a study of its accounting for the $135,268 received from cash contributions, of which a small balance remained when its report was made in June, 1894.¹

**TABLE 5.—Disbursements of the Chicago Central Relief Association, Winter of 1893–1894**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditures of Association</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work relief, including clothing and tools</td>
<td>$81,443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relief disbursed at central office</td>
<td>2,934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplies used in relief stations</td>
<td>14,645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical department</td>
<td>985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash to district organizations</td>
<td>2,916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration bureau</td>
<td>4,314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment bureau</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenses of Finance Committee</td>
<td>1,079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central office rent, salaries, etc.</td>
<td>3,398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$112,361</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appropriations to other organizations</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Children’s Aid Society</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Hebrew Charities</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Clubs Emergency Association</td>
<td>4,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German Emigrant Aid Society</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago Relief and Aid Society</td>
<td>15,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting Nurses Association</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>20,965</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$133,326</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures indicated that work relief received proportionately the largest share of funds. Relief was given “in kind” through district centers; assistance to established agencies went largely to the Chicago Relief and Aid Society, whose president was also chairman of the Central Relief Association.

When the emergency work of the winter of 1893–1894 ended, the functions of the Registration Bureau were continued by a new or-

ganization, the Chicago Bureau of Charities, to preserve for use the valuable records of applicants and to strengthen and perpetuate the system of co-operation between various societies engaged in charitable work. Represented in the group who urged the organization were not only business men and socially prominent people, but faculty members from the universities and workers from the settlements who saw the great need for a co-ordinating agency to lighten their work. Miss Julia C. Lathrop, at that time associated with the settlement group, was appointed the first secretary of the Bureau of Charities. The active participation of settlements in the formation of a charity organization society was unique in Chicago and not found in other cities. Not until 1909, however, were the leaders successful in merging the Bureau of Charities and the Relief and Aid Society into the United Charities.

Undoubtedly the Bureau of Charities was an outgrowth of relief measures for the depression, but hard times were not the only factor in its establishment. At least five years earlier valiant efforts to organize such an agency had been on foot.

Temporary Organization of Relief Committees

Relief committees for the most part had no such roots in the social welfare development of their communities as those in Philadelphia and Chicago. Usually they arose out of the pressure of the moment to cover emergency needs. In some places unemployment relief for the whole city was centered in their hands; in other places their specific projects were carried on without consideration of community needs or of facilities already available to meet hard times.

Leaving out of consideration for the moment an evaluation of its work relief as such, the Boston Citizens' Relief Committee represented a quickly organized emergency agency which undertook to meet the strain of 1893–1894 through a single form of assistance. Opinion differed as to the necessity for such an undertaking in the light of other provisions for care of the poor in Boston. In December, 1893, however, the newly re-elected mayor summoned "representatives of all the charity organizations, all the labor organizations, editors of newspapers, and leading clergymen of all denominations together with twenty or thirty prominent citizens
known for their philanthropic disposition.”¹ A general committee of 14 was selected to raise money and to spend it for work relief. This step was considered necessary because “the problem was of a different sort from that which was normally dealt with by the charitable agencies of the city, for the existing distress was supposed to be due chiefly to non-employment, and not to the ordinary causes of poverty.”² Others felt that a great mistake had been made in calling on volunteers, inexperienced although zealous, instead of using established agencies. In fact, some persons thought that total disaster would be avoided only by putting the newly created agencies for work relief under the charge of “veterans in charity organization work.”

The Citizens’ Relief Committee in Boston raised a sum of $100,772, of which approximately half went to pay the wages of laborers on street and sewer work; the other half to workrooms where both men and women were employed to make articles of clothing and rugs. In addition the city of Boston paid $32,020 for its public works program, $3,286 was secured by the sale of products from workrooms, and $490 from a special fund, making the total available for the Committee’s use $136,568. Among the men working in the streets, the majority had been out of employment for three months; they had no savings and each was responsible for the support of an average of four persons. An income of $10, the average total amount paid each employe, in fragments two to four weeks apart, did not therefore seem sufficiently large to merit a demonstration of very keen appreciation. The average amount received by women in the workrooms for the whole period employed was $8.82. Even these inadequate totals for each individual employe had been met only by reducing administrative costs to a minimum through the use of volunteers as clerks, investigators, and supervisors.

The meagre amount of relief afforded through such channels [would] of itself discourage the skilled workman from applying, and it inevitably

The numbers unemployed and the vast amount of money it would have taken to care for them adequately should have made it clear that the relatively small fund of the Citizens' Relief Committee could not be expected to carry the whole burden. Evaluation of its efforts was frank, completely lacking in bitterness or petty jealousy, but indicating a careful study of results. For example, one of its committee chairmen felt efficiency would have been increased if the work of registering and investigating applicants had begun earlier under more competent workers, even though this would have increased the cost of administration. Visitors employed by the Relief Committee were inexperienced and were required to make more visits in a day than could have been dealt with properly by the most competent visitor. Blunders of a too hurried beginning were increased by the Committee's failure to understand the extent of the problem and the consequent mass handling of workers.

The wide publicity the Citizens' Relief Committee enjoyed was criticized.

The whole matter was public from the beginning, so that it attracted a great many people who ought never to have applied, either because they were chronic or because they didn't need help at all . . . the more individual you can make any charitable work the better it is, . . . and whether you reach them all or not, if you actually help those you touch, it would be better than to aid a great many inadequately. I would have the money raised privately, without any newspaper advertising. Other contemporary criticism centered about the failure to have labor represented on the Committee, although its first-hand knowledge of the situation and of methods of employment would have been of real assistance.

3 Report of the Massachusetts Board to Investigate the Subject of the Unemployed, March 13, 1895, Part I, p. 39. Testimony of Miss Zilpha D. Smith, General Secretary of the Associated Charities, before the Board.
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Unsatisfactory as results were, some felt that properly organized charity could not have been entrusted with the task because labor distrusted its capitalistic origins. Members of the Committee agreed that the experiment did not warrant its being carried on the next winter even should the emergency continue. Case loads of relief agencies had not been reduced, because inadequate assistance per family from the Relief Committee had brought these same families to the established agencies for supplementary relief. In its best efforts to handle en masse large numbers of unemployed, lack of efficiency, adequacy, and due consideration of the total problem characterized its work.

Committees in cities other than Boston were appointed in the pressure of the emergency but none found such frank critics. In New York the East Side Relief Committee handled only work relief. Its leaders were recruited from social agencies, however, and more careful preparation and guidance were inevitable. Besides, it covered only a small geographic area of the city. In Indianapolis the plan adopted embodied many undesirable features of the Boston set-up, including mass handling and new organization. The dangers of a too hurried beginning were minimized, however, by asking the existing family agency to carry the load until the whole community could be properly studied, and costly new machinery was set in motion only when the Committee was convinced that agencies in existence could not handle the problem.

FUNCTIONS OF RELIEF COMMITTEES

Turning now from origin to function, relief committees of the nineties divide themselves roughly into four groups: (1) committees co-ordinating the work of relief agencies already established or those created for the depression; (2) committees raising funds to be dispensed through other agencies; (3) emergency committees providing direct relief in one form or another; (4) committees concerning themselves with work relief either as public works or under private auspices. The functions are not clearly separated. Many committees combine the characteristics of two groups, as in Indianapolis where work-relief wages were paid in supplies purchased wholesale and issued to individual clients; or in Chicago where the
co-ordinating function was covered by the Registration Bureau, money was used to assist established agencies or to organize new districts, and work relief was undertaken as well.

Washington, D. C., showed still another combination of functions. Its Central Relief Committee selected a group of established agencies whose relief orders it honored at a central distributing bureau, the supplies for the latter being secured in kind or cash by house-to-house canvass. Ten-cent meals were also served in return for tickets which citizens purchased and distributed to those who begged help from them.¹ Without rigid adherence to classification, the groups nevertheless serve to clarify general trends in the relief committee activity so characteristic of the nineties.

**Co-ordination of Emergency Relief Work**

Of the cities where the co-ordinating function of central committees was emphasized, Grand Rapids, Michigan, was unique in that the group called together by the mayor at intervals from the early fall of 1893, persistently advised against the organization of special machinery to meet the emergency. Additional public improvements were undertaken at its request; churches and other small groups doing relief work were urged by the Committee to keep in close touch with the Society of Associated Charities, which was forced to lower its standard of careful investigation for each case but managed without other adjustments to carry the unusually heavy load.²

In Toledo the Humane Society, until this period engaged in the prevention of cruelty to children and animals, assumed the co-ordinating function of an associated charities.

An attempt to bring into harmonious action more than two hundred different charitable societies, composed of various sects and creeds, each organized to do its own work, in its own field, in its own way, and each jealous lest the other should know what it was doing was a herculean task, full of discouragements, and promising little else than failure.³

³ Brown, James M., "How the City of Toledo Provided for Her Unemployed." In the Arena, vol. 10, October, 1894, p. 715.
The effort involved raising relief funds, investigating applications upon the basis of which supplies from the storehouse or coal yard were given, arranging for work relief with the Department of Parks, wages for which were paid in provisions purchased wholesale. Certain public work had previously been authorized by legislation, but the low rate of interest available on the city's improvement bonds and the lack of money for investment had made sales impossible. In the crisis the co-ordinating committee paid the men on work relief in provisions and accepted park bonds from the city as reimbursement. In spite of the diversified activities of the Toledo group, co-ordination of all effort for the unemployed was retained as a goal.¹

In two other cities, Buffalo and Cincinnati, the established charity organization societies took the lead in organizing unemployment relief in such a way that they became in a sense relief committees. In Buffalo the Charity Organization Society stimulated the mayor to appoint a Citizens' Relief Committee which raised $65,000 for work relief for men.² The Society also gave advice on the administration of a smaller fund for employment of women, and distribution from a central depot of clothing solicited through a newspaper. Applications for relief, investigated by the Society, rose to six times that of any previous year. Ansley Wilcox, chairman of the Executive Committee, who was acting as head of the Society in the absence of a general secretary, emphasized the necessity for preventing duplication of effort. Altogether 71 societies functioned independently but used the Charity Organization Society as a bureau for exchange of information on specific cases.

In Cincinnati the Citizens' Committee was organized in September, 1893, through the combined activities of the Associated Charities and a committee from the Chamber of Commerce. The money raised, almost $10,000, was expended through the Associated Charities for work relief and assistance to those unable to work.³ The Committee secured an appropriation from the city of $30,000 for the Park Commissioners, the money paid out as wages to resident

¹ The Chicago Central Relief Association, described in detail on pp. 106-110, also functioned principally as a co-ordinating agency.
³ Emergency Relief in Cincinnati, 1893-1894, p. 6.
members of families. Through the efforts of the Committee the staff of the Associated Charities was used to investigate families applying for outdoor relief. The new method of procedure would lead eventually, it was hoped, to the realization that public outdoor relief was not necessary. Facilities of the Associated Charities were also used to strengthen and direct relief work of the churches. Contributions from churches were placed in the treasury of the agency. Volunteers available from the membership of the Evangelical Alliance became district visitors for some 500 families under care of the Associated Charities; agents of the latter society gave "such advice and instruction" as they could under the pressure of their work. Other churches giving their own relief cleared their cases week after week with the Associated Charities, as did leading relief agencies in the city.

The methods of relief adopted furnish an excellent example of cooperative action on the part of public authorities, charitable organizations and churches. Miscellaneous and sporadic methods of relief have been deprecated and held in check.

Cities in which outstanding efforts for co-ordination in relief work were made, were those in which charity organization societies either took the lead or were used as the means through which cooperative plans were carried out. Even in Chicago, where no charity organization society existed, recognition of the advantages of these methods played a dominant part in the creation of a relief committee functioning along charity organization lines. The latter movement was comparatively young, yet its influence was apparent not only in efficient administration of relief in the emergency, but also in the joint participation of all community agencies through a centrally directed, comprehensive plan of action.

Raising Funds to Be Dispensed through Existing Agencies

Comparatively few relief committees were organized to raise money alone, allotting their funds to agencies already functioning

1 "Charity Organization in Times Extraordinary." In the Charities Review, vol. 3, April, 1894, pp. 278-279.
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in the community. In Boston the Citizens' Relief Committee besides supporting its own activities gave a small portion of subscribed funds to independent groups to carry on their emergency employment for women. In Cincinnati and Toledo most of the money was expended through charity organization societies, although special projects were designated and activities of relief committees covered more than money-raising. In Cleveland the Citizens' Relief Committee evidently concentrated upon raising necessary funds for relief agencies, the Associated Charities being one of its beneficiaries. Brooklyn's mayor appointed a committee to raise funds and to distribute them among existing societies. In New York City, however, several fund-raising committees apportioned money to a few accepted agencies. To do more than this, namely, to unify efforts for relief, was apparently too complex a task in a city as large as New York. A Citizens' Committee appointed by the mayor divided the $140,600 it raised among the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and the United Hebrew Charities, while employees of city departments by an assessment upon salaries raised $67,500 which was divided among the above agencies and a few others. The latter fund was criticized as "tributary to partisan ascendancy at elections" rather than as "mitigating the bitter distress of the industrious poor." Since $56,500 of the sum was distributed to social agencies, not a great deal of harm could have been done with the remaining $11,000 by office holders. An Emergency Fund to Give Relief by Work raised $151,500, which was disbursed through the various units organized to carry on relief work in the city.

Administration of Direct Relief

Many relief committees gave assistance in cash or in kind during the depression of the nineties. In their various adaptations of relief-giving, adequate investigation of applicants was difficult; their

staffs were for the most part inexperienced and the sudden heavy load they tried to handle was overwhelming. Relying at first on a single hurried office interview for a plausible story of distress, a few months' experience showed that more information was necessary in order to deal wisely with most of these families.

Fortunately few relief committees resorted to free distribution of supplies such as characterized the undesirable soup kitchens and food depots of other emergency agencies. The whole picture, however, was one of a gradually ascending scale from the worst methods to the best, with a question as to how satisfactory even the best were in meeting the need of the individual. Economy they undoubtedly achieved where food was purchased wholesale, but mass handling, inadequate investigation, rigidity of policy, and small relief totals per family had their bad effects.

In Columbus, Ohio, for example, a Citizens' Relief Committee dispensed relief in the form of coal, groceries, and second-hand clothing. Five reliable grocers in as many sections of the city were appointed to fill orders of applicants whose need had been ascertained. Insufficient assistance was indicated by the policy of giving no family more than "one ton of coal or two orders for groceries in a month, and a grocery order never exceeded two dollars." Actually in the first month and a half of the work, $4,500 was spent on 1,500 families for groceries and on 800 families for coal.¹

Relief supplies were purchased wholesale in many instances and given out by a committee instead of cash or orders on local grocers. In Paterson, New Jersey, a large relief committee was headed by a minister who had acted as director of relief in the hard times of the seventies. The 37 districts into which the city was divided were covered by volunteer "lady visitors." Supplies in kind were distributed from a central depot on three days of each week to those applicants in possession of proper credentials from district visitors. An economical purchasing committee succeeded in reducing to four cents the cost of an adult's daily ration selected from a list of bread, pork, fish, beans, rice, tea, meat, and sugar. Neither the cost nor the variety of food was unusual for the period, and the committee

¹ Shaw, Albert, "Relief Measures in American Cities." In the Review of Reviews, vol. 9, February, 1894, p. 185.
felt that not only had the immediate necessity been met but people of all backgrounds had learned to work together for the well-being of the community.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 183-184. See also Closson, Carlos C., Jr., “The Unemployed in American Cities.” In the Quarterly Journal of Economics, vol. 8, July, 1894, p. 465.}

The “Indianapolis Plan” carried on by the Relief Committee of the Commercial Club combined many of the features of relief work as it was organized by central committees in the nineties. Unemployed workmen in a series of meetings had directed the public’s attention to their alarming condition in the hope of interesting the wealthy in a plan of action. Finally these men appealed to the Commercial Club, an organization of 1,000 business men, in later years the Chamber of Commerce, and the appointment of a Relief Committee to study the question followed. From the beginning the Committee, aware of possible administrative difficulties, insisted upon centralization in their hands of all relief plans. Their first efforts were directed toward registering the unemployed for jobs, and they were successful in securing work for about 20 per cent of the applicants.\footnote{Shaw, Albert, “Relief Measures in American Cities.” In the Review of Reviews, vol. 9, February, 1894, p. 186.} Willingness to work and ability were tested in the few who were offered jobs, while the registration gave information as to the size and character of the unemployment problem. Recognizing the inadequacy of such measures, the Committee asked the Charity Organization Society to take over the relief work temporarily in order to test the capacity of the organized agencies to carry the unusual pressure before undertaking any special project. Anxious not to shift the emphasis of the Committee from work to relief, the Charity Organization Society carried this extra load with as little publicity as possible. Publicity was avoided also because the group of workingmen had purposely made their appeal to a non-charitable body, as they were opposed to relief which would class them “expressly or by implication with paupers,” and this prejudice was looked upon as an evidence of self-reliance. By December 31 the Charity Organization Society was carrying 1,000 families on unemployment relief, the money being guaranteed by the Commercial Club. Growing distress made it clear that other methods would have to be used, and this case load was thereupon
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transferred to the Relief Committee which had by this time worked out businesslike plans for a commissary and work relief.

Postponement of a public appeal had discouraged “emotional outbursts of charity” and strengthened the Committee’s position when its definite program was presented to the community for support.¹ Centralization of both money-raising and spending had been advocated by ministers, newspapers, and small groups. Through letters and personal appeals an auxiliary body, the Citizens’ Finance Committee, raised almost $20,000.²

In January, 1894, a food market was opened with two departments, one for registration and investigation, the other for issuing food. Written reports of investigation by the corps of paid visitors were required within twenty-four hours after their visits. Each visitor covered about eight cases a day including

the facts regarding the citizenship and need of the applicant. This information was usually obtained from neighbors, from the shopkeepers where the applicant had traded, and by personal interview and observation at the home of the applicant. The last employer, the landlord and those to whom references were made were also interviewed in many cases. If the written reports . . . contained no information decidedly unfavorable or suggestive of doubt as to the citizenship or need of the applicant, credit at the Food Market was granted, in evidence of which an account book was issued to the applicant containing a certificate signed by the manager of the registration and investigation department.³

No work being available, credit for rations was allowed. Later, arrangements with the city resulted in street labor and construction jobs paid for by the Committee in supplies from the food market. “No work, no rations” became the rule, and the Relief Committee transferred back to the Charity Organization Society for care families of widows or deserted wives who were unable to participate in work-relief projects.⁴ Difficulty in liquidating accounts was encountered when unfavorable weather prevented out-

² Ibid., p. 51.
³ Ibid., pp. 14–17.
⁴ (Indianapolis) Charity Organization Society, Charities of Indianapolis, 1893–1894, p. 7. H. H. Hanna, president of the Charity Organization Society, was a member of the Relief Committee.
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door work, or men sought other excuses for not working. A rigid application of the work requirement, however, resulted in "an aggregate indebtedness of a comparatively small amount—less than $1,000" when the books were closed.\(^1\) The Relief Committee held that their system was superior to payment for labor in cash, because it obviated possible wastefulness and wrongful expenditure of the money, and the economy possible through the wholesale purchase of food was of paramount importance where funds were limited.

The food market was carrying as many as 4,000 accounts when it reduced its services in the middle of March, 1894. Many men had found employment, funds of the Relief Committee were almost exhausted, and gradual reduction in numbers and size of rations was undertaken purposely in anticipation of the closing. Those who could not get along otherwise were referred to the Charity Organization Society when the market ceased functioning at the beginning of April.

In selecting the weekly ration, articles were included which were considered most essential in maintaining health and most frequently found in the diet of the poor. Cornmeal, hominy, potatoes, pork, bread, molasses, salt, were made up in specific quantities in packages for families of various sizes; soap was added. For a family of four or five, four pounds of fresh pork and a small amount of pickled pork covered the meat item. At first, molasses was expected to take the place of sugar, and coffee was omitted on the ground that it was stimulating rather than nutritious. The ration cost about 82 cents a week in "quantities sufficient to feed a family of four or five." Within a few weeks, on complaint of the unemployed, coffee, sugar, and lard were included, bringing the wholesale price of the same ration to $1.00. No further complaints were made.

According to its final report, the Commercial Club Relief Committee extended help in other forms. A man might earn 300 pounds of coal a week by working for the Committee. This amount of fuel was considered enough for each family. The coal was transported by the families in order to save the cost of delivery, which was high, and also to restrain unnecessary use of it. Shoes were also issued

\(^1\) Relief for the Unemployed in Indianapolis, p. 30.
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to those who had earned them. While the most popular sizes had to be purchased, large collections of second-hand shoes, repaired by unemployed cobbler, were "sold" for the charge of the repair. Rent presented a more complicated problem. The Relief Committee decided not to pay rents, even when eviction took place. Aware of this policy landlords were surprisingly lenient, and only in a few cases where eviction occurred did the families return to the Committee when unable to find shelter with relatives or friends. Relief standards for families not absolutely destitute were hard to settle. Where some member of a family earned a few dollars the regular ration was continued; property owners with mortgages were also helped, but those with no indebtedness were rarely given relief. Illness and other handicaps entered into a consideration of the treatment. Service was, however, limited to relief in kind, in return for which work was expected. Individual needs and differences, while clear to the Committee, were weighed only in connection with the family's economic situation.

Undoubtedly the Indianapolis Committee achieved a remarkable degree of success in preventing duplication of charitable effort. Centralizing numerous functions within its own scope, it worked out businesslike methods for giving relief. If centralization of distribution of relief operated against consideration for the individual and presented all the weaknesses of a commissary, at least Indianapolis could point with pride to the meticulous care with which its plan safeguarded the expenditure of funds. Even those who criticized the method were agreed upon the efficiency and economy of its practice. As for the method, Frederic Almy in an address to the Fortnightly Club of Buffalo stated that:

The Indianapolis plan of giving wages not in money, but in supplies, is by some considered an improvement, but there are others who think that even with the poorest it is an aid to character to show confidence, and although in dealing with separate cases one might refuse to give money, it would be an unnecessary degradation to make suspicion the rule for a whole class. On the other side is the fact that the city of Indianapolis, by buying at wholesale, could give more supplies in place of wages than the man employed could have bought if he had received the money.¹

Efforts of relief committees to find work for the unemployed were based on the conviction that employment was more beneficial to both applicant and community than so-called "charity." The community received some return on money thus invested; the applicant indicated his willingness to work and saved himself from identification with chronic dependents. Plans in various cities included ingenious devices to stimulate the regular demand for labor through contact with private firms or householders, establishment of employment bureaus, financing public utilities, stimulation of public works programs, and almost invariably organization of work-relief projects of the committee's own, either in public departments in co-operation with private agencies or in emergency shelters and commissaries.

Without going into a detailed description or evaluation of work relief itself at this point, a picture of the part relief committees played is pertinent. In New York the East Side Relief-Work Committee, and the smaller West Side Relief Committee confined their activities entirely to this type of aid. Streets not covered by the inadequate city street-cleaning force were assigned to the East Side Relief Committee which employed as many as 887 men at one time; buildings in the tenement areas were cleared of refuse and whitewashed; clothing workrooms sent their finished products to the cyclone sufferers in South Carolina as local use of the products would have decreased the employment of garment workers; home work in sewing, knitting, mat and quilt making was furnished to a weekly average of 122 women for sixteen weeks at $3.00 a week. In all over 400 individuals received home work, a project so far as is known, included in only one other work-relief plan.

The Citizens' Relief Committee in Boston also concentrated its efforts on work relief, after having found 125 positions for girls in

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1 See Chapter VII, pp. 168-185, for a discussion of work relief during the depression of 1893-1897.
2 Devins, John Bancroft, "Mrs. Lowell and the Unemployed." In Charities and the Commons, vol. 15, no. 9, December 2, 1905, pp. 322-324. No printed report of the work of the New York committees exists.
3 Lowell, Josephine Shaw, "Five Months' Work for the Unemployed in New York City." In the Charities Review, vol. 3, May, 1894, pp. 323-342. Philadelphia Citizens' Permanent Relief Committee also had such a project.
4 See pp. 110-112.
trades and, through existing employment offices, as many domestic service positions as were available. The Committee’s program included not only workrooms for women, but accommodations for rag rug weaving by men unfit for heavy labor. Public works for which funds had been appropriated were also pushed by the Committee so that the city employed a larger force than was customary in winter. Public funds were also spent to cover part of the cost of street cleaning and construction, and building of sewers, in the latter instance the difference between the cost of summer and winter construction being guaranteed by the Citizens’ Relief Committee. Such payment of difference in cost of construction was found only in Boston.

Committees combining direct relief with work-relief projects, covering in most instances workrooms for women and improvements on streets or parks, included those in Philadelphia and Chicago, while in Baltimore the Committee opened a stone yard, selling the crushed stone to the city. Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, and San Francisco had relief committees which undertook similar projects.

A somewhat closer relation between relief committees and municipal authorities in working out plans existed in some cities. In Cambridge, Massachusetts, for example, the Citizens’ Relief Committee, in addition to operating a sewing-room, undertook to investigate the eligibility of applicants for work offered by the city. Paid investigators were selected from among the more intelligent applicants and were found to be not overgenerous as had been expected but if anything, rather lacking in sympathy. Since Cambridge by law had to choose its municipal employes from civil service rolls, the Committee persuaded the city to set up a special list with qualifications for employment based, first, upon number of dependents, second, upon length of time out of employment, and only third, upon experience in the work for which the applicant was to be certified. Such jobs were all paid for at the rate of $1.00 a day. In this instance a committee undertook no project of its own, but by modifying the wage rate and basis of selection for certain municipal employes, persuaded the city to carry on what was virtually work relief.

In St. Paul municipal funds and privately raised money were
alternated. Immediately after its organization the Citizens' Com-
mittee for the Relief of the Unemployed was assigned by the city
a contingent fund of $9,000 and quarters in the City Hall for
receiving applicants. An additional $5,000, contributed by the city
from an excess fund raised through a multitude of assessments was
paid out as wages to the unemployed working on parks and streets.
Later, funds raised by the Committee were deposited in the city
treasury to be distributed in cash on the weekly payrolls just as city
funds had been. Finally the Committee adopted the more economi-
cal plan of orders on reputable grocers and itself assumed responsi-
bility for disbursing work-relief wages, since the city government
saw no other practicable method. In Buffalo, also, the city expended
an unusual amount on municipal improvements in order to give
work to the needy, and this amount was supplemented by projects
of the Citizens' Relief Committee; while in Cincinnati a city ap-
propriation of $30,000 to the Park Commissioners for work for men
was followed by contributions from the Citizens' Committee to con-
tinue the plan and finance women's workrooms.¹

In short, local conditions and local leadership determined the
pattern adopted by various relief committees. They utilized public
funds and facilities; they made an attempt to conceive their task
as fitting into the total needs of a community, whatever they were;
they protected their limited facilities by investigating need of ap-
plicants. General weaknesses, especially in programs for work
relief, were found in plans of relief committees, but within the
limits of their principles they perfected as carefully worked out an
organization as the size of the problem and the hasty preparations
permitted.

¹ "Charity Organization in Times Extraordinary." In the Charities Review,
vol. 3, April, 1894, p. 279.
CHAPTER VI

1893–1897: HOW THE ESTABLISHED AGENCIES CARRIED ON

RELIEF MEASURES CONDUCTED BY PUBLIC AGENCIES

Established Public Departments

The struggle between adherents of public and private relief that characterized earlier depressions was not conspicuous during the nineties. Generally speaking, the private agencies had outstripped the public in the interval since the last depression, and in most communities had secured a position of leadership. Philadelphia, leader among the cities which had already abolished outdoor relief as inefficient and corrupt, placed responsibility for financial assistance entirely upon private agencies. Massachusetts, advocate of public departments, held nevertheless that official boards, accustomed to deal with the chronic poor, would find it impossible to adjust themselves to the demands of such an emergency.\(^1\) In some places poor relief still carried with it the stigma of political disenfranchisement, making unemployment relief a questionable function of public departments.

With no time to decide such policies, the Boston Overseers of the Poor found applications in December, 1893, when local newspaper publicity concerning the depression began to appear, suddenly increasing to extraordinary figures. In that month 515 more families applied than during the corresponding month the previous year, and in January, 1894, the increase was 996; the staff was expanded 50 per cent and the distribution of groceries and coal in similar ratio.\(^2\) About two-thirds as much was expended in cash relief as

\(^{1}\) Report of the Massachusetts Board to Investigate the Subject of the Unemployed, March 13, 1895 (House Doc. no. 50). Wright and Potter Printing Company, Boston, 1895, Part V, pp. ix–x.

\(^{2}\) Ibid., Part I, p. 151. The funds of the Overseers were expended for various classes of needy so that it is difficult to determine the proportion of increase due entirely to unemployment.
was given in supplies of fuel, groceries, or clothing. Foodstuffs were secured from the city store at wholesale prices plus a small percentage for the cost of handling. Persons were allowed to select their ration, usually on a two-dollar order, from a list of flour, tea, sugar, beans, pork, fish, potatoes; soap was also included. Reacting possibly to current criticism of public relief methods for emergency conditions, the Boston Overseers held that most of the procedure to avoid indiscriminate relief was protected by legal stipulations. The staff was in duty bound to see that the law was enforced. Every case was investigated even though overtime and additional workers were necessary.1

An unusual method of administering public relief existed in Detroit, where the absence of a central relief committee was attributed to the great efficiency of the Poor Commission. By the beginning of 1894 about 4,000 families were requiring $10,000 a week relief, and the investigation of applications was entrusted to the Police Department with cordial testimony to the efficiency with which the work was done.2

In Chicago the County Board had only one distributing center. Applicants numbered 1,000 to 1,200 daily and many of them walked as far as seven miles in the biting cold. Waiting in line for hours, one woman was crushed to death and a man died from exposure. Some in need were unable to travel such great distances on extremely cold days. The County Board feared that the year’s appropriation of $125,000, made in January, 1894, would not cover the expense of branch offices, nor even the cost of the existing system at the current monthly expenditure of $35,000. Consequently a “special county relief fund” was proposed, to be raised by voluntary contributions and a compulsory contribution of one day’s pay a month for three months from city employes. Such a fund was to pay for substations and additional relief. This scheme to supplement the budget of a public department by private contributions was probably abandoned when Chicago concentrated its privately supported relief measures in the Central Relief Associa-

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tion. In Buffalo also exhaustion of the appropriation for outdoor relief by March, 1894, resulted in applicants being directed to the Courier Relief Society, an emergency newspaper fund, and other agencies. Professor Closson, describing the situation in the winter of 1893–1894, writes that:

In some cities . . . as for instance, in Scranton, Pennsylvania, where outside aid was not usually granted, the poor authorities have changed the policy to meet the special exigency. . . . In some places minor changes in method have been made, such as the establishment of storehouses at which the poor could obtain supplies directly instead of getting them through orders upon the ordinary grocery stores. In some places, too . . . the overseers have established wayfarers' lodges and wood yards, in order to provide a more adequate work-test. But, in general, the methods pursued have been along the accustomed lines.¹

Public departments, where they existed, carried some of the excess relief burden, but their efforts were overshadowed by private relief committees, toward which the heat of criticism was directed rather than toward agencies for public relief. In Cincinnati, as previously mentioned, evidence shows that the Associated Charities seized the opportunity to combat the city's relief methods, which were felt to lower wages, and unnecessarily to increase the number of dependents. The Associated Charities agreed to investigate applicants for city relief during one month, and found that in its opinion 973 out of 1,927 did not need assistance. In many instances coal and provisions had already been granted before the visit of the agent from the Associated Charities, which was offered as further proof of the demoralizing methods of public agencies.

Emergency Work of Police Departments

Occasionally the police department of a city organized some distribution of unemployment relief. In Boston the police collected funds for coal, food, and other aid, referring families to the Associated Charities when police funds were exhausted or when they felt further investigation necessary. Many of these families were already known to existing agencies, or upon investigation were

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discovered to be undeserving of aid. Social agencies lamented the inadequacy of these police attempts to alleviate suffering. The St. Louis police raised $10,000 which they distributed in coal, food, and clothing from their station houses. In Philadelphia the police in one ward not only solicited provisions from shopkeepers in their patrol wagon, collecting in one day 50 bushels of potatoes, 1,000 loaves of bread, and several tons of general provisions, including meat, vegetables, and groceries, but they also sought out "hidden poverty in the small streets and alleys." Supplies were given out from the police station to those bearing cards from policemen on the beat vouching for their need. Recognizing the limitations of such efforts, the police finally proposed to unite with the clergy to work through the local units of the Citizens' Permanent Relief Committee. The instances quoted serve only to show that anything short of the most carefully co-ordinated and well-organized efforts resulted in duplication and shortsighted methods of meeting the real need.

RELIEF MEASURES CONDUCTED BY PRIVATE AGENCIES

Establishment of New Agencies

"The 'hard times' and the consequent distress among every grade of employees affected thereby, have forced upon the attention of many communities the need of a better system, upon cooperative methods, for their local benevolent resources." This stimulus came in part also from the interest aroused in charity organization at the International Congress of Charities and Correction held in Chicago in 1893, and from numerous other local issues such as existed, for example, in Chicago prior to the organization of the Bureau of Charities. Most of these new agencies were organized during the winter of 1893-1894 along general charity organization

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1 Undated newspaper clipping, probably January, 1894, entitled "The Work of Relieving the Poor in the Twenty-ninth Ward." From a book of newspaper clippings lent the author by Miss Helen Parrish.
4 See Chapter V, p. 110, for discussion of Chicago Bureau of Charities.
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Many of them continued their development after the depression.

POLICIES AND PRACTICES OF EXISTING AGENCIES DURING THE DEPRESSION

Private social agencies for the relief of the poor, in other words, had acquired a recognized position in their communities. New endeavors naturally followed the pattern already set. So-called "relief" societies were often limited to a particular nationality, religion, class, or condition, while the charity organization societies, most of them with comparatively short experience, had no such restrictions and were concerned both with individual families and with the broader needs in their communities, such as registration bureaus, care for homeless men, work tests, employment bureaus, housing reform, and the still widely discussed question of public relief. In Philadelphia the agency assumed financial responsibility for its clients. Established private agencies in general, however, did not regard themselves as relief-giving bodies. Their stated object was rather to "investigate cases, lend a friendly hand, and assist by bringing the person who needs aid into contact with

1 The following new agencies are listed in the above-mentioned annual report of the New York Charity Organization Society; by Watson, Frank D., in The Charity Organization Movement in the United States, p. 265; by Closson, Carlos C., Jr., in "The Unemployed in American Cities," in the Quarterly Journal of Economics, vol. 8, July, 1894, p. 454; and by the Massachusetts Board to Investigate the Subject of the Unemployed, in its Report, March 13, 1895, Part I, p. xxxix.
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some individual or society which is specially fitted to elevate him.”

Where no relief agencies existed the charity organization societies adopted the policy of granting direct relief.

Laymen on the boards of these societies had grown up with the charity organization movement; they had organized the agencies, raised money, determined policies, and a goodly number of them had been in daily contact with the work. Professional staffs were increasingly important, but the issues involved during these lean years demanded leaders of the caliber of Mrs. Josephine Shaw Lowell to grapple with problems within the agencies as well as in the community at large. The depression constituted a particular challenge to the system of organized charity in this country, since this was its first trial in a period of hard times.

The way was not easy. In addition to internal problems of administration and standards, the charity organization societies felt that they must continue the struggle against the advocates of public relief.

In view of the notorious condition of our public charities, and of the substantial and permanent work accomplished by private persons in systematizing private beneficence, it would be idle to discuss this point. Selfish and opinionated sentimentalists may do temporary mischief by obstructing and decrying this work, but such hindrances are exactly what the charity organization has always encountered and expects to encounter.

There is too much tendency today to look upon the public purse as the resource of all needs; while, on the other hand, in churches and small bands of workers and individuals are to be found the highest exponents of charity, those who will give not merely of their means, but of their time and energy.

Relying upon the municipality to do those things which may be accomplished through persistent individual effort tends to become chronic, weakens character, and might easily be carried so far as to cause serious social evils.

1 Report of the Massachusetts Board to Investigate the Subject of the Unemployed, March, 1895, Part I, p. xxxix.
UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF IN PERIODS OF DEPRESSION

On the other hand, public assistance as a means of rescuing thrifty workingmen from demoralization at the hands of sentimental almsgivers had strong advocates. Stanton Coit, the founder of one of the earliest settlements in the country and a staunch supporter of the early trade union movement, thus writes on the subject:

It is to be deeply deplored that . . . the people who started the Charity Organization Society were tainted with laissez-faire doctrines and extreme individualistic theories. They did not see that the organization and unification of all relief agencies and methods cannot possibly be brought about by private efforts. The results of years of work by the Charity Organization Society may be swept away in one season of unusual distress by sentimentalists and by newspaper advertising schemes for relieving the poor. Scientific philanthropists will some day learn that charity organization is a distinctive municipal function. Who but the city can prevent the dispensing of free bread, and can limit the relief of each agency to a given district, so that there shall be no waste or overlapping? Who but the city can gather, week by week, full and accurate statistics of the condition of the unemployed? . . . Who but the city can compel every agency to follow careful methods to avoid fraud? In short, the city should grant licenses to relief agencies and regulate their methods.1

Although charity organization societies were set up to reach all groups in society, labor, both skilled and unskilled, regarded these agencies with suspicion and dislike, holding that most of their clients were the “chronic, if not vicious, poor,” and that one of their primary purposes was to prevent imposition upon charitable givers. It was perhaps not surprising that some held this to be the chief function of the agencies and criticized the private agencies for their lack of helpfulness in other directions:

The ordinary charitable institution as now constituted is not in touch with the industrial conditions. Such societies are organized for the relief of pauperism. They are so well accustomed to deal with the degraded or particularly unfortunate class that they necessarily lose a certain sort of tact and generous discrimination which is needed in dealing with men and women, who, under ordinary conditions, are steady wage-earners. Although probably by far the larger number of visitors or agents utilized by these societies perform the work of investigating with praiseworthy dis-

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crimination and appreciation of the difficulties of the honest needy, still, the inquisitorial and repellant attitude assumed by those who apparently regard the chief duty of a relief body to detect imposition reflects unfortunately upon the work of a relief association as a whole.¹

Fundamentally, too, labor felt charitable agencies to be “an aristocratic concession to poverty,”² only prolonging the unfair social system as a result of which workers found themselves unemployed.

After the first frantic excitement, however, at the end of the winter of 1893–1894, relief committees and work-relief projects in many places ceased to function. It was the charity organization societies, relief societies, and churches which had to carry as efficiently as funds and development would permit, the still abnormally large burden of the unemployed. The stress of the period brought not only an increase in volume of work, but in many instances additional functions. Holding fast to their principles, the charity organization societies worked closely in a variety of movements to relieve emergent distress, thereby gaining flexibility of method and wider approval.

The extent to which churches and other groups independent of social agencies participated in relief plans is hard to determine. In general, relief and supplies were distributed by them in larger quantities than usual. The class of people who, “if they made known their wants at all, naturally applied to clergymen for assistance”³ (white-collar clerks and elderly persons with a certain social status) were assisted quietly by individual pastors. During the winter of 1893–1894, one wealthy Boston church expended between $2,000 and $3,000 to help applicants who had no connection with the church, and two Boston churches opened free employment bureaus. More formal organizations of the churches, exemplified by the Evangelical Alliance of Cincinnati, led in the fall of 1893 to close co-operation with existing relief agencies. Their records and

¹ Report of the Massachusetts Board to Investigate the Subject of the Unemployed, March 13, 1895, Part V, pp. xiii–xiv.
³ Report of the Massachusetts Board to Investigate the Subject of the Unemployed, March 13, 1895, Part I, p. xiv.
methods were used, but in addition a relief committee in Cincinnati raised money with which foodstuffs were bought and distributed by volunteers to needy church members and families referred by agencies. "These supplies have been given directly to the families in need by those who have sought them out and showed a personal interest in them, and not from a distributing center or public crib, which method of giving is always demoralizing in its influence." In Pittsburgh, also, the Christian Aid Association of the East End organized districts under women volunteers from the churches and, adopting careful methods of investigation, assumed responsibility for all the needy in their territory for three months during the winter of 1893-1894. Free medical service from physicians and in some cases free medicine from druggists were secured. In addition, work relief on the grounds of a hospital was offered to non-citizens who were not eligible for work relief under the Citizens' Relief Committee. More than $5,000 was spent on this project, representing almost half the funds raised, the other half going for provisions at wholesale rates which were given out on grocery orders. Although relief from these smaller and often poorly organized sources was likely to be given in small, irregular amounts, it was often accompanied by the friendly interest of the givers to individual families.

Money-Raising. Increased demands upon agencies made necessary, even as early as the close of 1893, extraordinary efforts to raise larger budgets. Newspaper appeals, letters to special groups such as members of the Chicago Stock Exchange, and where public appeals failed, efforts to secure increased contributions from regular donors, were all tried. In Boston a paid collector of the Associated Charities was able to increase the income from $17,960 during the previous year to $21,448. The New York Charity Organization Society was proud of its refusal to accept money from any of the many public funds or entertainments given to relieve exceptional distress. Instead it managed to raise $43,019 in 1893, an increase

1 (Cincinnati) Citizens' Committee, Emergency Relief in Cincinnati, 1893-1894. The importance of the "Relief Work of the Evangelical Alliance" is indicated by its inclusion in this report of the Citizens' Committee.
3 (Boston) Associated Charities, Fifteenth Annual Report, November, 1894, p. 18.
over the previous year of more than $2,000, apparently by enlarging the number of its contributors.¹ This agency’s funds were ordinarily spent not for relief but for investigation and service, and for permanent reforms. In 1894, however, an Emergent Relief Guarantee was assured to the Society, “by which several persons of means became responsible for fixed sums, varying from $100 to $500 each, for the relief of those needy persons who were not eligible for the bounty of any church or society, and whose wants would otherwise have gone unrelieved.”² A sum of $2,275 for this purpose was administered by a special committee which called upon the subscribers for their pro rata share as the specific cases arose, and any surplus remaining was either returned to the giver or held for the next case. Such a fund definitely brought this agency into the relief-giving field.

Careful as many charity organization societies were to insist that they did not give relief, they often raised money for special cases from benevolent individuals designated in the jargon of the profession as “B. I’s,” or from other sources, the donors being kept informed of the circumstances in these families by reports or if possible by personal acquaintance. In Boston more “B. I’s” than ever before gave through district conferences,³ and during the first year of the depression the New York Charity Organization Society administered on behalf of such contributors a separate fund of $7,118.⁴

In the later years of the depression financial difficulty hampered the United Hebrew Charities of New York. In the first year of hard times, an emergency committee had secured $68,000 from benefit performances, from special funds in the community such as the City Employees’ Fund, and from other contributors.⁵ With funds of $147,623 available in 1895–1896, their 34,294 applicants for assistance, most of whom represented families, received an

² Idem, Thirteenth Annual Report for the Year 1894, p. 18.
⁵ (New York) United Hebrew Charities, Twentieth Annual Report, October, 1894, p. 12.
average of less than $5.00 each. "Adequate relief" was therefore impossible, and the board recognized that "suffering was assuaged to a very limited extent when circumstances called for that immediate and sufficient charity which would result beyond peradventure in self-help." The next year, confronted with the possibility of discontinuing the work of the agency, a committee of contributors determined to create a permanent membership of 600 whose annual contributions would put it upon a firm financial basis. With an increased expenditure of almost 50 per cent, the United Hebrew Charities in Philadelphia was forced to dispose of securities from "non-restricted" bequests to eke out its available funds, to which unusual contributions had already been made.\(^1\)

The general impression gained is that private agencies had varying degrees of success in raising sufficient funds to cover their increased needs. Some "let down the bars" and gave relief, safeguarding their principles by segregating for particular families the money thus raised. Assistance from emergency funds was gratefully accepted by other private agencies, notably in Philadelphia, where the Society for Organizing Charity through its ward offices spent money from the Citizens' Permanent Relief Committee, at the same time stimulating the districts to raise funds of their own. In still other communities the charity organization societies pointed with pride to loyal contributors who made it unnecessary for them to accept money from sources they considered to be of dubious origin. By and large the established agencies weathered the storm, increasing their work in almost every instance and occasionally adding new functions.

**Increased Activity.** It is impossible to make an accurate estimate of the extent to which private agencies throughout the country multiplied their services. No uniform statistics were available, even for agencies within a single city. Variety of functions made comparisons between societies difficult, and in addition the proportion of increase due directly to unemployment was seldom stated. Nevertheless for certain agencies the additional work they undertook in comparison with previous years indicated the extent to which their resources and the scope of their enterprises had to be expanded.

\(^1\) (Philadelphia) United Hebrew Charities. Annual Meeting, May 13, 1894, President’s Report.
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In Boston the average increase in number of families assisted by 10 relief societies, as compared with the previous year 1892—1893, was 60 per cent. Such a figure was at best only approximate, since the data of the individual agencies would undoubtedly have shown wide variations in accuracy. The Boston Associated Charities, not a relief-giving but rather an investigating and referring agency, dealt with 50 per cent more families in 1893—1894 than in the previous year. The proportion of the increased load due to unemployment was estimated by the Boston Provident and the Roxbury Charitable Societies, aiding a total of 4,314 families, who cautiously announced 75 per cent "would be capable of self-support if so inclined and if employment could be found; the Howard Benevolent Society and the Hebrew Benevolent Society, aiding 1,200 families, placed their estimate of employability at 50 per cent."2

Another means of securing a general idea of the increasing burden of private agencies was through the reports of registration bureaus maintained to exchange information among social agencies. In New York the work of the Registration Bureau increased as is shown in Table 6.3

TABLE 6.—REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION AND REPORTS SENT OUT BY NEW YORK REGISTRATION BUREAU DURING CERTAIN MONTHS OF FISCAL YEARS 1893 AND 1894

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Requests received</th>
<th></th>
<th>Reports sent out</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1892-1893</td>
<td>1893-1894</td>
<td>1892-1893</td>
<td>1893-1894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>2,113</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>2,076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>1,327</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>1,965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Boston the Central Registration Bureau statistics showed a total increase of inquiries as follows:4

1 Report of the Massachusetts Board to Investigate the Subject of the Unemployed, March 13, 1895, Part I, p. xli.
2 Ibid., Part I, p. xlv.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year ending May 31</th>
<th>1893</th>
<th>1894</th>
<th>1895</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New cases registered</td>
<td>2,437</td>
<td>5,770</td>
<td>2,578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old cases</td>
<td>5,369</td>
<td>5,940</td>
<td>6,877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total registered during year</td>
<td>7,806</td>
<td>11,710</td>
<td>9,455</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the year ending May 31, 1893, 40 societies reported cases; in 1894, 62 societies; in 1895, 67 societies, so that while the number of co-operating agencies increased, the total number of reports decreased. Need was undoubtedly less, and emergency agencies after their short activity had ceased to function. A sharp drop in cases reported by “other societies” than the regular public and private agencies in 1895 would indicate that this group was largely composed of agencies administering emergency relief funds or work-relief projects, such as those of the Boston Citizens’ Relief Committee, which went out of existence in the spring of 1894.

To agencies giving relief as well as service the hard winter of 1893–1894 brought tremendous burdens. During the first three months of 1894 the 57 conferences of the New York City Society of St. Vincent de Paul reported 10,925 families helped through the expenditure of $66,962, an increase of 300 per cent over the preceding quarter.¹ The budget for relief of the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor increased from $17,586 in the year ending September 30, 1893, to $66,659 for the year ending September 30, 1894.² In Philadelphia determination of the Jewish community to look after its own people led the United Hebrew Charities to request the Citizens’ Permanent Relief Committee to refer to it all Jewish families applying.³ This additional burden led to the agency’s first public appeal for funds and an increase of families under care in 1893 to 8,000, double the number ever provided for previously.⁴ Another clear picture of increased load is

¹ New York World, April 9, 1894.

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presented by the expenditures of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society which also permits an effective comparison of the several categories of expense.¹

### TABLE 7.—EXPENDITURES OF CHICAGO RELIEF AND AID SOCIETY FOR SPECIFIED ITEMS DURING WINTER MONTHS OF FISCAL YEARS 1893 AND 1894

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Cash relief</th>
<th>Transportation</th>
<th>Merchandise</th>
<th>Other relief</th>
<th>Total direct relief items</th>
<th>Payroll</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Winter, 1892–1893</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>$1,753</td>
<td>$6</td>
<td>$774</td>
<td>$182</td>
<td>$2,715</td>
<td>$1,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>3,231</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3,450</td>
<td>1,204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>3,952</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>4,291</td>
<td>1,198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>3,532</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>4,486</td>
<td>1,511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Winter, 1893–1894</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>9,355</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>1,617</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>11,174</td>
<td>2,657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>14,246</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>3,961</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>18,713</td>
<td>4,098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>11,846</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>2,660</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>14,693</td>
<td>2,502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>3,362</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>4,153</td>
<td>1,507</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistics at hand give evidence of a stupendous increase in the work which the agencies, most of them private, carried on, particularly during the first year of the depression. This increase varied, depending upon the money available and the scope of activities. Agencies dispensing relief found their relief budgets higher than ever before; those which emphasized investigation and co-ordinated effort found administrative costs rising because of the increase in applications. A combination of these factors is found in the expenditures of the New York Charity Organization Society from October, 1893, to February, 1894, which were $20,185, or 20 per cent more than those of the corresponding period of the previous year. New cases in its districts increased 297 per cent during the same period, bringing the number up to 9,087.²

Modification in Procedure. Methods of procedure in private agencies were modified to assure a more expeditious administration

¹Chicago Relief and Aid Society, Minutes of the Board, January 2, February 5, March 5, April 2, 1894. Expenditures for Conveying the Sick, Interments, Surgical Appliances, Coal, Meals, and Lodgings, for all of which comparatively small sums were spent are not itemized in Table 7 but are totaled under the heading “Other relief.”

of service to increasing numbers of applicants. In some instances these changes represented acknowledged although temporary compromises of standards hitherto maintained; in others the difference between principle and practice, although it existed, was never admitted.

Charity organization societies had always insisted upon adequate investigation of all applications before recommending assistance. This procedure was copied by many of the citizens’ relief committees in larger cities and by some other agencies in assigning clients to work relief and in giving out supplies. Transfer of this technique to emergency set-ups meant that often the investigation was not thorough. Staffs were generally inadequate and poorly trained for the work. Moreover, “investigation was spoken of as if it were in itself a good thing: whereas it is only excusable as a necessary preliminary to efficient help; and to invite people to lie and cheat for the sake of a package of groceries or a coat, and then to expose the lie, is only to add insult to injury.”¹ Popular feeling often opposed expenditures for administrative purposes rather than relief. The strongest argument advanced for such use of funds was that the amount saved in refusing undeserved relief more than balanced the cost of investigation.² Emphasis upon close relations between relief agencies in order to avoid duplication of relief was sometimes neglected because the amount of relief granted by any one agency was felt to be so inadequate that it was deemed unfair to confine aid for a given family to a single source.

However, private established agencies continued investigation as one of their most useful tools, although some modifications were believed necessary for the emergency. The New York Charity Organization Society depended largely upon securing relief for its families from other sources rather than on giving from its own funds. So great was the increase of applications to its district offices in 1893 that in December one office had more requests for aid than all 11 districts during 1892. Keeping records of all cases became impossible, and the “alms of direction” alone were resorted to in many

² Report of the Massachusetts Board to Investigate the Subject of the Unemployed, March 13, 1895, Part I, p. lvii.
hundred cases.\(^1\) Investigation, usually prompt in emergency cases, was delayed “four or five days, and often nearly double that time,” before even a home visit could be made. Effective treatment became difficult; neither the worker nor the district committee could keep clearly in mind so many cases. New families, new problems, and new pictures of distress seemed to pass before them in bewildering succession. Such pressures resulted in the transfer of preliminary investigations in all but the extreme northern and southern districts to a corps of visitors at the central office. In many instances, cases of temporary distress were treated and closed by these investigators.

The Provident Association of St. Louis observed strictly its practice of investigation before granting assistance, a “cardinal rule” the value of which was proved to the Association’s satisfaction by the results; out of 7,282 families applying, 3,731, or more than half, were found not to be in need or not “deserving,” a proportion about equal to that resulting from investigation in years before the depression.\(^2\) Other agencies were less optimistic about their maintenance of standards in times of such general distress. The Philadelphia United Hebrew Charities frankly admitted they “could not stop, as heretofore, to inquire systematically into the actual needs of thousands of applicants.”\(^3\) While attempting to follow the same careful method of investigation, the agency recognized that it was no longer possible to plan for the eventual self-support of applicants, but was a question of warding off horrors of starvation from countless families. In New York, too, the United Hebrew Charities distributed relief upon extremely superficial evidence.

If an applicant satisfied the agency that his earnings had never exceeded eight dollars per week, that he had been without anything like steady work for several months, and that he had a wife and four children, [the agency] relieved him without going into his habits or endeavoring to

\(^1\) “The Charity Organization Society of New York.” In the Charities Review, vol. 3, March, 1894, p. 239.
\(^2\) Monthly Register of the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity, vol. 16, November, 1894, pp. 5–6.
\(^3\) (Philadelphia) United Hebrew Charities, Annual Meeting, May 13, 1894, President’s Report.
ascertain whether he had been sufficiently provident while in receipt of wages.¹

The inevitable result of such lowered standards, it was feared, would be an increase in the number of able-bodied men throwing themselves upon the agency for support when they might at least have found odd jobs. Furthermore, such inadequate investigation curtailed the amount of relief given to individual cases and contributed to the "under-vitalization of tenement house dwellers" because of the meager rations it was possible to supply. The Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity admitted that its ordinary function of "provident measures, friendly visiting, finding employment, and permanent uplifting of the dependent"² had been subordinated to relief work. Efficient administration of large amounts of material aid in this new emphasis in its work, however, only proved the adaptability of the agency's methods.

Another change in procedure came about when pressures necessitated doling out relief at the offices rather than upon home visits. In Boston referrals had usually come by letter or other reference to the Associated Charities, followed by visits in the homes, and only about one-fourth of the applicants had applied in person. Such efforts to keep clients from becoming known personally as applicants went by the board in the depression, when fully half the clients made their own application.³ In Philadelphia the United Hebrew Charities pointed with satisfaction after the pressure of 1893–1894 to the discontinuance of granting relief "over the counter" and the return to home visiting as a basis for any assistance.⁴

Relief was given in a variety of forms and for different purposes. Either cash, or clothing, fuel and food were offered, the latter probably more often, as it was feared money might be misspent. Cash given for rent or transportation to other communities where


² Monthly Register of the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity, vol. 15, February, 1894, p. 91.

⁴ (Philadelphia) United Hebrew Charities, Annual Meeting, May 13, 1894, President's Report.
relatives or employment offered support was, however, frequently mentioned. Loans were made to those likely to be able to repay and occasionally medical care and medicines were necessary. In the case of the homeless, shelter and food were given in return for work. At least, during the first winter, larger sums were found in budgets for work-relief wages than for direct relief. No general philosophy of relief-giving prevailed, yet recurrent policies included the concept of work as a test of worthiness; recognition of the dangers of pauperization from too easily secured assistance; limitation in the quantity and variety of relief so that it would not be equivalent to what might be "procured by labor" but would still meet the minimum needs of the applicants; and wariness on the part of private agencies in assisting the chronically disabled, such as the aged or ill, rather than those who might be rehabilitated by temporary assistance. Some people were disturbed by the obvious inadequacy of relief per family and the impossibility of constructive service looking toward independence. In 1896–1897 one agency deliberately selected 48 cases on which it spent, not the full amount felt desirable, but at least a more adequate average of $41. All but four of these families were returned to self-support, and while many factors besides sufficient relief were probably involved, the concern of any relief agency for this aspect of the problem was significant.1

Personnel Changes. Personnel adjustments in private agencies followed increased loads. Both volunteer and paid staffs were increased and there emerged a realization of the need for the better training of workers. The United Hebrew Charities of Philadelphia in 1894 employed for the first time a salaried superintendent to direct the constantly increasing work of the agency.2 The Boston Associated Charities according to its annual report for 1894, took the novel step of employing stenographers in the central and district offices, who "became quite skillful in securing the substance of conversation" between visitors and applicants in the offices, thereby saving much time and effort on the part of visitors. Finally


they ran errands and "made inquiries of employers and relatives, supplementing the agents' work."\(^1\)

Early in the fall of 1893, according to the Minutes of the Executive Committee, a board member of the New York Charity Organization Society collected a special fund of $575 to pay for increased assistance for two months. At the beginning of 1894 the staff was augmented by 17 assistants, bringing the total personnel to 65. When considered in terms of total population and case load, this increase, however, was not proportionate to that in other cities.\(^2\) The need for an "emergency force" had been presented by the general secretary, and approved by the board for the first three months of 1894. When the large case load continued, the extra assistance was authorized for a fourth month. The emergency staff as first approved had numbered 15. Apparently it was later enlarged to 17. Monthly salaries first fixed for the emergency staff and the total increase in monthly salary cost were as follows:\(^3\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In Application Bureau</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assistant to take cases</td>
<td>$40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typewriter and stenographer</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In Registration Bureau</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 assistant investigating agents at $40</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk to attend waiting room</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In Superintendent's Office</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Typewriter and stenographer</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In each of 8 district offices</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An additional assistant agent at $40</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total monthly increase in salary cost | $557 |

Such careful preparation was unusual in setting up a special staff to carry the additional load. In most social agencies at that time as in later depressions, new assistants were not planned for, but were added sporadically when pressure became unbearable.


\(^3\) *Idem*, Minutes of the Executive Committee, December 26, 1893, March 27, 1894, January 2, 1894.

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A most interesting controversy was waged between the general secretary and the majority of the Board of the New York Charity Organization Society over salaries and personnel practices. Mrs. Lowell, leader of the radicals, suggested that salaries of assistant agents-in-training be increased to $40 a month because properly qualified persons were so difficult to find. The Board, however, felt that it was . . . no time for an increase in wages, or even a general consideration of the subject, and strongly advised that the question of wages or the consideration of advance . . . be for the present discountenanced, and opportunities be taken to impress this upon all those in the service of the Society.¹

Needless to say, the salaries under consideration remained low, $30 a month. Further, distinction between the emergency staff and the regular workers was indicated when the Board decided that the established minimum of $30 a month to assistant agents-in-training did not apply to the emergency workers, and that the former title was to be reserved for regular aspirants to the position of agent.² In other words, the higher salaries of the emergency workers were justified because they were expected to carry the brunt of the emergency without any pretense of having received training.

Mrs. Lowell, with characteristic energy, pursued the matter of the salary scale, presenting to the Executive Committee a year later a "Memorial" from the Committee on District Work. Commenting upon the meager salaries of assistants in the regular staff, the report said:

These assistants are required to be respectable, educated, energetic, patient, and sympathetic; able to collect statistics, to estimate character, to give good advice, and to endure hard work. This Society has to rely on their reports, that is, to depend on their ability and trustworthiness. In short, these assistants are the future agents of the districts and the present visitors and investigators of the organization.

It is evident that persons possessing the combination of qualities required by assistants are not plentiful, and are certainly deserving of living wages. Yet our Society, one of whose objects is to prevent pauperism, pays these assistants the inadequate salary of $30 per month at first; and when they are experienced and found satisfactory, they receive only

¹ Ibid., January 9, 1894.
² Ibid., January 9, 1894.
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$40 per month, without any promise of future increase, even after many years' service, unless some agent dies or resigns.¹

The time was not yet ripe for salary standards to be increased, for in spite of Mrs. Lowell's valiant efforts, the $40 maximum monthly salary was retained instead of a $50 maximum recommended by the Finance Committee.²

Growing realization of the value of training for social work was crystallizing in the stress of the nineties, and resulted a few years later (in 1898) in the course of summer lectures which subsequently developed into the New York School of Social Work. The Boston Associated Charities expressed the same point of view in considering measures which would prepare agencies more adequately to meet such crises.

We feel that our serious mistake was in not having a larger body of trained investigators or agents ready to be called upon in an emergency... who would supplement the work of our agents, receiving proper compensation for their services. Hence it would be wise always to keep at least two persons in training as agents. The slight additional expense involved would prove money well invested.³

Although two such apprentices were taken on during 1893-1894, "after a few months their training had to be finished in the severe school of experience, without much oversight."⁴ Already agencies facing the realities of the situation were forced to admit that the tremendous tasks undertaken in crises broke down standards of staff supervision, and that competent workers who had completed training were demanded if relief and the accompanying service to families were to be efficiently administered.

Staff members worked overtime night after night and wore themselves out in their heroic efforts to carry their burden. In one agency the havoc thus wrought required more than six months' leave for the general secretary, and three and a half months' absence for the assistant.⁵ In the New York Charity Organization Society the whole staff was given for its exhausting additional labor

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five days' rest "as soon as reduced applications permitted." This was, of course, in addition to regular summer vacations of two to three weeks.¹

Through newspaper and personal appeals every effort was also made to increase the number of volunteers and scope of their activity. Their work included not only attendance at case committees, which in some instances met daily, but also covered practically all the work of a paid agent, "investigating new families, writing letters and reports, running errands, looking up references, [and] seeing relatives."² The Boston Associated Charities increased the number of its volunteers by 127 during the first year of distress and reported that volunteers were an important means of handling the additional responsibility satisfactorily,³ as did innumerable other agencies scattered over the country.

Administrative Development. Administrative organization was also modified during the depression. Several agencies, organized on district office lines, increased the territory they covered by establishing new offices or increasing staffs. In Cleveland the Bethel Associated Charities viewed such systematic extension through their districts as a means of preventing "the scattered disconnected societies [from doing] a helter-skelter work that would pauperize the recipients."⁴ In each of 12 districts, corresponding to the wards and boundaries set up by the Board of Health for its district physicians, district committees were organized averaging 60 members, with an investigator paid from a central office. These districts solicited their supplies and funds and distributed relief where they found need. After the critical period, the committees in Cleveland discontinued their activities but retained their organization in order to be prepared for future emergencies.

A unique and successful experiment in Fitchburg, Massachu-

³ (Boston) Associated Charities, Fifteenth Annual Report, November, 1894, p. 16.
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setts, made possible referral of unknown cases of real need to the Benevolent Union. Each manufacturer of the city selected a workman trusted by himself and his employees. These workmen meeting together, devised a plan whereby notices were posted in each factory requesting those who knew of needy persons to report to their representative. Although the name of the Benevolent Union did not appear on the notice, the shop representatives actually formed an auxiliary committee of volunteers that co-operated with the agency.¹

The Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity maintained a unique position in the administration of relief. On the one hand, it advised and directed countless temporary agencies which sprang up in sections of the city; on the other, it attempted to turn all efforts into established relief channels, receiving funds to be expended through its districts, supplementing where necessary, and lending staff members where there was poorly equipped personnel. Funds from the Citizens' Permanent Relief Committee were distributed among ward societies, which maintained varying degrees of administrative relationship with the Society for Organizing Charity. This society maintained throughout a nicely balanced strength between centralization and decentralization of power; its chief concern was with policy making, personnel standards, relief-giving methodology, and city-wide relationships; the district organizations retained as much freedom in raising funds and making expenditures as each was capable of assuming. "The central administration served as the balance-wheel which secured steadiness and uniformity in the action of all the machinery."²

One populous ward with some wealthy residents and also a great unemployed manufacturing population, raised the necessary money for relief within its own boundaries. Poorer neighborhoods received funds from relief agencies outside their districts and from the Society for Organizing Charity, which expended almost $4,500 during the first winter of the depression in aid to district associations. District associations during the same period raised $22,081 for

¹ Report of the Massachusetts Board to Investigate the Subject of the Unemployed, March 13, 1895, Part I, p. xlivii.
² Monthly Register of the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity, vol. 15, February, 1894, p. 91.
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relief, exclusive of contributions of provisions, fuel, and clothing made in kind.\(^1\)

In the Kensington mill district, where little money could be raised, three staff members of the Society for Organizing Charity were offered to strengthen the administration and direct the local volunteers in distributing provisions until funds became available through the Citizens' Permanent Relief Committee. Such assistance meant that the unemployed, at one time numbering 600, were carried over the first trying period of distress until the general public was fully aware of their needs.\(^2\) In September, 1896, the situation in this district having again become critical, a group of workmen at a street meeting organized a Kensington Aid Association to collect funds. Again the Society for Organizing Charity forestalled duplication by persuading the workmen to entrust to the Kensington district organization the $3,700 raised. For more than a month two extra workers were detailed to handle applications, but at the end of that time the Aid Association disbanded and more friends had been won for the Society for Organizing Charity.\(^3\)

Extension of Function. New demands upon charity organization societies in many instances necessitated extending their scope of activity. Occasionally it meant taking over a specified group of clients previously cared for by other agencies, as in Boston, where demands upon the Hebrew Benevolent Society were so numerous that this sectarian agency requested the Associated Charities to assist certain Jewish families which it had previously carried.\(^4\) In addition to opening up new sources of intake, agencies took on new enterprises or extended the usefulness of those previously conducted. Work-relief projects were set up through workrooms, wood yards, and laundries. Out of 40 societies reporting in Massachusetts, 11 furnished some form of work relief.\(^5\) Efforts were

\(^{1}\) Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity, Fifteenth Annual Report, February, 1894, pp. 8 and 14.

\(^{2}\) Monthly Register of the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity, vol. 15, February, 1894, p. 91.

\(^{3}\) Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity, Eighteenth Annual Report, February, 1897, pp. 7–10.

\(^{4}\) (Boston) Associated Charities, Fifteenth Annual Report, November, 1894, p. 27.

\(^{5}\) Report of the Massachusetts Board to Investigate the Subject of the Unemployed; March 13, 1895, Part I, pp. xlvi–xlvii.
also concentrated upon appealing to individuals to undertake repairs and new enterprises, or upon setting up a free employment bureau or committee to find work opportunities. In this way, for example, one district of the New York Charity Organization Society secured 39 permanent jobs and 61 temporary ones during the month of March, 1894.¹

Private agencies renewed their attempts to co-ordinate community efforts for assistance. "In a time of emergency, more even than at any other time, united action, rather than multiplicity of organizations is what is best, both to insure relief where it is most needed as well as to secure the public against deliberate imposition."² The Indianapolis Charity Organization Society, after financial difficulties, had only just been reorganized and a new general secretary appointed in the summer of 1893, yet it agreed to assist the unemployed until the Commercial Club Relief Committee began to function, thereby preventing new agencies from springing up.³ Funds thus expended amounted to $4,000, and the Relief Committee, instead of reimbursing the society from its own funds, secured an appropriation from the Township Trustee on the ground that the Relief Committee’s method of handling the situation had saved the township large amounts of money.⁴ Upon the disbanding of the Commercial Club Relief Committee, the balance in its treasury was also turned over to the Charity Organization Society. More active efforts to control the community’s relief measures and method of procedure occurred in Philadelphia and have already been described.⁵

¹ (New York) Charity Organization Society, Twelfth Annual Report for the Year 1893, p. 54. Notwithstanding the date, the material in the report included the early months of 1894.
² Germantown Relief Society, Annual Report for 1893, p. 11.
³ (Indianapolis) Charity Organization Society, Minutes of the Executive Committee, August 2, 1893.
⁵ See pp. 148-149.
CHAPTER VII

1893–1897: SPECIAL EMERGENCY MEASURES

RELIEF THROUGH TRADE UNIONS

LABOR unions had by the nineties achieved strength and solidarity. In large cities they were able for the most part to care for their own unemployed members, so that the latter were not obliged to resort to outside relief. Skilled union members, however, formed but a very small proportion of the total number of unemployed, especially among women workers, and comparatively few unions in prosperous times had accumulated unemployment reserves. Their relief funds depended largely upon emergency contributions or levies upon employed members.

Information about unemployment relief by trade unions was available only for isolated areas or single unions. National union headquarters did not collect data, and even local trade councils representing a number of unions had no complete material. Much of their unemployment relief was carried on in irregular fashion. Where records actually existed, popular hostility to unionism made disclosure of the extent of their operations undesirable. Later investigation revealed incomplete record files and only meager data for building up the picture of trade union relief in the nineties. Out-of-work benefits existed because of local rather than general custom, and necessitated heavy dues which most organizations were unwilling to impose. Benefit funds were in reality savings accumulated in prosperous times by the unemployed. The relatively few unions with money available for distribution represented exceedingly well-organized trades. In New York one typographical union during 1896–1897 spent $28,189 for out-of-work benefits.¹

In Massachusetts the cigar-makers, “among the best organized of the labor bodies in this country,” kept carefully published records. Exclusive of the late winter and spring months, when unemploy-

¹ (New York) Charity Organization Society, Fifteenth Annual Report, July 1, 1896, to June 30, 1897, p. 18.
UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF IN PERIODS OF DEPRESSION

ment was at its peak, their reports in 14 cities showed out-of-work benefits totaling $7,496 paid to 1,952 members. In cigar makers' unions throughout the country, unemployment benefits for the years 1890–1893 were as follows: for 1890, $22,760; for 1891, $21,223; for 1892, $17,461; and for 1893, $89,403. A machinists' union in Boston and the shoe workers' organization of Haverhill, as well as various unions among Massachusetts textile workers, distributed out-of-work benefits. Representatives of the St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly served as members of the Citizens' Committee for the Relief of the Unemployed, helping "to make that work practical, and . . . to popularize among the laboring people some of its difficult problems." In addition, the Assembly cared for about 2,000 members partly at least through unemployment benefits.

Some organizations used surplus funds in their treasuries; others raised money from members or from the public at large, or assessed their employed members a definite portion of their wages. In the newspaper trades substitute workers were always about the offices to take the places of regular workmen who were ill or taking holidays. During the depression regular employes purposely took time off in order to give employment to needy substitutes. Benefits of various kinds also brought in money.

Funds were expended in different ways. Maximum weekly benefits of $3.00 for unmarried men, with additions of coal, flour, meat, and other provisions for men with families, were made by the cigar-makers of Chicago who spent up to $1,000 a week. In the typographical union of that city married men were given $5.00 weekly instead of additional supplies. The Chicago United Brotherhood of Carpenters of America, aggregating 6,000 men in its 29 local branches, made each local a relief agency, investigating and distributing funds according to individual needs. In one case as much as much as...
as $35 was “paid out at a single time” for relief, a remarkably large sum for those days. Altogether, about $40,000 had been spent in the six months prior to January, 1894. Assistance was frequently distributed in kind, and the “lasters” of Lynn, Massachusetts, being for the most part young unmarried men, utilized their building for a dining hall and served two meals a day to members. Instances existed where funds were used as loans to members, as, for example, the clothing cutters of Boston, the masons of New Bedford, Massachusetts, and the granite cutters of Quincy, Massachusetts. The largest body of workers following the loan plan was the Chicago Building Trades Council with 23,000 members in its various locals. Occasionally union relief funds were dispensed not only to members but to all who applied, the largest amount of this kind being paid out by the Central Labor Union of Boston.

Labor unions deserve credit for the comparatively large sums of money raised and the diversity of methods used, fitted to their local membership and employment needs. The depression of the nineties marked the first widespread contribution to unemployment relief by trade unions, and emphasized the skilled worker’s pride in his self-sufficiency.

Only one instance came to light of a co-operative self-help venture. In 1890 the “National Labor Exchange” was organized at Independence, Missouri, to promote direct exchange of goods for the products of labor, with scrip as the medium of exchange. Although the organization claimed 300 branches with a membership of 15,000 in 1897, by the next year all trace of it had disappeared. The depression had undoubtedly stimulated its development, and it died out when opportunities for employment increased.

1 Chicago Herald, January 21, 1894.
2 Report of the Massachusetts Board to Investigate the Subject of the Unemployed, March 13, 1895, Part I, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii.
3 Chicago Herald, January 21, 1894.
OTHER EMERGENCY MEASURES

As in every other depression, a mushroom growth of emergency agencies appeared all over the country. Citizens’ committees on the whole were well managed and of practical benefit to the unemployed and to communities at large; other emergency agencies, accountable to no one for their finances or their methods, did more harm than good. Special relief funds, breadlines, centers where food could be bought for less than cost, and newspaper enterprises more concerned with self-advertisement than with the real needs of the unemployed sprang up in large numbers. They attracted undesirable persons to the cities to share with the unemployed the funds available. Relief was given without consideration of its effect upon the receivers. Although relief was often insufficient, food kitchens and breadlines, however well meaning, were found to be expensive and inadequate methods of feeding people whether homeless or otherwise. Dirt, rags, and tatters, and a generally down and out appearance in the breadline became assets instead of liabilities.\(^1\) The first winter abounded in schemes rich in funds and poor in purposeful achievement. A noteworthy exception, the subsistence garden plans of Mayor Hazen S. Pingree of Detroit, appeared late in the spring of 1894.\(^2\)

FREE DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD AND CLOTHING

Free food, lodging, or clothing was given out with little or no investigation in many cities. In some instances meal tickets were supplied or sold to citizens who handed them to those approaching them for assistance.\(^3\) Distribution took place under the patronage of churches, police departments, individuals, and committees. In Pittsburgh different churches took charge of distribution of soup on different days,\(^4\) and a weekly allotment of 1,000 pounds of beef


\(^2\) Closson, Carlos C., Jr., “The Unemployed in American Cities.” In the Quarterly Journal of Economics, vol. 8, July, 1894, p. 463. Soup kitchens were mentioned in Boston, New York, Rochester, Schenectady, Yonkers, Chicago, Minneapolis, Pittsburgh, Milwaukee, Omaha, Salt Lake City. There were undoubtedly many others.

\(^3\) Pittsburgh Leader, February 9, 1894.
and 500 loaves of bread was financed by a shoe dealer for five weeks at least. The result of such undertakings according to one observer was:

Some communities when the hard times came this winter, and the army of the unemployed swept through the streets, were panic-stricken, the inhabitants fortified themselves behind soup-houses, and threw loaves of bread out upon the besiegers; naturally the siege continued.

Low-Cost Restaurants and Food Stations

The selling of food or other supplies at less than market rates, in most instances at cost, assured some that they had avoided the evils of free distribution. Actually these were not business enterprises, but food stations selling at such ruinously low prices that small shop-keepers were driven into the ranks of the destitute because they could not keep their stores open in the face of such rivalry. Moreover, the claim that these undertakings were on a business basis gave the thrifty a pretext for using the low-cost restaurants and stores as bargain counters. Sincere in their purpose, but unwise in their selection of methods, such restaurants and centers nevertheless spent huge sums of money.

In Boston a volunteer committee established three "five cent" restaurants at the largest of which 103,530 meals were sold in little more than four months. Food was also sold to be carried away, and given free to about 10 per cent of the applicants who presented meal tickets which had previously been sold to business men for distribution. The work was done by unemployed men, paid from three to five dollars a week and their board and lodging. Several of the labor unions testified that many of their unemployed members regularly got two meals a day at these restaurants because they did not feel they were accepting charity. Patrons of the cheap restaurants undoubtedly preferred the better quality of food avail-

1 Pittsburgh Dispatch, January 19, 1894.
2 "Charity Organization in Times Extraordinary." In the Charities Review, vol. 3, April, 1894.
able here, for they could buy good baked beans or meat stew with bread and coffee for five cents.

In New York the Business Men’s Relief Committee through its seven stores in various parts of the city served a meal for five cents or enough cooked food for three people to be taken out. Small quantities of supplies such as flour, sugar, coffee, tea, rice, lentils, dried peas, and condensed milk, costing not more than 50 cents in one day were also available. The Industrial Christian Alliance managed the stores and furnished the workers without charge to the committee. Tickets purchased by contributors were sent out in large quantities for distribution to agencies, churches, public schools, and institutions. In reality little of the food was paid for in cash, most of the customers presenting tickets secured from one of the above sources. The enterprise up to March 29 had cost $20,000 and it was continued until May.¹

Nathan Straus of New York personally provided coal, food, and other supplies at wholesale prices, as well as cheap lodgings. So large was this enterprise that his net loss was fixed at $100,000, which he probably looked upon as his contribution to the unemployed. The undertaking was criticized by the general secretary of the Charity Organization Society as a sincere but poorly planned emergency measure in fundamental violation of economic laws, since the business basis of the plan was negated by the huge deficit.²

**Newspaper Funds**

The “boastful publicity and fulsome self-adulation” of newspaper funds met harsh criticism from established agencies in New York.

The journals only investigated when they wished sensational articles to publish in their columns. They drew crowds to their doors, composed of those who blushed at the exposure of their condition or of those who had long since ceased to blush. They sent wagons blazoned with their names


and errands into crowded tenement streets, and called aloud the names of those for whom they had a charity package. In a word, they surrounded their work with conditions that repelled real merit, and lured the shameless to their doors and carts.  

The excellent work of the New York Tribune Coal and Food Fund was exempted from such wholesale condemnation as it turned to existing agencies for investigation of applications made to it. The United Hebrew Charities, however, found that the Tribune was being used by Hebrew Christian missionaries to make converts through the distribution of tickets, and that investigation was not always a prerequisite since people were known to gather the night before at the depots in order to be first in line the next morning.

The most sensational and irresponsible of emergency newspaper funds in New York was the World Free Bread Fund, described in the New York World, January 28, April 1 and 9, 1894. Its contributions, credited in loaves of bread instead of money, arrived from individuals, clubs, theater and ball game benefits, and the “Bread Fund Boxes” which were placed on store counters. The newspaper considered its bread the means of keeping many from starvation, and prided itself on the distances people walked for a loaf. A million and a quarter loaves were distributed before the work stopped in April. The Fund fought the “red tape” of established agencies, claiming that it was the “most direct, simple, and useful of charities. . . . Giving succor today that the sufferers might live to receive the aid the more general charities would give tomorrow.”

The Buffalo Courier Relief Fund was established in December, 1893, “to receive from all sources money and supplies at a central depot, to be re-issued to the needy upon the written order of some charitable organization.” Centralization of relief was deemed necessary because the Buffalo Charity Organization Society investigated but gave no relief, the Citizens’ Relief Committee offered work, and churches and relief societies overlapped in their efforts.


The newspaper served as a "natural co-operating agency" issuing from its warehouse 4,243 orders of groceries and clothing. A three-dollar order was supposed to suffice for five people for a week and included, besides staple groceries, a pair of shoes costing 80 cents and a set of underwear costing 40 cents. The supplies distributed during fifteen weeks were valued at over $20,000. The newspaper and the Charity Organization Society argued illogically that since 80 per cent of the 4,000 orders went to families who received help only once, and only 2 per cent to families who received more than two orders, the "irresponsible and incorrigible pauper" was not helped, and one basket assisted most of them "to make their way through the distress of the winter."^1

Innumerable miscellaneous relief enterprises were generously supported throughout the country. According to a forthright critic, some funds raised by city employes or in New York City by Tammany Hall itself were spent by district leaders, "to prop the fortunes and increase the vote" of the party rather than to help the unemployed.^2 Undoubtedly many groups whose main interest was in the amount of money and attention they could attract, hastily conceived emergency projects which diverted funds from better organized endeavors and employed methods of distribution condemned by leaders in the field of social work.

Garden Plans

As already stated, in the spring of 1894 Mayor Pingree of Detroit conceived the idea of subsistence gardens as a means of providing food and employment for victims of the depression. The first recorded undertaking of its kind in the United States, the subsistence garden movement was known for years as the Pingree Garden Plan, or the Detroit Experiment. As an unemployment measure it was one of the original contributions of the nineties.

Mayor Pingree appointed an Agricultural Commission which selected 430 acres of land within the city or adjacent to it, offered by charitable persons. Three thousand persons applied for plots,

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^1 Ibid., p. 23.
but because of limited funds only 945 were granted land after careful investigation. The expense included purchase of farm implements, preparation of the land for cultivation, supervision and cost of seeds, which was estimated to average $3.45 for a half-acre lot. After the first year’s experiment, one-third of an acre was judged sufficient for summer green vegetables and the winter supply of potatoes for a family. Altogether, $3,600 was expended, more than half of which was raised by city employees. No accurate account of the produce was kept, but the venture was estimated to have netted the cultivators food valued at from $12,000 to $14,000.$^\textsuperscript{1}

Crops included not only potatoes, but beans, cabbage, corn, beets, tomatoes, squashes, and pumpkins. In addition the Agricultural Commission planted turnips in those areas considered unsuitable for other cultivation and this crop was given to the Poor Commission for use in public institutions. Nine-tenths of the ground was well taken care of and little difficulty from trespassers hindered the work.

Considering that the land used was in many cases an abandoned truck garden or very poor soil; that there was an unusual drought during the greater portion of the summer; that in every case the land was covered with a thick sod or with weeds when plowed in the month of June, and that no organization existed to carry the plan into effect until the first week in June, it was said that the experiment was attended with more success than could have been expected.

This late planting helped the potato crop which had not advanced far enough to be ruined by the drought. Advantages to the workman included some training in gardening, the satisfaction of receiving the results of his labor, and in some instances supplementation of inadequate wages by early morning cultivation of land so that he was saved from applying to the public agency for assistance. In other words the gardens were considered a means to “diminish pauperism or the habit of becoming used to getting something without labor.” Such confidence in the plan was aroused that the next year the Common Council appropriated $5,000 for gardens, and 1,516 people were given land, of which 1,218 were on the poor commissioner’s lists.

$^\textsuperscript{1}$ (Detroit) Agricultural Commission, Report, 1894, pp. 1–8. All the material on the Pingree Garden Plan is taken from this report.
Delegations from other cities were sent early in 1895 to look into the Detroit Plan. Chicago was interested, but had to abandon the plan because the land available was six or seven miles from the tenements, and carfare was out of the question.\textsuperscript{1} New York City was not discouraged by such difficulties, accepting 138 acres of land for cultivation in the spring of 1895 which necessitated ferry travel to Long Island City. The original plan had been to accept vacant lots in the city proper, but the committee appointed by the mayor believed that expense of guarding the produce would cost them more than ferry tolls. The Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor was asked to supervise the garden and advance money necessary for seeds, tools, and labor. Eighty-four families took plots; the remainder of the land, a 40-acre tract, was used as a co-operative farm, the workers being paid 10 cents an hour. Surplus produce was sold to private consumers by the individual gardeners, some of whom made considerable profit. The unsound economics of a procedure which furnished men with everything but labor and permitted them to compete in open market with commercial farmers, was not a matter of concern to the committee, for, according to the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, the small number of farmers on the Vacant Lot Farms would not do any appreciable injustice to the other classes, and even if they did cut into profits somewhat, the increased supply of skilled farm labor would more than compensate. The co-operative farm yielded $1,067, about $100 above expenses, from produce sold to charitable institutions at market rates. It was felt to be the major feature of the enterprise, because it afforded immediate wages to the cultivators and contributed largely to other expenses of the undertaking.\textsuperscript{2} The next year the only land available was at such a distance from the city that planned extension of the project could not be carried out.

Boston also undertook a garden program in 1895. The Industrial Aid Society, delegated by other agencies as best equipped to manage it, rented a 60-acre farm for $150 and hired a farmer to

\textsuperscript{1} (Chicago) Civic Federation, First Annual Report of the Central Council, May, 1895, p. 29.

\textsuperscript{2} Kelgaard, J. W., "Cultivation of Vacant City Lots by the Unemployed." In A.I.C.P. Notes, vol. 1, December, 1895, published by the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, New York, p. 11. Also issued separately as a reprint.
supervise operations. The land had not been under cultivation for twenty-five years, so that preparation was expensive. Plots were assigned to those applying in person or sent by social agencies, the majority of the men being physically unable to do a full day’s work. Seeds were secured free, in part from the United States Department of Agriculture. As in New York, surplus products were sold by the individual workers. In addition to maintaining self-respect, the garden program, it was hoped, would “create a desire for farming on a large scale, and may be the means of inducing some of the unemployed to go to farms in the country.” The number of plots furnished in the Boston plan increased from 50 in 1895 to 65 the next year, and 83 in 1897, but in 1898 the same land could not be cultivated without a rotation of crops, and since times were better, and no other suitable location could be found, the plan was abandoned.¹

No accurate list is available of communities to which the Detroit Plan had spread by the summer of 1895, but replies to a questionnaire sent by the New York organizers to all cities in which the plan had been discussed indicated that at least 17 communities had subsistence gardens. Auspices varied, including individuals, special committees, relief agencies, and municipal governments.²

Although unjustified claims were made for subsistence gardens as a means ultimately of doing away with “degrading charity,” the projects were undoubtedly among the most satisfactory measures undertaken for the relief of unemployment. With the green vegetables supplied they balanced excess of starches in food orders granted by relief committees and agencies, supplemented wholly inadequate relief standards, and gave families recreation and outlets for energy. They were too small and scattered to make much impression upon total relief costs, but their value was apparent from the attention and support which they achieved.

² Kelgaard, J. W., Cultivation of Vacant City Lots by the Unemployed, 1895, p. 22. Cities reporting were: Brooklyn, Buffalo, Cincinnati, Duluth, East Orange, La Crosse, Minneapolis, Omaha, Seattle, St. Louis, St. Paul, Syracuse, Toledo, Washington, D. C., in addition to Boston, Detroit, and New York.
UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF IN PERIODS OF DEPRESSION

MONEYLENDING AGENCIES

The depression increased demands from those who could offer no security such as wages, stocks, or real estate for loans at reasonable interest rates. The Charity Organization Society of Buffalo increased its loan fund, money from which could be borrowed at 4 per cent without additional charges.¹ In Philadelphia the experience of the depression led to efforts, without result, to organize a loan society. The New York Charity Organization Society under the leadership of its president, Robert W. de Forest, had been for several years considering plans for a loan society. Enthusiastic reports of similar European organizations and the intensified plight of borrowers during the depression furnished final stimuli for the organization of the Provident Loan Society in February, 1894.² Representatives of the four leading relief agencies, the Charity Organization Society, the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and the United Hebrew Charities, were placed on a board to assure a continuing “benevolent aspect” to the society.³

CARE OF THE HOMELESS

Accepted Standards

Since the previous depression, thoughtful study and experimental treatment had clarified problems of the homeless. No longer merely a threatening mass, to be handled as cheaply as was consistent with community protection, homeless men had been revealed as persons with specific problems. Adequate care necessitated consideration of individual needs. It is true that community practice during the nineties often lagged far behind approved standards, but such development in current thought was progress indeed. Indicative of the new approach was the census of tramps which J. J. McCook made in 14 cities in 1892–1893. Police officers in

³ Kellogg, Charles D., Discussion on Charity Organization. In the Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction, 1894, p. 304.
these communities returned 1,349 blanks upon which answers to 32 questions supplied a more or less complete biography of each man. This method of collecting data presented obvious weaknesses, but upon analysis the person of the “tramp” assumed a more definite outline. More than half the men, for example, had “trades, employments, or professions requiring more or less skill.” Three-fifths of the men were under thirty-five, and three-fourths under forty, thus in the prime of life. Surprisingly enough, only one-tenth were illiterate. Replies to the questionnaires confirmed the author’s opinion that intemperance, admitted by 60 per cent of those who answered the question, was the chief cause of “tramping.” The report failed to name the two diseases of “special loathsomeness, associated one . . . with physical, the other with moral uncleanness, both known to be contagious.” Of 1,200 answering the question about health, 10 per cent admitted one of the diseases, and 5 per cent the other disease. Compulsory detention until the communicable period was passed was recommended as protection from what were probably tuberculosis and syphilis.\(^1\)

Standards suggested as the result of the census included:

1. Removal of tramps from police stations, since they were paupers rather than criminals and should not be housed with the latter. If police stations were the only available shelters, quarters for the homeless should be segregated from the criminal section and be “clean, well-ventilated, and free from vermin.”

2. Routine of care; separation of the vermin-infested from others, or disinfection of every garment. A bath and sleeping garment, and nightly medical inspection with detention for those who had contagious diseases, were considered necessary.\(^2\)

To such minimum standards Amos G. Warner, one of the contemporary leaders of the charity organization movement, added the investigation of each applicant with “disposition of the case as circumstances required.” While this investigation was in process the institution was to apply a rigid work test.\(^3\) Lodging-houses and wood yards were not looked upon as panaceas, for they had “an

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\(^2\) Ibid., p. 765.

\(^3\) American Charities. Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1894, p. 189.
inveterate tendency to become mechanical. Interest is lost in individuals; and they are ground through the regular routine without any real attempt being made to get hold of the helpable, and to punish habitual and degraded vagrants.”

Centralization of the work in one place, or through close co-operation of existing shelters, would induce citizens to refuse alms to unknown applicants, since adequate facilities for their care would be available.

Lodging-houses offering the customary three days’ shelter failed to meet the real needs either of vagrants or of itinerant workers. In fact they remained three days under the city’s hospitality, just long enough for them to learn all the schemes for securing help. Then they were turned loose “to prey on the rest of the community for the remainder of the winter.” An unlimited period of shelter which would include some study of individual need, with a hard stint of work attached, was the suggested remedy. Cleveland carried out such a plan when the number of homeless men became so large that the wood yard could not furnish them work. Street-cleaning at 10 cents an hour provided them with two days’ care for every six-hour workday. They seem to have been allowed each week only work enough to cover six days’ care.

Mrs. Josephine Shaw Lowell epitomized the constructive service which should have accompanied the shelter and work test of the nineties.

It was no kindness to feed and lodge him [the homeless man], and to do no more. Such a life is degrading, and either more or less should have been done. If the man could have been held and trained and influenced for good, and put in the way of decent self-support, by all means it should have been done. But to offer free meals and lodgings, or meals and lodgings at so low a rate that every man was sure to get enough to pay, whether he worked or not, was an injury to every individual man and to the whole city.

Mrs. Lowell recommended that non-residents should be returned to their own homes, and those who belonged in the community put

2 Testimony of Robert A. Woods, Andover House, Boston, before the Massachusetts Board to Investigate the Subject of the Unemployed, Report, March 13, 1895, Part II, p. 6.
3 “The Relief of the Unemployed in the United States during the Winter of 1893-1894.” In the Journal of Social Science, no. 32, November, 1894, p. 36.
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to work in workhouses where the "moral benefit" to be derived was constantly uppermost in the minds of the administrators.

AUSPICIES OF CARE FOR THE HOMELESS

Public Agencies. Although the Boston Overseers of the Poor had established a Wayfarers' Lodge in the depression of the seventies, the police had gradually resumed the habit of lodging homeless men at station houses. The winter of 1893-1894 found more men there than at the Lodge. An agreement between the two agencies in December, 1894, resulted in the Lodge keeping open until 2:30 a.m., so that no man might complain that he had come too late for shelter. The police stations agreed on this basis to refuse care to applicants. Admissions to the Wayfarers' Lodge did not increase after the police stations closed because actual tramps, discovering that Boston required a bath and a certain amount of work, preferred the minimum existence provided free in police stations of nearby towns.¹

In New York private agencies assumed leadership in bringing pressure upon the city to increase its inadequate facilities for handling the homeless. As early as December, 1893, a group of societies persuaded the mayor to institute a system of daily court commitments of police station lodgers to the care of the Commissioners of Charities and Correction "for such treatment as the circumstances of each required"; the non-residents were to be returned to their homes, the physically unfit and aged sent to the almshouse, and the "vicious habitués" committed to the workhouse. After a short trial, a greatly reduced number of police station lodgers were reported, and even though the police did not bother to continue the plan, the experiment proved that the debasing characteristics of police station lodgings were entirely inexcusable and avoidable. The battle against police lodgings was won with the passage at this time of a statute providing for municipal lodging-houses.

This law had not yet been put into operation in January, 1895, when the city's Department of Public Charities and Correction agreed to try the experiment of assuming care of the homeless. Private agencies, led by the State Charities Aid Association, de-

¹ (Boston) Board of Overseers of the Poor, Thirty-first Annual Report, February 1, 1894, to January 31, 1895, p. 10.
cided that the establishment of a municipal lodging-house while the experiment of the Department was being attempted was not expeditient.\(^1\) Within six months, however, conditions under which the homeless were sheltered were found to be even worse than under the former practice of receiving them at police stations. Space was inadequate, no beds were provided, and only blankets were issued, while frequently there was not enough floor space to permit men to lie down. Bathing and fumigation of clothing were never tried. Records were inadequate and repeaters numerous. Although the Department of Public Charities and Correction had no power of commitment to the workhouse, \(75\) men went there voluntarily, but later complained because they had to work while others received food and lodging free.\(^2\)

In November, 1893, the Charity Organization Society had opened a well-equipped Wayfarers' Lodge which, in conjunction with its wood yard, was used to capacity and followed the best standard practice. A municipal lodging-house was finally established early in 1896, the Charity Organization Society inviting city workers to examine its method of recording and treating homeless men, and to learn how investigation was carried on through a period of training in the Society's Application Bureau.\(^3\)

Chicago, the railroad and lake transportation center, found itself with thousands of homeless men on its hands in the early months of the depression. Men were lodged in the stone corridors of police stations, conversing at will with prisoners in the nearby cells. In addition it was estimated that almost \(2,000\) men slept nightly in the corridors of the City Hall with newspapers for mattresses. Smoking was permitted, so that there was constant danger of fire.\(^4\) The number of soup houses and free lodging places increased. Finally the Central Relief Association arranged with the police to

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\(^1\) Copy of a resolution of the Board of Managers of the State Charities Aid Association, January 24, 1895. Enclosed in a letter sent to the Charity Organization Society, July 2, 1895, by the New York County Visiting Committee of the State Charities Aid Association.

\(^2\) Letter from the New York County Visiting Committee of the State Charities Aid Association to the (New York) Charity Organization Society, July 2, 1895.

\(^3\) New York Charity Organization Society, Minutes of the Executive Committee, February 11, 1896. It is not stated whether the invitation was accepted.

\(^4\) Stead, William T., If Christ Came to Chicago. Laird and Lee, Chicago, 1894, p. 28.
bring them any men found at freight yards or stations without money, baggage, or written assurances of work, in order that they might be returned to the places from which they came. At the same time the police restricted the intake of the free lodging-houses by removing from them any man able to work for his maintenance. Both police stations and private shelters offering free care were found a great barrier in Chicago to the establishment of adequate shelters where work was required in return for food, lodging, and clothing, such as those operated by the Central Relief Association.

Private Agencies. Philadelphia was renowned for the standards of its care of the homeless under the auspices of the Society for Organizing Charity. Its Wayfarers' Lodges extended their services as much as possible during the depression, since feeling still ran high that public agencies could not adequately manage such institutions and administer proper work tests. In fact the Department of Charities and Correction in one year paid $1,000 for maintenance of its wards at the Wayfarers' Lodges at the rate of subsistence in "out-wards of the Philadelphia almshouses." An important feature of the Society's work was its department for the care of non-residents, including homeless women and families in addition to men. Applicants were dealt with "upon organized charity principles," investigation including inquiry in the locality to which the client wished to be sent. Temporary shelter pending investigation was offered at Wayfarers' Lodges. The work was financed in part by the Society, but in large measure also by the referring agencies, including the city Department of Charities and Correction, which had come to depend upon the efficient methods of the Society for Organizing Charity.

Emergency Agencies. Baltimore represented a community in which for years a group of workers with vision had sought to secure more adequate care of the homeless than they were getting in police stations. The extreme pressure of the unemployment

1 "The Relief of the Unemployed in the United States during the Winter of 1893–1894." In the Journal of Social Science, no. 32, November, 1894, p. 45.
period merely offered the opportunity to demonstrate their program. The Board of Police Commissioners, overwhelmed by the increased difficulty of handling 40,000 homeless in 1893, in November of that year approached the social agencies for advice. As described in a previous chapter, an emergency co-ordinating unit, the Central Relief Committee, was organized, and assumed as its first task adequate provision for the homeless, believing “that provision for the homeless would simplify the problem of caring for residents in need.”

By the middle of January the Committee had raised enough money to open its Wayfarers’ Lodge, a reconstructed factory in one section of the city, and to utilize the facilities of the existing Friendly Inn in another part of the city. These institutions were organized with approved methods of maintaining cleanliness and order, and of requiring work in their wood yards in return for food and shelter. The three-day limit was enforced except when special permission was given to remain longer. Within a month police stations were closed to the homeless, while “the police dealt vigorously with beggars on the street.” Even then the facilities of Inn and Lodge were never overtaxed, which was an indication of the effectiveness of the work test in reducing the number of applicants. The prompt, efficient response of the Central Relief Committee to the request of the police authorities resulted in a most amicable working out of provision for the homeless, with both groups playing a part.

WORK RELIEF

Efforts to Secure Regular Employment

Regular channels for securing employment became ineffective early in the depression. The next step comprised new efforts to discover and promote opportunities for workers. In the fall of 1893 the Citizens’ Committee for the Relief of the Unemployed in St. Paul, sent circulars throughout the state and received calls for men to work on railways, threshing machines, farms, and in lumber camps. Positions were filled in part by relief agencies, but mainly through the employment committee of the St. Paul Trades and

1 (Baltimore) Central Relief Committee, May 1, 1894, p. 2.
2 Ibid., pp. 6, 10.
Labor Assembly.\(^1\) The Industrial Aid Society of Boston, whose function was placement, increased its staff and tried out new methods of securing jobs through more extensive advertising, at the same time accepting for registration only those likely to secure employment.\(^2\) In spite of such efforts, farm placement, at least in Massachusetts, was considered impracticable according to an inquiry from 1,000 employers of agricultural labor. Demand for such labor existed, but “the greater social advantages, generally higher wages, less arduous toil, and more uniform employment afforded in the cities” militated against this solution of unemployment.\(^3\)

**Work Relief and the Work Test**

When every effort to find work failed, some communities discussed the possibilities of free employment bureaus and plans for “staggering” work. Lack of work, however, could not be remedied by employment bureaus when they had no jobs to offer; and so attention was shortly directed to the creation of work as a means by which the unemployed might earn the relief they needed. The depression of the nineties marked the first extensive use of work relief, at that time called usually “made work,” as an unemployment relief measure. Projects were begun all over the country, some of them small, others involving huge expenditures as compared with earlier relief operations.

Made work might properly have designated undertakings in which, according to the proverbial example, applicants moved a pile of rock from one side of a yard to the other and back again in return for food or lodging. Apart from the uselessness of the work, this was more nearly a work test and should not have been confused with work relief, although the distinction was not always clear during the emergency. “A labor test is not intended as relief; it is a test precedent to relief; . . . a condition on which relief depends; a test of the genuineness and desert of the applicant.”\(^4\)


\(^2\) (Boston) Industrial Aid Society, Fifty-ninth Annual Report, October, 1894, p. 9.


a means of studying the work habits of an individual a work test was a temporary measure, never involving the same complex and continuous organization as work relief. Work tests were used in the nineties largely in the treatment of the homeless. In Boston, however, the Overseers of the Poor ordinarily required from residents of the city two days’ work at wood-cutting to entitle them to receive a quarter of a ton of coal or two dollars’ worth of groceries, "not in the light of payment for relief given but as a test of their worthiness to receive it."\(^1\) Families of the men assisted were enrolled as paupers. When the emergency brought numbers of new applicants, certain trust funds “for the use of others than paupers” enabled the Overseers to establish a special wood yard. Almost 500 men were employed here on six-day shifts at $1.25 a day, with a limit of twelve days’ work a month. Five thousand dollars was expended on such work relief, jobs being assigned only after proper investigation. “No record of the men was kept at the office and they were not entered as paupers.”\(^2\) A rather fine distinction was thus drawn by the Overseers between the work test and work relief.

Confusion naturally arose in the precise designation of undertakings as public works or work relief.\(^3\) Private contributions were occasionally turned over to public departments to pay for work-relief projects, or a necessary task beyond the city’s budget was assigned to private agencies to be financed and supervised. In New York, for example, certain streets not covered by the Street Cleaning Department were cleaned by the East Side Relief Committee. In Cincinnati as early as October, 1893, $30,000 from the city’s contingent fund was voted to furnish employment to 1,200 men in the parks. The city supervised the project, but the selection of workers was on the basis of need determined by home visits. Sufficient income already earned by a family, or absence of dependents, disqualified an applicant. Later in the winter an additional appropriation gave work to 3,100 men with 17,000 dependents, but these were divided into three shifts and worked only one week in three.\(^4\) The method of selecting workers according to


\(^{2}\) Ibid., p. 370.

\(^{3}\) Ibid., p. 370.

individual need and of employing them for a period only sufficient to permit them to earn partial subsistence removed the enterprise from public works into the work-relief classification.

St. Louis, on the other hand, erroneously called the building of a park lake a work-relief project. Plans for the lake had previously existed, since a street car company was under contract to pay the city $25,000 whenever the governing body passed an ordinance directing the Board of Public Improvements to begin work, but lack of funds had held up the project. In the emergency the St. Louis Post-Dispatch took the lead in advocating the advancement of public works which had already been authorized. A Citizens' Committee, created by the Municipal Assembly, received and expended the sum due from the street car company, augmented by contributions of $13,000 solicited by the Post-Dispatch, while the Municipal Board of Public Improvements directed the work of construction. In order to employ the largest possible number of men, machines were to be discarded in so far as economy and efficiency could be maintained. Laborers were selected on the basis of competency, and there was no investigation of need, although residents were given preference and men with families taken on first. In this case, with an unusual combination of funds and management, a previously planned public improvement was undertaken through private initiative and used to employ 4,000 men whose claim upon the job, aside from their capacity to perform the work, was merely a statement as to residence. Properly speaking, St. Louis encouraged public works rather than work relief.

**Purposes of Work Relief**

Enthusiastic supporters of work relief held that provision for work was all that was needed to prevent pauperism and do away with unemployment. Since relief was to be given only to the aged, invalids, and little children, whose numbers had not increased to any extent, it was held that compensation for work of community value would meet the needs of the unemployed. More thoughtful leaders were aware of inherent difficulties such as the problem of

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1 Tuttle, Elizabeth, “Work Relief in St. Louis in Previous Depressions.” Chap. 4 of The Work Relief Project of the St. Louis Provident Association. A master’s thesis submitted to Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, 1934. Mimeoographed copy available in the Library of the University.
finding non-competitive work suited to the capacity and training of applicants, of fixing wages at a fair level which would not attract workers from legitimate jobs; and of selecting workers on the basis of need. For example, the mayor of Minneapolis considered unemployed tradesmen, mechanics, and others unaccustomed to hard labor to be totally unfitted for outdoor work in winter. In particular, he felt that sawing wood in public, “an occupation long associated with the vagabond element,” would harm applicants more than would the acceptance of charity.

Majority opinion was agreed, however, that maintenance of “moral independence” was the chief value of working for relief, especially since able-bodied recipients of charity in the nineties were considered to be in most instances responsible for their condition.

The demoralizing physical and moral results of long continued idleness have been prevented. . . . The same amount of direct relief would have left the recipients weaker in body and poorer in their only real capital, the power to work, than they are now, and also with habits of idleness, which, in many cases, it would have been difficult for them to overcome when the opportunity for real work returned.¹

Auspices under Which Work Relief Was Undertaken

Varying with the locality, the sponsorship of work relief was assumed sometimes by public, sometimes by private agencies, either permanently established organizations or those of an emergency nature. Agencies often combined to undertake projects, one organization furnishing funds and a working force whose needs had been investigated, another organization supplying supervision and work to be done. Responsibility sometimes shifted from one group to the other as the work went on; or a relief committee might set up part of its program under its own direction and finance the remainder under the auspices of an established unit such as a public department or a church. No one pattern was found in all cities, although central relief committees participated in work-relief set-ups in most of the large cities where the results of their efforts were recorded.

In Philadelphia several ward units of the Society for Organizing Charity raised special funds to clean 400 alleys and passageways within their boundaries, not included in the city's street cleaning contracts. Applicants for relief were investigated by the agents of the Society and given an opportunity to earn a sum equal to the relief they would have received. Carts were hired from city contractors. Workers were paid cash, $1.00 a day and $1.75 to foremen, instead of groceries because they could doubtless make the money go farther and spend it more judiciously themselves. Paying in groceries would make the men feel that so little reliance was placed in them that they could not even be trusted with a day's pay.\(^1\)

At the same time, in the Kensington mill area of Philadelphia, a similar project was undertaken by Miss Esther Kelly, who had gone to live among the unemployed workmen. Financed by friends and the Union Benevolent Association, she furnished work to 240 men and spent $4,000. The work begun at this time developed into the Lighthouse, a well-known settlement of which Miss Kelly became the headworker.\(^2\)

More extensive than either of these efforts was the work relief undertaken by the Citizens' Permanent Relief Committee. Street cleaning and park work were set up for men, while women, working either in sewing-rooms or in their own homes at piece rates, made garments which were distributed by the Committee, or did cleaning and scrubbing. Organization was decentralized, the management of the projects remaining in the ward units. The Philadelphia College Settlement acted as distributing center for several of the wards and managed a workroom where 200 women weekly received work.\(^3\)

Thus in one city during a single winter at least three different groups were organizing work relief, only one project endeavoring to

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3. College Settlements Association, Fifth Annual Report, September 1, 1893, to September 1, 1894, p. 34.
cover the city as a whole. How many unrecorded attempts also existed it is impossible to say.

Points of view varied as to whether public or private auspices were best for work relief. Public enterprises were considered by some groups as socialistic measures designed to put all industry under government control; but Washington Gladden argued that it was no more socialistic to pay "people for work out of the public treasury," than to "support them gratuitously from the same source."^1 The administration rather than the principle was questioned by others, because public work relief stimulated more applications than could be investigated properly, and because politicians could make use of it to reward their supporters. On the other hand relief work undertaken by private agencies was often found to be limited by insufficient funds. A combination of public funds administered through private agencies offered a possible solution. In New Haven the Town Wood Yard was financed by the city and successfully managed by the Charity Organization Society; while in Providence, grading work financed by landowners and the city, and directed by the city, employed men selected by a volunteer committee. A strike caused by a misunderstanding over the hours of work convinced the organizers that divided authority was not feasible.

**Varieties of Work Relief**

Work relief for men consisted largely of heavy outdoor labor. Stone crushing and loading at quarries, sewer construction, road building and grading, and snow shoveling required a strong physique and a period of acclimatization for men previously employed in less active work. Men capable of less physical effort were found satisfactory for street cleaning, work in the parks, wood-cutting, and cleaning and whitewashing tenements. In Cincinnati plans included contracts for tearing down buildings, the resulting material being turned over to the wood yard for kindling.

For a few workers physically unable to stand the rigors of outdoor winter labor, and for those skilled in garment making, opportunities of indoor work were available, but not much diversifi-

cation of employment to utilize special skills was attempted. Although regretting in certain isolated instances the hardships endured by a clerk or machinist, work-relief organizers considered their enterprises the only available openings for non-competitive work. If a man's adjustment was difficult, the additional development of character from the struggle was tacitly understood to make up somehow for his suffering. Work relief on such a large scale was new, and presented so many problems that organization on a mass basis was felt to be the only possibility.

Unfortunately most work-relief projects were carried on during the winter, when weather conditions slowed progress and increased the men's difficulties of adjustment to jobs. Occasionally suitable clothing was provided for workers, but in Pittsburgh lack of warm garments in cold weather prevented applicants from working steadily, and in some instances resulted in frozen hands and other serious disabilities. An instance of selecting men on the basis of their physical fitness occurred in Boston where particularly strong men were hired for sewer building. Even so, two weeks' hardening was required before the men were in physical condition to render a fair return for their wages. In the end the sewers were as well constructed as usual, but in many instances the Citizens' Relief Committee reimbursed contractors for losses due to severe weather conditions or to lack of skill and experience on the part of the men employed. Boston found street cleaning satisfactory and of great benefit to the sanitary condition and appearance of the city, but the workers accomplished less than regular employees.

Lighter work for women and a few men was available in sewing-rooms on new or partly worn garments, in laundries, and in rag-rug weaving. Philadelphia and New York inaugurated what was possibly the forerunner of the present-day "housekeeper service." In Philadelphia nurses from the College Settlement or those otherwise familiar with neighborhood conditions reported families who were unable to pay for needed assistance in their households, and helpers were furnished and paid from work-relief funds. In New York $3,179 was distributed [by the East Side Relief Committee] to thirteen different Societies and Missions, to be used in paying for work. Some of

1 Pittsburgh Dispatch, January 13, 1894; February 2, 1894.
2 (Boston) Citizens' Relief Committee, Report, 1893-1894, pp. 22-23.
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this money was expended in employing women, who themselves needed help, in nursing the sick, caring for children, and cleaning for their neighbors.¹

Perhaps a closer tie-up between work-relief organizations and established social agencies might have led to similar experiments elsewhere than in Philadelphia and New York. The practice in these two cities of giving out sewing to be done by women in their own homes may also be related to a closer acquaintance with the individual needs of applicants. The evils of "home work" had not at this period come in for public discussion.

Workrooms and laundries for women under the auspices of charity organization societies, churches, or other agencies existed before the hard times. They were usually small establishments combining the element of the work test with training in cooking, laundering, and sewing, and including in many instances a free employment bureau through which women were placed after training as domestic servants or seamstresses. In many cities the relief committees offered additional funds to existing workrooms to handle the emergency work. Increased demands brought rapid growth, and many of the workrooms were forced to abandon emphasis on careful training and personal service. The Boston Citizens' Relief Committee controlled admissions, but left administration entirely to the four workrooms through which indoor work relief for women and men gave employment to 3,480 persons. In Chicago the Women's Clubs Emergency Association, which included 40 women's clubs, utilized existing workrooms and opened others so that different areas of the city might be served. Funds for nine such centers were raised by the clubs, only $4,250 of the required $19,000 being given by the Central Relief Association.²

Workrooms were meant to meet the need of self-supporting women, including those with no dependents, who had been employed before the hard times. In fact, employment of housewives was recognized as desirable only when male breadwinners could find neither employment nor work relief. Applicants came in such

² Report of the Massachusetts Board to Investigate the Subject of the Unemployed, March 13, 1895, Part I, p. 182.
numbers that machinery for proper investigation broke down, and
the weeding-out process failed to eliminate the incompetent, chron¬
ically dependent woman whose family regularly applied for as¬
sistance. On the other hand, in certain places skilled workers
welcomed the opportunity to earn a little.

In order not to compete with industrial firms, finished garments
were distributed to clients of relief agencies, workers themselves,
or charitable institutions, provided that regular shop-made goods
would not otherwise have been purchased. However, a limited
quantity of household linens and clothing would have had to be
supplied to these people, so that the competitive factor, while
reduced, was not entirely eliminated. The chief argument for mak¬
ing rag rugs and quilts was the lack of demand for them in open
market, so that the very condition which recommended the under¬
taking would render vain any hope of adequate financial return.
In Boston, where workrooms were secured rent free and material
for rugs and quilts was donated, only $3,276 was realized through
the sale of articles out of a total cost of $53,896 for four workrooms.¹
Financial returns were never considered an important item in
estimating costs.

Although applicants were sometimes familiar with the processes,
instruction was necessary. In contrast with most of the opportu¬
nities offered men, workrooms for women emphasized the training
value of their organizations as well as the other benefits to be de¬
rived. This was probably because they were patterned after
existing centers where instruction was a fundamental principle.

Organization of Work Relief

Applications for work relief in some communities were accepted
only through social agencies. In most cities, however, preliminary
publicity attracted large numbers of applicants not previously
under care of any agency and necessitated inquiry as to eligibility.
St. Paul offers an illustration of the methods of investigation then
in use. Registration of destitute unemployed through the public
employment bureau was conducted during a six weeks' period early
in the fall of 1893. Registrants were obliged to answer certain
questions designed to eliminate those ineligible because they lacked

¹ Ibid., pp. 23–25.
six months’ residence or had no dependents. Although no promise of work was given the men, they were expected to sign an agreement to work for $1.00 a day with payment in kind as “prima facie evidence of inability to secure more remunerative employment.” Preliminary registration resulted in a potential working force of something less than a tenth of current estimates of the number of unemployed. When work was finally available, investigation of applicants included a Social Service Exchange clearing with subsequent conference where families were known to agencies, and home visits by a qualified staff which numbered six at the period of greatest pressure. In spite of early registration, proper investigation was not made at the beginning. In all, 1,600 men with 8,900 dependents were finally accepted out of a total registration of 2,600.

In Boston the early policy was to accept on the basis of one interview all “respectable men with dependent families, out of work through no fault of their own.” The applicant’s statement as to residence and number of dependents was not checked. Within a few weeks requirements were modified to include only those in immediate need, and a more rigid system of investigation was instituted. Paid visitors with 20 to 30 cases a day had time only for meager reports, supplemented occasionally by data from agencies knowing the applicants. Trained investigators familiar with the neighborhoods, it was felt, would have been more efficient.

More careful examination of applicants at women’s workrooms in Boston included, where possible, visits to last employers and routine reference to existing records in social agencies. Nevertheless need was so pressing, reports were so unsatisfactory, and competent investigators so hard to secure that many deceptions went undiscovered. In addition, women whose condition was not the result of hard times were often admitted instead of being referred to social agencies whose proper charge they were. Final decision as to admission was left with a volunteer committee instead of with the investigators, while in Pittsburgh investigations and decisions by the police force satisfied the Relief Committee.

3 Ibid., pp. 25–32.
4 Pittsburgh Dispatch, January 19, 1894.
Practice in selecting persons for work relief conformed in general to the procedures just described. Small projects, organized by agencies already familiar with their neighborhoods or clientele, inevitably produced a more satisfactory method of securing qualified candidates; large new organizations had a more complex problem in determining eligibility of a great number of unknown applicants.

Work-relief wages aroused much discussion. Certain short-sighted organizers justified low wage rates in the belief that poorly paid employment would attract fewer who were undeserving, and that small available funds should be stretched to help as many people as possible.¹ The claim of organized labor that work relief tended to reduce wages was borne out by the testimony of Helena S. Dudley, headworker of Denison House, Boston, who cited instances of employers offering lower pay to women than they received in the workrooms.² On the other hand, the removal of large numbers of people temporarily from active competition in the labor market, tended indirectly to maintain the wage standard. Work relief was never planned as a substitute for real work:

The work given must be adequate in amount to prevent families from suffering either hunger or cold; but at the same time it must be really hard work in order to prevent dabbling, and it must be decidedly underpaid in order not to attract those who already have work at half-time, or who have otherwise disagreeable work. The whole must be so unattractive as to guarantee that, when other work can be had, the laborer will seek it.³

Moreover, the basis of selection was need rather than capacity, and the projects were often poorly organized so that standards of work were rarely up to those required by industry.

Specifically, wage discussions concerned themselves less with the total amount earned per week or per month, which in most instances was pitifully small, than with the rate of compensation. Jane Addams, for example, insisted that to avoid permanent re-

³ Ayres, Philip W., "Is Emergency Relief by Work Wise?" In the Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction, 1895, p. 100.
duction of wages it was better to have men earn their $3.00 a week in two days rather than three.

I resigned from the street cleaning committee in despair of making the rest of the committee understand that, as our real object was not street cleaning but the help of the unemployed, we must treat the situation in such wise that the men would not be worse off when they returned to their normal occupations.¹

Market rates of wages were desirable, but the real problem lay in steering a safe course between low pay that was demoralizing to industry and families alike, and normal wage rates that would tend to entice workers from regular industry. Reduced hours at standard rates were the answer. Work relief as carried out, often underpaid good workers and overpaid poor ones, but as an emergency relief measure it was, in most cities at least, concerned with a fair rate of compensation.

Wage differences between men and women were accepted, as in Boston, where indoor work paid women 80 cents a day and men $1.00. Another difference came to light in Buffalo where a uniform daily rate of 70 cents was adopted as a subsistence wage. Germans, Irish, and Americans refused it, while Italians and Poles immediately accepted it as more nearly equivalent to their own standard of living. Offered as a labor test, the low wages served only to bring out differences among nationality groups.² Most frequently wages for men on work relief were set at $1.00 for a full day's work, although occasionally as in Lynn, Massachusetts, the daily hours and earnings were reduced by half, "to assure no assault upon normal wage rates."³ In cities where workers were paid in food purchased at wholesale, it was believed that they received greater value than when paid in cash. For example, in Toledo with centralized purchasing, $30 spent through the commissary was considered sufficient to carry a family through the winter, furnishing them with the necessary coal, lard, flour, potatoes, and a very small amount of sugar and tea.⁴

² "The Relief of the Unemployed in the United States during the Winter of 1893-1894." In the Journal of Social Science, no. 32, November, 1894, p. 33.
⁴ Ibid., p. 185.
The most serious criticism should have concerned itself with the total amounts individuals were able to earn during the whole period when work relief was available. Even where current wage rates were maintained, total weekly, monthly, or seasonal earnings were far below regular wages, and in most instances lower than the amounts given to those on home relief. Work was staggered by a definite assignment being given to all eligible workers before a second period of employment was possible. St. Paul, for example, permitted each eligible worker to earn up to $6.00 when he was laid off until all on the list had been given a similar opportunity. Men laid off were permitted to earn additional food and fuel at the wood yard. Small towns in Massachusetts operating under this policy assigned work at very long intervals. In Holyoke the average earnings for the season were $24 for a total of twelve days’ work, in Cambridge an average of $28 for twenty-four days’ work, and in Lawrence, where a second shift of work was never achieved, men earned a total of $9.00.

Data accumulated in Boston furnished the basis for a study of wage totals earned by all recipients of work relief under the Citizens’ Relief Committee in 1893-1894. Assignments varied in length according to the kind of work, and no man was re-assigned until those whose names preceded his had received re-assignments. The force of 5,761 men on sewer, street, or indoor work received average total earnings of $9.00. Many worked only a short time, but the highest amount paid to any one man was only $24. The insignificance of such payments was emphasized by the fact that men reported they had been unemployed, on the average, for more than three months, and only about one-fourth had been able to earn anything in the meantime through odd jobs.

In the Boston workrooms for women $34,622 was spent in wages. In the largest workroom, on Bedford Street, each woman worked an average of about eleven days at 80 cents a day, with total average earnings of $8.82. In the other three workrooms, where total average earnings were $10.34, $13.60, and $14.93, the women em-

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2 Report of the Massachusetts Board to Investigate the Subject of the Unemployed, March 13, 1895, Part I, pp. 81, 84, 92.
ployed were of higher type, so that the average earnings bore about the same relation to their normal wages. The $14.93, for example, represented what the same women would have earned in seventeen days' real work.\(^1\)

**CERTAIN WORK-RELIEF PROJECTS**

To illustrate work relief as it functioned in the depression of the nineties, several differently organized projects may be described. Baltimore's program was significant in that it was organized by an emergency committee and taken up during the second winter by an established agency. In 1893–1894, since the city government was unable to provide park work or street-cleaning on a relief basis, the Baltimore Central Relief Committee, an emergency body, operated four stone-breaking yards for a period of ten weeks, offering real work at piece rates. This involved no competition with stone produced commercially, which was usually crushed by machinery and sold for much less than the hand-crushed stone produced by work relief. Persons employed had to be legal residents with dependents. They were referred after investigation by relief agencies or investigated by the Committee itself. Those having four or more dependents earned $1.00 a day, those with fewer than four, 50 cents, and either two or three days' work a week was permitted, a force of about 120 being daily employed. Regular employment, either temporary or permanent, was found for 125 workers. Of the total $10,000 spent, $6,400 went for wages and $3,000 for stone. Sale of the stone brought $4,000, the remainder being met by contributions. Since they were privately administered, the stone yards seem to have escaped the difficulties of political entanglement and general inefficiency associated with public enterprises.\(^2\) Care was taken to purchase materials and sell the product at current market rates, but wages were determined on quite a different basis, the fear that "work ready at hand, relieving the applicant of the struggle required in hunting for it, had a tendency to lower the moral standard of the men by taking away one of the great incentives to ac-

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\(^1\) Report of the Massachusetts Board to Investigate the Subject of the Unemployed, March 13, 1895, Part I, pp. 26–29.

1893–1897: SPECIAL EMERGENCY MEASURES

Since only one-sixth of the workers had been previously known to relief agencies, particular caution was considered necessary in handling a group of men usually capable of obtaining their own jobs.

The next winter the Central Relief Committee had gone out of existence. Distress in Baltimore continuing, however, the Charity Organization Society raised a special Work Relief Fund of $3,800 and maintained a stone yard, laundry, and sewing-room for the first three months of 1895. In addition to the Society’s own clients, applicants were referred by the clergy or the police, or came in response to newspaper articles. Each applicant was personally interviewed by a member of the Society’s Executive Committee. Even after investigation and recommendation by an agent of the Society, this board member rejected 30 out of 330 men and 34 out of 148 women interviewed. Stone-crushing was such heavy labor that all men were not physically able to do it. Ten men, certified as unfit by a physician or after a trial period at work, were placed in a commercial basket factory, the agency paying their wages after securing a promise from the employer that his regular force would not be reduced. Since the stone yards were six miles from the center of town, carfare for half the distance was furnished. The total earnings of 237 men averaged only $8.50 during the entire winter, and 87 women, with no able-bodied men to assume support of their families, averaged about $10 for the season. The laundry did the washing for the Wayfarers’ Lodge; the sewing-room made up articles from donated material which were sent to institutions or in a few instances sold.

The workers represented two groups:

Those who were in need owing to inability to get work, highly respectable persons, some of whom had never known need before; and those who really preferred alms to work, but who were being uplifted to responsibilities of self-support by the efforts of the Society’s agents and visitors to cut off their resources for alms and to force them to work.

The Society’s reports emphasize that sound business practice and

1 The “Relief of the Unemployed in the United States during the Winter of 1893–1894.” In the Journal of Social Science, no. 32, November, 1894, pp. 18–19.
3 Ibid., p. 1.

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careful supervision on work-relief projects offered opportunity for improving the workers’ skill. Assured of a regular income the workers were considered much better off than when dependent upon “uncertain doles.” Since work relief was after all only another form of relief, careful preliminary investigation and accompanying service to help the clients overcome their need for assistance were essential.

The East Side Relief-Work Committee of New York was notable because it attempted to cover only a very small area of the lower East Side and because its members, well-known leaders in the field of social service, maintained a critical attitude toward their own undertaking. Mrs. Josephine Shaw Lowell, as chairman, gave her entire time to the enterprise during five months of 1893–1894, when the Committee raised and spent $121,700 in employing 5,000 heads of families.1 The other committee members represented churches and charities in the neighborhood, thus having the advantage of long familiarity with both applicants and local conditions. Such knowledge led directly to the particular projects undertaken, namely, street-cleaning in districts not covered by the city, cleaning and whitewashing tenements, and the establishment of tailoring shops where the large number of jobless Jewish needleworkers might be employed. Investigation of applicants was left to churches, charitable societies, and trade unions, who were supposed to issue tickets to those whom they knew to be in need. Trade unions particularly were included because the Committee “believed in organized labor and . . . wished to conform, as much as [they] could, to the desires of those whom [they] were trying to help.”2

Plans were conceived in meetings characterized by frank discussion of labor’s desires, wage rates, and the danger of competition, as well as the broader social issues presented by the applicants. For example, low wages of $12 to $18 a week prevalent in the clothing trade led to the establishment of daily rates of 60 and 70 cents, but the Committee gave their workers a lunch of bread and coffee, and later raised the wages to $4.00 for a five-day week.

Decentralization of projects was the only possible way to handle such huge numbers as were unemployed in New York. The West Side Relief Committee and countless smaller units followed the lead of the East Side Relief-Work Committee, but the latter’s policies were outstanding and its work efficiently organized without losing awareness of individuals and their problems. Advertising was carefully avoided; addresses of work shops and names of the agencies which distributed tickets were never published. Wages in cash were put back into the natural currents of trade in the neighborhood and helped to support the retail dealers who in depressions necessarily suffered greatly and were often on the verge of ruin.¹

In the spring of 1894 when its work was over, the East Side Relief-Work Committee condemned work relief as a regular measure of assistance except in such emergencies as they had just passed through. Only abnormal conditions justified efforts to alleviate distress through artificial employment, and Mrs. Lowell warned other cities against using the New York experience as a precedent.

When industry and trade are natural, the only safe course for the working people is to accommodate themselves to the circumstances, or to change them by their own action. The efforts of philanthropists to compensate, by artificial means, for irregularity of work or low wages can only result in mischief.²

PUBLIC WORKS

Evaluation of public works as differentiated from work relief for relieving unemployment during the nineties is obscured by lack of data and by confusion in the reports of projects. Information indicates, however, the presence of the same problems which have consistently interfered with satisfactory results from such measures in other emergency periods. So far as can be ascertained, public works were undertaken during this period by neither federal nor state governments. When the State Trades Assembly asked the Ohio legislature for relief through public works on unreclaimed land and through the construction of public buildings, the House Committee reported no unreclaimed land owned by the state, and no

¹ Lowell, Josephine Shaw, “Five Months’ Work for the Unemployed in New York City.” In the Charities Review, May, 1894, pp. 327-333.
² Ibid., p. 336.
surplus money nor immediate necessity for new public buildings. Since it was against state policy "to raise public money for other than necessary purposes," the legislature felt it had no power to relieve the unemployed through authorizing the plan.\(^1\)

Public works under municipal auspices included:

1. Continuing of work already in hand;
2. Hastening work which had already been planned and provided for
3. Anticipating as an emergency measure, work which was contemplated but not planned for immediate execution;
4. Carrying on work which was especially devised to meet the emergency.\(^2\)

In the immediate need for relief, communities were handicapped by legal entanglements prohibiting or delaying appropriations, and by public opinion which was not yet convinced of the value of public works as an unemployment relief measure.\(^3\) Most municipal departments planned their operations months in advance, making almost impossible a flexible and quick adaptation. Moreover, the prosecution of public works was prohibited or made unduly expensive by winter weather in some parts of the country. Many municipalities let their contracts to independent contractors, who often objected to the restrictions surrounding public works when carried on as a relief measure. In Indianapolis, for example, sewer construction work was given out to contractors in the fall of 1893 with definite instructions to begin work within thirty days in order to relieve unemployment. Unfavorable weather had already set in before plans could be completed, however, and the work had to be abandoned.\(^4\) In 1894, public works were undertaken with more success. During prosperity street and sewer construction had been systematically undertaken, but with the depression postponement of expensive improvements was urged. Work had progressed so far that delay would have resulted in losses. Property owners carried

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\(^1\) Chicago Tribune, January 20, 1894.
\(^2\) Report of the Massachusetts Board to Investigate the Subject of the Unemployed, March 13, 1895, Part I, p. xxv.
\(^3\) Closson, Carlos C., Jr., "The Unemployed in American Cities." In the Quarterly Journal of Economics, vol. 8, July, 1894, p. 472.
additional assessments for the third year in order to complete improvements. Besides furnishing jobs to many who would otherwise have resorted to relief, work was carried on at a saving to property owners of 20 per cent because of depression prices.\(^1\) Economy in contributions and economy in cost of construction had both been achieved.

Milwaukee hired a large group of unemployed men to make street improvements which had been contemplated but never begun. Holyoke, Massachusetts, kept 100 to 300 men building sewers which under ordinary circumstances would not have been undertaken until summer. Waterbury, Connecticut, undertook highway improvements for the express purpose of furnishing work to the unemployed. Winter weather and the inexperience of the men on heavy labor meant that only $4,000 worth of work was secured for the $10,000 expended. In spite of such discouragements the town meeting voted an additional special appropriation of $10,000 in May, 1894, for the same purpose. A unique arrangement in Rochester, New York, on what was virtually public works, consisted of an appropriation of $36,800 on park and street cleaning activities. The regular force worked only four and one-third days a week, while emergency workers were put on for two or three days a week. The report does not state what financial adjustment was made between the two groups.

New York City appropriated $1,000,000 to be spent by the Park Commissioners. Unfortunately partisan politics entered into its expenditure; workers referred by social agencies were dropped more quickly than those sent by politicians; some men never appeared except on paydays, and carelessness, extravagance, and misappropriation in administration were rife. Even with such mishandling, the fund undoubtedly proved an important resource in relieving unusual distress. The enterprise represents a direct example of an appropriation for public improvement in response to unemployment demands.

Extensive use of public money in work-relief projects where assignments were made on the basis of need already has been described. True public works, defined as improvements for which

\(^1\) Second Annual Message of the Honorable Caleb S. Denny, Mayor of Indianapolis, January 1, 1895, pp. 6, 8.
UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF IN PERIODS OF DEPRESSION

workers were selected on the basis of capacity rather than need, were less frequent as a relief measure because legislative restrictions often prevented quick organization. Sometimes lack of previous planning resulted in poor administration tainted by political patronage. No accurate evaluation of their usefulness in the nineties can be made from the meager and vague reports available. Unquestionably they furnished employment to numbers of those who would have resorted to relief.
CHAPTER VIII
1907-1908: ORGANIZED CHARITY TO THE FORE

THE PANIC

The financial panic of 1907 followed upon ten years of extraordinary commercial and industrial prosperity. Unprecedented prices of goods and commodities had stimulated production, industrial amalgamation, and payment of large dividends and profits. In March, 1907, a crash in securities in the New York stock market necessitated sacrifices of sound investments to meet obligations. In the last week of October the New York stock market was again in difficulty and several banks closely associated with speculative enterprises closed. A severe financial panic was averted within a month, through the combined efforts of a group of financiers and the United States Treasury, but the succeeding depression extended over the winter and created sufficient unemployment to demand unusual relief measures in various communities.\(^1\)

GENERAL CONDITIONS

EXTENT AND EFFECTS OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Industry was not completely paralyzed during the winter and spring of 1908; factories and shops operated on part time, and when they shut down activity in other lines offered employment to those who had been idle for several months. No accurate measure of the extent of unemployment existed, and except for New York City no attempt was made, so far as is known, to ascertain the number out of work.

In Massachusetts, state free employment offices in Boston, Springfield, and Fall River offered figures which, had they covered a longer period, might have reflected the condition of employment. Unfortunately the earliest office to be established, in Boston, had only completed its second year in November, 1908. For purposes

of comparison or as an exact measure of unemployment its statistics were unreliable; during its early months many persons registered who were not actually out of employment, while the depression discouraged many from registering because they felt it was useless; in addition there were various modifications in record-keeping which hampered comparison between periods.

During 1908 applications for jobs increased slightly over the previous year, at the State Free Employment Office in Boston, but opportunities for employment cascaded downward. Employers applied for almost 62 per cent fewer workers in 1908, although the actual number of positions reported filled decreased only 31 per cent, showing that a proportionately larger number of these positions were filled. Probably this resulted from a better organization of the employment office during the second year of its existence; but it may also indicate a group of applicants better prepared or more anxious to secure work, or on the other hand, it may connote more temporary placements. As a matter of fact the kind of employment offered changed character in the two years; while 14 per cent fewer trade union members applied for employment the second year, the office placed 68 per cent fewer of these skilled workers; likewise a significant fact in the temporary or short-time employment was that 38 per cent more persons were placed in more than one job during 1908 than during 1907.

In New York the three largest family agencies, the Charity Organization Society, the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, and the United Hebrew Charities joined forces in a study of the extent and character of unemployment in the community. Union members out of work were estimated to be 90,000, or one in every three union members, while vagrants were thought to number 30,000. No accurate method of ascertaining the total unemployed non-union laborers or clerical and professional workers existed. At least 75,000 of the 90,000 idle union workers were engaged in building, stone-working, or textile and clothing trades, or in transportation, branches of industry ordinarily undergoing a slack season at this time of year. The depression, however, increased the severity and length of their period of idleness. High

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interest rates prevented stimulation of business recovery through borrowing. Building construction was at a standstill, while the clothing industry, owing to the cool summer, had been caught with large stocks unsold. Clothing manufacturers were also in the process of changing from manufacturing for stock to production on order, an innovation that increased seasonal unemployment in the trade.¹

Indications of general distress were apparent through sources other than unemployment studies, and were frequently utilized in estimating need. Small bank accounts were withdrawn in large numbers and savings deposits decreased in number and amount. The reports of social agencies responsible for penny savings and loan societies presented evidence of increasing distress. In Indianapolis $11,000 was withdrawn from the Dime Savings Bank in the three months following November 1, 1907,² and the New York Provident Loan Society made thousands of small loans to wage-earners, with the percentage of unredeemed pledges much larger than usual.³ East-bound steamers carried back to Europe unprecedented numbers of recent immigrants. In comparison with 1907, the first five months of 1908 showed an increase in departures and a decrease in arrivals amounting in all to 628,766 passengers.⁴ In Boston most of the departing immigrants were unmarried Italians who had been boarding in families of fellow-countrymen, and cutting off this source of income brought increased strain to the families.⁵ Social agencies whose relief case loads had not recently included families of able-bodied men, discovered a few months after the panic that many unemployed men and young people were ap-

¹ Warne, Frank Julian, “The Unemployed in New York City.” In Charities and the Commons, vol. 19, February 8, 1908, pp. 1584-1586. No conclusions on the extent of general unemployment were reached by Mr. Warne’s study, for obviously trade union figures touched only one group of workers.
² A Partial Report of Four Months’ Work of the Unemployed by the Charity Organization Society of Indianapolis, December 1, 1907, to April 1, 1908, p. 3.
⁵ (Boston) Associated Charities, Twenty-ninth Annual Report, November, 1908, p. 39.
UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF IN PERIODS OF DEPRESSION

Applicants for relief. The New York Charity Organization Society found that from one-fifth to one-fourth of the families under its care needed assistance because of unemployed wage-earners. Increased numbers of applicants at employment bureaus and shelters for homeless men also pointed to greater need, although newspapers in most places were successfully restrained by social work leaders from depicting distress in highly emotional and exaggerated stories.

Families met hard times with adjustments of their own which led to lowered living standards and harmful aftereffects. Miss Mary E. Richmond, general secretary of the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity during 1907-1908, listed some of these: homes were lost and chattel loan companies offered money on disastrous terms; furniture was sold piece by piece; self-respecting families were forced to live in furnished rooms where conditions were questionable; families took in lodgers who were unfit companions for their children; families existed on inadequate part-time wages.

Miss Richmond recommended certain "exits," as she called them, for relieving the panic state of mind. Recalling the fears of the public, the unemployed, and the social agencies in the depression of the nineties, her recommendations sought to prevent demoralization from too great concentration on one or two ways out. Means of escape included emigration, which has already been discussed, migration from congested areas, change of occupation to fields where work was plentiful, part-time employment, use of savings and credit, help from relatives and neighbors, and lastly and by all means least desirable, relief from existing charitable agencies.

The Boston Associated Charities in its 1908 report gave specific illustrations of ways in which the suggested exits had been tried. Small grocers allowed credit up to $75, and landlords permitted tenants to run $100 in arrears. Families moved to cheaper quarters and housewives took in sewing or washing, while their husbands changed from skilled to less skilled occupations.

Relatively few communities during the second winter after the

1 (New York) Charity Organization Society, Twenty-sixth Annual Report, September, 1908, p. 11.
panic found unusual relief measures necessary. In exceptional instances, as in Buffalo where the Charity Organization Society applications in December, 1908, were 50 per cent above those in the corresponding month of the previous year, this meant that industrial recovery had not yet affected the poor; the extraordinary load was due to unusual sickness from lack of food, diminution of credit because landlords and grocers had reached their limit, and exhaustion of savings by those who faced a second winter of unemployment. The same conditions created increased demands upon the New York United Hebrew Charities during the winter of 1908-1909; 1,000 more applicants for relief came because of illness, and those applying because of unemployment increased from 9 per cent of the total in 1906-1907 to 25 per cent in 1908-1909. Additional causes of heavier loads were felt to be unemployment of elderly men who would never find other work although prior to the depression they had been employed steadily, and a much wider use of charity organization societies both by individuals and by other agencies.\(^1\) Expansion from the latter cause was considered permanent, a result of the agencies’ having carried the emergency so well. Larger case loads during 1908 and 1909 may have indicated, therefore, both increased need and the growing strength of the agencies; any accurate estimate of unemployment would require separation of the two factors.

Charity Organization Societies and Relief Measures

The depression of 1907-1908 was neither so long nor, as far as relief needs were concerned, so intense as that of the nineties. Moreover, the young social workers of the earlier depression were now responsible for relief measures and diligently sought to avoid the mistakes of the previous emergency. Charity organization societies were older and so much stronger that they dominated the scene.

In many cities [in 1907-1908] they were not only able to discourage centralized general schemes for dealing with distress, but differentiated sharply between plans for the homeless and those for family distress, urged the expansion of existing agencies to meet the situation, held conferences

\(^1\) Letter from Porter R. Lee, Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity, January 24, 1910, to Field Department “Exchange Branch” of Charities and the Commons. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.
with those agencies frequently, sought a logical division of work among them, tried to get information about real need quietly from those most likely to know, secured additional funds in unadvertized ways that would not increase unnecessary applications for help, and greatly enlarged their regular staff of field workers.¹

These societies molded public works plans, effectively suppressed sensational emergency schemes, and controlled objectionable publicity at the same time that they carried out internal adjustments of administration and procedure. Wherever unemployment relief measures were discussed their representatives were present. While their help did not always prevent unwise moves, the gains in emergency relief organization were due in no small part to the clear-sighted determination of private agencies to expand existing sources rather than hastily to assemble new and unnecessary organizations.

Social workers had achieved status as advisers in emergency planning. Not only the general public but government officials as well sought their assistance in working out comprehensive programs. In Massachusetts, for example, the statement was made that the . . . governor [was] willing not only to pay some wondering and incredulous deference to the opinions of charity experts in the matter of their specialty, but actually to consult with and be guided by them. Governor Guild has gone out of his way to see that, not only public departments like the state employment bureau, but so far as he could, that private individuals and organizations adopted the detailed, personal and inconspicuous methods which the charity workers approved. In more than one instance he has headed off the starting of a bread line or some other wholesale method of advertising for, and creating, unemployment, by calling in the experts and calling off the promoter.²

The larger cities, at least, were in constant communication with each other. Sixteen charity organization societies exchanged confidential letters every few weeks during the winter of 1907–1908, discussing their local experiences and proposed plans. During the following winter these Emergency Winter Letters continued to be exchanged through the newly organized Field Department of Charities and the Commons under Miss Richmond’s direction. The

² “Emergency Relief Due to Financial Depression.” In the Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction, 1908, p. 430.
letters indicate that the societies sought to keep relief measures in the hands of small units where individual need rather than hysterical mass action dictated the form of relief.

Chicago alone made a centralized appeal for funds through a General Relief Committee. A brief survey of available means for meeting unemployment needs, made at the request of social agencies, pointed to city-wide lack of funds for the purpose. In January, 1908, the Chamber of Commerce organized a committee to raise $100,000. The Bureau of Charities was to receive 35 per cent, the Relief and Aid Society 30 per cent, and the remainder was to go to numerous small sectarian and relief societies. No new relief machinery was created, but existing agencies were to be strengthened sufficiently to meet the load. Only $60,000 was raised through various branches of industry. Applicants were undoubtedly attracted by advertising such a large fund and were not deterred by the fact that only three-fifths of the amount sought had been raised. The occasion offered an opportunity also for renewed efforts to consolidate the Chicago Bureau of Charities and the Relief and Aid Society, but even this joint planning for funds failed to achieve the desired combination, for the consolidation of the two agencies did not take place until April, 1909.

Newspaper Publicity

Emphasis upon limited publicity and moderate public statements was not uniformly successful. Many private agencies concentrated their efforts upon preventing sensationalism and movements to raise large public funds. In Buffalo the newspapers urged contributors to stand by established agencies. One newspaper contemplated a canvass for second-hand clothing and supplies, but when both settlements and Charity Organization Society refused to handle the collection, the idea was abandoned. Even the amount of publicity involved in announcing the weekly figures of applications and contributions from the pulpits of several large churches was not approved, but as a campaign measure and a reminder

1 Chicago Bureau of Charities, Report to the Executive Committee, April 13, 1908.
2 Letter from Porter R. Lee, Charity Organization Society, Buffalo, February 8, 1908. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.
that the Society was handling the situation adequately it was tolerated.

The Cleveland Associated Charities, on the other hand, failing to raise sufficient funds to meet its mounting budget, resorted to extensive newspaper publicity. Cash to the amount of $8,000, 21 carloads of coal, and an amount of second-hand clothing estimated at three carloads were secured. At one time a force of 25 persons was required to sort and distribute the clothing, which was given out only on written order. Newspaper appeals gained for the Associated Charities "wide recognition of its vitality, its position as the responsible private charity, its ability to meet an emergency." On the side of liabilities, the agency suffered from "the crowding incident to receiving a winter's supplies and half a winter's cash in two weeks, and worst of all its inability to maintain its standards with a flood of applicants, and the coming of the lazy and the bad." Newspapers in Baltimore themselves took the initiative in raising funds for the established agencies, and later when the Federated Charities organized a campaign for $15,000, it asked for newspaper assistance. In proportion to the increased load of other agencies the Federated Charities' applications did not seem to have been unduly stimulated by these public appeals.

Much more serious results followed a "Tag Day" in Columbus, Ohio. Unusual publicity and city-wide activity stimulated the unemployed to expect big returns. The afternoon of Tag Day brought insistent demands for relief, and distribution of hastily purchased rations of cornmeal and bread was received with grumbling. Only $10,000 was secured, and when this amount had been spent for groceries within three weeks, the unemployed organized repeated marches upon the City Hall demanding work relief.

The trend toward reasonable control of widespread publicity and newspaper funds was clearly marked in 1907–1908. Little specific material is available to show the means by which such undesirable

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1 All the material in this paragraph has been taken from the Emergency Winter Letters, 1907–1908, of the Charity Organization Department of the Russell Sage Foundation or from reports of the Cleveland Associated Charities.

ends were avoided, but general statements clearly indicate per¬
sistent efforts along these lines in many places. Where newspaper
solicitation or other widely advertised schemes were tried they were
described in some detail, often with such helpful analyses as ac¬
companied the account of the Cleveland and Columbus under¬
takings.

LABOR DEMONSTRATIONS

The depression was used by labor leaders and radical agitators
as an occasion for demonstrations. Most often the demands upon
municipal authorities were for appropriations for emergency work.
In St. Louis, for example, 500 to 600 marchers went to the City
Hall asking that the city give them work. A bill was introduced
in the House of Delegates to appropriate $10,000 of public money
to finance work relief, but it failed to pass.1 J. Eads Howe and
Ben L. Reitman of Chicago tried to organize a winter march to
Washington after the plan of Coxey's Army, but this too failed. In
Boston, Morrison I. Swift again became active in holding meetings
and parades.2 Organized labor disapproved his tactics, and the
majority of his followers were recent immigrants, casual laborers,
and homeless wanderers. Whenever these men had occasion to
apply for assistance at one of the social agencies they were unable
to give addresses and employers' names, or to establish the exist¬
ence of a family. Boston's most spectacular demonstration took
place when Mr. Swift led 300 men into Trinity Church one Sunday
morning and demanded the collection. The quick-witted minister
explained that the money was already assigned, but that the next
Sunday the fund could be turned over to the unemployed. In the
meantime, conferences resulted in directing both money and appli¬
cants to existing charities.3

Police activity in maintaining order during labor demonstrations
often created more disturbance than the meetings themselves would
have done. Overzealous in carrying out orders, police officers mis¬
treated and sometimes seriously injured participants. A notorious

1 Letter from W. H. McClain, St. Louis Provident Association, January 15, 1908.
In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.
3 Letters from Alice L. Higgins (later Mrs. Lothrop), Associated Charities of
Boston, January 24, and January 31, 1908. In files of the Charity Organization
Department, Russell Sage Foundation.
instance was the Union Square parade in New York, organized by
the Committee of Unemployed, to show by their numbers the ex-
tent of unemployment and the need for extraordinary city work.
Spectators and participants were moving slowly about the Square
in friendly mood. The socialist leaders who had organized the
meeting had failed to appear, but when several of the advertised
speakers came in sight, the mounted police, fearful of disorder,
charged the crowd, pushing them roughly down the surrounding
streets. After the crowd dispersed, a radical tailor, not officially
connected with the meeting, tried to avenge himself upon the police
for an earlier arrest. His poorly made bomb killed him and his com-
panion. The bomb-throwing was clumsy; the meeting had failed
because of lack of direction; only the police were organized in their
charge upon a peaceful crowd of citizens among whom were women.¹

Many people questioned the value of public meetings as a desir-
able means of stirring public officials or private employers to action.
Very few, however, failed to be moved by the drastic measures
taken by the police to prevent or interrupt meetings. Permits were
withheld, and police exercised arbitrary power in breaking up as-
semblages of persons which seemed to threaten the peace. Un-
fortunately their judgment in the strain of the moment was not
always to be trusted and their behavior won much sympathy for
those whose right to foregather was questioned.²

RELIEF MEASURES OF ESTABLISHED AGENCIES

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Whatever form relief measures might take, private agencies
thoroughly familiar with community needs and resources were on
hand to formulate plans or, on the basis of their own experience,
discourage new enterprises. Their perseverance was marked not
only by changes in their own work but by their unified community
action in preventing inexpedient undertakings on the part of public
officials or individuals. What happened in Baltimore when the
city councilmen considered a special appropriation to feed the poor

¹ Kellogg, Arthur P., "The Traffic Squad at Union Square." In Charities and
the Commons, vol. 20, April 4, 1908, pp. 9-11.
² "Public Meetings and the Police." An editorial in Charities and the Commons,
vol. 20, April 4, 1908, pp. 1-3.
and authorize work relief was typical of the campaigns against unwise emergency measures. The established relief agencies, the Federated Charities, Federated Jewish Charities, St. Vincent de Paul Society, and, most significant of all, the Supervisors of the City Charities, conferred with the mayor. Their combined statistics showed that existing facilities for the care of the homeless were not being used to capacity; that the agencies represented had had no extraordinary increase in applicants for relief from unemployed heads of families. As a result the mayor agreed that existing charities were quite able to care for persons in need. The city confined its efforts to greater utilization of labor within its regular departments.\(^1\) Accurate data on current needs could be mobilized quickly from the statistics of established agencies. Their immediate acceptance as the basis for action symbolized the position these agencies had attained in the eyes of the general public, and their capacity to work together.

Acceleration in the movement toward unified community action came with the depression. Private agencies seized the opportunity to strengthen the confidence of the public in their methods. After all, if increased contributions to carry them through the emergency were to be secured, their capacity to handle adequately the additional problems would have to be proved. Experiments in carefully developed work-relief units necessitated more exact knowledge of industrial conditions, and co-ordination of the work of all agencies required far-sighted planning.

Miss Richmond had come to Philadelphia a few years before the depression as general secretary of a torpid society which she undertook to reorganize. She was eminent during this period in her capacity for community leadership, although social workers in other cities were no less zealous. "Everything she touched she vitalized," and her activity in the whole community was characterized by such "inspiring and selfless intelligence," that she very often achieved her ends without ever being herself connected with what was accomplished.\(^2\)

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1 Letter from J. W. Magruder, Federated Charities, Baltimore, February 13, 1908. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.
Under her direction the Society for Organizing Charity succeeded in persuading the three largest relief agencies in the city to register their new applications daily. Work-relief plans under other auspices were organized, although the Society itself tried to find farm work and utilized the Wayfarers’ Lodge for work relief for heads of families. To increase its usefulness to working people who might shrink from making personal application, a special letter was sent to 600 clergymen and visits were made to 40 trade unions to urge these institutions to refer cases of emergent distress to the society. Finally the private agencies met with the mayor to determine the responsibility of each in providing for beggars if measures were undertaken to remove them from the streets. Rigid enforcement of the law, including sentence to the House of Correction for begging, was recommended with the understanding that private charities consider as their charge resident persons who were disabled, convalescent, or unemployed but who had a good work record. The attempt thus to clarify public and private function was a long step away from previous unwillingness, in Philadelphia particularly, to admit public agencies to any part in planning the social program.

Plentiful evidence existed of similar efforts by private agencies quietly to strengthen co-operation between social agencies under strain of the depression. In Boston, by arrangement with the governor, the State Employment Bureau sent the Associated Charities the names and addresses of applicants for work who stated they were destitute. In Newark the Overseer of the Poor began to register his cases and to consult the records of the Associated Charities when families were known to both agencies. When a special employment office was being considered by the Associated Charities in Cleveland, a group representing the paper, iron, and clothing manufacturers, organized labor, and the city government discussed the many angles of the problem. The decision not to create an emergency agency was based upon employers’ promises to increase their forces in the production of staples and in rotation of employment, the city’s agreement to give out work on buildings earlier than usual and the preference for strengthening existing charitable employment agencies.¹ By focusing attention upon need, then ap-

parent in the community, the Associated Charities stimulated response from several different sources and did away with the necessity of establishing a new agency.

Participation of private agencies in work relief, public works, care for the homeless, and establishment of emergency agencies, will be discussed under those various headings, although actually it was a part of the co-ordination of community forces which has just been described.

**Modifications within the Agencies**

The depression, after all, was only one factor in strengthening the position of private agencies in the community. Any discussion of changes involves consideration of the natural development which would probably have taken place, though at a slower rate, had there been no emergency. New districts were being organized, staffs were being enlarged, and the societies generally were becoming so much better known that more and more people referred problems to them. The volume of service which a society undertook during the emergency of 1907-1908 was likely to become its normal load in the ensuing period. For example, the following figures indicate that after the marked increase of 1907-1908, the New York Charity Organization Society's load remained at this high level and even increased in subsequent years.¹

**Table 8.—Cases under care of New York Charity Organization Society, fiscal years 1906 to 1913**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal year ending September 30</th>
<th>Under care at beginning of year</th>
<th>Taken up during year</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>1,536</td>
<td>2,239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>1,010</td>
<td>2,326</td>
<td>3,336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>1,121</td>
<td>4,652</td>
<td>5,773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>2,039</td>
<td>4,180</td>
<td>6,219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>1,353</td>
<td>4,034</td>
<td>5,387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1,528</td>
<td>4,544</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>1,670</td>
<td>5,043</td>
<td>6,713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>1,533</td>
<td>5,234</td>
<td>6,767</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Increase in Case Loads.* The extent to which case loads in various agencies increased gives some picture of the adjustments which

must have been necessary within the societies. In Chicago, statistics for a number of agencies are available for a single month in each of two successive years and are given in Table 9. The figures include applications only and fail to show the more urgent need found among these cases due to the depression, and requiring additional service.

TABLE 9.—APPLICATIONS RECEIVED BY SEVEN CHICAGO AGENCIES DURING JANUARY IN 1907 AND 1908

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>January, 1907</th>
<th>January, 1908</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chicago Bureau of Charities</td>
<td>1,311</td>
<td>1,997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago Relief and Aid Society</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>1,377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Hebrew Charities</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Vincent de Paul Society</td>
<td>624</td>
<td>1,309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German Society of Chicago</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish National Society</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Agent</td>
<td>3,477</td>
<td>5,891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>6,391</strong></td>
<td><strong>11,438</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The totals probably do not show the number of different families applying for relief since there was likely to be duplication of cases between the county agent and the private relief societies. Increase in loads for each agency, however, was clearly shown to be very great. In February, 1908, the Chicago Bureau of Charities expanded even more by taking on a large number of cases from the smaller relief societies serving particular nationalities and religious groups, whose funds were exhausted, and from the police department which had no regular relief fund and no time to carry on the difficult work of caring for those in need. An additional burden was accepted from the county agent, who asked that emergency calls in outlying districts near the offices of the Bureau of Charities might be referred to them over the telephone.

The Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity reported in March, 1908, a case load nearly five times as heavy as in March, 1907. The New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor in 1908 increased its case load by 60.7 per cent, to a total

1 "Reports from Charitable Organizations." In Co-operation, weekly publication of the Chicago Bureau of Charities, vol. 8, no. 8, February 22, 1908, p. 64.

of 10,752 families. Relief was necessary for 6,725 of these families, an increase of 153 per cent in families requiring material relief.\(^1\)

**Finances.** With the marked development in the work of the agencies, additional funds had to be raised. The Federated Charities of Baltimore employed an extension secretary for the purpose. In Buffalo a Committee on Appeals carried on a seven weeks' campaign; the regular donors' list was circularized four times, and in an effort to attract small givers, a two-dollar check ready to sign was sent out. The total number of donors for the year mounted to 2,063, an increase of 1,114 over the previous year.\(^2\) In some communities a hodgepodge of money-raising methods brought in funds enough to tide over the emergency. Schools and churches collected food and clothing as well as cash, employees in certain firms were asked to contribute fixed sums weekly, and benefit ball games and dramatic performances added several thousand dollars to the treasury of the Indianapolis Charity Organization Society.

Some agencies piled up large deficits, thus jeopardizing their permanent funds. The United Hebrew Charities of New York, on the other hand, closed its doors to additional applications for three days in December, 1907. The newspapers protested immediately, and prominent Jewish men and women were aroused to action. The Council of Jewish Communal Institutions raised enough to reopen the office temporarily, but all through 1908 contributions came in slowly while the work of the agency was doubly heavy because of cases transferred to it by small relief societies whose treasuries were empty. Finally the drastic move was made of curtailing relief to widows with children, the alternative of institutional care being open for the children. A Widowed Mothers' Fund was formed to supply money to these families and the Hebrew Orphan Asylum shared in the financial responsibility of keeping homes together.\(^3\) The crisis also stirred certain large givers to action. Jacob H. Schiff gave $20,000 to a loan fund designated as the Self-Respect Fund for the use of families never before known to the agency; and


\(^2\) (Buffalo) Charity Organization Society, Fifty Years of Family Social Work, 1877-1927, p. 90.

\(^3\) (New York) Jewish Social Service Association, Fifty Years of Social Service: The History of the United Hebrew Charities of the City of New York, 1926, pp. 71, 72.
several large donors, including Mrs. Russell Sage and Robert W. de Forest, voluntarily came to the rescue, although funds had ordinarily been secured only from the Jewish community.

*Extension of Work.* Private social agencies met increased pressures by different methods. In Boston a special committee on unemployed cases was appointed by the Associated Charities to consider plans for individual families. Labor unions were represented on its membership. In Chicago the regular advisory committees in the districts or at central office met daily instead of weekly to consider additional problems. The Charity Organization Society of New York released its staff for emergency work by discontinuing the investigations it had been making for hospitals and dispensaries to determine whether patients could pay for the services of a private physician. In Buffalo the Charity Organization Society opened two new district offices in areas not previously covered. One of these, in a Polish district, continued to operate after the depression; the other, financed almost entirely by a steel company whose unemployed workers comprised the needy population, was opened outside the city limits. After two months and a half the steel plant reopened and the office was closed, since the danger of perpetuating a relief program in a community where ordinary local resources were entirely lacking was considered serious by the Society. In Baltimore, too, the Federated Charities extended its organization beyond the city limits to take over the indiscriminate relief-giving of a county commissioner and police department. Whether characterized by contraction or expansion, private agencies during the depression adjusted their work in ways such as might permit them to handle the increased demands most efficiently with the resources at hand.

*Relief and Service.* In 1907–1908 two points of view in regard to relief existed in family agencies. One held that adequate relief to able-bodied men was of doubtful wisdom. The private agencies had cared for the sick, disabled, and aged in the years prior to the depression and were inclined to feel that able-bodied men should be given only enough to prevent acute suffering—a sort of mere bread and water existence which would not encourage dependency. The St. Louis Provident Association went so far as to advise that
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assistance to able-bodied men might even be interpreted in some instances to mean either food or coal when both were asked for.

In addition certain conditions imposed upon the recipients of relief were articulated by the Buffalo Charity Organization Society, and were probably part of the procedure in other agencies since they implied the service aspect of work with families emphasized at this time.

Where a family has continuing aid, the society demands that the children go regularly to school, and requires a weekly report from the teacher as to their attendance. When the society is supporting a family it also provides and insists upon competent medical examination of the children so that they need not grow up defective and unable to earn. . . . It may be that next winter attendance at the night schools to learn English, or to learn trades, may be required of men who are being continuously aided.¹

These conditions, it was admitted, would require “vast tact” in administering relief and frequent exceptions.

An entirely different point of view on relief standards was typified by the attitude of the United Hebrew Charities of New York. The agency measured its responsibility toward families in need by the results of a recent study of living standards made for the New York State Conference of Charities and Correction by the Committee on the Standard of Living in which the annual budget for a family of five was fixed at $700 to $800 as a minimum below which financial assistance would be required, while $800 to $900 was set as the standard of decency.² During the winter of 1907–1908 the society was forced to see its families suffer for want of the necessities, and felt that its efforts degenerated into an attempt to give as little relief for each as possible.

The unusual pressure presented difficulties to agencies which had built up a technique of investigation and treatment. Although social workers held that proper treatment for an unemployed man with a dependent family required visits to former employers and others mentioned as references to gain an adequate picture of the family standard in ordinary times, many were forced to admit that

¹ (Buffalo) Charity Organization Society, Fifty Years of Family Social Work, 1877–1927, p. 89.
they had fallen far below such practice during the depression. In Cleveland, for example, only 381 out of 4,567 visits were designated as reference calls, which meant that the function of the agency became simply relief-giving rather than service to people.¹ Social workers who had struggled hard to build up the standards of family agencies, faced the problem of merely improving the bare condition of larders rather than of helping the people themselves. Which points of procedure were kept and which sacrificed temporarily were admirably summarized in the annual report of the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity for 1908:

We still made full use of the individual system of relief, which "makes a loan to one, sends another to the woodyard to work for all he gets, staves off the landlord's eviction notice for a third, finds a chance of work outside for a fourth, places the fifth in a hospital, sends the sixth and his whole family to the country, provides cash for the exceptionally provident buyer who is the seventh, relieves the improvident eighth sparingly with supplies plus a work test, and, instead of doing work twice over, turns the ninth over to the charity that is already caring for him."

This adaptability we counted as second only to promptness, and the standard of promptness that we fixed and lived up to was a visit to everyone within twenty-four hours and relief on the spot whenever needed.

Tasks have remained undone; the larger constructive plans which involved a careful following up of educational chances, the expert treatment of physical defects which stop short of acute illness, the bettering of incomes by training and by improved conditions—these have been neglected. But something had to be put aside, and the very work in which we have heretofore taken the deepest satisfaction has had to wait.²

Established social agencies were constantly aware of the individuals whom they treated, even when exigencies of the moment necessitated ignoring their other needs and taking the less satisfactory measure of relieving hunger. Reports and articles of the period show clearly an acceptance of case-work methods, and deviations from approved procedure were considered merely temporary. In many places, it was true, social agencies had never before applied case-work procedures to physically fit clients. In the rush of hard times it was natural that they should revert to the feeling that

¹ Cleveland Associated Charities, Report of the Superintendent to the Executive Committee, April, 1908.
² See p. 22 of the Society's report.

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too much relief would be harmful to men who had always supported themselves.

*Personnel.* Extra paid workers and volunteers were recruited to carry the unemployment load. By January, 1908, in many agencies additional staff members were engaged and were retained sometimes through the spring. In Baltimore, for example, the latter arrangement enabled the regular staff of the Federated Charities to bring their case records up to date after the heavy accumulation of the winter’s work, besides taking a three days’ vacation. When money was lacking, board members often agreed to pay the salary of additional workers rather than to limit the function of the agency; and in Philadelphia sufficient funds were secured through the board to make an extra week’s vacation possible for all the overworked regular staff, and to employ in addition emergency workers.

Recruits were secured from unusual sources. The Chicago Bureau of Charities, which doubled its force to number almost 60, reported that its emergency workers comprised former employes called back for a period, students from universities or theological seminaries who could drop their work and welcomed the opportunity to earn a little extra money, research workers from the Social Science Institute who suspended their work temporarily, and several policemen. Two married men who were in such desperate straits that their families were about to be evicted were taken on; one of these had been editor of a foreign language newspaper; the other, college trained, had been in business until the depression. One became a good office interviewer and the other an outside investigator.\(^1\)

Four men of the high-grade clerical class in Philadelphia were found capable under supervision of doing every kind of work in the districts except taking first interviews. In spite of enlarged staffs, workers carried increased case loads. In the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, for example, the customary case load of 75 to 100 was expanded to a maximum of 240, a figure recognized as an injustice both to the work and to the worker.\(^2\)

As a result of hard times, added responsibility was placed upon

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the paid staff by volunteer district committees. According to the 1909 report of the New York Charity Organization Society these changes in its organization became permanent, and district agents were thereafter called district secretaries, in recognition of their increased responsibilities. The change permitted district committees to place upon district secretaries the duty of opening and closing cases without committee supervision. Simple cases which involved only following established principles were left as far as possible to the workers. This shift of responsibility enabled district committees to give their attention wholly to complex cases, general supervision of case work, and development of co-operation with existing agencies in the community. No widespread testimony indicates the extent to which the transfer of responsibility from volunteers to staff had been hastened by experiences of the winter, but the emergency must have required, at least temporarily, relinquishment of details previously carried by district committees.

Volunteers were already so active in every branch of work in private agencies that it was comparatively easy to recruit new volunteers and find tasks for them to do. Some societies enlarged their volunteer staff by holding meetings to which anyone interested was invited; others carried on quietly through the regular channels in the community. Volunteers already serving increased the hours they gave, while others spent from a few hours to full time. A single agency in Chicago reported 300 volunteers at one period. Their services covered many angles of the work, among which the following were most frequent:

Volunteers of skilled experience held first interviews, conferred with relatives and cooperating agencies, composed special case appeal letters, and found permanent work for heads of families. . . . Volunteers with less experience followed up emergency cases after the first interview; looked up records in schools, hospitals, courts, boards of health, etc.; saw landlords, employers, references in the country; took patients to clinics and made other arrangements for medical care; fitted children with shoes; delivered pensions; and did office filing.¹

The volunteers also did clerical work, including organization of community resource files and stenography. In a word, volunteers

were engaged upon every phase of the program carried on by private agencies and were placed according to their aptitude and experience.

Greatly enlarged staffs, both paid and volunteer, were necessary during 1908-1909 to carry the increased burden of private agencies. Even then comparatively untrained people were assigned most difficult work under supervision, and the loads of individual workers were exceedingly heavy. The balance of authority between volunteers and staff shifted slightly in the direction of giving over to paid workers more and more responsibility and leaving for the volunteers on committees the larger issues and development of casework standards.

EMERGENCY MEASURES

Breadlines and soup kitchens flourished as usual in the depression of 1907-1908, but established agencies carried on an active campaign in many places to prevent emergency relief from taking such forms. For one thing, the crisis never reached a point to warrant in popular opinion emergency measures of the kind which would have done more harm then good. For another, social work leaders strove constantly to show the inadequacy of free distributions to the poor.

To be able-bodied and willing to work and yet utterly unable to find it is hard; to have others quite helplessly dependent upon you in addition is so hard that it almost beggars description; but to be forced to stand in line with a basket for hours and then to be given, in the name of charity, a loaf of bread and a handful of withered vegetables, is a cruelty to which no human being should be subjected. None of the distributions improvised for dealing with this emergency have opened a door of real escape for the poor; all have led to no thoroughfare, but most of them have been well meant.1

Social work executives spent a large part of their time in preventing unnecessary and foolish proposals from taking shape and in offering as an alternative the resources within their own agencies.

In Cleveland the new head of the American Volunteers suggested that downtown churches be thrown open for transient lodgings and

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a soup kitchen established nearby. As soon as publicity on the plan appeared in the newspapers, social workers went to the Chamber of Commerce, which managed to dissuade the promoters of the scheme. Successful efforts to show how futile a breadline would be blocked the organization of several different groups in Boston. The Hebrew Bakers' Union contemplated distribution of bread, urged on by Morrison I. Swift, whose followers needed food, and by the Hearst newspapers which offered support in return for the publicity to be secured. Three local agencies, the Associated Charities, the Provident Association, and the Federated Hebrew Charities, showed how individualized service with no advertising campaign could more nearly meet the total needs of the unemployed than could mass action. The breadline was abandoned and the Union delivered its bread to homes recommended by established social agencies in the community.¹

Quite a different approach was made to a minister who desired to open a breadline in Boston. The governor and influential lay persons invited him to appear before the executive committee of the State Conference of Charities. Also a worker from the Associated Charities sat with him at his office during the hour that he received applicants each week to demonstrate to him charity organization methods. Her assistance in interviewing applicants not only won his co-operation but showed him how few people coming to him were in need of help because of hard times.

Still another plan was devised following Mr. Swift's march on Trinity Church in Boston. After a conference among relief leaders, $1,000 was entrusted to the Provident Association of that city which investigated applicants referred by the Swift group and provided food and lodgings to those willing to work in return.

In Newark the Associated Charities was only partly successful in doing away with a breadline organized by the Hebrew Bakers' Union, which undertook to receive and investigate applications, refusing the agency's offer to perform this service. As a result, bread was delivered to 150 families, but the social agency believed that the investigation was inadequate, and deplored the fact that in addition to deliveries bread was still given out from a central

¹ Letter from Alice L. Higgins, Associated Charities of Boston, March 10, 1908. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.
organizing charity to the fore

distributing depot. In New York the futility of a breadline was demonstrated to the agencies' satisfaction when waiting men were offered the services of the social agencies. The men declined to give information necessary for a comprehensive study of their needs, preferring the cycle of free meals and lodgings available to the rounder.

Settlements in New York also objected to sorting out children of poor families from among the school population and providing them with free food. Organized first by neighboring restaurants for children recommended by their teachers, the movement developed during the spring of 1908 into a drive for more funds.

Until the school authorities deem it wise to inaugurate a regular system of school lunch, dignified and orderly, in conformity with the theory of state responsibilities for the best development of the child, the suffering and need of the school child should be met by existing agencies and privately.¹

The family welfare agencies went farther. They believed that while relief should be given when necessary, permanent and adequate relief for hungry school children could best be obtained through efforts to teach families to plan the expenditure of small incomes so as to insure sufficiency and proper balance of their dietaries. Such recommendations were made after family agencies had received 146 applications from schools and had gone carefully into the needs.

CARE OF THE HOMELESS

In several cities social workers struggled to maintain or achieve adequate care for the homeless in connection with a work-relief plan. Where established agencies were responsible for wayfarers' lodges, statistics on their population offered ammunition with which to fight street begging, free police station care for the homeless, and other moves to open shelters not requiring a work test. Police stations and free shelters were looked upon not only as demoralizing but also, in most instances, as unsanitary and therefore dangerous.

The most comprehensive plan to safeguard standards of care for

the homeless functioned in Chicago, the Mecca of tramps and itinerant laborers. When the Municipal Lodging-House and other lodging-houses became overcrowded, a committee appointed by social workers persuaded the mayor to open an annex. A local banker had already established a free lunch wagon on a prominent street corner, feeding 800 men nightly, and the committee pointed out that similar harmful enterprises would spring up unless the city sought to control the situation. At the annex to the Municipal Lodging-House, one day’s work on the streets in return for three days’ lodging was made the rule. Men had thus two free days in which to find work. At about the same time the Chicago Daily Tribune sought to raise a fund to provide free shelter and food. The sensational publicity and dangers of its plan were opposed to the unified action of many forces in the community. Through board members serving on the Tribune Committee, the newspaper was persuaded to establish its lodging-house as another annex to the Municipal Lodging-House, receiving its men after one night at the latter institution where bath, medical examination, and disinfection of clothing had been secured. Deflected from its original purpose of indiscriminate relief-giving, the newspaper joined enthusiastically in discouraging street beggars by continuous publicity about available facilities for the homeless and the harmfulness of encouraging unnecessary begging.

The same group in Chicago induced the commissioner of health to prevent the Salvation Army five-cent lodging-house from taking more men than could be accommodated with beds. As many as 150 men nightly had been lying on the floors or sitting in the lobby free of charge. After the capacity of the Municipal Lodging-House had been enlarged, the police closed station houses to the homeless, but a downtown church serving free breakfasts to 1,000 men daily could not be persuaded to give up the plan. On the whole, however, Chicago’s careful direction of activities for the homeless through a representative committee resulted in strengthening efficient enterprises and eliminating unwise undertakings.

In the city of New York individualized service to the homeless was attempted. The Department of Public Charities agreed to furnish transportation to persons who had a home but no means of returning to it. For three months during the winter the Joint Ap-
plication Bureau, which handled the homeless applying to private agencies, lent the services of an agent who interviewed men and women at the Municipal Lodging-House.

Out of nearly 1,200 individuals with whom interviews were had there were only six who could meet the Department [of Public Charities'] requirements. For seventeen others the [agent] found relatives or friends willing to furnish them with transportation and for two others who were insane proper institutional care was secured. Many of these men declined to give references.¹

The Joint Application Bureau was also singling out a group of homeless men for more careful individualized treatment. In December, 1907, out of total applications numbering 2,954, only 191 persons were found who “apparently could be placed upon a basis of self-support through assistance,”¹ while in January, out of a total of 1,825 applications from homeless persons, 387 were selected for treatment.² This increase in cases likely to respond to treatment indicated a change in the character of applicants, probably due to many self-respecting men having been forced by the depression into the ranks of the homeless.

Cordial relations continued to exist between public and private agencies caring for the homeless. From April to June 30, 1909, an agent from the Joint Application Bureau stationed at the Municipal Lodging-House interviewed 2,293 men, of whom 68 were placed in permanent positions while a large number were directed to employment agencies or relief societies; 38 men were furnished transportation and 41 clothed. The agent provided various means of work by which a man might remain in the Lodging-House while looking for employment or until his first pay was secured.³ Limited as was the concept of treatment embodied in this plan, it nevertheless signalized a step toward long-time service to the transient in which food and shelter were only one part of the care.

¹ (New York) Charity Organization Society, Twenty-sixth Annual Report, September, 1908, p. 25.
² Letter from W. Frank Persons, Charity Organization Society, New York, January 28, 1908. In the files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.
UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF IN PERIODS OF DEPRESSION

WORK RELIEF

Efforts to Secure Work

Before organizing work-relief projects, many agencies tried to secure real work for able-bodied men. Committees on employment sought jobs for particular men, or, as in Philadelphia, the Society for Organizing Charity hired a man to find work through personal solicitation of employers. His efforts to discover employment on farms for men with families met with only indifferent success. In Cleveland, however, a committee of the Associated Charities sent 241 men and 13 families to farms. Not all the placements worked out successfully, but it was felt that much good was accomplished and helpful relations with surrounding communities established. The Charity Organization Society of New York through advertisements in country newspapers found farm work for 75 men. For 66 of these the agency had to provide transportation, but more than half promptly paid back their obligation.

The depression accentuated the inadequacy of facilities for finding jobs. In October, 1908, a movement to establish a privately financed employment bureau on a business basis was initiated in New York by Jacob H. Schiff. After a careful study the National Employment Exchange, with a working capital of $100,000 secured through subscriptions, was incorporated. Although at first covering only manual labor it soon extended its services to skilled and clerical workers. Like the Provident Loan Society in the earlier depression, this independent organization was an outgrowth of needs emphasized by the hard times, was initiated by social agencies, and was independently financed.¹

Avoidance of Large-Scale Programs

Social workers cautiously avoided becoming involved in any mass movement for work relief. The leading magazine in the field, Charities and the Commons, in its issue of April 4, 1908, commented editorially that it was

in which savings and other resources are exhausted; until labor organiza-
tions can no longer provide for their idle members; until general unem-
ployment means deprivation of the necessities of life for large numbers
who would not be in distress for other reasons.

Buffalo went so far as to insist that when men were honestly unable
to find employment "charity work known to be such was an un-
necessary humiliation." Most cities, convinced that work of some
kind was preferable to relief alone, proceeded to develop small
work-relief projects, frequently under the supervision of private
agencies.

Work-relief plans frequently involved only an extension of an
already existing arrangement. For example, the Charity Organiza-
tion Society of New York at its wood yard gave preference to men
with families rather than to the homeless. Employing an unusual
number of workers, and with an overstocked market, the supply
of cut wood increased so rapidly that space available for work
was seriously curtailed. Gifts of $15,000 enabled the agency to
distribute wood to needy families and approved institutions, thus
giving opportunity for more work. In its annual report for 1908
the Society observed that wood-cutting was not educational, but
merely a labor test adapted somewhat to the needs of the moment.
A workroom for women, in which the Manhattan Trade School for
Girls and a free employment bureau also co-operated, provided
some training in connection with work relief by giving sewing to
unskilled workers, the garments being distributed to families known
to the Charity Organization Society. Wages were set at $3.50 a
week, and some acquired enough skill to find regular work.

In other communities labor on public improvements was or-
organized and financed by private money. The Chicago Relief and
Aid Society placed only its own clients on such projects. Streets
were cleaned, vacant lots cleared of rubbish and made into play-
grounds, and snow removed in areas not properly looked after by
the city, which, however, furnished teams and tools. As part of
this program the Eli Bates Settlement employed men with families
at $1.35 a day (later reduced to $1.00 a day in order to encourage
them to search for regular work) to clean up neglected areas. A

1 Hall, Fred S., Two Methods of Emergency Relief for the Unemployed, October

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lunch of sandwiches and hot coffee was furnished by the agency and eaten in the shelter of the settlement. The amount of time each man was allowed to work averaged six and one-half days during the entire period. The undertaking afforded prompt relief and maintained the self-respect of applicants at the same time that it eliminated those unwilling to work for their relief. In addition it provided an excellent service to the districts where decent streets and clean playgrounds took the place of unsightly and often unsanitary vacant lots.¹

In Philadelphia the Citizens' Permanent Relief Committee, which had been active in the previous depression, provided funds to furnish work in parks to clients of the five largest relief or family welfare agencies. Carefully steered by social workers to avoid undue publicity or establishment of new agencies, the Committee refused the request of the Unemployed Conference to open relief stations. The only effort made by the Citizens' Permanent Relief Committee in the hard times of 1907-1908 was the expenditure of $6,000 to $7,000 on the park work above described.² Other work relief in Philadelphia was undertaken by the Lighthouse Settlement which turned 16 acres of land into a recreation park, and by the Society for Organizing Charity through its own wood yard and through day's work in large institutions paid for by the agency.

Unique among schemes for work relief was the Indianapolis Charity Organization's plan of employing men of different trades to build cottages and improve surrounding land. The cottages were intended to provide homes rent free for widows able with this assistance to support their children. Questionable as it may have been to segregate widows' families in this particular fashion, the project supplied an unusual variety of employment for carpenters, painters, blacksmiths, machinists, and brick and cement workers. Clothing and shoe repair shops were opened to furnish renovated clothing to the workers. All able-bodied men were given two days' work a week at 15 cents an hour. Payment was made daily in food

¹ Chicago Relief and Aid Society, A Brief Outline of the Work Accomplished by the Chicago Relief and Aid Society during Its Fifty-first Year, 1908, pp. 9-11. See also Rosing, B., "Chicago's Unemployed Clean the Streets." In Charities and the Commons, vol. 21, October 3, 1908, pp. 47-51.
² Philadelphia Citizens' Permanent Relief Committee, Minutes, April 10, 1908; April 14, 1908.
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or coal from the supply store on the grounds. Indianapolis had retained from the depression of the nineties a deep conviction that the money-saving features of payment “in kind” outweighed its other disadvantages. Hot coffee and sandwiches were served at noon, and heavy clothing furnished for which no return in labor was demanded, although some men preferred to work for it. Constant changes in the working personnel retarded progress, but the quality of the work was satisfactory.\(^1\)

PUBLIC WORKS

Appropriations for public works are frequently mentioned, but how often they were actually made cannot now be determined. In Cincinnati $20,000 was used to employ men for heavy work in parks at $1.60 a day, each man receiving one week’s work. Applicants had to be referred by a responsible citizen, and were required to answer a set of questions prepared by the Associated Charities. Need rather than capacity was probably the basis of selection, although the public auspices under which the work was done, and the wage rate paid would seem to indicate a public works project. Baltimore hastened public works during the winter of 1907–1908 so that 100 heads of families could be given employment, and as the spring advanced, contemplated an increase in the force employed. The city of Cleveland rushed building repairs and placed orders for wagons, boilers, and other material that would not ordinarily be required in the immediate future, while Philadelphia expended large sums of money on school repairs, and Newark made a special appropriation to undertake work not otherwise provided for, employing for the purpose about 500 additional men. Sufficient evidence exists to indicate that public works as differentiated from work relief were undertaken in many cities.

CHAPTER IX

1914-1915: RECOGNITION OF UNEMPLOYMENT AS A NATIONAL PROBLEM

THE INDUSTRIAL SITUATION

The World War broke out at a time when financial markets and industry had long been in a semi-paralyzed condition. Tariff changes in the opinion of some observers were to blame for the industrial lag of the previous few years. The events preceding the outbreak of hostilities in Europe precipitated excess selling on the New York Stock Exchange, which closed temporarily on July 31, 1914, to prevent further drop in prices. War had at first a disastrous effect upon American foreign trade, although the situation varied in different industries and localities. By the summer of 1915, however, a marked improvement in manufacturing due to European war orders was noted, and the winter of 1915-1916 found the United States well launched on its period of war prosperity. Relief measures for the unemployed were confined almost entirely to the first winter following the declaration of war against Germany by the continental powers.

CONTEMPORARY REACTIONS TO DEPRESSION PROBLEMS

TRENDS IN EMERGENCY MEASURES

For a brief period the conflicting claims of European war sufferers and American victims of unemployment confused the issue. Shortly, however, principles of unemployment relief emerged with a clarity that left no doubt as to the lessons which had been learned in other depressions. Plans were focused, as in 1907-1908, upon avoidance of large centralized relief measures and of inadequate emergency agencies. Private agencies, less aggressive in their own right than in 1907, participated with other community forces in a comprehensive and searching study not only of emergency measures, but of basic employment needs as well.
The individual worker and his family formed a background upon which emergency measures were projected. "The injury to the worker by unemployment extends beyond his mere industrial efficiency, and dangerously affects the social standing, the family relations, the health, the intelligence and the public orderliness of the working classes of the community," declared an authority in a basic American industry. Intelligent treatment of unemployment demanded study of individual situations and careful differentiation among the various groups of unemployed people. The first Mayor's Committee on Unemployment in New York, organized in December, 1914, in its report issued January, 1916, classified the unemployed roughly into four groups:

1. Those who had recently and normally held long-time, steady jobs; such as engineers, railway employees, clerks.
2. Those whose occupation was seasonal; such as building trades workers who shifted from job to job and from employer to employer but remained in the same field.
3. Casual laborers; such as longshoremen or odd-job men, whose employment was by the day or hour, and who were subject to dismissal on a moment's notice.
4. Unemployables who were incapable of regular work because of illness, old age, or other handicaps, or who refused to work, preferring the status of loafers and tramps.

Indiscriminate relief even in the emergency, it was pointed out, would undermine self-respect and would fail to take into account individual capacity and responsibilities. This concern for the needs of each person was stated by the second Mayor's Committee, which had been appointed on January 25, 1916, in its report, How to Meet Hard Times, issued in January, 1917.

No matter how severe the unemployment crisis, a sincere effort should be made by the public authorities and by the private agencies primarily responsible for its relief to classify those in need in some way not inconsistent with rapidity of action, so as to determine what kind of relief the individual is most in need of or which is most likely to be appropriate to his or her capacity for self-help, possession of resources, station in life, family responsibilities, age, health, sex, etc.

Centralized registration in many cities prevented duplication of effort among both public and private agencies and safeguarded decentralized administration, since all applications were cleared. Marked improvements in public administration of relief had also taken place since the beginning of the century. In the fall of 1914, 17 executives of family agencies, who met to discuss the subject, expressed themselves as follows:

Certain parts of an emergency program belonged logically to public departments, such as developing public work which needed to be done, giving it to resident heads of families, and paying for it at market rates; such also as providing adequate care under right conditions of work-test and flexible time-limit for the homeless. The division of work between public and private agencies could not be the same the country over . . . but there should be good faith and co-operative understanding between the two everywhere.¹

This opinion showed clearly the strides that had been made during the last decade in improving relations between public and private welfare agencies.

The approved program demanded that existing agencies, whether large or small, under public or private auspices, be strengthened wherever possible. This emphasis upon decentralization, however, created a corresponding need for a co-ordinating agency or group. The participation of the federal government in the local relief picture was not even thought of at this period; state governments took slight part; municipal governments, increasingly strong in welfare work, frequently assumed leadership in integrating the forces of the community to meet hard times. Numerous mayors’ committees, semi-official in character, studied the basic problem of unemployment and carried out measures for meeting the immediate emergency.

**Permanent Planning**

Community planning in 1914–1915 took on more fundamental aspects than in earlier depressions. We find local unemployment committees, appointed for the emergency, beginning for the first

The business cycle began to appear in their deliberations as the "villain of the piece." Hasty and scrambling efforts to organize relief were deprecated as superficial; it was the condition of industry itself that required adjustment. This point of view is ably expressed in the report of the second Mayor's Committee on Unemployment in New York.

The proper sphere of emergency relief in any complete scheme of provision against unemployment is the residual problem when all these other influences have been at work and all these other resources have been exhausted. The doling out of bread, soup or money, even relief employment at a made job, come last, not first in a well worked-out program of preparedness. Indeed it may almost be said that the efficiency or lack of efficiency of social organization and mutual consideration in an industrial community can be measured by the extent to which it is necessary, during a time of business depression, to maintain able-bodied and willing workers out of charitable funds.¹

Relief was considered as a permanent subsidy to industry which aggravated rather than improved the basic situation. Attention was therefore directed to fundamental reforms designed to reduce the amount of involuntary unemployment. Suggestions of a possible approach included public works, under national, state, and city auspices; regularization of industry, especially where seasonal employment threw large numbers out of work for part of the year; federal and local public employment exchanges, and, as a preventive measure, unemployment insurance on a national scale. Extensive public works were found to be too heavy a burden for municipalities to conduct unaided, as was shown by Chicago's financial inability to carry on large projects; but even state governments were not considered "competent to cope with the miseries caused by interstate and even international conditions of trade, transportation, and commerce."² Accurate labor market statistics, available through public employment offices or other established channels, were recognized as essential to any comprehensive scheme for unemployment prevention.

¹ How to Meet Hard Times: A Program for the Prevention and Relief of Abnormal Unemployment, January, 1917, p. 15.
The impetus toward this trend in social thought originated within the American Association for Labor Legislation. Organizations for the discussion of fundamental problems and remedies spread throughout the country. In March, 1914, the First National Conference on Unemployment met in New York with 200 delegates. Since the work of the Association was limited to discussion of future possibilities for preventing unemployment, it touched only in part the subject of relief measures for 1914–1915. The significance of the Conference for our subject lies in its emphasis upon the study of unemployment remedies from the economic rather than from the relief aspect. Some of the remedies suggested, such as unemployment insurance, which have figured materially in the plans of European nations are still, in 1936, not generally in effect in the United States.

Publicity

The hard times of 1914–1915 found social agencies still opposed to publicity methods which stimulated applications or led relatives, churches, or other “natural resources” to unload their proper burdens upon an advertised fund. For instance, when large gifts to the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity were featured in the newspapers in November, 1914, weekly intake immediately rose from 115 to 190. Applications continued to increase gradually until the announcement in December of a municipal appropriation of $50,000 for relief, when they shot upward from 255 to 385. An immediate announcement in the newspapers that the Society was not going to disburse public funds was followed by a drop in intake to 145, and it did not subsequently rise beyond 225 in any one week during the remainder of the winter.¹

Social workers were agreed that sound publicity should be promoted, but controlled. The advantages of a program for putting before the public the achievements and purposes of social work were much more widely recognized than in earlier depressions. Through the newspapers, employers were requested to keep men on half-time, householders were appealed to for odd jobs, soup kitchens and breadlines were headed off. The strong feeling of social agencies against newspaper fund-raising was apparent when a

¹Willits, Joseph H., Philadelphia Unemployment with Special Reference to the Textile Industries, p. 66.
Hearst newspaper, the Boston American, conducted a "Bundle Day." The Boston Associated Charities along with other leading agencies refused to distribute the garments, and the Mayor and the Governor's Committee to Promote Work both opposed the movement.¹

Attacks which were being directed at this time against charity organization societies sharpened these agencies' reactions to publicity. The opposition of private agencies to legislation extending public relief in the form of "mothers' pensions" had drawn a return fire from supporters of the new development in which many newspapers and magazines joined. It was claimed that high salaries and costs of administration in private agencies used up funds intended for relief—"it takes a dollar to give a dollar"—and that there was callous delay in relieving emergency needs. Private agencies were called the minions of the rich who supposedly sought through charitable gifts to maintain the status quo in society, and it was charged that through "interlocking directorates" the agencies had become one great "charity trust." The New York Sun and New York American led the attack, followed by Harper's Weekly and Pearson's Magazine. Other newspapers took it upon themselves to answer the charges. The New York Times commented editorially that only the scientific approach of organized charity could deal successfully with unemployment distress, since it recognized not only immediate needs but the ultimate objective of restoring the individual to independence. The following extract is from an issue of that paper on January 8, 1915:

It is easy to ridicule or denounce the keeping of records and the payment of salaries to society officials and visitors. It is not easy—it is impossible—to prove the records are useless, that the salaries are not as a rule well earned by hard efficient work, or that the trained subordinates in "the field" are not really restoring to social efficiency great numbers of those whom mere giving would but "tide over into next week's misery"—or next day's.

The Baltimore Federated Charities, according to its general secretary, succeeded in convincing the newspaper leading the attack in that city that the local agency was free from the complaints

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charged, but articles in other cities continued to appear censuring private charitable agencies. The Boston Associated Charities persuaded the editor of the local Hearst newspaper to give up his contemplated campaign, and the Buffalo agency used the occasion to distribute 10,000 copies of a pamphlet explaining its work without appealing for funds. Although the basis of these newspaper attacks had nothing to do with the emergency, the private agencies were stimulated by it to organize their publicity carefully and gained advocates by their sound educational methods.1

LABOR DEMONSTRATIONS

Since the depression was comparatively short, no very serious labor strikes or demonstrations of the unemployed occurred. Again Coxey led a small band of marchers from Massillon, Ohio, to Washington and back again, but his speech from the steps of the Capitol created little excitement. Charles T. Kelly started out from San Francisco on a march to Washington. Arrested on the way, he decided to give up his radical activities.2 Socialists and members of the Industrial Workers of the World were reported as leaders of mass meetings or marches upon city governments. Morrison I. Swift was again active in recruiting an “army” in Boston, where the governor heard their peaceful demands for appropriations for work relief and for increased facilities in the state employment bureau. Only in New York City did serious trouble occur between the unemployed and the police. Under the leadership of Frank Tannenbaum 500 men raided a Roman Catholic church for shelter. More than half had already left at the priest’s request when the police arrived and arrested those inside the church. Unreasonably heavy sentences were imposed upon them.3

ESTIMATES OF THE EXTENT OF UNEMPLOYMENT

While unemployment surveys are not actual relief measures, they were so frequently preliminary to community action in 1914-1915

1 Material in this paragraph has been taken from letters from the general secretaries of the local charity organization societies on file in the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.


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that many reports of the emergency included some account of them. No previous depression brought forth such extensive and varied attempts to measure the amount of unemployment. In these studies interest in the development of a scientific method was coupled with great concern over the existing amount of unemployment, the determination of which might serve as a guide for necessary relief measures.

**Existing Data**

Statistics on employment in the United States were neither extensive nor trustworthy. In New York\(^1\) and Massachusetts continuous figures were available on trade union membership, and in addition Massachusetts had collected annual data on employment from manufacturing establishments since 1886. New Jersey and Ohio had similar statistics for shorter periods of time.\(^2\) The Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics had been compiling quarterly figures of members of certain trade unions since 1908, and these data reflected in the trades represented both the abnormal unemployment of 1914–1915 and the recurrence of seasonal employment. Percentages of unemployment in Table 10 are based on numbers of workers ranging from 122,000 to 183,000.\(^3\)

**Table 10. — Per cent of members unemployed in trade unions reporting quarterly to the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics, 1911 to 1915**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1912</th>
<th>1913</th>
<th>1914</th>
<th>1915</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 31</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 30</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 31</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The high figure for March, 1912, is explained by the inclusion as unemployed of 9,000 textile workers who were temporarily on

\(^1\) See comprehensive data in Idleness of Organized Wage Earners in 1914, New York State Department of Labor, Bul. no. 69.


\(^3\) Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics, Forty-sixth Annual Report on the Statistics of Labor for the year 1915, Part II, pp. 37–39. See also the Bureau's Forty-seventh Annual Report on the Statistics of Labor for the year 1916, Part VI, pp. 33 and 35. In December, 1913, approximately 73 per cent of the total membership of all local labor organizations in Massachusetts were represented in the reports to the Bureau.
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strike. The figure shown for December, 1914, was the highest in the entire series, the next highest being that for March, 1908, in the midst of the previous depression, when 17.9 per cent of those reported upon were out of work. The value of a continuous series of figures on unemployment, even for a limited group, was clear, although the reliability of trade union figures as an index of general unemployment was seriously questioned.

Special Studies

Sources of Information in Various Cities. Many communities undertook to measure their problem by studying special groups, such as the homeless; by registering the unemployed, or by surveys of particular areas or sources of information. The Columbus Associated Charities sent a questionnaire to 200 employers “with the double object of getting information as to the number of employees during December of the past three years, and of suggesting, through the type of questions asked, the duty of the employer at this time.”¹ The Detroit Board of Commerce made a monthly canvass of the normal force and present force of 35 representative industrial concerns; but the resulting figure of 50 per cent unemployed was considered to be too high an index when applied to the number of total wage-earners reported in the last federal census.²

Sometimes data from many sources were combined. In Newark, for example, several firms were visited from each of the 32 industries mentioned by name in the federal census of 1910, and 21 trade unions were canvassed to give a picture of the number of men out of work. In addition the number of homeless men was estimated by studying the decrease in patronage at lodging-houses charging 25 cents or more a night and the increase of 50 to 100 per cent at the free or cheaper shelters.³ The Cleveland Labor Exchange and the City Council’s Committee on Labor collected data from several sources in comparing figures for November, 1913, and November,

¹ Letter from James L. Fieser, Associated Charities, Columbus, Ohio, January 21, 1915. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.
³ Clipping dated February 6, 1915, enclosed in a letter from A. W. MacDougall, Bureau of Associated Charities of Newark, February 20, 1915, who made the study. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.
1914. Classified advertisements in four daily newspapers showed a decrease in positions requiring skill and an increase in persons desiring work. Lodging-house figures indicated the downward trend of living conditions of workmen which paralleled a 15 per cent decrease in working forces and a 19 per cent decrease in working hours of 308 industrial firms. Retail stores reported increased credit accounts ranging from 10 to 700 per cent. Fee-charging employment offices had 17,055 applicants in November, 1913, and 48,457 in November, 1914, while demands upon charitable agencies increased 67 per cent. A house-to-house canvass to discover the number of unemployed persons was made in certain sections of the city. From all these reports it was estimated that approximately 61,000 workers were unemployed in Cleveland. Unable to convince certain members of the Mayor’s Committee on Unemployment of real need on the basis of this survey, the Labor Exchange asked all unemployed people who were willing to work at anything for any price to register with them; and within a week 11,000 persons had enrolled.

As a means of obtaining statistics concerning the number of unemployed persons, voluntary registration of the unemployed, of which the above is a variation, is not a method recommended by experience.

Without a compelling motive for persons out of work to register, and without adequate means of preventing fraudulent registration if the incentive is expectation of relief, data so obtained are certain to be grossly inaccurate, and the effort expended in obtaining them will be wasted so far as their statistical value is concerned.

The extent of unemployment in New York City was most thoroughly surveyed, as was justified by the number and size of its industries and by its strategic position as a distributing center for labor. As early as the middle of December, 1914, replies to the Mayor’s Committee from 602 establishments in all lines of trade and industry gave a general picture of the decrease in employment

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UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF IN PERIODS OF DEPRESSION

in the last year.\(^1\) Public and private employment agencies, as well as relief organizations, were called upon to furnish comparative figures of applications in 1913 and 1914. Trade unions submitted figures, and smaller retail stores were canvassed by workers of 17 social settlements in as many different localities. Deposits and withdrawals of savings banks were tabulated.\(^2\) The information secured served only to confirm the conviction that more than ordinary measures were required to prevent serious distress.

Surveys were carried on under various auspices. Official agencies such as state or federal labor bureaus, semi-official organizations such as chambers of commerce and mayors' committees, and various private agencies or groups undertook to find out the degree to which unemployment had mounted. In Minneapolis, home visits to the registered unemployed were made by students from the University of Minnesota. In Baltimore the police took the census ordered by the United States Commission on Industrial Relations,\(^3\) while in New York City figures for the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics were obtained by a corps of about 100 tenement house inspectors.\(^4\)

*Metropolitan Life Insurance Company Studies.* The most comprehensive material was secured by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. Through its agents a careful canvass of industrial policyholders, constituting representative portions of the wage-earning population, was undertaken in 29 cities. The first study was made in New York in January, 1915; during March and April, 16 cities in the East and Middle West, and during June and July, 12 cities in the Rocky Mountain and Pacific Coast states were canvassed. Data on the number of unemployed, the duration of and reasons for unemployment, and the amount of unemployment by occupations were obtained. For the eastern and middle western cities an average of 11.5 per cent of the wage-earners studied were out of work, and an additional 16.6 per cent were working only

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\(^3\) Baltimore Sun, March 6, 1914.


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part time. The variation in emergency need measured by the extent of unemployment was clearly shown by the figures obtained. The survey of the Rocky Mountain and Pacific Coast cities was taken so much later that it had less value in pointing the way for relief organization.

### TABLE II. UNEMPLOYMENT IN 16 CITIES, MARCH-APRIL, 1915, AS SHOWN BY METROPOLITAN LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY SURVEYS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Number of families canvassed</th>
<th>Per cent of families with unemployment</th>
<th>Number of persons in families</th>
<th>Number of wage-earners in families</th>
<th>Unemployed wage-earners</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
<th>Part-time wage-earners</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boston, Mass.</td>
<td>46,649</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>207,956</td>
<td>77,419</td>
<td>7,863</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>13,426</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridgeport, Conn.</td>
<td>8,144</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>32,144</td>
<td>12,533</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>2,493</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago, Ill.</td>
<td>66,579</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>414,675</td>
<td>157,616</td>
<td>20,952</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>10,575</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland, Ohio</td>
<td>16,851</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>67,787</td>
<td>24,934</td>
<td>2,348</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>3,060</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duluth, Minn.</td>
<td>1,383</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>6,596</td>
<td>2,089</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas City, Mo.</td>
<td>14,890</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>53,437</td>
<td>22,512</td>
<td>2,615</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>1,979</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisville, Ky.</td>
<td>1,607</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>7,238</td>
<td>3,036</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee, Wis.</td>
<td>8,813</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>36,346</td>
<td>13,112</td>
<td>1,030</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>3,788</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minneapolis, Minn.</td>
<td>2,206</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>8,571</td>
<td>3,449</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia, Penn.</td>
<td>79,058</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>346,787</td>
<td>137,244</td>
<td>14,147</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>26,907</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pittsburgh, Penn.</td>
<td>36,544</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>155,793</td>
<td>53,336</td>
<td>5,942</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>15,474</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis, Mo.</td>
<td>65,979</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>258,669</td>
<td>104,499</td>
<td>14,219</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>13,317</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Paul, Minn.</td>
<td>2,515</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>10,782</td>
<td>4,135</td>
<td>582</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springfield, Mo.</td>
<td>1,584</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>6,199</td>
<td>2,284</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toledo, Ohio</td>
<td>7,233</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>28,045</td>
<td>10,312</td>
<td>1,102</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>1,801</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkes-Barre, Penn.</td>
<td>11,453</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>53,900</td>
<td>18,884</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6,104</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>401,548</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>1,694,895</td>
<td>647,394</td>
<td>74,218</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>107,494</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the percentages shown in Table II were applied to the total number of gainfully employed persons, as reported by the federal census in these cities, a fairly satisfactory estimate of total unemployment could be arrived at. In Philadelphia, for example, the working population was estimated at 769,700. If the Metropolitan's figures held good, 79,000 would have been unemployed and 150,000 working on part time in March, 1915. Previous estimates of unemployment in Philadelphia had ranged from 50,000 to 250,000. The Metropolitan Life Insurance figures showed also

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UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF IN PERIODS OF DEPRESSION

that 22 per cent of those without work in Philadelphia had been unemployed for six months or longer, and more than half for over three months.¹

Results of the study made by the same company in New York City in January, 1915, were in fairly close agreement with those of an almost simultaneous survey by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. The latter study included a census of 104 city blocks in different sections selected to include a representative number of families of various nationalities and all classes of workers. In addition, 3,703 individual tenement houses and residences with a still wider range of distribution were covered. The survey also included such facts as the duration of unemployment and unemployment by occupations. From these studies it was concluded that the total number of unemployed in New York was between 398,000 and 434,000. Both agencies made a re-survey in August and September, 1915. On this occasion their figures showed some discrepancy, but signs of recovery were indicated in both studies.²

TABLE 12.—RESULTS OF PARALLEL SURVEYS OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN NEW YORK CITY IN 1915

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Metropolitan Life Insurance Company surveys</th>
<th>U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics surveys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>January, 1915</td>
<td>September, 1915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families canvassed</td>
<td>155,960</td>
<td>100,951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families having unemployed wage-earners</td>
<td>37,064</td>
<td>11,408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per cent of families with unemployment</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons in families</td>
<td>639,436                     ⁴</td>
<td>413,146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wage-earners in families</td>
<td>252,912</td>
<td>141,516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed wage-earners</td>
<td>45,241</td>
<td>12,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per cent of wage-earners unemployed</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Willits, Joseph H., Philadelphia Unemployment with Special Reference to the Textile Industries, pp. 13–14, 128.
NATIONAL PROBLEM

Royal Meeker, at that time Commissioner of the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, made the following comment on the assistance given by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in the 28 cities outside of New York:

This survey was unique, in that a private company did the job for the Federal Government without any compensation. . . . It is humiliating to note that, in the vitally important matter of unemployment, the facts needed were not available, and that lack of funds rendered the Federal officials helpless to obtain the required information. Had it not been for the philanthropic service rendered by this private insurance company, information in regard to unemployment outside of New York City in 1915 would be almost wholly lacking.¹

Attempts to find some accurate picture of unemployment during 1914–1915 were part of the effort earlier discussed to discover fundamental causes and remedies. A certain amount of unemployment was known always to exist; how much might be considered normal was as yet unknown. Before emergency relief measures were proposed, the size of the problem had to be gauged. The two studies by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company employed as sound research methods as were known at the time. Other studies were more experimental and their results less reliable; yet the diversity of sources consulted constituted in itself a contribution to statistical methods for measuring unemployment.

PARTICIPATION OF NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

For the first time in depression periods, national agencies not only stimulated exchange of experience but participated by initiating studies, formulating principles of emergency organization and publicity, and directing the development of local groups to study conditions and remedies. The American Association for Labor Legislation summarized data secured from 115 different communities on unemployment studies and particularly on measures directed toward prevention of the evil, such as social insurance, public works, and regularization of industry. Its Committee on Unem-

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ployment in Massachusetts functioned simultaneously with a committee appointed by the governor. The Association committee, under the secretaryship of Ordway Tead, carried on several ambitious projects and published pamphlets on labor exchanges and social insurance. A subcommittee on relief strove to stimulate local relief measures such as public works, loan funds, house-to-house canvasses for work, the development of groups of lawyers to help people out of legal difficulties, and of doctors to see that free medical resources were sufficient, and other temporary aids to the unemployed.¹

Various channels for the exchange of information between cities existed through the Charity Organization Department of the Russell Sage Foundation and the American Association of Societies for Organizing Charity, the national agency of the private family societies. Constant communication between these offices and local communities brought information on organization and policies followed by local agencies in adapting their means to the winter's emergency. As previously mentioned, 17 charity organization societies in cities of more than 100,000 population sent their general secretaries to an informal conference called early in October, 1914, by the Charity Organization Department under Miss Richmond's leadership. The questions discussed at this conference gave the representatives rich material upon which to base their own local relief programs.²

There was a clear determination at this conference to differentiate the efficient from the unemployable, the casual laborer from the man usually employed continuously, the transient or floating applicant from the resident, and to try to deal with each upon the plan least likely to prolong individual distress or the duration of the emergency period.³

In the spring of 1915 a conference of private agencies was held at the Russell Sage Foundation to discuss educational values to be aimed at in agency publicity and to think through a common program for meeting newspaper attacks upon private charity.

¹ Recommendations from the Committee on Relief of the Massachusetts Committee on Unemployment. For Consideration of the Local Committees throughout the State, February 26, 1915. In files of the Boston Provident Association.
² See p. 220.

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The Charity Organization Department maintained an emergency winter letter exchange with agencies in 12 large cities and periodically circularized smaller communities for information on such topics as workrooms, newspaper appeals, case loads, standards of work, money-raising, agency co-ordination, and attitudes and activities of board members. The American Association of Societies for Organizing Charity through correspondence with its agencies in 289 cities reported that not only had practically all the local societies weathered the storm, but many new organizations had been established. The increased confidence of the public in the work of the private agencies, maintenance of agency standards of work, and better organization of relief measures without recourse to expensive centralized work-relief projects were all indications of a more closely knit group of local societies benefiting by the help of agencies operating nationally.

STATE ORGANIZATION FOR RELIEF

Although Massachusetts had appointed a committee to study unemployment relief measures in 1893–1894, the depression of 1914–1915 was the first in which state governments functioned actively. The governor of Massachusetts appointed 45 members to a Committee to Promote Work, under the chairmanship of Henry S. Dennison. Their efforts were devoted to speeding up legitimate employment, public and private, through wide publicity, and to urging appropriations for public works in counties and municipalities. The state itself appropriated $200,000 in order to give work to additional men in state parks and forests. An employment clearing house was set up in Boston for work offered by householders, factories, and mercantile houses. The need for work opportunities was widely advertised through posters, newspapers, motion-picture theaters, and letters to employers, farmers, and other likely sources. The Committee did not itself organize any relief measures; it advised on various work-relief projects, urged the expansion of resources of local family welfare agencies, and condemned breadlines and soup kitchens.


2 Massachusetts Committee to Promote Work. Copy of the Original Report, May 14, 1915, on file in the Governor's Office, State House, Boston.
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In Colorado events prior to the depression had created a serious situation, particularly in the coal-mining counties. A protracted mine strike had only just ended in the fall of 1914, and the mild winter created little demand for coal. In February, 1915, union strike benefits were withdrawn. Several counties experimented with road building as a means of providing work for the unemployed, but funds were so limited that thousands of families were on the verge of starvation. In the latter part of March, 1915, the governor appointed a Committee on Unemployment Relief to deal with the extraordinary situation. No means existed for increasing funds for relief within the state. The Rockefellers were already involved through their interest in the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, so the Committee appealed to the Rockefeller Foundation for assistance and obtained $100,000 with which an extensive road-building program was carried on for three months, the state and counties paying for materials and supervision. Each man worked at least one or two days a week at the current wage rate of 25 cents an hour, wages being paid in orders for food or clothing drawn upon reputable merchants in the community.\(^1\) The Colorado Committee on Unemployment was, however, the only state committee which itself carried on relief projects in 1914–1915.

California had been worried for several years by the large group of migratory workers, who lingered in the state after summer work was over instead of seeking work elsewhere until the California season reopened. As preparation against such "unemployed armies," a conference of mayors who had gathered in San Francisco decided during the summer upon a plan of action including provision of work relief according to individual needs, and abandonment of the old method of passing the non-resident unemployed along from city to city.\(^2\) The governor of California later designated the existing State Commission of Immigration and Housing as the proper agency to study the unemployment problem. This Commission issued wide publicity to discourage the migratory population of eastern and central states from flocking to California, and put into operation a comprehensive plan for assisting various

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\(^1\) (Colorado) Committee on Unemployment and Relief, Report, 1916.

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groups of unemployed within the state. With no attempt to interfere with local autonomy, the Commission sought to secure acceptance of a uniform plan, elastic enough to be adapted to local conditions. Under this plan, concurred in by all communities except Los Angeles, work relief, public works, and work tests for the homeless were co-ordinated throughout the state. Public funds were not plentiful, and private agencies which were expected to carry resident families often had very limited resources. Preparations were begun too late to secure satisfactory results during 1914–1915, but the value of a state clearing bureau for information and advice, the necessity for preliminary planning against the next emergency, and the division of responsibility for the homeless between local communities and the state were noteworthy results of the efforts of California in 1914–1915.

These three instances of state emergency organization, while differing widely, indicate the drift which had set in toward larger units than the municipality, or even the county. Resources within smaller units were not sufficient to meet hard times, and intercommunity planning developed common policies and joint action for the solution of common problems. State appropriations for public works or work relief, state help in handling the non-resident unemployed, state-wide attack upon the whole problem, in the form of committees appointed by the governors, signified a trend in relief measures toward integration of effort over larger areas.

LOCAL AGENCIES FOR PLANNING AND CO-ORDINATION

The depression of 1914–1915 produced an abundant crop of local committees. A new development, and one symptomatic of the greater assumption of responsibility by municipalities for social welfare, was the appearance of numerous semi-official groups appointed by mayors, although many unofficial volunteer committees also functioned in meeting emergency needs. While the scope of the different committees varied, the general pattern followed that recommended by the second New York Mayor’s Committee on Unemployment. Its functions are described in How to Meet Hard Times, issued by the Committee in January, 1917.

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In limiting ourselves to matters within the domain of practical politics and constructive statesmanship on the governmental side and within the possibility of immediate achievement by co-operative voluntary social effort on the community side, we do not wish to be understood as in any sense overlooking or minimizing the necessity for defining and remedying the fundamental economic, social and political maladjustments which are responsible for the recurrence of periodic trade crises and for thus depriving hundreds of thousands of workers of the opportunity to earn their daily bread. Nor do we fail to appreciate the value and practical worth of reforms in personal and group conduct and attitudes and of desirable additions to the industrial machinery of our cities, states, and the nation, designed to promote the general welfare.

The Committee's discussion while confined within the limits of the immediately attainable, has included, (1) a theoretical consideration and analysis of the financial and industrial aspects of trade crises and of the preventive and meliorative measures which may be taken by consumers, employers and particularly by "high finance," "big business" and government to avert or mitigate the distressful effects of such crises; (2) a review and critical examination of the principles to be adopted in meeting the relief needs of these crises, in-so-far as, and to the extent that, relief may or must be given, and of the respective shares of responsibility for meeting such needs which should be assumed by the city and by voluntary relief societies supported by private contributions; (3) a discussion of methods of relieving distress and of providing emergency employment; (4) an analysis of the means by which the relief of distress and the provision of emergency employment may best be accomplished.

Permeating all recommendations made by co-ordinating or planning committees, were the general policies earlier mentioned which had been worked out in the informal conference of private agency executives under the auspices of the Charity Organization Department of the Russell Sage Foundation. For example, the final report of the St. Louis committee appointed by the mayor, "embodied practically all of the recommendations agreed upon at New York," namely, care of the homeless at municipal lodging-houses; avoidance of temporary emergency agencies; strengthening of existing agencies; staggering regular employment by appeal to employers; stimulation of odd jobs and acceleration of public works; while the Committee on Unemployment of Columbus, Ohio, an unofficial

1 Letter from C. M. Hubbard, St. Louis Provident Association, January 25, 1915. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.

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body formed by representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, Associated Charities, State Employment Bureau, and labor unions, considered the same recommendations carefully in developing their plans for work relief.

Other unofficial committees were those in Portland, Oregon, where the Citizens’ Employment Committee was active in providing care for the homeless, and in Philadelphia, where the Citizens’ Permanent Relief Committee, which had functioned in the two previous depressions, was called upon by a group of board members and social workers to raise money for the emergency as a joint enterprise, rather than to proceed with several independent campaigns which were under consideration. Only the exigencies of the situation brought the private agencies to concur in this step, since they were no less fearful of the results of widely advertised appeals for a central fund than of a resort to public relief. More than $40,000 was raised and distributed among agencies which could insure adequate investigation and expenditure of every dollar contributed to the actual relief of need.¹

From even a brief description of various unofficial planning committees great divergency of method and scope is evident. No single pattern prevailed, although they all seemed aware of certain fundamental principles of emergency relief, some part of which at least they tried to include in their local plans.

Mayors’ Committees

The most characteristic form taken by local committees in 1914–1915 was exemplified in the semi-official groups appointed by mayors. Functions differed in different communities, but generally speaking, the committees were fairly representative of employers, employes, social workers, and public officials. The trend emphasized in their work depended largely upon local needs and local leadership.

In Indianapolis a joint meeting between the Charity Organization Society and the Citizens’ Relief Committee composed of representative business men, resulted in the assumption of responsibility by the latter group for care of the homeless and for finding oppor-

¹ Committees mentioned are discussed in detail under subject headings on succeeding pages.
tunities of real employment where possible, while the private agency agreed to organize a work test, maintain a commissary and clothing store, and investigate applicants for relief.\(^1\)

A less amicable relationship developed between the private agencies and the Cleveland Citizens' Relief Commission appointed by Mayor Newton D. Baker. When the Commission had exhausted every means to put men to work through a "Hire-a-Hand" campaign and was unable to secure public funds, it attempted to raise $100,000 for work relief. The opposition of organized charity to the proposal was vehement; it was feared that the funds secured by high-pressure publicity methods would not offset the decrease in direct contributions and increase in applications to the private agencies which would be certain to result.\(^2\) The agencies contended that money would go farther if distributed as relief than if used as wages; to which a member of the Commission replied that he "would rather lose half the money in giving employment than to save half of it in giving bread. Keeping a man's manhood is by far better than having more dollars."\(^3\) The campaign succeeded in raising $86,000, and harmony was finally restored by giving preference on the work list to men recommended by the Associated Charities.\(^4\)

Some mayors' committees were apologetic over the necessity for asking for contributions, as in Louisville where an inflexible state law requiring popular approval of a bond issue at a regular election compelled the committee to raise by subscription funds for work relief. In Memphis no public outdoor relief existed; the Mayor's Citizens' Committee undertook to raise funds for the Associated Charities, the only relief agency of the community. This plan was considered preferable to opening an employment bureau, since no jobs were available, and it was feared that disappointed

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1 Letter from the (Indianapolis) Charity Organization Society, undated but listed under 1914–1915. In files of the Indiana State Library.


3 Cleveland Plain Dealer. Undated news item—Will Cite Figures to Raise Job Fund.

4 Letter from James F. Jackson, Cleveland Associated Charities, April 26, 1915. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation. Only one representative of social work was on the Commission, Allen T. Burns of the Cleveland Foundation, who served as secretary.
registrants for work would immediately demand relief, thus placing an additional burden on the Associated Charities to determine who were really in need. In addition to raising money, the Citizens’ Committee appointed subcommittees on rent, mortgage foreclosures, and recruiting volunteers for the Associated Charities. Of all these semi-official groups, however, those in Chicago and New York attempted the most ambitious programs.

Chicago: A Succession of Commissions. Chicago began to wage a battle against unemployment as early as January, 1912. Stagnation of business led the United Charities to ask the mayor to “authorize a commission to study and report on the whole subject of unemployment, and to make such recommendations as might suggest themselves for the amelioration of existing conditions.” The Commission on Unemployment, which was appointed, consisted of 22 persons, five of whom were members of the City Council. Among the remainder were a number of representative social workers. Professor Charles R. Henderson of the University of Chicago, president of the Board of the United Charities, was designated as secretary. Working through subcommittees on which sat experts in the various fields, investigation of the following seven subjects was undertaken: the nature and extent of unemployment, employment bureaus, immigration, vocational guidance, adjustment of employment, emergency relief, and repression of vagabondage. The Commission’s report, rendered in May, 1912, recommended legislation for the reorganization of state free employment bureaus, but no action was taken and only a few minor changes in procedure were made.

In November, 1913, when the winter’s unemployment problem again became urgent, the Commission was reconstituted and at once attacked the problems of emergency relief for homeless and unemployed people. The municipal lodging-house was enlarged and a trained man put in charge of its employment department. The Commission also tried an unsuccessful experiment in opening city grocery stores where food and fuel were sold at cost to persons “liable to become a public charge” unless such economy were made

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possible. All purchasers were investigated by the county relief agency.¹

In the fall of 1914 the City Council established another commission called the Municipal Markets Commission. Conclusions reached were practically the same as those of the earlier commission in regard to general plans to prevent unemployment, but emphasis upon a practical scheme for dealing with the immediate situation indicated the impact of recent experience. A proposal was made to raise and expend $500,000 for special work-relief projects. Objections to the plan came from trade unions and the local branch of the Socialist party on the ground that the responsibility for providing work should rest upon government rather than upon private givers; and from others who feared that labor in the street cleaning department, which was the only employment contemplated, would inevitably become the football of local party politics. The plan was finally abandoned in favor of strengthening established public and private agencies. Professor Henderson declared that “it was wasteful to build up still another charitable organization dependent upon the gifts of exactly the same people who were supporting the regular charities.”²

The Commission’s efforts were limited in the end to stimulating private employers to increase their payrolls by staggering work or undertaking projects that would soon be required in the ordinary course of business, and striving to dovetail seasonal occupations to provide for continuity of employment. In addition, great emphasis was placed upon blocking the creation of new private or public agencies for relief, breadlines, and soup kitchens, and upon preventing competitive projects among existing agencies in carrying out relief projects. The Commission believed firmly that indiscriminate relief would do more harm than good, and that advertisement of available relief would attract outsiders. In order to relieve the burdens of private agencies, the county outdoor relief department increased its food allowances to families, and private agencies took only applicants not eligible for public relief.

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In contrast to other planning groups, Chicago's Commission had been functioning for two years before the emergency winter of 1914–1915, and brought to its task, therefore, a background of knowledge and sound principles of unemployment relief. It undertook no relief activities of its own, but devoted its energies to guiding and developing the plans of other groups. It suggested general relief programs, worked out co-operative relationships between the public and private agencies concerned, and prevented the inception of undesirable activities. Beyond the relief field, it promoted modifications in industrial management to lessen the incidence of unemployment, and brought about improvements in the administration of the free employment bureau.

New York: The Mayor's Committees on Unemployment. Most comprehensive in its activities was the New York Mayor's Committee on Unemployment appointed in December, 1914. Ex-Judge Elbert H. Gary was chairman, and John R. Shillady, formerly secretary of the New York State Industrial Board, was executive secretary. Its 80 members included such prominent citizens as Robert W. de Forest, Cornelius N. Bliss, Frank A. Vanderlip, Mortimer L. Schiff, Thomas M. Mulry, Percy S. Straus, and Dr. Stephen S. Wise; labor was represented by Hugh Frayne, Rose Schneiderman, and Mrs. Florence Kelley, while the social workers included Lilian D. Wald, Edward T. Devine, and Homer Folks. It was hoped that the Committee might bring together the experience of the community on the way in which such an emergency should be handled and prevent hasty launching of emergency plans. In order to carry out the work effectively, seven subcommittees took up particular phases of the problem:

1. Facts regarding existing conditions of unemployment
2. Immediate private and public employment opportunities
3. Co-operation of business and industry to promote employment
4. National, state, and municipal policies
5. Relief needs and measures
6. Unemployment among women

A short report appeared several months after the Committee's organization, but the final report, issued in January, 1916, recorded

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New York's experience during the depression as suggestive of ways in which recurrent unemployment might be met. Previous studies of the extent of unemployment carried on in New York have already been discussed; as a result, the Report of the Mayor's Committee stated "more progress has been made in securing the facts regarding the amount and incidence of unemployment in New York City than in any other city in the country." In addition, three special investigations by students of the New York School of Philanthropy under the direction of Mary van Kleeck, covered (1) a study of unemployment in the families of children applying for work certificates from January to April, 1915; (2) a study of 300 girls who attended the scholarship classes during the winter of 1915; (3) a study of records kept in public employment bureaus throughout the country.

The Committee conducted 13 workrooms for men and four for women in addition to five where clothing was renovated. Seven special scholarship classes were established for girls to give training and work-relief wages to stenographers, bookkeepers, clerical workers, needle workers, and those wishing to enter domestic service. A subcommittee conducted a "Bundle Day."

In the field of care for the homeless, the Committee furnished the Municipal Lodging-House with an experienced employment clerk for four months beginning March, 1915. Supplementing the efforts of the municipal government, the Mayor's Committee also provided a building for the "Hotel de Gink," a self-governed lodging-house where the men purchased their own food from money secured from odd jobs.

In the attempt to stimulate regular work, employers were urged through their trade associations to distribute available work among the largest number of individuals possible by using weekly shifts. This share-the-work plan was believed to have given work to 2,400 men in the building trades within a month, and the brewing and printing crafts also adopted a rotation-of-work program. The Police Department was backed in a quiet but effective search for jobs, 90 per cent of the 2,800 positions filled being reported to be permanent. A federation of noncommercial employment bureaus was organized to correlate placement work and prevent duplication and overlapping.

The Committee also presented a proposed program for immediate
steps in preventing unemployment, which covered public employment exchanges and classification of the unemployed, public works, regularization of private industry, plans for vocational training, and unemployment insurance. On the side of relief measures, a permanent federation of public and private relief agencies was suggested to make possible proper and prompt functioning in unemployment crises. The part each agency would assume in an emergency would be determined ahead of time and the machinery prepared for action.

The Committee raised $185,246 through private contributions. Of this amount, $167,929 was expended on the relief projects described above and $8,021 for administrative, investigational, and educational purposes, leaving a balance of $9,296 at the close of 1915. In its report, a reorganized committee was suggested "to deal constructively with the problem of unemployment and prepare against a recurrence of unemployment crises." The suggestion was followed and a second Mayor's Committee on Unemployment appointed with William D. Baldwin as chairman and John R. Shillady as secretary. Bruno Lasker served as assistant secretary and the membership included Henry Bruère, Herbert Croly, Edward T. Devine, Hugh Frayne, Frederic C. Howe, Anne Morgan, Mortimer L. Schiff, Mary van Kleeck, and Lillian D. Wald.

The new Committee presented its report entitled How to Meet Hard Times, in January, 1917. This was, in effect, an analysis of unemployment as a community problem with suggestions as to government and community facilities needed for meeting an emergency. Prevention of unemployment depended fundamentally upon certain industrial adjustments including manipulation of prices, production and working conditions, as well as increased expenditures through public works as compensation for reduced private employment during depressions. As a basis for relief measures, classification of the unemployed was advised so that individual needs might be more adequately met. Trade unions and credit associations were included as self-help agencies, and work relief, maintenance during training, and direct relief listed as desirable forms of assistance. The Committee believed that the 1914-1915 mayors' committees throughout the country were evidence of ultimate municipal responsibility for emergency relief. Other agencies might share the responsibility by having certain tasks delegated to
them, but the city should furnish the co-ordinating center of emergency activity. To this end the Department of Public Charities in New York was urged to add to its task of managing institutions the investigation of “conditions of unemployment and other conditions creating a demand for public relief and to develop measures for their prevention and . . . render aid in the procurement of employment for the unemployed.”

Centralized relief administration was disapproved as likely to block effective and economical private and local relief efforts and stimulate unnecessary applications; but centralized planning was recommended to co-ordinate and standardize the efforts of agencies, and to direct needy persons to available sources of assistance. The Committee declared that “One of the needs most clearly shown during the crisis of 1914–1915 was that of reassuring the public by authoritative statements that these societies, including trade unions, mutual benefit associations, credit institutions, and the like, were fully competent as well as willing to handle all the needed relief work, provided they were financially enabled to do so.”

New York was too large to permit any one group to keep in touch with everything that was being done during the hard times, so that the co-ordinating function of the Mayor’s Committee on Unemployment was only partly carried out. Some critics felt that the remedies suggested dealt with superficial rather than with fundamental changes in industrial organization, which was in part true, since modification rather than thoroughgoing change of the existing social order was the purpose aimed at in the recommendations. Distrust of public action and preference for private charity were motives clearly apparent in the report.

The Mayor’s Committee, like most bodies of its kind, failed, however, to consolidate its gains, and relaxed its efforts as soon as the crisis was past, leaving the community as unprepared “to meet the next crisis, as it was to meet the last one,” except for the fact that a set of principles and policies had been formulated.

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1 How to Meet Hard Times: A Program for the Prevention and Relief of Abnormal Unemployment, p. 53.
2 Ibid., p. 55.
3 Seager, Henry R., “Unemployment: Problem and Remedies.” In the Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction, 1915, p. 493. As a member of the first Mayor’s Committee on Unemployment, Professor Seager of Columbia University was in a position to know its work intimately.
CHAPTER X
1914–1915: RELIEF THROUGH ESTABLISHED CHANNELS

PUBLIC RELIEF

Public departments had grown in number since the last depression and in consequence public confidence in their achievement had increased to a certain extent. In Cleveland and Detroit, it is true, criticism of prevailing standards in the public departments was directed toward inadequate, poorly equipped staffs, niggardly relief, and lack of clearly defined function in relation to private agencies.¹ The Overseers of the Poor in Boston, however, made drastic adjustments; personnel was increased, two district offices were added, and relief given amounted to $254,000 more than in 1913.²

DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITY BETWEEN EMERGENCY PUBLIC AGENCIES AND PRIVATE SOCIETIES

Organized private agencies in several cities succeeded in preventing special measures for the unemployed through public appropriation. In Baltimore the possibility of a municipal relief fund led social workers to recommend to the mayor increased appropriations for street cleaning and street improvements instead of a widely advertised public relief appropriation.³ In Pittsburgh the mayor tried to appropriate a relief fund to be administered through the police, and failing that, attempted to re-establish outdoor relief administered through the Department of Charities. His plans were

¹ Arguments for Relief Plan of the Survey Committee of the Cleveland Foundation. For use of Appropriation Committee of City Council, December 15, 1914. In files of Cleveland Associated Charities.


³ Letter from J. W. Magruder, Federated Charities, Baltimore, December 18, 1914. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.
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thwarted by the Associated Charities, which had only a year before presented evidence to the City Council leading to the abolishment of outdoor relief. The mayor finally resorted to a house-to-house canvass of certain areas, which stirred up a tremendous volume of artificial applications to social agencies, investigation of which revealed little actual need and furnished ample evidence that the mayor’s proposals were creating rather than solving problems.

New York resorted to a police fund limited in amount, and used only for emergency relief pending transfer of each family in real need to an established social agency. Tickets redeemable at neighborhood grocery and clothing stores were given. Police efforts included also the collection and distribution of garments for a "Bundle Day," under the auspices of the Mayor’s Committee and the previously mentioned attempt1 to find employment for men in their own neighborhoods through the resources with which the police officers were presumably familiar. They worked closely with social agencies in caring for 791 families, registering their applications at the Social Service Exchange and referring families immediately to some social agency for "scientific investigation" and "a permanent relationship" that would meet their needs. The police continued to handle cases only when "private agencies refused to grant assistance, because of previous bad record, or for other reasons, but where the family nevertheless seemed in real need."2

Public Appropriation to Private Agencies

For the most part the extra relief load was carried by established agencies, public and private, with general acceptance of the principle that certain specific tasks, such as care for the homeless, public works, or work relief were the proper responsibility of the municipality. Philadelphia, however, was the scene of a bitter struggle over emergency public appropriations to private agencies. Only the year before, family agencies had opposed legislation for mothers’ assistance, taking the traditional stand of such agencies against public relief. Accounts of suffering in the war-stricken countries in Europe had aroused excitement, strong sentiment, and great

1 See pp. 242, 261.

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activity. After two shiploads of supplies had been dispatched from Philadelphia to Belgium, the Emergency Aid Committee of Philadelphia, which had been organized for the relief of civilian populations in devastated districts abroad, decided to organize a "Home Relief Department" for those locally unemployed. Backed by influential people of means, this group demanded that City Councils recognize the local emergency by appropriating public funds. The politicians hastened to respond to such formidable pressure and made two appropriations of $50,000 each, to be expended by private agencies. Mayor Blankenburg opposed the first measure but finally signed it, declaring that the principle was unsound since it would multiply applications and decrease sources of private charity; moreover it would be difficult to administer since it imposed an intolerable burden upon agencies accepting the funds. He felt it necessary, however, to consider the general political situation in Philadelphia; and since so many citizens held a different point of view, he believed that $50,000 was not too great a price to pay for a practical demonstration. When the second appropriations bill was passed, the mayor allowed it to become effective by the device of neither signing nor vetoing it.\(^1\)

Having failed to prevent appropriation of public money, the Society for Organizing Charity and other leading family welfare and relief agencies declined to take part in its administration on the ground that the situation demanded no public intervention, thus practically forcing the Emergency Aid Committee itself to take over extensive relief work. Even within the boards of agencies which refused to participate, sharp disagreement on the issue prevailed, and the doctrinaire attitude taken against public relief and emergency measures damaged the standing of the family agencies with certain influential groups in the community for many years thereafter.

ESTABLISHED PRIVATE AGENCIES

RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNITY CO-OPERATION

Since private agencies at this period generally bore the brunt of the emergency by caring for families in need because of unemploy-

ment, their experiences in 1914–1915 form an important chapter in the history of relief measures. Family agencies not only struggled to increase their resources but to retain their carefully developed concepts of case-work service based upon individual needs. They assumed active leadership against mass relief measures such as breadlines and centralized work-relief plans, and participated in varying degrees in studies of fundamental factors in unemployment. In the midst of the depression, as has already been mentioned, they withstood a widespread newspaper attack against private charity, with allegations of over-large expenditures for administration and alignment with the established capitalistic system. In combination with settlements and other social agencies, their efforts in the emergency were directed toward co-ordinated community activity, and this step was undoubtedly, though somewhat paradoxically, the forerunner of the later development of community chests and councils.

Miss Mary E. Richmond enunciated the basic principles of the group after the early fall meeting of family agency executives at the Russell Sage Foundation, previously described. Joint conferences among all agencies dealing with the unemployed were to determine a plan of action. Existing agencies, since they disapproved of new relief machinery, would be forced to expand their own resources to cover the field. Registration at social service exchanges was urged to prevent duplication of work. The Charity Organization Bulletin for November, 1914, entitled Special Number on the Coming Winter, contains the following paragraph on the subject.

What they [charity organization societies] say to their colleagues in the private conferences of social workers that are held, what they say to the public through the newspapers, what they say to prospective contributors in their appeals, what they say to the churches in their addresses to congregations and their letters to the clergy, what they say to public officials and to their own volunteers about the fair distribution of the burden and its individual handling will have a great deal to do with the quality of the co-operation developed through these trying months. . . . It must be evident that it [the agency] intends to enlarge its resources, to enlarge its staff, to redouble its efforts and strain every nerve to meet the situation. But it should be equally evident to the society and should
be made so to others that it cannot do all this alone, that it does not wish
to, that it has not opposed other forms of centralized effort for any such
self-seeking reason.

**INCREASE IN CASE LOADS AND EXPENDITURES**

No uniform statistics of the work of charity organization societ¬
ties throughout the country were available. Replies to letters
from the Charity Organization Department of the Russell Sage
Foundation brought case load and relief statistics from many agen¬
cies, but no reliable comparison of figures between these agencies
could be made, since statistics were differently compiled in different
societies. Comparison of gains or losses from year to year within
one agency had significance, however, provided record forms and
scope of organization had not changed. Some societies still empha¬
sized functions of investigation and service, and for relief utilized
other resources almost entirely, so that relief statistics often offered
no picture of the amount of assistance given. In other communities
applications were artificially stimulated during certain months by
local conditions which threw unemployment out of focus as a factor.
For example, in Pittsburgh the activity of police in their survey to
determine the extent of need and the extensive publicity in con¬
nection with Bundle Day were reflected in markedly increased and
disproportionate intake in the Associated Charities. Certain
agency figures reflected the burden of unemployment not only in
the local community, but in surrounding territory, as in Memphis,
when dispossessed Negro tenant farmers from rural districts flocked
to the city. Charity organization societies were developing strength,
so that their work normally increased. How much of the develop¬
ment during times of depression was due to this natural growth,
and how much was an accelerated increase due to unemployment,
cannot be determined.

Hard times for the private agencies and their clients had con¬
siderably antedated the outbreak of the war in Europe. Even in
the early months of 1914 the United Hebrew Charities of New York
had found that “the financial and commercial depression which has
prevailed for the last few years, began to show its effect; unemploy¬
ment and irregular employment had begun to exhaust the resources
of the working people, and community aid had to be sought.” In
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1912–1913, 2,466 families applied to the society for the first time, while in 1913–1914 an increase of 33 per cent brought new applications to 3,294, those applying because of unemployment increasing by 100 per cent. There had been no increase in applications to this agency since the depression of 1907–1908, and the increased relief expenditures beginning in 1913 resulted in a deficit of $30,000.\(^1\) In Cleveland the Associated Charities reported for May, 1914, a 50 per cent increase over the corresponding month of 1913 in families whose need was chiefly due to unemployment. The Wayfarers' Lodge gave 25,000 nights' lodgings from October, 1913, to May, 1914, in comparison with 16,000 during the same months of the preceding year.\(^2\)

In New York the experience of the relief agencies during the fiscal year October, 1912, to September, 1913, was considered normal. From that period on, however, the four largest relief societies in the city showed the following quarterly increases:\(^3\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quarter ending</th>
<th>Fiscal year ending September 30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 31</td>
<td>7,670(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 31</td>
<td>9,465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30</td>
<td>8,187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 30</td>
<td>7,448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entire year</td>
<td>8,192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)Figure for the three largest agencies only.

Summing up the data, increases in case load began before the financial crash in the fall of 1914 and were less marked after the spring of 1915. The average number of families under care increased by 23 per cent during the first year following the crisis, and by 57 per cent during the second year. A tentative comparison

\(^1\) (New York) United Hebrew Charities, Fortieth Annual Report, October, 1914, p. 15.

\(^2\) Cleveland Associated Charities, Superintendent's Report to the Executive Committee, June, 1914.

\(^3\) The four agencies were the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, Charity Organization Society, United Hebrew Charities, Brooklyn Bureau of Charities. Report of the Mayor's Committee on Unemployment, January, 1916, pp. 24-25.

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showed that expenditures for relief by the same four New York agencies increased 14 per cent in 1913-1914, and 70 per cent in 1914-1915 over 1912-1913.

The United Charities of Chicago gave assistance to 22,105 families in the year ending September 30, 1915, as compared with 12,790 during the fiscal year ending in 1911. In Philadelphia the Society for Organizing Charity, although the unemployment load was shared by a large emergency agency as well as by numerous other relief agencies, nevertheless showed marked increase in growth, from 8,257 families on relief rolls in 1911 to 10,488 in 1915. Other agencies showed similar increased case loads, with the high-water mark in February or March of 1915.

Efforts to raise additional funds were complicated by the numerous appeals which were attracting large contributions for war relief. Most of the private agencies avoided general solicitation, and sought to widen their lists of private donors through carefully worded letters and pamphlets. Board members of the St. Louis Provident Association approached churches and different trades and industries and raised $85,958. The Boston Associated Charities had no general relief fund, but continued to follow its traditional policy of raising money for each individual family according to the need. Its volunteer financial secretaries by vigorous efforts raised much larger sums than ever before, not only for relief, but to meet the rising administrative costs of the agency. Some cities adopted the plan earlier originated in December, 1912, by the New York Times of issuing a combined appeal in the columns of some newspaper for the “hundred neediest cases” in the city. In such appeals, emphasis was always placed on the long-time needs of specified families whose stories were published in disguised form. The United Charities of Chicago raised unusually large sums of money, one device being a voluntary “war tax” on luxuries such as candy, theaters, and clothing, levied by contributors upon themselves and turned

3 Letter from C. M. Hubbard, St. Louis Provident Association, April 19, 1915. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.
4 Letter from Fred R. Johnson, Associated Charities of Boston, April 22, 1915. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.

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over to the agency.\textsuperscript{1} While the Buffalo Charity Organization Society used newspaper appeals, it was careful to advertise its poverty rather than the money it secured so that applications actually decreased because no stimulus was offered newcomers.

**Standards of Work**

Standards of work in private agencies naturally suffered from emergency pressure. Although the shift was made “from preventive and constructive effort to remedial and palliative aid,”\textsuperscript{2} certain irreducible minima were nevertheless retained. Every applicant was expected to receive a home visit within twenty-four hours, which necessitated enlarged staffs. Adaptability in form and amount of relief to meet individual needs was felt to be dependent upon a knowledge of background which took the time of skilled workers to secure. Expenditures for service were defended as fundamental to sound distribution of relief.

Conscientious investigation of the needs and resources of the individual family, intelligent advice by experienced (and, therefore, reasonably remunerated) professional social workers and those working under their direction, establishment of contacts with other social agencies, searching out relatives able to help, assistance in securing employment, and quite a number of other possible forms of non-material aid are just as important as the dollars and cents handed out. Indeed, without a thorough appreciation of all the circumstances and without the additional services which capable workers can render to the family in need, the money part of the aid given often is wasted or wrongly used.\textsuperscript{3}

Even with these additions, staffs worked overtime and neglected clerical work piled up, the struggle to visit promptly taking precedence over office routine. Increased use of the social service exchange was found to be an economy in the long run. Louisville added 19 agencies to the list of those registering in the Social Service Exchange,\textsuperscript{4} and Detroit built up its exchange service to include

\textsuperscript{1} “Self-Imposed ‘War Tax’ for Charity.” In the Survey, vol. 33, October 10, 1914, p. 42.

\textsuperscript{2} Glenn, Mary Willcox, “A Prelude to Peace.” In the Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction, 1915, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{3} How to Meet Hard Times: A Program for the Prevention and Relief of Abnormal Unemployment. Mayor’s Committee on Unemployment, New York, January, 1917, p. 105.

\textsuperscript{4} Letter from Harriet E. Anderson, Associated Charities, Louisville, January 9, 1915. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.
35 relief agencies, the more recent and important converts to this co-ordinated effort being won during the increased work of the depression.¹ In Buffalo, visitors were authorized to give relief, even pensions, without sanction of the district committee, and in general to expedite their work by cutting "red tape."² Adequate relief was considered a necessary accompaniment to individualized service. Giving insufficient relief as an encouragement to the client to help himself was held to be a false economy, and to derive from the old practice of handing out charity without regard to the real needs of an individual family.

Private agencies had relinquished for the moment, but never abandoned, their standards of work in order to meet pressing needs. Certain minimum services they retained, namely, prompt and adequate investigation upon which an individualized plan of treatment could be based, recognition of the need for case-work service even where such service was beyond their capacity, and emphasis upon relief methods as adapted to the individual rather than based on a rigid uniform system of distribution. When the strain of the heaviest months relaxed, case loads, although lower, were found to include many persons with increasingly serious problems as a result of their experiences during the depression.

Not only did the aftermath of the depression thus leave the established agencies with many difficult family problems demanding intensive service, but emergency groups suddenly dropped out of the field, thrusting their remaining burdens upon the agencies which continued to operate. As in previous depressions, these residuary legatees of the community's social obligations turned when the stress was over to the long and arduous process of salvaging and rebuilding lives which had been mangled during the economic crisis. With little popular support—for people were tired of hearing about hard times—the agencies undertook again their routine and inconspicuous service to the community and to the survivors of the depression.

² Letter from Frederic Almy, Charity Organization Society of Buffalo, April 16, 1915. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.
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Personnel

To achieve even minimum emergency standards extra workers were employed, although the "task of assimilating strange material or of educating the raw" new members often presented additional problems to the agency. The St. Louis Provident Association noted the difficulty of increasing a staff from 25 to 102 through the addition of comparatively inexperienced people, but observed that the new workers secured from among the graduates of the local School of Social Economy, although having limited practical experience, were well trained in theory. The Cleveland Associated Charities organized a training class in the spring of 1914, in addition to its regular fall classes, to prepare for the demands of the next winter which were expected to be heavy. In Pittsburgh, when trained experienced persons were not available to augment the staff, the Associated Charities turned to its more experienced volunteers for investigation and case treatment. Workers with training were in great demand, many of them having been drafted into war work at home and overseas.

In presenting the need for increased staffs to board members, social workers stressed the necessity for maintaining reasonable standards of case work. In Philadelphia, where 17 additional case workers and six stenographers were increasing administrative costs monthly by $1,000, the Committee on District Work agreed that retrenchment would only result in such low standards of work that the agency's appeal for funds would be jeopardized. The United Hebrew Charities of New York had received editorial commendation for its low administrative costs, but its director hastened to reply that too low costs of administration were as reprehensible as those too high, and explained the necessity of an increased staff on the following basis:

The interests of the poor require that they be ministered to by tactful, intelligent, and well-trained workers rather than by [those] poorly paid,

1 Cleveland Associated Charities, Superintendent's Report to the Executive Committee, February, 1915.
2 Data on individual cities have been secured from letters in files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.
3 Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity, Committee on District Work, Minutes, March 12 and April 16, 1915.
over-worked, and unequipped, for the personal service to be rendered is of as great value and importance as the monetary relief with which it frequently must be supplemented.\(^1\)

In Chicago the board of the United Charities, thoroughly convinced of the need for an addition to its staff, raised a special fund within three weeks to cover salaries of 16 new workers for five months.\(^2\) Increases in staff varied from city to city, but almost all private agencies added new, if untrained, paid personnel.

Volunteers were used in all capacities by private agencies during the depression. War needs had stirred in great numbers a desire to give service, and the charity organization societies offered many of these persons preliminary training and experience. With the development of social work on a professional basis had come something of a reaction against the earlier use of volunteers as "friendly visitors." These new candidates, willing to undergo discipline and take real training, presented a challenge and an opportunity to the professional workers, some of whom developed what was almost a genius for training and directing volunteers, while others cried out for help without knowing how to use it when offered. Regular hours of work were expected from volunteers-in-training; they were classified and assigned work according to their particular capacities. Experienced volunteers were permitted to interview applicants, investigate, and make home visits; others answered telephones, kept up files, and assisted with general office work. Some stayed with the agency that trained them; others went into Red Cross Home Service and other war activities, but many of the latter eventually returned and strengthened the volunteer staffs of the private agencies.

Under the stimulus of the unusual need volunteers in the Federated Charities of Baltimore made 5,630 visits in the four winter months of 1914-1915 in comparison with 3,100 visits during the corresponding months the previous year.\(^3\) In Boston 621 volunteers served as friendly visitors to over 900 families, while 250 others

\(^1\) Forty-first Annual Report, October, 1915, p. 10.

\(^2\) Letter from Eugene T. Lies, United Charities of Chicago, December 18, 1914. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.

\(^3\) Letter from J. W. Magruder, Federated Charities, Baltimore, March 11, 1915. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.
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helped the Associated Charities in other ways. The New York Charity Organization Society added 271 recruits to its volunteer staff, bringing the total to 624, the largest number in any one year of the agency's history. Whenever volunteers were given responsibility they met it satisfactorily. In fact, their response in the emergency revealed to social workers their latent possibilities. Both volunteer and professional staffs developed a morale indicative of closer loyalty to their agencies than before such great tasks had been put upon them.

In Memphis office workers, retained by their firms but with insufficient work to occupy them, were lent to the Associated Charities on part time, their employers continuing to pay their salaries. Volunteers from the Graduate Nurses' Association gave their time when off duty, and took the places of nurses whom the agency had laid off because of more pressing demands upon its funds.

TRADE UNION UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF

No complete record exists of assistance to the unemployed available through labor unions. Regular unemployment benefits from insurance premiums previously paid into the treasury by union members took the place of relief in some unions; in others, emergency relief funds were secured by means of levies upon employed members; while in still others, members holding jobs would sacrifice an occasional day's work in order to give their unemployed colleagues a chance to work. In one typographical union in New York, for example, each man after three weeks' employment gave his place to one of his unemployed brother unionists, thus spreading available employment over the whole membership. Certain unions assisted only to the extent of carrying their members without payment of dues.

Letter from J. P. Kranz, Associated Charities, Memphis, Tennessee, December 12, 1914. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.

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Local, national, and international unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor reported a rise in unemployment benefits during 1915 and 1916. While the trend was significant, the accuracy of these figures was questionable.

In New York City local units reporting the payment of unemployment insurance benefits included the international unions of cigar makers, of carpenters and joiners, one local brewers' union, and two typographical unions. Benefits ranged from $3.00 a week to $1.00 a day, the latter in one of the typographical unions, and the benefit period extended from twelve to a possible twenty-four weeks in succession. Benefits sometimes went only to members who had previously paid additional dues, as in the carpenters' and joiners' union, while other restrictions greatly reduced the number of members eligible for unemployment benefits. In one New York typographical union the emergency situation resulted in the establishment of a regular benefit system, because heavy assessments of 5 per cent on wages over $10 a week and haphazard relief payments were "unsatisfactory to the membership at large and humiliating to the recipients."

In Boston the Cigarmakers' Union combined an out-of-work benefit on an insurance basis amounting to $3.00 weekly with an additional $3.00 secured by levying $12.50 per capita upon working members. Through these means a total of $27,600 was made available for unemployed members. The Boston Central Labor Union collected a fund for the relief of union and non-union men whose needs were investigated by a special committee. Although no record of the extent of the work exists, the Chicago Federation of Labor took care of all unemployed union men referred by the United Charities during the depression.

Undoubtedly trade unions extended much assistance to their members in 1914-1915. The emergency measures suggested a better organization on the part of union labor toward meeting the

3 Letter from E. N. Nockels, Secretary, Chicago Federation of Labor, to the Conference on Unemployment, August 24, 1921. In files of the Chicago Council of Social Agencies.
problem of unemployment than earlier and indicated the strength and facilities within trade unions to render assistance along these lines.

EMERGENCY MEASURES

In addition to unemployment at home, suffering in Europe resulting from the World War aroused the country to an awareness of conditions and a desire to help. Under the circumstances, surprisingly few soup kitchens, breadlines, collections of food and clothing, or other emergency measures were organized for relief at home. Established agencies, confident of their capacity to cope with the problem, emphasized a united attack upon community needs. In their outspoken condemnation of shortsighted enterprises for the relief of the unemployed they prevented in many cities a mushroom growth of unwise emergency projects. Where prevention was impossible, flexibility and readiness to compromise on the part of established agencies often resulted in modification of the least desirable features of the plans.

BREADLINES AND SOUP KITCHENS

When newspapers printed stories of starving people, food seemed the obvious answer. The resulting distributing centers attracted, as always, huge crowds who preferred standing in line to working for relief; breadline methods were demoralizing since they overlooked real needs and often blocked acceptable plans for the unemployed. In addition, their primary purpose of feeding the unemployed was seldom accomplished because the quality of food was rarely nourishing or such as to insure a proper diet.

Supplementing the community’s inadequate provisions for the homeless, a free soup kitchen in St. Louis was felt to be justified. The Municipal Lodging-House had been slow in opening, and established private agencies in the city frankly declared their resources insufficient. Even after the Lodging-House provided shelter and breakfast the soup kitchen was continued, the private citizen who financed it pointing out the obvious fact that the men needed an evening meal as well.1 Detroit lacked channels to co-ordinate

1 Letter from C. M. Hubbard, St. Louis Provident Association, January 25, 1915. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.
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and clarify efforts for unemployment relief. Under the circumstances, organization of a soup kitchen under the auspices of the Public Welfare Bureau was understandable. Workers were recruited from the police department, rent and equipment were secured free, and food was furnished by a club of citizens at an approximate cost of $2,500. Unemployed wage-earners rather than vagrants applied, and the men gave evidence of real hunger, but the establishment offered no means of testing the applicants’ willingness to work, and its efforts were not correlated with those of any other agency so that opportunity for rehabilitation was lacking.

In most cities where such establishments were conducted it was without consideration of community need. When the Cleveland News’ breadline ceased functioning after six weeks, its closing had no effect upon the work of other agencies in the city except a slight increase in those seeking to work for their breakfasts at the Wayfarers’ Lodge. In New York a permanent breadline at Fleischman’s Restaurant was supplemented by four others organized as emergency efforts. Approximately 4,000 were fed daily in this way, but the discontinuance of any one breadline apparently had no effect upon the number of applicants appearing at any other.

In Boston a soup kitchen was opened at Ford Hall by several radical groups, with food contributed by restaurants and hotels. Notwithstanding the vigorous protest of social agencies against opening this food station, a worker from the Homeless Men’s Department was assigned to assist, and to discover what real needs, if any, the undertaking was meeting. Out of approximately 1,000 men applying, 75 were selected and referred to a social agency as being hopeful for further study; but 20 of this group failed to appear. Of the remaining number, 16 were found to be vagrants, 14 had had previous unfavorable contact with the Department of Homeless Men, 29 were alcoholics, 3 had criminal records, and 7 were obviously mentally deficient. Naturally some of these classifications overlapped. The social worker’s efforts resulted in finding lodgings for 25 other than in the Wayfarers’ Lodge, work for 15,

transportation to employment or their own homes for 7, clothing for 4, and medical care for 5; 3 were turned over to the police and 6 continued under supervision.

This study was believed to reveal that, for the most part, the men were not workers who had been caught by the depression. Furthermore, it was learned that many of them had been attracted to Boston because they had heard that maintenance could be had there without work. Their gathering presented "a menace to health and morals," as many were unclean and a considerable number infested with vermin or known to have an infectious disease. One man was discovered to be selecting young boys from the line for homosexual practices. Those in charge soon became convinced that a bowl of soup would not rehabilitate a person; so they opened an employment bureau which succeeded in placing 150 men through newspaper advertisements, and organized a Big Brother Movement to enlist 500 citizens, each to take one man and re-establish him in the community. No report could be secured as to the effectiveness of this scheme.¹

The only method of food distribution which met with general approval was furnishing meals to those on work relief, to supplement wages purposely kept low in order not to attract workers from regular employment. In New York the president of the Board of Aldermen induced 54 leading hotels and restaurants to provide soup served as a noon meal in 12 workrooms. Heads of families were given a sufficient supply to provide a meal for those at home.²

Newspaper Funds

In some communities, newspapers raised money for established agencies; in others, the newspapers themselves conducted special emergency projects. In the latter category the New York Evening Mail raised a fund for the relief of families on the verge of eviction. News stories of individual families were printed, a procedure which may have caused landlords to increase the number of evictions in the hope of securing rent payments. The newspaper maintained cordial and co-operative relations, however, with the family agen-

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cies. In Portland the Oregon Journal collected $3,500 and thousands of bundles of clothes with which it set up a "bureau of relief," supplying as many as 550 families weekly. The salaries and administrative costs of the enterprise were met by one individual.  

The Baltimore Sun, on the other hand, undertook to raise a Community Relief Fund for the three largest relief societies in the city. The agencies tried to dissuade the promoters, but finally accepted the receipts of $51,000 rather than to have the money allotted in some other way which might involve unwise methods of expenditure.

Bundle Days

Collection of second-hand articles for the poor was a method long known in emergency relief, but the term "Bundle Day" was coined in the 1914–1915 depression. Originating with the idea of securing supplies to send to war sufferers, the plan was easily adapted for domestic consumption. Packages of worn clothing or food were collected or deposited at designated centers, usually police stations, fire houses, and schools. Wide emotional publicity, generally opposed by established social agencies, accompanied the preparations, and the mayor or a mayor's committee designated a particular day for the collection. Everyone was given an opportunity to make an offering, no matter how small. Merchants contributed trucks and quarters for sorting; Boy Scouts, police, and firemen gathered the donations and municipal departments of health often did the fumigation. Perhaps the only constructive feature of these enterprises was that sorting and repairing the clothing furnished work to the unemployed for varying periods of time. Too often Bundle Days were carried out without relation to other efforts for dealing with family needs, and even where distribution through established agencies was undertaken, publicity and the possession


3 Letters from J. W. Magruder, Federated Charities, Baltimore, December 18, 1914, and April 12, 1915, in files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation. Of the total amount, $15,000 was raised through a "Self-Denial Day."

4 See p. 246.
of unprecedented supplies of clothing deluged the agencies with applications for bundles from people who would not ordinarily have applied.

In a letter written on December 14, 1914, J. Byron Deacon of the Associated Charities of Pittsburgh expressed a rather general opinion: "Bundle Day proved what some of us predicted, a hideous colossal example of the worse than futility—the cruelty of mass treatment of dependency." The earliest Bundle Day was held in Pittsburgh in December, 1914, the original plan being to collect for the joint needs of European sufferers and the unemployed at home; but practically all the 20 carloads of clothing secured were distributed locally by six agencies. In addition to the Bundle Day plans mentioned specifically, Chicago and Newark (New Jersey) also held them. Undoubtedly there were others of which no reports have been found.

A modification of the general scheme was followed in Memphis where Bundle Day was held at a special time each month and publicity was avoided by making appeals for clothing over the telephone and through the schools. In Detroit the City Poor Department stocked a clothing store with the results of collections. Cincinnati’s 300,000 bundles when sorted were also put into a Municipal Department Store which was open certain days to those who could purchase articles, and reserved on other days for persons referred for free gifts by various relief organizations. In Boston clergymen and other citizens were included among those who gave out the necessary tickets entitling the holder to a bundle of clothing.

The most extensive and efficiently organized of these occasions was undertaken in New York under the auspices of the Mayor’s

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2 Kruesi, Walter E., Report upon Unemployment in the Winter of 1914-1915 in Detroit and the Institutions and Measures of Relief, p. 16.


4 (Boston) Associated Charities, Minutes of the Committee on Unemployment, March 5, 1915.
Committee on Unemployment. Prominent women under the leadership of Frances A. Kellor worked for six weeks organizing and distributing supplies. Expenditures totaled $15,526, although the amount of volunteer service secured was very great. The John Wanamaker store assumed responsibility for publicity and delivery, the former comprising free advertising space in newspapers, slides in 600 motion-picture theaters, and wide distribution of the tags that were to be placed on the bundles. The collection centers were located in 240 public schools, 99 parochial schools, 89 police stations, numerous department stores, and seven railroad terminals. Clothing was sorted and repaired in emergency workrooms employing about 500 people at $1.00 a day.

Several different methods of distribution were employed. More than a hundred organizations, including schools, churches, hospitals, and settlements, requisitioned some 200,000 articles of clothing, which they in turn gave out to persons for whose need they were willing to vouch. This was, of course, a comparatively satisfactory way of handling the garments. But the Bundle Day Committee also undertook to honor requests from individuals, the only guarantee of need being an endorsement from some person or agency claiming to know the applicant's circumstances. The distribution was on such a large scale that this supposed safeguard had very little value. These "mail order" bundles were given out at police stations by a large group of volunteers secured through the churches. Of the requests thus received, 18,000 were filled completely, and 3,000 in part. At the end of the two weeks covered by the distribution, it was found that 4,000 bundles had remained unclaimed, and these were left at the police precincts to be given out to families at the discretion of police officers.

A third and even less satisfactory method of distribution was resorted to when emergent requests were received from homeless persons not known to social agencies, or from applicants who stated that they could not wait to secure agency endorsement. In some

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1 Material on New York's "Bundle Day" is taken, unless otherwise designated, from the Report of the Mayor's Committee on Unemployment, January, 1916, pp. 32-33; and Report of the Bundle Day Committee of the Mayor's Unemployment Committee, March 10, 1915.

23,000 such cases the rules were waived and the clothing given outright, with the result that many repeaters and even second-hand clothing merchants were discovered to have profited thereby.

A special division was set up to handle requests received for other forms of relief than clothing. Complaints of 68 impending evictions and 282 other requests were investigated, and the majority referred to social agencies. A small fund by an anonymous donor was dispensed to urgent cases upon investigations made by Boy Scouts and college students.

In New York the relatively great effort expended on Bundle Day was felt by the Mayor’s Committee to have been entirely out of proportion to the results obtained. Assistance given was not related to the total needs of the family; children might receive clothes at school, the mother through her church, the father through some other agency, so that an exact picture of real needs and the best way of meeting them was never obtained. The plan embodied all the undesirable features of the breadline and was cumbersome without being effective. On the other hand, the ready response of householders was thought to indicate a valuable means of "democratizing" relief-giving. It represented substantial gifts from those who would have been less likely to contribute an equal amount in money.¹

In a few cities a modification called "Donation Day" was undertaken. In Cleveland, for instance, contributions in excess of car fares deposited in street-car fare-boxes on a certain day amounted to $14,080, and an additional $3,400 was collected from persons in automobiles. The fund was turned over to the Associated Charities.² A similar plan in St. Louis netted almost $5,900, which was prorated among three relief agencies.³ Buffalo social workers preferred more quiet methods of money-raising, but the public demand for something dramatic led to a Donation Day after plans for a Bundle Day had been rejected. Receipts were advertised to be used for relief to the unemployed "without the usual careful investiga-

² Letter from James F. Jackson, Cleveland Associated Charities, December 1, 1914. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.
³ Letter from C. M. Hubbard, St. Louis Provident Association, February 19, 1915. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.
tion of need," and $11,000 was raised and distributed through the Charity Organization Society and two other agencies.¹

**Relief by Special Groups**

Emergency relief measures undertaken by a variety of clubs, churches, or other units followed several characteristic trends in 1914–1915. Relief funds collected through the schools were administered by Parent-Teacher Associations in Portland, Oregon,² and in Minneapolis, where the group worked quite independently of social agencies.³ In New York a Teachers' Relief Organization was formed in each school district, which raised money from dues, conducted lunchrooms, gave clothing, food, or coal, purchased eye-glasses, braces, or other medical appliances recommended by the school nurse, and referred families to social agencies for more permanent care. The teachers prided themselves on lack of red tape and on their initiative in discovering need before it was referred to them.⁴

Several communities stressed the possibility of work through churches. The New York City churches joined an Inter-Church Committee on Unemployment which carried on an active "campaign designed to interest the membership and enlist the working organizations of the churches in the relief of the unemployed."⁵ The central committee itself spent $20,244, while individual churches expended large funds of their own. Some churches established emergency workshops; others cared for the needs of their own members or neighbors, in co-operation with social agencies, while still others were able to develop temporary or permanent work opportunities.

The only important body created especially to function as a relief agency in the depression was the Emergency Aid Committee of

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¹ Letter from Frederic Almy, Charity Organization Society of Buffalo, April 16, 1915. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.
³ Letter from Frank J. Bruno, Associated Charities, Minneapolis, January 16, 1915. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.
⁵ Report of the Mayor's Committee on Unemployment, January, 1916, p. 41.
Philadelphia, whose genesis has been described. The municipal appropriations of $100,000 which had been entrusted to this agency after four leading relief agencies had refused to handle them, were supplemented by $165,442 in contributions, most of the latter secured through collections made on what was called "Self-Sacrifice Day." The routine of the established social agencies was criticized by the Emergency Aid Committee as rigid, and its volunteer workers, freed "from all preconceived ideas and formulas" announced themselves as "ready to seize any plank for service in the existing shipwreck of society."

The Association organized its work in local branches, and volunteers made the investigations. Immediate relief was given where necessary and work relief assigned where possible. The largest expenditures were for work-relief wages to 2,000 men for work at $.12 a day in parks, recreation centers, settlements, hospitals, and the sanitary department of the city, and to women for making garments in their own homes or in sewing-rooms. Women in 14 work-rooms were paid 75 cents a day and lunch, and those capable of learning were instructed in factory work. Garments were distributed directly to homes, and through truant officers at schools.

Over 14,000 individuals were relieved by the Committee up to its closing in May, 1915. During the succeeding five months only 38 of these persons were known to have applied to the Society for Organizing Charity. This fact gave satisfaction to both contending parties. To the regular relief agencies it proved that the ministries of the emergency body had not been needed; to the Emergency Aid Association it showed that its clients did not belong to the "great class of helpless who are the constant burden of the established agencies."

Clouded as the situation was by fundamental differences over public appropriations, and by war-time enthusiasm over volunteer achievements, the work of the Emergency Aid Committee cannot now be properly evaluated. Its publicity was widespread and con-

1 See p. 247.
2 The St. Vincent de Paul Society, Protestant Episcopal City Mission, Germantown Relief Society, and various churches stood ready to help the Emergency Aid Committee.
3 All data on the Emergency Aid Committee are from its Report of Home Relief, 1914–1916.
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Continuous, including harrowing stories of individual tragedies. Previous depression experience would justify the expectation that many of the resulting applications did not represent genuine distress. The work-relief projects in themselves were well administered; other aspects of the undertaking, hurriedly organized by large numbers of volunteers eager but often unqualified for the work, probably failed to achieve that rehabilitation of families which was the goal of social work even in the depression.

CARE OF THE HOMELESS

Emphasis in Treatment

Certain definite trends in treatment of the homeless during the depression of 1914–1915 marked progress in understanding the problem. Care of the homeless was accepted as a public function, although comparatively few cities had adequate facilities or such qualities of management as gave promise of constructive results. Private agencies still offered whatever case-work treatment was given and administered work tests in return for food and lodging. In Baltimore the basic need for adequate standards of cleanliness and food in return for work was felt so strongly that private agencies successfully opposed opening a free municipal shelter and preferred the privately managed Friendly Inn.¹

Associated with emphasis upon public care of the homeless was the movement to study and classify applicants at shelters. It was recognized that unemployables and unemployed demanded fundamentally differentiated treatment, but the separation of the two groups required trained social workers. The sick, mentally defective, and aged needed to be sorted out for proper care. Vagrants and those unwilling to work ought to be sent to penal farm colonies, as yet undeveloped, and those requiring further industrial training should be given it while under care. In New York the Mayor's Committee on Unemployment felt that such "functional division of the treatment of unemployables from the humane provision of shelter for bona fide unemployed workmen temporarily without a home" should make of the municipal lodging-house not a "casual

¹ Letter from J. W. Magruder, Federated Charities, Baltimore, December 18, 1914. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.
ward” but a temporary shelter. Even with the elimination of those needing permanent care, a municipal lodging-house was not considered a proper place for young boys and girls.

The homeless began to be recognized as not so much a local problem as one requiring uniform methods of treatment, at least throughout a state, and preferably throughout the country. “Passing on” of vagrants in order to relieve localities of their support was deplored, and Chicago could see no solution of this problem unless neighboring states and communities, and ultimately the federal government, would assume financial responsibility for non-residents who congregated in Chicago because of its geographical location. It is interesting to note that the federal government, which actually assumed responsibility for transients only in 1933, was here for the first time designated as the natural agent to give such care. State responsibility for the care of the transient was increasingly recognized, particularly in California, during the 1914-1915 depression.

In a number of communities, especially in the Northwest, homeless men were encouraged to provide for themselves on a self-governing basis, managing shelters provided by the community and earning their own food and often the necessary equipment. The results of these communal enterprises varied with the leadership available in the group, with the adequacy of the buildings provided, and with the opportunities to earn subsistence without resort to begging.

**Public Care**

Acceptance of municipal responsibility for care of the homeless involved the further extension of municipal control over privately operated shelters. Only thus could the free “flop houses” with their deplorable standards be eliminated. In Chicago the Homeless Man Department of the United Charities was absorbed by the Municipal Lodging-House, so that more thoroughgoing and discriminating individualized work might be done under public aus-

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1 How to Meet Hard Times: A Program for the Prevention and Relief of Abnormal Unemployment, p. 111.

2 Chicago Municipal Markets Commission, Report to the Mayor and Aldermen on a Practical Plan for Relieving Destitution and Unemployment in the City of Chicago, December 28, 1914, p. 56.
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Private agencies in New York, associated in the Joint Application Bureau for case work with the homeless, planned gradual withdrawal in order to encourage the development of city resources. The ultimate goal was to have the city take on this obligation entirely.

Even in Philadelphia, where the well-conducted Wayfarers' Lodges of the Society for Organizing Charity had long served as models of what adequate care for the homeless should mean, hard times led to the proposal that the lodges be taken over as a municipal responsibility. The suggested program included not only management of a well-equipped lodging-house for men and women, but also the inspection and licensing of private lodging-houses and daily reports by all shelters to a city bureau. Mayor Blankenburg approved, but the City Council refused to accept the plan.  

Conditions under which municipalities cared for their homeless varied with the facilities already in existence and the degree of pressure. In Buffalo, for instance, police stations housed as many as 500 a night on their floors and the County Lodging-House was overcrowded. The city provided additional quarters in an auditorium where beds, baths, and meals were available for 200, and later opened a warehouse accommodating 500 a night, which offered two meals and shelter but had no facilities for bathing. When the city provided emergency care, the police closed their stations to transients. No work test was required in the city shelters.  

Boston provided at public expense for an average of 639 per night during the first five months of 1915, the largest number on record up to that time. In addition to the existing Wayfarers' Lodge, four temporary shelters were opened. Besides these accommodations the state lent a pier for a co-operative "Hotel de Jobless," run by the homeless themselves.  

1 Letter from Eugene T. Lies, United Charities of Chicago, December 18, 1914. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.  
3 Letters from Frederic Almy, Charity Organization Society of Buffalo, December 18, 1914, and February 12, 1915; and Statement and recommendations from the City Committee on Unemployment, Buffalo, 1920–1921. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.  
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size and adequacy of new quarters, and the Overseers of the Poor soon found themselves without facilities for providing the work test stipulated by statute in return for food and lodging. Publicity and absence of work tests were undoubtedly factors in increasing the number of applicants. As a result of the winter's experience in Boston, the Wayfarers' Lodge was found inadequate, and "the widely separated location of the annexes, the duplication of attendants, and the multiplication of expense in the conduct of the places used" offered strong arguments for more efficient methods of care, supplemented by provision for individualized assistance.\(^1\)

Searching analyses of provisions for care of the homeless in New York City came from many sources. Chief among them was a survey of the municipal lodging-house population made in March, 1914, under the direction of John A. Kingsbury, commissioner of public charities. Medical examinations were given to 2,000 men, 10 per cent being found physically unable to work.\(^2\) Investigation of the social background of 1,500 men permitted their classification as unemployed or unemployable, and as resident, non-resident, or alien. Recommendations following the study included the establishment of a medical department for treatment and disposition of the physically and mentally unfit, an employment department, and a social service department to reclaim those who could be saved from the ranks of vagrants. Temporary shelter and food were essential features of the plan, but far more was included. Commissioner Kingsbury summarized the situation as follows:

If our Lodging-House were not choked to capacity with men who should be cared for elsewhere, and whose reception there is of no real benefit to themselves or the community, doubtless it could go a great deal farther toward carrying out its original purpose . . . "first aid to the homeless man." . . . While self-respecting men are often found in the Lodging House, there is no doubt that many worthy men, men who deserve all the assistance the Lodging House can give them, do not go there under present conditions. They object to being housed with vagrants, inebriates, and defectives, and you cannot blame them.\(^3\)

\(^1\) (Boston) Board of Overseers of the Poor, Fifty-first Annual Report, February 1, 1914, to January 31, 1915, p. 10.
\(^3\) Idem, "Rehabilitation of the Homeless Man." In the Fifteenth New York State Conference of Charities and Correction, 1914, pp. 36-37.
The Municipal Lodging-House with capacity for 800 had an adequate record system and facilities for serving meals, giving baths, and sterilizing clothing. The routine was thorough, providing for physical examination, isolation, and medical care where necessary. During the winter of 1914-1915 additional shelter was provided on a glass-enclosed recreation pier with 1,000 cots, and on boats moored beside a pier, where 300 men slept on the decks without blankets, and were required to rise at 4:30 a.m. in order to get breakfast at the municipal restaurant. Mr. Kingsbury pointed out that although the population of the Municipal Lodging-House had increased steadily since the erection of the new building in 1909, the per capita cost of administration had steadily decreased from 16 cents to only 5 cents.

At the request of the Mayor's Committee on Unemployment length of stay in the city lodging-houses was no longer limited to the usual three days, and men were allowed to remain for seven nights in one month in exchange for work. In addition the Mayor's Committee supplemented the work of the regular staff by paying for an experienced employment clerk who was stationed at the Public Employment Bureau from March 1 to June 30, 1915, and who placed only persons referred from the Municipal Lodging-House. Jobs were found for only about 20 per cent of those referred, partly because their clothing and appearance made a poor impression on employers, partly because employers tried to take advantage of the men by offering far below the market rate of wages. Temporary work shoveling snow at 30 cents an hour, and placement of both men and women as institution workers at wages of $10 to $40 a month and maintenance were the most satisfactory work outlets which could be found for the homeless unemployed. The experiment was felt to demonstrate, however, that homeless men should be placed through regular employment channels rather than directly as "down and outers" from the Municipal Lodging-House.

Early in 1915 two private agencies, the Women's Conference on Unemployment and the Committee for Immigrants in America, paid the salaries of two social workers to develop a social service department in connection with the Municipal Lodging-House. Their work included returning aliens, non-residents, and runaway boys; soliciting aid from relatives; and directing those in need of
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care to the proper institutions and agencies. During the first three months of 1915, 896 homeless aged persons were sent to institutions for permanent care; 409 persons referred for removal as aliens or non-residents; 178 referred to private agencies for treatment; 121 returned to their own homes; 156 given emergency medical treatment, and 49 referred for examination as mental defectives; while 77 were referred to courts, and 21 children placed in care of the Municipal Children’s Bureau.¹ Municipally financed care for the homeless in New York doubtless left much to be desired, but few communities had the advantage of such excellent organization of work for the homeless as the reform administration under Mayor John Purroy Mitchel provided in New York. Moreover, the assistance of private agencies made it possible to extend the program to include many features which other cities accepted in theory but were never able to put into practice.

PRIVATE CARE

Private care for the homeless provided evidence of the possibilities of individualized service. In Detroit, for instance, the McGregor Institute, with a capacity of 650, had flexible rules and procedure. Men might pay for or secure free excellent shelter and good food. Approximately two-thirds of the guests paid for their care during the winter of 1914–1915, and limitation of the length of the free stay for the remainder was determined by the superintendent on the basis of each man’s need. Four hours’ work a day in return for shelter and food might also be demanded if deemed desirable by the superintendent.²

The Provident Association and the Associated Charities in Boston jointly maintained a Department for Helping Homeless Men. During the year ending September 30, 1915, 1,056 men and boys were referred for assistance, of whom 612 maintained a sufficiently long contact with the institution to make possible some form of substantial service, including finding work, transportation, legal or medical assistance. Twenty per cent of the group were found unemployable owing to physical or mental handicap.³

¹ Kingsbury, John A., The Men We Lodge, p. 28.
CO-OPERATIVE SHELTERS

“Hotels de Gink,” popular in the northwest, particularly in Seattle, Portland, and Tacoma, were also found in New York and Boston. Casual laborers in Seattle established their own shelter, pooling their earnings for its maintenance. The group secured contracts from the city for clearing ground, and in the second winter of the “Hotel’s” existence obtained an appropriation of $2,000 from the county.1

In the absence of a municipal lodging-house, Portland appropriated a meager $1,000 to equip an abandoned laundry for homeless men under the auspices of the Citizens’ Employment Committee.2 When these accommodations proved inadequate, the use of a huge wooden tabernacle with capacity for 1,000 men was given to a group of homeless and $2,500 from the city treasury was promised for its maintenance. The men appointed committees to manage the shelter and kitchen, solicited work and funds throughout the city and utilized their own skills, such as tailoring, shoe repairing, and barbering, for each other’s benefit.3

New York’s Hotel de Gink was organized by Jeff Davis, an official of the Migratory Workers’ Union, and maintained for two and one-half months in the winter of 1914–1915 in a very dilapidated building turned over to them by the city. The Mayor’s Committee on Unemployment helped to finance the undertaking. No cots were to be had, and the men, securing blankets, slept on the floor. The work of the shelter was apportioned among the men, and a committee passed on applications to join the group. Work enough was found to cover expenses, although a small group assumed the major responsibility.4 In Boston, as earlier stated, the governor assigned a pier for the use of a group of men running a “Hotel de Jobless.”

Self-governing hotels on a co-operative basis were run successfully enough in a number of cities to make the method a significant feature in planning for the homeless in 1914-1915. But even where funds, buildings, or equipment were contributed by the municipality or state, funds were insufficient to maintain a high standard in these shelters. Surprisingly enough, the institutions were run with no disturbances, and were on the whole successfully managed by groups of men with little previous experience in co-operative living.

PROVISION OF WORK FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

Efforts to Secure Real Work

Attempts to lessen the load of unemployment were frequently made through industry itself. Employers were circularized, as in Chicago, and in Minneapolis, where the Civic and Commerce Association urged them to keep all employes at work as a social and civic responsibility; if it became absolutely necessary to decrease output, they were asked to rotate the work in shifts so as not to reduce their working force. Part-time employment sometimes reduced workers' incomes below subsistence level and prevented increase in consumption. A later critic has stated that "the share-the-work movement cares neither for the maintenance of basic wage rates nor a minimum standard of living for those employed part time." At best, sharing work in many instances barely kept families off relief rolls.

Social agencies, particularly family societies, made heroic efforts to secure employment for clients through former employers or friends of the agencies. The Boston Associated Charities through a Committee on Employment hired an employment secretary for five months during the winter of 1914-1915. A Philadelphia newspaper carried notices of "employment wanted" free for three social agencies dealing with large numbers of unemployed, while the Memphis Associated Charities sent descriptive lists of individuals needing employment to 500 donors and posted the bulletins in


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the Cotton Exchange, Merchants Exchange, and Real Estate Exchange. The first bulletin resulted in placing half the workers listed, the second placed a fourth, but the third was even less successful. Carefully selected case stories sent by the Chicago United Charities with receipts to donors brought in odd jobs enough for the men described, but naturally the number assisted was limited. Wider distribution of a pamphlet entitled About That Work You Want Done resulted in additional odd jobs.

Struggles to find jobs were subject to diminishing returns, however, for no amount of effort would produce work when none existed. Odd jobs for a limited number of people might be found, but the great mass of the unemployed could not be helped even by frantic attempts to find every available work opportunity.

PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT OFFICES

Public employment agencies ought not to be considered as real remedies for unemployment, since they cannot create jobs. Centralization of demands for work and calls for workers can help in stabilizing employment, but even the best employment service is useless where no work is available. The following quotation emphasizes the relation between depressions and public employment bureaus:

In times of industrial depression the promotion of labor bureaus appears to the general public to be a practicable means of providing employment for the unemployed. An historical study of the establishment of public labor bureaus in the United States would show that a number of these have been established after each great industrial depression since the Civil War. Shortly thereafter interest in the labor bureaus dies out.

Few public employment offices in 1914–1915 had strong enough organization and staff to be of great help during the hard times. The federal government’s participation was strengthened by the

1 Letter from J. P. Kranz, Associated Charities, Memphis, December 12, 1914. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.
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creation of the Department of Labor in 1913, which, in the language of the congressional law creating it, was to "foster, promote, and develop the welfare of the wage earners of the United States, to improve their working conditions and to advance their opportunities for profitable employment." Stimulated by the activities of the American Association for Labor Legislation and by increasing unemployment even early in 1914, the federal government, as well as numerous states and municipalities, established or improved public employment offices and took steps to regulate the business of private agencies. Not until the depression was long over, however, was the Federal Employment Service established in January, 1918, as a bureau of the United States Department of Labor.

In Illinois Charles R. Henderson, in connection with his work as chairman of several unemployment bodies, drafted the Henderson Bill to reorganize the employment bureaus of the state according to modern standards, and to free them from partisan influences by instituting the merit system of appointment and promotion. Included in the bill were provisions to have public employment bureaus responsible for persuading "the great employers of labor, including corporations, county, city and state government, and the federal government, to adjust their contracts and schemes of public work so as to avoid unemployment in the future, as far as possible." The Illinois legislature passed the bill with some modifications and the governor appointed to the board able representatives of labor and industry. After reorganization under the new act, the local offices in Chicago worked out more careful statistical methods, canvassed for jobs, and established a follow-up system on placements.

The state employment bureaus in Pennsylvania, established during the depression year of 1915, were generally believed to follow especially sound methods. Active in promoting legislation to establish them were local groups of the American Association for Labor Legislation, the City Club of Philadelphia, and the State

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Department of Labor and Industry. City and state governments jointly operated local offices, thus insuring uniform financing and supervision.

The Board of Commerce in Detroit, as an emergency measure, established a free employment office which, however, closed at the end of March, 1915. Altogether 22,000 persons were registered, of whom 3,570 were placed. Inadequate methods of classification were used during an experimental period, and the emergency nature of the bureau together with the inexperience of its managers impaired its efficiency. Real gains were made, however, through coordination of the efforts of smaller employment bureaus in the development of common standards and methods.

In Columbus, Ohio, the existing State Free Employment Bureau lacked funds with which to extend its services to meet depression needs. In order to avoid a special campaign to raise money for its expansion, the Associated Charities undertook to assist the Bureau from its own funds until public funds could be made available.

In New York State free employment bureaus were established as a result of the depression. The state passed an enabling act in 1914, and in January, 1915, the first state employment bureau was opened in Brooklyn, followed in the next few months by offices in Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo, and Albany. The city of New York, perturbed by the large number of unemployed during the winter of 1913-1914, had already established a municipal public employment bureau in April, 1914, through action of its Board of Aldermen. The Mayor's Committee on Unemployment contributed $800 to this bureau to pay for newspaper advertising and posters.

The Mayor's Committee also formed a Federation of Noncommercial Employment Agencies in New York City which included the

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38 largest and most important agencies. Its function was "the prevention of overlapping, in so far as this seriously affects the efficiency of each bureau, the assistance of the members by distribution of information of common interest, but especially the gradual creation of greater uniformity in methods and the improvement of general standards." 

In general, public employment bureaus extended their operations and improved their standards during this depression period. In certain areas the development was associated with other emergency relief measures, or stimulated by persons who were equally active in other lines of relief work. Arising from greater need for employment opportunities, public employment agencies only indirectly helped out in the depression, but with the impetus gained, the system of local, state, and federal offices continued to function until after the post-war era.

WORK RELIEF

Theory and Practice in 1914. Work-relief plans in 1914–1915 reflected current economic thought. Continued emphasis upon decentralization of emergency relief effort led to small work units under varied auspices rather than to large mass organization. The Mayor's Committee on Unemployment in New York held that "relief employment is the nearest approach that can be found to a normal opportunity to work for wages sufficient to maintain life while the need for such work lasts," but that work relief ought not to be disguised as non-charitable. The question as to auspices aroused much discussion; some relief agencies took the stand that their intimate acquaintance with applicants enabled them to combine work relief with supervision of the general welfare of families. On the other hand, again quoting the Mayor's Committee, the relief of those incapable of self-help and the provision of self-help opportunities cannot easily be united as two functions of one organization because the man in search of work will not recognize any affinity of his problem to that of the helpless applicant for charitable aid.

2 How to Meet Hard Times: A Program for the Prevention and Relief of Abnormal Unemployment, p. 123.
3 Ibid., pp. 88–89.

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If disagreement existed in regard to auspices, no one questioned the advantages of small organizational units in close touch with the needs of neighborhood facilities for personal and financial assistance. Even the large-scale emergency relief employment necessary under the Mayor's Committee was believed to have been successful only because of the close co-operation of various social agencies and persons who had knowledge and experience of local neighborhood conditions. Decentralization also made possible diversification of work, closer supervision of workers which balanced the increased cost of overhead, free or at least low cost premises offered by settlements, churches, or interested property owners, wider use of volunteers, and study of individual relief needs and problems.1

Contemporary discussion of work relief from the economic point of view centered about its competitive element and the effect of the wage scale upon the labor market. By and large, work relief did not include industrial training through which a man or woman might be better prepared to become self-supporting after the unemployment period, although in some communities, notably New York, such opportunities were developed. It was found to be difficult if not impossible to find work-relief jobs which did not compete in one way or another with regular business. Articles made in sewing-rooms and given to the unemployed reduced the business of retail dealers. Remodeled furniture and clothing drew trade away from established second-hand stores. Rolling bandages and making surgical dressings, which formed an important part of work-relief operations in 1914-1915, would otherwise have offered paid employment to many persons. Argument was made that "since the demand for [these articles] arose from the same emergency which indirectly caused the unemployment, it was perfectly legitimate to earmark their manufacture for philanthropic employment outside of normal business"; but this seems a far-fetched attempt by those who had utilized the war to furnish a new form of work relief to justify the undertaking.

Goods were in most instances produced more expensively through work relief than in regular factories; evidence does not show that many work-relief projects were self-supporting in 1914-1915. Nor could it be expected that untrained workers, selected on the basis

1 Ibid., pp. 90-94.

2 Ibid., p. 98.
of need rather than capacity, would reach a commercial standard of efficiency and productivity during their short period of employment.

At the same time, wages paid were too often based on funds available and on current low standards of relief rather than on output. Although intended to cover minimum cost of living and to make other relief unnecessary, wages in reality were often too low to meet the essentials of existence. The effect of niggardly work-relief wages in reducing wages in industry was recognized by some communities, in which the hourly wage scale at least approximated the standard for regular work in parallel industries.

Projects developed in 1914-1915 were suited more closely than those of earlier depressions to the previous industrial experience of the city-bred men and women chiefly employed. A special enterprise in this field was work relief for tailors sponsored by the Consumers' League of Boston. Unemployed needleworkers, after investigation and recommendation by social agencies, were permitted to earn up to $7.00 a week making women's clothing which was shipped to war sufferers in Europe. Heavy outdoor work, however, still comprised a large part of work-relief programs, as in St. Louis, where the Provident Association employed from 100 to 200 men a day in crushing stone at $1.00 a day and lunch, the agency being assured a certain return on its investment through the city's agreement to purchase the product. The proportion of indoor and outdoor work undertaken varied naturally with locality and climate. Even in outdoor projects, however, consideration was usually given to physical fitness to endure heavy work and exposure to cold and wet weather. The depression of 1914-1915 saw a definite development in the assignment of work-relief tasks suited in some degree at least to the abilities of a worker, although general practice still admitted room for improvement in this direction.

Varieties of Work Relief. Work relief during the war depression was more diversified than ever before. Outdoor work included the familiar tasks of road construction, gravel digging, street cleaning,
sewer building, land clearance, stone crushing, and tenement-house renovation; in addition, new projects were undertaken in many cities. Wood-cutting camps were established near Portland, Oregon, to employ resident married men at clearing land and cutting wood for fuel. Wages were $3.00 for eight hours’ work, the men being assigned for four days at a time. Full value was received for the $4,500 appropriated for this purpose, since the men were found to be practically as efficient as regular employees. Three similar camps were established outside the city for single men, 900 being given employment for an average of a little more than thirteen days each, with a total expenditure of $61,000. Piece rates were paid on the cordwood produced, with deductions for food, lodging, and use of tools. This project was run at a loss, owing to a number of factors; city employes were inexperienced in handling such undertakings; the workers were less efficient than the married men; too high prices were paid for standing wood; and no market was found for part of the product. It was acknowledged, moreover, that the enterprise competed directly with the business of cordwood dealers.

Under public auspices Columbus spent $10,500 on its waterworks with very satisfactory results. Cincinnati raised $100,000 through bond issues for municipal improvements, including removal of landslides. Applicants were selected from registrants at the Free Labor Exchange and from clients of relief agencies, the customary civil service requirements being set aside. A total of 2,815 men were employed in two-week shifts at $2.00 a day. Baltimore appropriated $55,000 for extra street cleaning, workers to be certified by the relief agencies for two weekly assignments of three days, with additional assignments permitted on account of family needs.

Work relief under private auspices was usually administered by

4 Letter from J. W. Magruder, Federated Charities, Baltimore, March 11, 1915. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.

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the established family agencies, although the Emergency Aid Committee of Philadelphia carried on large projects. When supervision was taken over by municipal departments, wages being furnished by private agencies and workers selected from among their clients, results were found to be more satisfactory than when a social agency inexperienced in managing public works attempted to handle the whole project. The United Charities of Chicago, for example, devised relief work in street-cleaning and vacant lot clearance for 1,729 married men with families who were clients of the agency. Wages of $1.20 a day amounted to $24,606. Supervision and tools were furnished by the City Bureau of Streets.

Among work-relief projects undertaken by family agencies, the most widely discussed was that under which the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor arranged with the Bronx Botanical and Zoological Gardens to place its clients at $2.00 a day for three days each week, half the wages being paid by the agency and half by the park authorities. Responsibility for employing, supervising, and discharging men was left with park officials, clients simply being given the opportunity to apply as in the case of any other employment. Work was continuous on good behavior, but when men refused the opportunity or left without good reason, further relief was refused by the agency, although such other services as nursing care were continued. Only 231 men were referred for jobs, so that the project was definitely limited in scope. An evaluation of the work by those who directed it states:

Thus was work of a public nature accomplished which could not have been accomplished but for this arrangement. It therefore did not involve (at least directly or seriously) the problem of competition with other legitimate labor or the throwing of people out of jobs for the purpose of giving unemployed jobs. It had in it elements of real work under real supervision with real wages and a real penalty attached to a failure to work. For the particular families for which we used it, it was by all odds the best form of relief which we gave that winter.

2 Letter from Bailey B. Burritt, New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, April 20, 1918, in files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation. Data also in Matthews, William H., "Wages from Relief Funds," in the Survey, vol. 34, June 12, 1915, p. 246.
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Relief work conducted entirely by private agencies is illustrated by the project carried on by the Minneapolis Associated Charities during the same winter. A tract of land in the city was to be flooded by the construction of a government dam; no public appropriations for clearing it were available, nor had commercial lumbering concerns been willing to accept the work on contract. The Associated Charities agreed to clear the land, paying resident heads of families $1.60 plus carfare for an eight-hour day and a three-day week, wages being paid “in kind” or by orders on neighborhood grocers, to make sure that families as well as the men received the benefit of the work. If men refused work, further relief was withheld, so that the plan involved a work test. At first suitable clothing was provided free for workers, but they abused this privilege and were later required to pay for it with additional work. More than $6,000 was expended, only about half of which was recovered through sale of wood the following winter. The work was not competitive, since no bids had been received for the job, but the purchase and loss of tools, and the inefficiency of men quite unaccustomed to such labor, rendered costs very high. The conclusion of the sponsors was that a private social agency unused to business organization lacks ability to direct a project employing men of various industrial backgrounds, and that the charitable basis of the work made it economically unsound.¹

Indoor work-relief projects were stimulated by the demand for supplies and warm clothing for the use of American relief agencies and medical units overseas. Knitting, bandage-rolling, the making of other surgical supplies, and sorting and repairing clothing donated for European war sufferers were major activities. In addition, workers were employed in sewing on new garments, rug-weaving, chair-caning, raffia work, making and repairing furniture, and even sorting old papers for sale. In Cleveland the Associated Charities employed over 100 women clients in their own homes making clothing for the needy. Careful supervision was maintained, and sanitary precautions included investigation into the health of

¹ Letters from Frank J. Bruno, Associated Charities, Minneapolis, December 19, 1914, and March 30, 1915. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.
the family and disinfection of the finished garments before distribution.¹

The Community Workshop for the Unemployed in Baltimore, an outgrowth of the open forums on unemployment under the Ascension Episcopal Church, maintained a small work-relief unit. Funds were contributed, rooms given free by the Young Men's Christian Association, and applications cleared through the Social Service Exchange. If applicants were found to be in care of the Hebrew Federated Charities or the Federated Charities, these agencies made partial reimbursement to the Workshop for wages paid them. Five dollars a week was paid for five and one-half hours' work a day; this sum being deemed sufficient for the subsistence needs of families without supplementation by a relief agency. Orders for inexpensive furniture were filled, and bandages were made under supervision of a trained nurse.²

The Brooklyn Bureau of Charities, which had previous experience in managing a regular workroom, opened three small workrooms where women made clothing for the Belgian Relief Committee. A special fund of $14,600 was raised to pay wages of 90 cents a day with lunch, which were supplemented either by the irregular earnings of other members of the family or by further relief from the agency.³ Hours were purposely kept short to permit the women to care for their homes. The close contact with the workers and their families increased the value of the workrooms in terms of the needs of individual employes.

Wage levels in workrooms were evidently an issue in several communities. A sewing-room established by the Detroit Associated Charities paid wages of $1.50 and lunch for an eight-hour day, its sponsors holding that this amount was adequate to provide subsistence and was only slightly lower than the established com-


² Letter from J. W. Magruder, Federated Charities, Baltimore, February 18, 1915. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.


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commercial wage for the work. In Buffalo a special committee managed six sewing-rooms offering the same wage. In answer to the criticism that such a high wage restricted the number of women who could be employed, the committee insisted that it had "taken years of education to get the Buffalo public educated to the idea of a $1.50 wage and we do not feel that we should take advantage of this emergency to undermine the principle."

The best workrooms not only offered a respite from ceaseless job-hunting, with fair earnings, good food, and pleasant surroundings, but also gave attention to the industrial needs of workers. In Chicago the Woman's Club financed for five months an employment center where clothing was made to be distributed by various social agencies. Social services offered the women included medical care, legal aid, clothing, transportation, and scholarships for further training. Study of their work histories showed the difficulty experienced by self-respecting middle-aged women in finding employment in the needle trades, and prompted the Club to suggest that a permanent workroom for this group would be much more useful than relief and would cost but little more. Its report also pointed out the need for adequate vocational guidance in the schools and for the services of a properly conducted free city or state employment bureau.

In at least two communities, work-relief schemes for women developed into training classes with scholarships provided. The New England Division of the National Civic Federation established workrooms in Boston for 1,100 women during the winter and spring of 1915. Untrained girls whose families needed their assistance were given "the opportunity of turning a period of idleness, with its possibilities of demoralization, into a term of real achievement." Hand-sewing, especially the making of buttonholes, and machine stitching by both foot and power machines, were taught. After the girls became sufficiently competent, they were transferred to the workrooms and their scholarships converted into wages. Other girls were given instruction for six hours a week outside their work-

ing time in salesmanship and the improvement of personal appearance in order to increase their usefulness in whatever line of work they might follow.\(^1\)

The most extensive scholarship program was carried out in New York by a subcommittee of the Mayor's Committee on Unemployment. The funds for the work of this subcommittee were supplied in part from the Committee's treasury, in part by contributions in money and equipment from ten co-operating agencies. Scholarships amounted to 60 cents a day or $3.00 a week, the wage current in the workrooms operated by the Committee. Classes were attended by about 1,000 girls and met the needs of two distinct groups: those having technical skill were given supplementary training along the line of their chosen work, while those without special training or with an irregular work history were tried out in several different occupations to discover the field to which they were best suited. Such a class was included for office workers, business firms lending the necessary equipment. After the class had demonstrated the value of the training given, the Board of Education agreed to continue it after the depression, although not on a scholarship basis. Another class in dressmaking was conducted at the Board of Education's Manhattan Trade School, whose instructors taught new processes and strengthened weak points in the members' training. This class was later utilized as a center for study of the girls and the giving of vocational advice. It continued after June 1 as part of the Trade School's own program, to offer vocational tests to applicants referred by the various placement agencies for women and girls. Classes for needle workers and domestic workers, including one for colored girls, were successfully conducted.\(^2\) A study was made of the handicaps and strong points of 300 girls as revealed by their family background and industrial history, and the conclusion was reached that training


\(^2\) Mayor's Subcommittee on Unemployment among Women, Reports of Committees on Emergency Workshops for Women and Trade Extension (Scholarship) Classes for Girls Conducted during Winter and Spring of 1915, pp. 26–38.
classes for unemployed girls could usefully supplement insufficient
general education and lack of technical information.

*New York City's Program.* In addition to the scholarships and
classes for vocational guidance just described, the Mayor's Com-
mittee on Unemployment managed a large number of work-relief
rooms, with churches, social agencies, and local committees sup-
plementing the funds and resources of the central committee. The
procedure followed demonstrated the tremendous value of decen-
tralizing work-relief efforts. Twenty-two workrooms were organ-
ized employing 5,000 people daily. Thirteen of these gave work
to men at bandage-rolling, chair-caning, and other suitable tasks;
the remainder employed women. Experienced workers were se-
lected as supervisors from the ranks of the unemployed. Workers
were employed five hours a day for five days a week, men receiving
50 cents a day and their lunch, women 60 cents without lunch, as
most of them preferred to go home at noon to care for their fam-
ilies. A kindergarten and nursery for children under school age
was established in connection with one workshop on the lower East
Side. A small special relief fund was spent through the women's
workshops for emergency relief.

The New York workshops, hastily organized as they were and
sometimes shortsighted in wage policies and selection of work,
demonstrated the possibility of a large centralized agency with
numerous independent or semi-independent units which, through
their local connections, raised funds and maintained a closer rela-
tion to workers than would otherwise have been possible. In the
case of women workers it was possible to isolate certain funda-
mental problems in their industrial life which in turn suggested
possible treatment for the period after depression.

**PUBLIC WORKS**

Public works were considered in 1914-1915 as a means of absorb-
ing some of the unemployed who had been laid off by private in-
dustry. The chief difficulty, as always, lay in the fact that public
works for the most part had not been planned in advance; legis-

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2 Mayor's Subcommittee on Unemployment among Women, Reports of Com-
mittees on Emergency Workshops for Women and Trade Extension Classes for
lative difficulties and the desire of politicians to make a record for economy blocked efforts to secure immediate appropriations for public works. The difficulty of carrying out public improvements during winter weather presented an additional obstacle, although these were found practicable in many cities, especially when low cost of materials and labor during hard times offset to some extent increased cost of construction. The chief objections raised to public works as a relief measure are voiced by G. D. H. Cole when he states that:

. . . they are for the most part of a kind which employs mainly unskilled labor, or the skilled labor of only a few trades. It is true that the wages paid to these workers, by increasing demand, would react on other trades. But they would not react enough to revive, say, the shipbuilding or the cotton industry.¹

In 1914-1915 over 50 cities reported resorting to some form of public works for the relief of unemployment. Projects included digging sewers, laying water-mains, improving roads and parks, erecting school-houses, and repairing public buildings.² The state of Idaho went so far as to pass an act in 1915 establishing the right of every person who had resided in the state upward of six months, to ninety days of public work a year, at 90 per cent of the usual wage for those married or having dependents, and 75 per cent for those without dependents. Pittsburgh had available $100,000 already appropriated for public works previously planned. Pressure upon the city administration from social agencies freed this sum at the moment when it was most needed for street and park work for the unemployed.³ Newark made a special appropriation of $26,000 for street cleaning and set in motion other contemplated public works, although the extent of the projects was hampered by the administration's economy program.⁴

³ Letters from J. Byron Deacon, Associated Charities of Pittsburgh, December 14, 1914, and April 17, 1916. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.
Public works were clearly defined in 1914-1915 as work undertaken according to the usual procedure, either through contracts or by direct employment on "force account" by the city. The standard rate of pay was to be maintained and workers were selected on the basis of ability to do the job. In many communities residence was a requirement for municipal employment. Men were hired through the usual channels instead of on the recommendation of social agencies, and supervision and discharge followed the customary practice. In other words, a public works program had no relation to emergency relief measures, except as it indirectly reduced the number of prospective clients.

Chicago, according to Miss Richmond, was the city which had done the "most toward meeting the situation by hastening the beginning of necessary public work and by stimulating private enterprise of the same kind."\(^1\) The construction of the Union Station, for which the City Council had granted railroads an extension of time, was speeded up. The Public Works Department refrained from laying off its regular employes and began several proposed improvements much earlier than had been intended. Streets were widened, piers and warehouses were built, and three schools on which work was to have begun in the spring were started during the winter.\(^2\)

Public improvements in Boston were financed by municipal and state funds. The city constructed a new public playground, several sewers and a boulevard which had long been in prospect, and shared in the state's appropriation for reforestation and the extermination of the gypsy moth.\(^3\) In addition the state legislature appropriated $100,000 for special public improvements in the Boston district.\(^4\)

Since so much public work during this depression had to be undertaken on an emergency basis, the Mayor's Committee on Unemployment of New York proposed as one of its most important

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\(^1\) Letter from Mary E. Richmond, March 12, 1915. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.

\(^2\) Letter from Eugene T. Lies, United Charities of Chicago, December 7, 1914. In files of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation.

\(^3\) (Boston) Associated Charities, Thirty-sixth Annual Report, November, 1915, p. 15.

recommendations a plan for the systematic distribution of public work. Public improvements ought to be laid out for a period covering seven to ten years. They should include not only construction, but also some part of public expenditures for army and navy equipment, post-office repairs, and other city, state, or federal expenses not previously considered as part of the public works program. As outlined in the report the proposal set forth that

In each normal business year a certain percentage [approximately 10 per cent] of the public improvements program could be deferred, i.e., put into a sinking fund against dull times. When the lean years occur and private employers lay off help, which would be indicated by information as to the state of employment furnished by the Department of Labor and the Public employment bureaus, the state and the city would at once begin work on a deferred public improvements program in accordance with a well-worked out plan.¹

The flexible public works program thus created would act as a preventive measure rather than as an expensive, hastily organized relief plan. Public purchase of non-perishable products could be similarly regulated to stabilize employment during slack seasons.

The Director of the Mayor's Committee estimated that an annual reserve fund of 10 per cent of all expenditure on public improvements by federal, state, county, and city authorities, and of all private funds used for the extension or improvement of railways, would in ten years' time make available $633,000,000 for such deferred construction of public works. Of this sum about 30 per cent would be spent for direct wages and an additional 15 per cent for indirect wages; i.e., wages spent in the production of materials and equipment which would have to be purchased. This estimate was admittedly tentative; but it presented vividly the potentialities of controlling employment fluctuations through the planned use of public works.²

Practical difficulties, as usual, stood in the way of any general utilization of public works as an emergency measure. Plans for the development of projects were not often formulated ahead of time.

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nor were appropriations available; such programs as existed were calculated to absorb only unskilled labor. In Chicago, bonds for specific projects had already been voted, so that work was not delayed; and in some 50 other cities some form of public works was undertaken. Academic plans for meeting future depressions through public works were carefully developed but never put into practice. At best they could not have affected unemployment in all branches of industry and probably could not have overcome the customary unwillingness of municipal officials to increase expenditure of public money in hard times.¹

CHAPTER XI

1920–1922: THE POST-WAR DEPRESSION

When the industrial depression of 1920–1922 began in the United States, the country had hardly shaken itself free from the immediate effects of the World War. Consequently both the nature of the depression and the relief measures adopted reflected two distinct trends: social work practice in the early twenties was overlaid by the superstructure of war-time psychology and organization methods; in addition, however, social work in its own development had been strengthened and enriched by the war experience. Not always easily separated, these two determining factors nevertheless form a background against which to project an analysis of what happened in 1920–1922.

Original sources for material on unemployment relief during this period were studied as carefully as those for earlier depressions. The evidence, if presented at length, would be substantially the same as that in the authoritative contemporary study by Philip Klein, The Burden of Unemployment,¹ which includes data on 15 cities in the East, South, and Middle West with populations varying from 25,000 to 2,750,000 and covers widely different local conditions. In the present chapter, therefore, the author has drawn extensively from Mr. Klein’s valuable material.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DEPRESSION

The depression began late in the summer of 1920, and in most communities revival of industry did not occur until during the spring of 1922. Following a period of great prosperity, savings from war-time wages in many instances postponed actual need. Average annual earnings and their purchasing power had both expanded during boom years. Under pressure of war-time production

women and younger members of families had been drawn into industry, and working people had laid by larger financial reserves than ever before in their lives. At the time of the depression, industry was still suffering from the effect of the withdrawal of demand for war materials, while at the same time demobilized military and naval forces constituted a considerable portion of unemployed labor.

Unemployment, however, occurred in different cities and industries at different times and with varying force, emphasizing the individual character of localities. Where war had inflated manufacturing as in steel, iron, and other metals, and drawn thousands of new workers to a community, conditions during 1920–1922 were serious. In this group Cleveland and Pittsburgh began to feel the depression in the fall of 1920, and suffering continued through the second winter. The textile industry also suffered early from the depression. In Lawrence, Massachusetts, the population was almost wholly dependent upon the textile mills for employment. After several months’ part-time work the mills shut down in August, 1920, and by December conditions were so serious that steps for co-ordinated relief measures were undertaken.\(^1\) Where trade was dependent upon the purchasing power of farmers, as in Kansas City, Missouri, and Sioux Falls, South Dakota, difficulties followed upon the fall in prices of agricultural products which occurred in the winter of 1921–1922, but they were not as extended.\(^2\)

In large cities the situation was complicated by scores of men attracted by war industries and then set adrift by the deflation. Large numbers of southern Negroes among the industrial recruits presented serious financial and health needs, and found it difficult to adjust to urban conditions and northern climate, particularly in Cleveland and Chicago. In the former city a normal increase in Negro population at the rate prevailing up to 1915 would have brought Negro residents to 13,000 in 1920. Actually 34,000 Negroes were living in Cleveland in 1920.\(^3\) Comparatively few Negroes

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2 Klein, Philip, The Burden of Unemployment, p. 94.
3 Welfare Federation of Cleveland, Minutes of the Special Committee to Discuss Problems Connected with Recently Immigrated Colored People, July 14, 1921.
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wished to return to their homes in the South because, even with no work, conditions were more tolerable in large cities. As a result special appropriations to established social agencies for assistance of Negroes were arranged. In Chicago the Urban League "organized ministers, social agencies, and club women into a special committee which undertook the feeding and sleeping of unemployed negroes," when public and private agencies were unable to extend their facilities to care for the special group.¹

A particular problem of the post-war depression arose from demands of ex-service men for preferential handling and special legislation. At best their readjustments to civilian life were accompanied by restlessness and discontent. The inability of large numbers of them to find employment increased their difficulties.

ESTIMATE OF UNEMPLOYMENT

As a result of the depression of 1920–1922 the collection of statistics relating to employment was greatly stimulated and carried out through such organizations as the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, the United States Employment Service, the various state departments, and some of the regional Federal Reserve Banks.² The data were still considered far from satisfactory since record forms and definitions of public employment bureaus, for example, were not yet adequately standardized, and the value of their statistics depended upon the efficiency of the state set-up. The Illinois Free Employment Service was organized so well that its reports were dependable; but the general reports of the United States Employment Service as well as their Industrial Employment Survey Bulletin published from January, 1921, to May, 1922, were useful only in so far as one was familiar with local problems and variation in method.³ In other fields as well, collection of continuous data relating to employment and unemployment from enough communities for comparative purposes still left much to be desired.

³ Klein, pp. 182–184.
Several cities undertook voluntary registrations of the unemployed; but experience soon showed that even where some definite incentive could be offered, such as the possibility of assignment to work relief or preferential treatment in home relief, only a partial registration could be secured. This incomplete collection of data was of course quite satisfactory to officials and others who wanted their city’s unemployment rate to appear low for publicity purposes, but as a basis for planned activities for the relief of the unemployed it was generally very undependable. In Baltimore, where police stations were made the centers for registration, the unemployed were so loath to appear there that data thus obtained placed actual unemployment far too low.\textsuperscript{1} Where registration was associated with relief projects, its shortcomings as a reliable index of the total number of unemployed were further emphasized by the fact that the projects were limited in size and called only for manual labor.

Local studies of unemployment were likely to place unwarranted dependence upon the statistics of social agencies as to relief, intake, and case load. Such figures had the advantage of extending usually over a period of years; but their significance varied between agencies, and sometimes from year to year in the same agency, because of different policies and practices. As a means of comparing the burden of unemployment in different communities, agency statistics were in general of doubtful value; but while they lacked standardization, they were useful at least as one indicator of distress in a particular community.

In addition other sources of information were being developed to round out the picture. Vital statistics, general business indices from bank clearings, mercantile, stock, and bond sales, freight car loadings, and rent and help-wanted advertisements began to be drawn upon for comparative data in relation to unemployment. The 1920–1922 employment studies often showed refinement in method, careful scrutiny of results to exclude factors other than unemployment, and increase in extent of data.

\textsuperscript{1} Klein, p. 180, footnote 3.
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RELIEF MEASURES GROWING OUT OF THE WAR

The President's Conference on Unemployment

During the World War, mobilization in many fields had radiated from federal offices in Washington, covering the whole country in a semi-militaristic routine. By 1920–1922 most of the national network of organization had disappeared; even the war-created federal Employment Service, from which so much had been hoped, gradually disintegrated for lack of adequate financial support. Washington was naturally looked to for continuing leadership in the new national crisis created by the post-war depression; and in September, 1921, President Harding called a nation-wide President’s Conference on Unemployment, selecting as Chairman Herbert Hoover, who had been successful as the war-time Food Administrator, and as his assistant Colonel Arthur Woods, former police commissioner of New York, who in 1919 as Assistant Secretary of War had been in charge of re-establishing ex-service men in civilian life.

It speedily became apparent, however, that the underlying purpose of the Conference was not to offer federal participation in dealing with the question of unemployment, but rather to hand the problem firmly back to private industry on the one hand and to local communities on the other. Membership of the Conference consisted overwhelmingly of leaders in trade and industry. Such representatives of other fields as attended were called in as consultants and had no voting powers. Recommendations made to the Conference by social workers and labor representatives had slight effect on the results of its deliberations.

Reports from subcommittees dwelt upon the responsibility of industry to stabilize itself and increase opportunities of employment, and upon the duty of localities to assume relief of the unemployed. President Harding in his address of welcome had been outspoken in stating his belief that doles from the federal treasury would not solve the problem. He said in part,

I would have little enthusiasm for any proposed relief which seeks either palliation or tonic from the public treasury. The excess of stimula-

1 An exception to the general trend was the Woman in Industry Service of the War Labor Board, which by act of Congress in 1920 became the Women's Bureau of the U. S. Department of Labor.

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tion from that source is to be reckoned a cause of trouble rather than a source of cure. We should achieve but little in a remedial way if we continued to excite a contributing cause.¹

In spite of the disappointment occasioned in liberal circles by the findings of the Conference, it must be pointed out that the widespread publicity accorded its discussions served to focus attention on the problems of unemployment. There emerged from its deliberations the first clear-cut official statement as to industry's responsibility to aid in the solution of the social problems it had created, and on the need for participation in the relief program by many groups in the community.²

COMMITTEE ON CIVIC AND EMERGENCY MEASURES

While the President's Conference on Unemployment existed as such for a very short time, its functions were continued through the appointment of national committees to carry out its recommendations. One of these, the Committee on Civic and Emergency Work, was designated to serve as a clearing house on local activities and to stimulate and advise on measures to be undertaken locally for unemployment relief. After observing the results of its work in 15 cities Mr. Klein states:

The information gathered by the committee was not always checked up before it was made public. Sometimes erroneous statements and inept advice were circulated. Unsupported opinions and judgments of local correspondents were quoted by the committee and given nation-wide circulation through the press.³

Although its clearing-house function was inadequate, the Committee did not meet with such scathing criticism in this field as that evoked by some of its pronouncements on policy. Particular disapproval was directed toward the powerful pressure which the Committee exerted upon mayors to take the lead in calling, organizing, and guiding local committees on emergency relief.

³ Klein, p. 60.
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Mayors' Committees

In 1914–1915, mayors' committees were an expression of purely local concern about unemployment. In 1920–1922 a semi-official national committee was actively promoting their formation. The difference, however, is more apparent than real, since the purpose animating the Committee on Civic and Emergency Measures was to secure the appointment of citizens' committees, under the aegis of city governments, which would co-ordinate effort and mobilize private as well as public resources as far as possible. Since the national committee had no funds to disburse, and was equipped with no powers conferred upon it by Congress, its efforts met with varying success.

Obviously all the mayors in the United States could not suddenly be turned into qualified and experienced leaders capable of carrying on social programs in their communities. In many places mayors sought out already existing committees to whom they delegated the task of struggling with the problem of unemployment, or they encouraged the formation of unemployment committees among groups whose daily work placed them in a position to know conditions and means of meeting them. In Cleveland, for example, the Welfare Federation presented to the mayor an accurate account of plans already under way through public and private agencies to meet the anticipated severity of the winter of 1921–1922. The Mayor's Committee, which had already been appointed, thereupon refused to establish a special public fund for unemployment relief and limited its activity to finding work opportunities, while the social agencies carried the relief burden.¹

The political affiliations of mayors often determined whether they did or did not respond to urgings from Washington to assume leadership in the relief situation. In some instances refusal was based upon a genuine conviction that an existing organization was equipped to handle the situation and was already functioning. Only rarely did action taken by mayors interfere with or duplicate work carried on in their communities by other co-ordinating groups.

Where mayors' committees were appointed, weaknesses were fre-

¹ Letter to M. F. Bourjaily, Secretary of the Mayor's Unemployment Committee, from the General Secretary, Cleveland Associated Charities, October 11, 1921. In files of the Cleveland Associated Charities.
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quently inherent in the plan. Choice of personnel was too often a matter of political preference, with the next election in mind. As an exception to this, the mayor of Evanston, Illinois, a fairly homogeneous residential suburb of Chicago, appointed a small, active committee which operated an employment bureau and secured advance payment of franchise fees from a public service corporation to finance public work in the parks.\(^1\) The Boston Committee was also appointed without political manoeuvering, but its 33 members, while representative of various groups in the community, had no common ground for discussion, and accounts of their meetings reflect indifference and remoteness from actual conditions.\(^2\) Political alignments and perfunctory appointments to satisfy various interests weakened chances for competent personnel on mayors' committees. Moreover, change in administration in the midst of the depression often resulted in complete suspension of a mayor's committee until the new official made his own selection of personnel.

Since the press assumes that "the actions of a public body are common property," publicity attached to activities of official mayors' committees often prevented achievement.\(^3\) In Chicago, for example, Mayor Thompson deliberately held out against organization of a committee on the ground that political controversy between two local newspapers would wreck the possibility of any real accomplishment, since its appointment would be used as another battleground for publicity for and against his political machine. A newspaper controversy ensued between Mayor Thompson and Mr. Hoover, as a result of which the mayor made the gesture of appointing a Mayor's Commission of 68 members, the majority of whom, however, were aldermen. Unwieldy and divided against itself and the mayor, its achievements were negligible. The important work had already been done by a voluntary Unemployment Conference appointed three months earlier by the Council of Social Agencies.

A great variety in organization and function existed among mayors' committees, although only in smaller cities did they undertake the direct administration of relief projects. Usually specific services were turned over to existing agencies whose previous experience fitted them to carry the particular task, on the theory

\(^{1}\) Klein, p. 230.  
\(^{2}\) Ibid., p. 55.  
\(^{3}\) Ibid., p. 44.
that “administrative services are handled with difficulty by a temporary body lacking experience in routine.”¹ The Committee on Civic and Emergency Measures had wisely assumed that local conditions could not be met by a prescribed plan of action; each city was to plan a program which fitted its particular social work structure and needs. The weakness of the Committee’s plan lay in its rigid formula that official mayors’ committees were the most effective means of attaining the desired end.

**Financial Federations and Councils of Social Agencies**

Since the depression of 1914–1915 there had developed in many cities community funds and central councils of social agencies, successors of the War Chests which raised money and co-ordinated local efforts for war relief. Of the 15 cities studied by Mr. Klein, Cleveland, Kansas City, Minneapolis, New Bedford, and St. Paul had financial federations which assumed responsibility for community planning as well; while Boston, Chicago, Hartford, Memphis, and Pittsburgh had established councils of social agencies but were not federated for joint financing.² Philadelphia organized a federation in 1921. Although not primarily the outcome of the depression, this new method of co-ordinated activity presented possibilities for emergency relief organization.

Additional funds for the support of social agencies had to be raised in 1921 and 1922 because of unusual demands from the unemployed. Where financial federations existed, success in securing the increased budgets was by no means uniform. Cleveland’s Community Chest in 1921 exceeded by $100,000 its goal of $3,750,000. The next year $457,000 was included in the budget for emergency relief, and when secured was assigned in large part to the Associated Charities and the Cleveland Chapter of the American Red Cross, which carried the unemployment load.³ Kansas City’s Council of Social Agencies added an emergency appropriation of $25,000 to the estimated budgets of its member organizations and easily secured the amount. In the campaigns for 1921–1922 in Minneapolis and St. Paul, however, only 80 per cent of the required funds were raised, partly because of inflexible methods and

³ *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 26, 1921.
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partly because of an unofficial "boycott by organized labor" as part of the industrial warfare then going on in the Twin Cities.¹

When community chests failed to meet emergency needs, local agencies made a variety of adjustments. The Minneapolis Family Welfare Association lightened its burden by transferring its unemployed families to the public department, while the St. Paul United Charities, after supplementary campaigns had failed, was able to borrow against funds to be secured in 1922. In Akron, Ohio, the member agencies of the Community Chest other than relief organizations relinquished 40 per cent of their budgets to the family agency which was carrying the depression load.² Failure of the Baltimore Alliance, a modified community chest, to raise sufficient funds in 1921 necessitated a 25 per cent cut in the budget of the Family Welfare Association. After all possible retrenchments had been made, $18,000 needed to meet the reduced budget was raised by letter appeals for special families, the family agency when it joined the Alliance having insisted upon retaining the right to secure funds by this method.³

With mounting budgets, financial federations, which had never before had to face a depression, found that quality of leadership and not mere machinery of centralized money-raising was what counted. In meeting deficits some of the plans devised were so ingenious and resourceful that they have been again resorted to by many community funds during the pressure years of the nineteen thirties.

Similarly, activities of community councils showed differences in kinds of assistance rendered as well as in achievement. Of the 10 cities included in Mr. Klein's study where some form of central organization existed, only five took the lead in attacking the unemployment problem with a united front.

The success of the Chicago Council fully justified individual agencies in delegating leadership in emergency measures to a representative body created by the agencies. Through its Conference

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on Unemployment the Chicago Council of Social Agencies drew into the work not only the representatives of social agencies but also members of the Association of Commerce, Federation of Labor, Woman’s Club, Department of Health, and Illinois Free Employment Service.\(^1\) Representing 40 diversified organizations, the Conference was divided into a number of subcommittees which functioned in different fields, and when the Mayor’s Unemployment Commission was finally appointed, the Conference presented a program of accomplishment that made substantial activity on the part of the Commission unnecessary. It secured an appropriation from the Commercial Club to staff within the Illinois Free Employment Service an emergency department to find additional jobs. Through the voluntary efforts of its ward chairmen, members of the Woman’s City Club also assisted by stimulating requests for odd jobs which were reported to the public Employment Service.\(^2\) Chicago’s Conference on Unemployment also brought influence to bear upon the authorities to open a municipal lodging-house, and an appropriation of $18,000 was secured, although too late to be of use in the emergency. The appropriation was subsequently used to establish a central clearing bureau for homeless men. Equally valuable was the work of the Conference in controlling publicity on relief needs and emergency measures.\(^3\)

The Cleveland Welfare Federation’s work has already been mentioned.\(^4\) Minneapolis, Kansas City, Missouri, and Hartford, Connecticut, are included by Mr. Klein in the group whose community councils functioned with particular success. Limits upon co-ordinated effort were set only by “the initiative of executives, the mutual goodwill of the organizations, and their respective financial resources, equipment, and personnel.”\(^5\)

Special Provisions for Ex-Service Men

The ex-service man in most communities became one of the mass of unemployed and was assisted by whatever agencies offered relief, shelter, or other services to the needy. In several cities, however,

\(^1\) Chicago Council of Social Agencies, Minutes of Conference on Unemployment, August 8, 1921.
\(^3\) Klein, p. 226.
\(^4\) See p. 298.
\(^5\) Klein, p. 133.
special resources not available to others were open to unemployed war veterans. In Hartford, for example, interest from the $2,500,000 Connecticut State Fund for Soldiers was administered through the American Legion. The Boston Soldiers and Sailors Relief Department distributed funds to Civil War veterans, war veterans unable to work, and able-bodied ex-soldiers in need. With a total budget of over a million dollars for 1921 and a case load mounting to almost 5,000 by January 1, 1922, the Relief Department through its help to unemployed ex-service men bore a large share of the city’s unemployment load.1

Private agencies also rendered special assistance to veterans. In Buffalo the Spanish War Veterans’ Relief Association undertook the emergency task of giving grocery orders, coal, and in some instances rent. In spite of an expenditure of $68,000 in 1921, funds were totally inadequate. Investigation and follow-up visits were not thorough, and no trained personnel was available to handle other than relief problems in the families assisted.2 The Cleveland American Legion attempted to plan for approximately 15,000 homeless and unemployed ex-service men during the winter of 1921–1922. Although veterans who had homes were cared for by the regular social agencies of Cleveland, the American Legion helped by opening an employment office and found temporary, and later permanent work for as many of these men as possible.3

In still other cities services offered specifically to ex-service men were limited to opportunities for work. Thus in Kansas City, Missouri, the American Legion and the Red Cross together organized an Employment Bureau which made a singularly good record. In the first seven and one-half months of its existence in the winter of 1921–1922, 23 per cent of its placements were “comparatively permanent.” A similar effort to co-operate with other organizations in finding work was carried out by the Ramsey County (St. Paul) Central Committee of the American Legion,4 but it was not as successful as that in Kansas City.

1Ibid., pp. 157–158.
2 Report on Unemployment Relief in Buffalo. Issued by a Committee Representing the Relief Societies of Buffalo, January, 1922, p. 7.
3 Legionnaire, March 26, 1922. In files of the Cleveland Associated Charities. See also pp. 317–318 of this chapter.
4 Klein, pp. 71–72.
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The American Legion and other veterans' organizations both public and private functioned through employment bureaus, relief bureaus, or other special projects which fitted into general community needs. Sometimes they served only ex-service men; sometimes their scope included unemployed men in general. Preferential service for war veterans or any other group of needy is usually considered a poor policy, because the appeal is made on grounds other than real need. Coming so soon after the war, however, appeals in behalf of ex-service men met with a much readier response than plans for the unemployed as a group.

RELIEF PROGRAMS OF PREVIOUSLY EXISTING ORGANIZATIONS

The American Association for Organizing Family Social Work

Assistance available to cities through the American Association for Organizing Family Social Work,1 the national agency in the field of family welfare, was in marked contrast to that rendered by the President's Committee on Civic and Emergency Measures. With no preconceived program to put over as to how the emergency should be met by its constituent members, the Association turned its main efforts into serving as a channel for the exchange of experience on the basis of which local communities might plan their own programs.

In a two-day conference in the fall of 1921, representatives from 31 agencies in cities of 100,000 or over throughout the country met in New York City to discuss concrete problems which would have to be faced during the winter. The recommendations of the President's Conference on Unemployment, as they affected social work programs and the relation of social agencies to mayors' committees, came in for lively discussion. Effort was made to lay down specifications for a working relationship between family social work agencies and public agencies such as employment bureaus and public relief departments. Discussion ranged from desirable publicity programs to the care of the homeless. From the many divergent

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1 Previously mentioned under the name of the American Association of Societies for Organizing Charity. It is now the Family Welfare Association of America.
points of view expressed, no specific program for meeting unem-
ployment was outlined; the general principles which emerged, how-
ever, stressed the need for experimentation and flexible policies
based upon the particular requirements of each community.

Beginning in December, 1921, the Association published the
first of a series of exchange letters from cities with a population of
100,000 or over. The reports were sent at regular intervals to the
Association's offices, where they were edited and circulated to
member agencies. They comprise a valuable collection of month-
by-month plans and achievements which is still available as source
material upon the depression.

Relief to Families

The great achievement for both public and private relief agencies in the
winter of 1921–22 was that, whether relief came from public or private
sources, it was always given through the regular permanent organizations
and was, though with great variations of degree, as nearly as possible
individualized. No public distributions scandalized the rational conscience
of intelligent communities, at least so far as the extent of our study makes
possible this generalization.¹

Established agencies, both public and private, did not earn such
praise as given in the above paragraph for accomplishment in 1921
and 1922 without tremendous effort on their part. Conscious of
the community-wide implications of their activities, changes in
policies of intake, administration, or case-work procedure were en-
tered into only after careful deliberation. Opinions might differ as
to the extent to which a given family agency was responsible for
meeting relief needs due to unemployment, but there was general
agreement that it should share this responsibility with other social
agencies, and that the division of work depended upon local
conditions.

Private Family Agencies

Family societies in communities where the obligation for raising
funds was not assumed by a financial federation were put upon their
mettle to produce sufficiently large sums to meet the unemployment
crisis. Mr. Klein found nine cities which had no financial federation;

¹ Klein, p. 137.
in six of these the emergency demanded extraordinary efforts to raise additional money. They resorted to no new methods, merely using more intensively the ordinary channels for securing funds. By general agreement no public appeals through newspapers or other widely advertised sources were attempted by recognized social agencies. "The serious quantity relief problems of previous emergencies were thus avoided."¹

**Modifications in Procedure.** Case loads increased rapidly, and unemployment was the basis for application in an unusual proportion of the families. The trend is apparent in the annual statistics for the Boston Provident Association for this period:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal year ending September 30</th>
<th>Total applications</th>
<th>Applications in which unemployment was a factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Per cent of total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>861</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>87</td>
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<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>986</td>
<td>568</td>
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<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>808</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Larger case loads made necessary various internal adjustments on the part of private family societies, not the least important of which occurred in connection with personnel practices. In Baltimore, where the Family Welfare Association's lack of funds demanded retrenchment, case workers unequal to the heavier burden were the first to go.² Most agencies, however, found it necessary to expand, and well-trained and experienced people were in such demand that they were constantly being offered larger salaries and greater responsibility. Under pressure of the emergency, strong staff members who had "absorbed the principles and ideals of case work" felt dissatisfied with the way in which they were asked to compromise their standards, and occasionally sought other work

¹ Klein, p. 106.
that required less physical and mental strain and offered greater
satisfactions. An unusual amount of illness among staffs followed
months of overwork, and leaves of absence for recuperation were
frequent. Mr. Klein well describes the situation:

Perspective was difficult. Only by steady plodding and more hours of
toil a day than mind or body reasonably could bear was she [the case
worker] able to get through her daily grist. She had no time or poise to
relate her daily labors and the principles of her changing technique to a
comprehensive case work philosophy or to their relation to the general
economic situation.

To relieve the situation the Chicago United Charities was careful
to pay all salary increases which had been authorized before the
depression rather than to use the money for additional workers. Only by reducing possibilities of staff turnover in this way was the
agency able to hold its experienced people and thus handle a much
larger load without a disproportionate increase in relief.

Case loads for individual workers rose from 40 or 50 to as high as
175 per month in the Cleveland Associated Charities, the number of
inactive cases increasing as did also the number of instances in
which the only service rendered was material relief or referral for
employment. The Associated Charities found it difficult to secure
additional trained workers and therefore hired inexperienced per¬
sons, for the most part as aides to older visitors. Later used as a
method of expanding staffs in the depression of the nineteen thir¬
ties, this first experiment with aides in Cleveland, Mr. Klein states,
to a certain extent "defeated itself because of the additional de¬
mand that it made upon the already overburdened supervisors."

Private family agencies generally found that they could make use
of Red Cross trained volunteers whose services were no longer re¬
quired in war activities. As their experience warranted, they were
pressed into service as visitors, or took over office duties such as
answering the telephone, doing clerical work, or typing. Volunteer

1 Cleveland Associated Charities, Assistant General Secretary's Report to the
Executive Committee, April 5, 1922.
2 Klein, p. 125.
3 United Charities of Chicago, Minutes of the Board Meeting, August 22, 1921.
4 Report of Assistant General Secretary to Executive Committee of Cleveland
Associated Charities, April 5, 1922.
5 Klein, p. 121.
motor service was also utilized, and in Baltimore when they could not give time themselves, volunteers were urged to send a substitute by contributing toward the salary of an extra worker.1

Among private family agencies, attention was centered on the attempt to keep relief allowances for food and shelter adequate. Financial stringency in the agency was met by reduction in intake or limitation of the service aspect of the agencies' work. “Possibly, also, relief from public funds was more freely utilized by the private agencies than at other times,”2 especially where such items as coal or shoes were available from the public department. As often happens in a period of stress, the policies of family societies as to payment of rent were fluctuating and often unsatisfactory. Since the war, rents had been unusually high and their payment imposed an especially heavy burden upon agencies. The Cleveland Associated Charities, through its district advisory case committees, set arbitrary limits on the amounts it felt were reasonable for rent in various districts. In most instances landlords preferred to accept the reduction, as long as the agency continued to pay the bill, rather than to resort to eviction proceedings.

The Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity, which in January, 1922, set up an Emergency District to care for all cases in which unemployment was the basis for application, gave some thought to working out a relief policy for these cases. Families in which unemployment was the cause of need often had members who might find part-time or regular work. Consequently clients and agency looked upon the relief problem as temporary and met it on a week-to-week basis.

No weekly or monthly allowance for rent was made; rent was paid in each case when it seemed unwise for the family to go further into debt. A clothing allowance was not provided. In a temporary situation, replenishment of clothing can sometimes be postponed. Where new clothing was essential it was provided at the time it was needed. . . . Coal also was given as needed.3


2 Klein, pp. 109, 113-114.

Food was budgeted according to the requirements of the family, but instead of the cash relief customarily given in the Society's regular districts, grocery orders were substituted and cash distributed only for meat and sundries. This policy was adopted because it was feared that families on an emergency budget would spend cash to meet other needs and go without adequate food.

In addition to changes in relief policies, family societies made numerous other internal adjustments in their work. Decisions were effected earlier in regard to transfer of cases to other agencies, and clearer definition of scope was attempted. Thus the Baltimore Family Welfare Association deliberately refused "cases for which another organization was organized to care, or cases which obviously offered no opportunity for constructive family work." If the "presenting symptoms" seemed to indicate that care by the Society to Protect Children from Cruelty and Immorality would be appropriate, immediate reference was made to that agency; investigations for the military division of the Red Cross, including applications for discharge, "A.W.O.L.," and verification of illness were discontinued. A new arrangement was worked out with the St. Vincent de Paul Society by which it agreed to accept applications from families it had previously known and those calling for the placement of children in Catholic families. This made it possible for the family agency to decrease its visiting staff by one member. The position of dietitian was not filled when it became vacant, and a district secretary, who had been released on salary to do community work in her district, was recalled to her regular duties.

With rapidly mounting loads case workers often failed to close cases because they lacked time to make the necessary final visits to be sure that the situation warranted closing. If the family failed to apply for further assistance this was often considered sufficient basis for taking no further action, although actually the family might still need service. The Minneapolis Associated Charities decided that clerical details could be reduced without too great loss of efficiency, and substituted penciled memoranda for the regular

2 Klein, p. 120.
case record in instances where only some incidental service had been given. Statistical data formerly required regularly from workers were reduced in number with a frank statement that accuracy of case count would probably be impaired.

The most outstanding illustration of modification of work within a private family agency occurred with the establishment, previously mentioned, of the Emergency District of the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity. This segregation, begun in order to save the regular staff from pressure, made possible differential treatment of the needy unemployed. In February, 1921, the Society for Organizing Charity had closed its intake to families of unemployed persons because of financial difficulties and referred them to the Department of Public Welfare, which had just secured a special fund of $13,000 for relief of the unemployed, the first move in the city's re-entry into the administration of outdoor relief.

Private agencies urged City Councils to make an appropriation of $100,000 for 1922 but only $2,500 was granted. By the end of January, 1922, when this fund was practically exhausted, an anonymous gift of $25,000 to the Society for Organizing Charity made possible the opening of the special district. The agency realized that "administration of this fund would bring, inevitably, a large influx of new work" and decided to handle cases in which unemployment was the only problem in a separate office, leaving to the regular districts families in which other difficulties were also present.

The Emergency District was manned by trained workers with at least two years' experience, on the theory that they would be better able to adapt their "technique to a special type of problem and to an emergency situation, at the same time holding to the

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1 American Association for Organizing Family Social Work, Reports on the Unemployment Situation in Cities of 100,000 and Over. No. 2, December 21, 1921.

2 Philadelphia had had no public outdoor relief since 1879, although during the depression of 1914-1915 it had made appropriations for outdoor relief and the money had been administered through a private agency. (See p. 247, where the 1914-1915 experiment is discussed.) The family agency's activity in obtaining the public appropriation in 1921 was necessitated by its financial limitations rather than by any strong conviction on its part of the advisability of the development of a public department. (Interview with Karl de Schweinitz, General Secretary of the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity in 1921-1922, on May 25, 1932.)

fundamentals of good case work.” Policies of relief-giving worked out in this district have already been discussed. A modified first interview focused upon items that had to do mainly with the immediate situation, such as the date and circumstances of the beginning of a client’s unemployment; earnings in last job and in other jobs held for the previous three years; how the family had managed during unemployment; the situation at the moment, with especial reference to the children’s health, future prospects for work, and the family’s own plan.

Investigation was also curtailed and consultation was suggested only with the last two employers, one relative on each side of the family, the church attended, and present medical sources. For previous neighborhood references the visitor was to interview only one from among the group of landlord, neighbor, tradesman, school, physician, church. Actually even less investigation than outlined above was possible, as six visitors were attempting to cover the whole city except the two most remote sections. Great care was also taken to leave health supervision with medical agencies, since workers from the special district undertook to cover only relief needs.

The Emergency District functioned for a little more than two and one-half months, or until the fund was exhausted. Families needing further care and “straight” unemployment applications were thereafter referred to the Department of Public Welfare, which had in the meantime secured an appropriation of $22,500. Private agencies lent their workers to the Department, since no allowance for administration had been included in the appropriation.

Even though the Emergency District remained open for only a short time, the experiment was suggestive of ways in which casework procedure could be simplified to apply to a specific situation. Unemployed applicants received prompt attention, and the family agency had the stimulating experience of carrying a challenging job through to its completion. Necessity had required that the public agency’s responsibility should be taken over temporarily; the special district as it was developed made possible the most profitable use of that necessity.

1 See pp. 308–309.
In many communities private agencies worked out a clearer definition of their field, with special emphasis upon division of responsibility with public agencies. In Cleveland the outdoor relief division of the public department limited its function almost entirely to granting relief in kind in the form of coal, shoes, and groceries. The private family agencies accepted such public supplementation to relief budgets of families under their care in order to lessen their own expenditures.

The Minneapolis Associated Charities, in view of the rapidly increasing demands upon its diminished treasury, decided to refer simple unemployment cases to the public department. Standards of work in the latter organization were so poor at the time that it was necessary for the Associated Charities to organize a formal protest to the Board of Public Welfare before even a semblance of adequate care could be assured. Even then efforts to persuade the public agency to use the social service exchange and to admit a representative of the private society to conferences met with indifferent success, for the gap between the public and private agencies was still broad.¹

Quite a different situation was found in Boston, where an agreement had long existed between the Family Welfare Society and the Board of Overseers of the Public Welfare Department that the latter would care for families needing continuous cash allowances. Since the private agencies were unable to increase their funds to care for the burden created by unemployment, the public agency agreed to take over such cases in addition, and to supply relief while the private agencies continued to visit and provide for other than relief needs where additional service was necessary. When in some instances the public agency was unable to furnish relief on an adequate scale, private agencies were able to supplement, but this arrangement was considered unsound in principle.²

¹ Letter from Frank J. Bruno, General Secretary of the Associated Charities of Minneapolis, to the American Association for Organizing Family Social Work, February 2, 1922. In files of the Family Welfare Association of America.

1920–1922: THE POST-WAR DEPRESSION

Clearly apparent in the literature of the times is the previously observed reluctance of the private field to regard public departments as having a continuous and developing share in the handling of unemployment relief. The attitude current at this period is reflected in one of Mr. Klein’s conclusions:

The fact that some public departments of welfare have found it easier to obtain additional funds than private agencies, that frequently those departments were quite willing to assume the added burden, and that the quantitative change in the private agency’s case load forced down the standards of treatment, has tended to spread the theory that unemployment relief is fundamentally the duty of the public authorities and that, therefore, the private agencies should carry an extra burden of this type only under protest, if at all. On these particular grounds, at any rate, such a conclusion does not seem warranted.1

It is impossible to estimate for the country as a whole in what proportion the burden of unemployment relief was divided between public and private agencies during 1920–1922; but it is probable that the public treasury was even then bearing a larger part of the costs than private agencies imagined; and that, although these continued to look askance upon the extension of public relief, reality had already outstripped their theories.

ASSISTANCE THROUGH EMPLOYERS AND TRADE UNIONS

Mr. Klein found several unusual relief arrangements in effect between employers and their employes who had been laid off. Employers were motivated in part by “the desirability of having access to workers who had previously been employed in the same or similar industries,” in part by “a sense of social responsibility, . . . and a personal interest in employes rendered idle through no fault of their own.”2 In some instances, agreements were made between employers and the trade unions represented in their personnel, by which relief was given from funds set up by the firm itself or contributed by members of the working force still employed.

An outstanding example was the International Harvester Company, which adopted various methods to care for its employes. When reduction in force became necessary, rotation of available

1 Klein, p. 218.
2 Klein, p. 143.
UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF IN PERIODS OF DEPRESSION

employment was based on "efficiency, needs and length of service." When a plant had to be completely shut down, the employment manager tried to secure work elsewhere for as many men as possible.

In the same company the age limit for retirement on pension was lowered, and a loan fund was established for the benefit of former employes who had worked three years or more. Another firm reported by Mr. Klein kept contact with its 500 laid-off employes, giving temporary work on the maintenance of its plant to some, and to others providing relief or extending credit.

Trade union members did not form a large proportion of applicants to family agencies. This was partly due to the comparatively few workers who were organized, but special studies indicated that union members did not apply for relief even in proportion to their numbers.

Trade union relief took various forms in the depression. In St. Paul and Minneapolis the local trades and labor councils requested social agencies to refer to them for assistance any union members applying, while in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, the trade unions contributed funds to the family welfare agency upon the understanding that the latter would care for any union members in need. News of the hardships among Philadelphia textile workers led a group of nearby farmers active in the Farmer Labor Party to send barrels of fruit and produce to be distributed through the locals of the textile workers' union. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers of Chicago established a revolving loan fund of $25,000. Other unions gave relief either in cash or kind, in some instances establishing kitchens where cooked food was distributed.

Information on the subject of trade union assistance for the unemployed is as meager for the years 1920–1922 as for the earlier depressions. Mr. Klein reports upon contemporary plans which were outstanding in the 15 cities he studied, but a fuller inquiry would have undoubtedly revealed many other plans.

1 Klein, p. 148. 2 Philadelphia Public Ledger, January 13, 1921.
CARE OF THE HOMELESS

Nature of the Problem

Large numbers of non-resident single men had been attracted to manufacturing centers by war-time demands of industry, only to be set adrift when these demands ceased. To them were added many demobilized soldiers who were unable or unwilling to settle down, and who scattered across the country in search of work wherever they thought it might be found. Migratory laborers in the Middle West and Northwest, unable to supplement their seasonal wages by the odd jobs which they customarily picked up at slack periods, drifted to the large cities. The homeless population included not only employables but also the mentally and physically handicapped, and panhandlers who saw their opportunity to profit by the facilities set up for the homeless without the danger of being offered work.

Characteristic differences in the extent of the problem and the resources for dealing with it existed in different sections of the country. Mr. Klein found that in eastern cities the rapidly increasing number of homeless men presented the chief difficulty. In New York City it was necessary to open three emergency shelters, financed by public funds but under the administration of the Salvation Army, to augment the resources of private agencies and of the Municipal Lodging-House. Southern cities, on the other hand, suffered less than other regions, so that no marked change was necessary in their program for the homeless. In middle western centers of migratory labor, such as Chicago, Minneapolis, and Kansas City, the unusual influx of homeless men made it necessary greatly to extend the provision for feeding and sheltering them. Generally speaking, care of the homeless was not considered the responsibility of social agencies caring for resident family men, but of a separate organization. A work test was felt to be desirable, but the amount of work which could be done by relief labor in a community was limited, and the resident unemployed had a prior claim upon it, so that it was not easy to employ masses of homeless men at tasks that would test their willingness to work for food, shelter, or clothing.

UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF IN PERIODS OF DEPRESSION

Care through Public Agencies

In his study of the period, Mr. Klein found that on the whole, private agencies maintained higher standards for care of homeless men than did public agencies, but that their lack of funds forced the greater part of the responsibility into the hands of public officials. Chicago through its conferences on unemployment urged the city to reopen its Municipal Lodging-House, which had been closed for years, but the appropriation that was finally made for this purpose was delayed so long that the support of homeless men during most of the depression fell to private agencies, such as the Salvation Army and church institutions. Breadlines were opened, and existing lodging-houses taxed beyond capacity. Conditions were reported as deplorable.¹

In Minneapolis, however, the Board of Public Welfare responded to a similar request by the Council of Social Agencies made in the fall of 1921. The director of the Union City Mission who was also manager of a high-grade workingmen's hotel took charge of the city's problem. Resources of the two agencies were extended to meet the needs of all homeless men within the community and to serve as a nucleus for joint planning. Municipal authorities appropriated a total of $45,000 during the winter to finance the work. Although no work test was provided, "the normal responsibility for the relief of the transient homeless of Minneapolis was recognized both by the government and by the philanthropic conscience of the city. The dual responsibility in financing and administering raised difficulties. But the method of successful procedure was clearly visible. ..."²

Care through Private Agencies

In Cincinnati the Mayor's Committee at its organization meeting referred the handling of homeless men, as well as the care of local families, to established social agencies. A joint committee from six agencies opened a Central Lodging Bureau for the homeless in a city-owned building, but because the cost of installing equipment

¹ (Chicago) United Charities, Sixty-six Years of Service. An account of the activities of the United Charities of Chicago, including reports of social work done and financial statement for the period October 1, 1919, to October 1, 1922, p. 34.
² Klein, p. 173.
and plumbing was prohibitive, used the rooms only for interviewing and itself managed no shelters. Municipal authorities held that state laws prevented the city from assuming the cost of caring for the homeless, and the Community Chest authorized expenditures not to exceed $10,000 for the purpose. Actually since staff members were lent by the co-operating agencies, only a little over $8,000 was spent in payment for food and shelter through tickets issued on restaurants and men’s hotels already being conducted by religious agencies. Continuous inspection by the City Health Department maintained the standard of food served at the restaurants. Each man reported daily to the State-City Free Labor Exchange for work before receiving his tickets, but as the few available opportunities for employment usually went to local residents, this was only a gesture in the direction of a work test. In spite of this lack, the Bureau had the advantage of an experienced social service staff which utilized existing facilities instead of spending its limited funds to set up new institutions.

Cleveland was outstanding in the care of its homeless, since services beyond mere food and lodging were available. The Wayfarers’ Lodge conducted for many years by the Associated Charities cared for both transient and resident homeless during 1920–1921. Applicants requiring some form of individualized service were referred to a special agent of the Associated Charities who spent half his time at the Lodge. Standards did not include medical examination or satisfactory bedding, but meals were nutritious, clothing was fumigated, and night clothes supplied. A wood yard was provided in connection with the shelter where men worked to earn their meals and bed.

During the winter of 1921–1922, a special fund of $57,000 was raised by the Community Chest, with which two additional lodges were opened and maintained with higher standards of service than during the previous winter. One of these cared for resident homeless, placing no time limit on the period of care; the other was a Barracks for ex-service men. Four hours’ work a day was required

1 Agencies represented on the committee were the American Red Cross, American Legion, Associated Charities, Bureau of Catholic Charities, Salvation Army, and the United Jewish Social Agencies. Conrad Sherman, Report of Central Lodging Bureau, submitted to the Cincinnati Council of Social Agencies, 1922. In files of the Family Welfare Association of America.
in return for care. Necessary clothing was earned by extra hours of work. Resident but homeless ex-service men remained in the shelter until work could be found for them and a week’s pay was in their pockets. Individualized service was continued by the Associated Charities and an unusually diversified work program developed, including not only maintenance of the lodges, but unpaid work in other private institutions and street cleaning or other labor for the city. Each shelter was managed by a committee of citizens, several veterans’ organizations being represented on the one which operated the Barracks. The plan received no newspaper publicity, although cards were given out to the general public to distribute to those who asked aid. On the whole, Cleveland maintained during the emergency a remarkably high standard of care for the homeless. The program was centrally administered by a private agency already experienced in the work, but the community at large met the expense and through well-integrated committees shared responsibility for carrying out the plan.

**Urbain Ledoux’s Slave Mart**

One of the picturesque figures of the depression was Urbain Ledoux, better known by his nom de guerre of “Mr. Zero.” After a varied career which at twenty-one included a lectureship at Harvard and an American consulship, he adopted Buddhism and, inspired according to his statements by a vision, undertook to bring the conditions of the homeless forcibly and dramatically to the attention of an unheeding public. He established a “Hotel de Jobless” in Boston and auctioned off unemployed “slaves” on Boston Common before a huge crowd. Men without work, stripped to the waist, described their various abilities and offered themselves to the highest bidders. Some jobs were secured at $25 for two weeks’ work without board, or four weeks with board. Within a month, Mr. Zero’s “shorn lambs of labor” were ordered out of Boston by the police. Investigation had disclosed that 162 residents of his institution were professional panhandlers who had been at-

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1 Klein, pp. 162–165.
2 Chenery, William L., “Mr. Zero, the Man Who Feeds the Hungry.” In the Survey, vol. 47, October 1, 1921, p. 15.
3 Philadelphia Public Ledger, September 10, 1921.
tracted to Boston from other cities and even from Canada.\(^1\) Ledoux also organized several groups in New York for care of the homeless, but did not succeed in establishing himself there at that time. When the President’s Conference on Unemployment convened in Washington, Ledoux presented about 50 unemployed men from New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore as “human documents.” Some of them gladly accepted farm work in North Dakota offered by a member of the Conference.

Ledoux’s efforts were poorly organized and sporadic. Turned out of one city, he appeared in another, putting on his program under the banner of a religious movement and attracting chiefly adventurers and panhandlers from among homeless men.

**ATTEMPTS TO ORGANIZE REGULAR EMPLOYMENT**

The usual struggle to find employment preceded work-relief enterprises. Trade unions spread work by sharing available jobs among all their unemployed members. Centralization of employment service and persistent advertisement for jobs often made available a certain amount of temporary work. Odd jobs in repairing and improving property and buildings were rounded up in many cities by systematic house-to-house canvass.

It is, of course, difficult to estimate how many jobs are really made available by emergency employment service and accompanying publicity and how many are merely cleared through them. It is quite likely that by far the greater number are found by the unemployed themselves in their day-long searches from house to house.\(^2\)

Where free employment bureaus existed they were drawn into plans for mobilizing work opportunities. Social agencies offered financial support or lent staff members for the emergency period. In Cleveland, for example, the Welfare Federation, after contributing for some time to the State-City Free Labor Exchange for which public appropriations were inadequate, resolved to discontinue this assistance and force the responsibility back upon public funds by June, 1921. When the time arrived, however, the Federation decided that it was imperative to make an additional grant of $12,000 to cover the last six months of the year. This they did in

\(^1\) New York Times, September 30, 1921.  
\(^2\) Klein, p. 82.
view of the essential nature of the Exchange’s services during the depression and the probability that withdrawal of private aid would jeopardize standards and public support already secured.¹

In Baltimore, where increasing applications from unemployed persons had demonstrated a need for a clearing house for such employment opportunities as were available, social agencies were responsible for securing the establishment of the Municipal Employment Bureau in December, 1921.²

Where adequate and flexible service was normally available in a public employment agency, emergency efforts to find jobs were most easily undertaken under its auspices, as was effectively done in Chicago, where four additional staff members were provided for the Illinois Free Employment Service, their salaries being paid by two associations of business men. Auxiliary service in procuring jobs was offered by the Woman’s City Club, Chicago Association of Commerce, Manufacturers’ Association, Federation of Churches, and the Fire Department. Even increased procurement services, however, could not overcome limitations in the actual number of available jobs. In spite of disappointing results, the enlarged employment offices “advertised the service, helped educate the public regarding the unemployment situation, furthered the centralization of free placement work, and knitted more closely the co-operative relations between the public employment service, the employing public, and social agencies.”³

**WORK RELIEF**

Large-scale work-relief projects were not attempted under either public or private auspices during 1921 and 1922. For the most part private social agencies developed real work opportunities for which no funds were available, and arranged with employers to pay wages to persons selected from their relief lists. Men thus chosen had the feeling of doing something worthwhile; in some instances they worked side by side with regular employes. Daily wages were

¹ Cleveland Welfare Federation, Minutes of the Board of Trustees, May 13, 1921.
³ Klein, p. 67.
kept at the current level, and assignment was for a sufficient number of days a week to meet budgetary needs. Careful selection of clients who would benefit by having work to do rather than by receiving direct relief enhanced the therapeutic values of such experiments, which re-emphasized the necessity of careful supervision under auspices that would assure individualization of workmen.

In Boston, it is true, projects were financed by public funds, but no mass activity was undertaken. The Overseers of the Poor extended the use of the wood yard at the Wayfarers’ Lodge so that family men who were unemployed might work for their food orders. For the year beginning February 1, 1920, 347 such men were sent to the wood yard, an increase of 283 over the previous year. The next twelve months brought the number of “order men,” as they were called, up to 13,381, a graphic indication of increasing unemployment.

The governor of Massachusetts appointed in 1921 a state Committee to Promote Work, which prevailed upon the legislature sitting that fall to appropriate $100,000 for work relief. Only $60,000 of the fund was expended, entirely within the metropolitan area of Boston. The first project was to clear away the debris caused by a sleet storm in November, 1921. Two hundred jobs, paying $3.25 a day, were assigned through the State Public Employment Bureau and the American Legion to any resident applicant. Private agencies raised objections to this procedure, and thereafter work was assigned to unemployed men recommended by social agencies, so that the project became in fact work relief under public auspices benefiting clients of private societies.

As in 1914-1915, relief work on a limited scale under careful supervision was organized by the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor and shared to some extent by the New York Charity Organization Society. Men physically fit for outdoor labor were taken on at Bronx Zoological Park and the Botanical Gardens as well as at a fresh-air camp conducted by the

1 (Boston) Overseers of the Poor, Fifty-seventh Annual Report, February 1, 1920, to January 31, 1921, p. 5.
2 Idem, Fifty-eighth Annual Report, February 1, 1921, to January 31, 1922, pp. 5-6.
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Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, and were put on necessary improvements which could not otherwise be undertaken because of limited city funds. Wages of $3.00 a day were paid and the city reimbursed by the Association, the men being assigned as many days a week as would meet the minimum needs of their families.¹

The Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity co-operated with the Lighthouse Settlement to build a playground, the Settlement furnishing supervision and materials, and the Society paying the wage bill, which amounted to about $5,000. The Settlement assigned half the jobs to unemployed men in its neighborhood; the Society for Organizing Charity selected the remainder from its relief lists, averaging 35 men at a time. Unskilled workers were paid 35 cents an hour, those doing more skilled work 60 cents. Most of the men worked 24 hours a week, which was intended to cover family food costs; but at the discretion of social workers, additional hours might be assigned in exceptional cases. Wages were paid at the Settlement, the Society appearing only as the means through which its clients secured temporary part-time employment. Several hospitals and the College Settlement accepted men on a similar basis to clean, paint, repair furniture, do plumbing, plastering, carpentry, or electrical work. Women were taken on to do ironing and sewing. The Society also placed 50 men on half-time in city parks at $3.00 a day. Employment was given to 199 persons in all, and $4,083 spent for wages. As a result of these experiments the agency registered its belief that made work should always be kept within limits small enough to be an adjunct to good case work. The variety of work opportunities made possible “at least a crude kind of adjustment of the man to the job”; for men unable to do heavy outdoor laboring there were diversified inside jobs utilizing previous industrial experience.²

On the whole the work relief undertaken during 1920–1922 demonstrated the strength and adaptability of small units in which men were placed after a careful study of their situations. In those

² All information on Philadelphia work relief is from Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity’s Annual Report, January 1, 1922, to December 31, 1922: The Aftermath of Unemployment, pp. 25–27.
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cities where work relief was used to reinforce case work but given only a subordinate place in the general relief program, it proved most valuable.

PUBLIC WORKS

One of the purposes of the President's Conference on Unemployment was to stimulate local public works as a relief measure. In practice, such steps as passing the necessary legislation, securing popular approval of bond issues at the polls, and receiving bids and letting contracts took so much time that "a great deal of money appropriated for public works of an emergency relief nature could not be used until after the time of the year when such aid was most needed." Furthermore, municipalities followed no uniform definition in the analysis of their appropriations for work so that unemployment relief as such could not be segregated.

In St. Louis, however, a city ordinance, passed as an emergency measure to become immediately effective, provided $80,000 "for the purpose of supplying work to the unemployed and needy of the city." The ordinance stated specifically that the enterprises were not to include those already provided for by special taxes or bond issues. A later ordinance appropriated an additional $20,000 to hire teams and teamsters. Funds were assigned to cover work on streets, sewers, parks, buildings, power plants, and the municipal lighting system. Applicants were required to show a month's residence and were rated as unskilled laborers, receiving $2.50 a day. A total of 3,163 men registered, but how many were actually employed is not clear.

The St. Louis Provident Association complained because the men it referred were not given preference, stating its conviction that with a limited fund to expend, the best interests of the public could be served by taking on men who were well fitted for the work and whose destitution made them "objects of charity." The fact that need alone was not the basis of employment stamps the project as public works rather than work relief.

1 Klein, p. 75.
2 Tuttle, Elizabeth, "Work Relief in St. Louis in Previous Depressions." Chap. 4 of The Work Relief Project of the St. Louis Provident Association. A master's thesis submitted to Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, 1934. Mimeographed copy available in the Library of the University.
References indicate that Buffalo secured funds to repair public buildings; New Bedford, Massachusetts, began the construction of much needed schools; Cleveland hastened to carry out six large construction projects costing $15,000,000; Minneapolis sold bonds for public works amounting to $980,000; and Milwaukee planned public expenditures totaling $10,000,000. In addition Mr. Klein mentions that Sioux Falls, South Dakota, substituted hand digging for power in some sewer construction and water supply work and made a special appropriation of $75,000 for public works to relieve unemployment. The United States Children's Bureau publication in its studies of the effect of unemployment on children mentions that Racine, Wisconsin, in August, 1921, appropriated $150,000 for road and park work to relieve unemployment.

1 (Buffalo) Fifty Years of Family Social Work, 1877–1927, Charity Organization Society, p. 121.
3 Klein, p. 76.
CHAPTER XII

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

HISTORY, if it has any value, should offer the experience of the past in such form as would enable us to plan more wisely for the present and the future. Those responsible for unemployment relief measures in times of distress have too often concerned themselves solely with the immediate crisis and made no attempt to profit by earlier discoveries. Relief methods in each depression here discussed seem to present superficially the same picture, but a more searching analysis will reveal the development of trends, begun as experiments and dictated by the contemporary structure of social work, but giving hints of what will develop. Subsistence gardens, commissaries, work relief, public improvements to absorb the unemployed, local and state planning committees, forms of assistance that are more and more being used, did not take form suddenly. Their beginnings may be seen in earlier efforts although these beginnings may now seem antiquated. But as time went on they succeeded in adapting themselves in a surprisingly flexible manner to the current need of each period, taking on new form and substance to meet new pressure.

A brief recapitulation of the outstanding features in relief of distress in each depression studied may serve to clarify both the unique characteristics of assistance in any one period and the general progress of common methods. Considering the country as a whole, the material on any of the depressions is necessarily fragmentary. In the text, evidence of what went on in specific places has been cited; in the following summaries greater freedom has been used in attempting to reconstruct what actually took place in any one depression.

1857–1858

Eastern cities, more industrialized than those in the Middle West, were especial sufferers from the depression of 1857–1858.
Methods for relief of the unemployed familiar in later years were also used in this depression.

In cities whose needs demanded some form of social organization the existing structure had developed both public outdoor relief and private relief societies, although both did not always exist in the same communities. Various combinations of public and private agencies existed, including in two communities at least an arrangement by which volunteer workers investigated applications and spent public money for relief, or requisitioned public money for particular cases. The functions of private and public agencies were not clearly defined.

Criticism of public relief took the same form as do the arguments current today. Thus the Boston Overseers of the Poor, who were appointed by the party in power, were accused of partisanship and laxity in the expenditure of funds. In Chicago an emergency municipal appropriation was administered by a committee of aldermen, who bitterly fought attempts to have the Chicago Relief and Aid Society disburse the money and revealed quite clearly in their recorded speeches how loath they were to relinquish a powerful political resource.

To private organizations the depression offered an opportunity to prove their efficiency and their resourcefulness in handling the extra burden without necessitating the setting up of questionable emergency agencies. They were severely attacked for rigidity of method and lack of sympathy for distress, and were as vigorously defended for the efficiency of these methods. Private agencies strained to increase their funds at a time when many of their contributors were themselves hard hit; one organization, the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, expanded its usefulness by establishing district offices in the poorer neighborhoods. In Boston the Provident Association justified an increase of one staff member by the anticipated economy resulting from systematic investigation.

Emergency agencies sprang up in cities where established organizations were already functioning as well as in those where no other form of relief for the unemployed existed. Agencies, either public or private, set up for the emergency were criticized for their inadequacies and mismanagement. Mass feeding through soup
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kitchens and breadlines, disapproved by some communities, was approved by others. In two communities newly organized groups spent both public and private funds. The volunteer ward associations of Philadelphia, originating as emergency agencies, later became the accepted form of organization for much of the relief-giving of that city. Residents of a ward, sometimes augmented by outsiders, banded together to assume responsibility for raising funds and distributing help to the unemployed within their boundaries. Methods in the various wards were similar, but each ward society maintained its independent organization with its own officers, treasury, and volunteer workers. Money was raised usually through benefit performances or pledges received from different families. A method of “block visiting” permitted volunteer visitors to issue relief orders for goods dispensed from ward warehouses. The effect on small tradesmen of wholesale purchasing and distribution of goods did not come in for serious consideration.

Permanent agencies undoubtedly grew out of the needs of the period. The Chicago Relief and Aid Society, however, which has usually been considered an outgrowth of this depression, had existed for some years and had actually obtained its charter in February, 1857, before the panic occurred. The Chicago agency, the ward associations in Philadelphia, and certain emergency agencies in Massachusetts towns followed the organization and methods of successful relief agencies whose reputation had spread over the country. Probably numerous other agencies established at this time followed the same pattern, but no adequate record of their activity is to be found.

Labor protested against enforced idleness. In New York and Philadelphia labor demonstrations helped indirectly in securing appropriations for public works or work relief for the unemployed. With the limited evidence available, the distinction between public works and work relief is not always clear. In New York City cumbersome legal machinery weakened the emergency value of public improvements. The difficulties centering about the issuance and sale of city bonds and other legal questions vitiated hoped-for benefits from an emergency appropriation for work relief so far as immediate usefulness was concerned.

Migration to farms, especially in the thinly settled West, was
much discussed, and in Philadelphia and New York agencies were organized on a small scale to send young women to western states as domestic servants. Placement of city-bred men as farm hands was found ineffective then as later, since they did not as a rule adapt themselves easily to country work and life.

1873–1879

The long depression of the seventies gave rise to numerous conjectures as to the extent of unemployment. Estimates showed wide variations and often, upon analysis, gross errors. Although methods and results were unreliable there was a growing desire for more exact knowledge of the problem. The Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor in 1878 undertook two state-wide surveys through police and assessors in cities and towns in an effort to measure unemployment. In Boston the number of applications for police station shelter by the homeless was available over a period of years and offered a basis for comparison. Social agencies kept statistics of a sort, but they were often misleading; changes in internal organization or arbitrary limitation of function because of inadequate funds affected annual reports without reflecting the real conditions in communities.

In the social philosophy of the day a distinction was made between those whose personal shortcomings were held to be to blame for their need, and those whose distress was due to causes outside their own control, such as unemployment. In the plans of private agencies one is aware of ever present concern over the supposed weakening effect of too generous relief upon the character of the recipient. Labor unions in some industries had by this time acquired a strength which resulted in protests against the reduction of wages and lengthening of hours. Workers in the building trades, longshoremen, shoemakers, and coopers struck in New York, and the violence of strikers on the railroads in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New York resulted in calling out federal troops and state militia. Opinion in some quarters held that unemployment relief offered a means of subsistence to laborers during strikes when they should have accepted without protest inevitable industrial changes represented by lower wages.

Social work organization had developed to the point where un-
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employment relief in at least two cities was planned on a basis of total community need. A citizens’ committee in Indianapolis after considering various plans for administering a municipal appropriation for relief which it had been instrumental in securing, finally divided the territory and the money between the two leading private agencies of the city, the committee functioning as arbitrator of differences in policy and standards. In New York a group of social agencies held, as the result of a survey, that available public and private funds were adequate for the emergency. Their efforts were therefore directed to organizing a registration bureau whose function was to restrict the use of resources to the “deserving poor.” The depression undoubtedly created a need for better coordination in the work of social agencies; but efforts in joint community planning were short-lived because of jealousies between agencies and differences in standards of work.

Indirectly, the trend toward integration of community agencies was apparent in the rapid development of charity organization societies at this time. In form they reflected the influence of similar societies in Europe; their immediate purpose, however, was to combat extravagant public relief and prevent haphazard duplication of effort among private agencies; hard times accentuated the need and accelerated the progress of the movement.

The more strongly entrenched private agencies, because of increased demands from the community, faced critical situations either from lack of funds or, as in the case of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society, from the agencies being known to possess money. The range of adjustments carried out gives a realistic picture of the stage of growth reached by private agencies in the seventies. They sought in the emergency a more careful definition of function and modification of methods to insure regular investigation and visitation. Classification of cases according to problems presented helped in deciding upon intake and utilization of special funds for the unemployed; and once again paid staffs became increasingly important in assisting the large number of volunteers. In several instances financial stringency led agencies to use their reserve funds until this precarious financing forced them to reduce the scope of their work, regardless of needs within the communities as a whole. Social agencies continued to avoid and oppose widespread publicity in
securing expanded funds for relief, fearing that this would tend to increase demands upon social agencies out of all proportion to existing need and to stimulate poorly planned efforts to relieve distress.

As private agencies grew in numbers, public agencies were under increased pressure to improve their methods. Public relief followed no one pattern throughout the country, but varied confusingly from city to city according to the particular community setting in which it functioned. Public funds were administered in some communities by private agencies. Weak public departments such as the department in Brooklyn, vacillated from one practice to another in a vain attempt to achieve economy and efficiency. Chaos in the administration of public money was reduced to order in Boston where a well-established body, the Overseers of the Poor, improved their methods to meet the needs of the time. Throughout the period, resentment continued to rise against waste and harmful methods in public relief, the attack being led in many communities by established private agencies.

Surprisingly enough, the form in which relief should be administered received wide discussion at this early period. Centralized distribution of supplies through warehouses was felt by some to be wasteful and to disregard individual differences of taste and need; food orders on local grocers were criticized because the grocers were found cheating clients on price, quality, and quantity, and the opinion was expressed in one instance that while a few clients might abuse the privilege of cash relief, the majority of them would make as good or better use of money than they would of other forms of assistance.

It is true that numerous undesirable temporary agencies sprang up in the form of soup kitchens or shelters which attracted the homeless from other communities, but many social agencies in the seventies were outspoken in their criticism of advertised distribution of supplies by well-meaning but inexperienced groups. In Philadelphia, however, the emergency groups, organized as ward-relief associations, approximated the status of carefully managed, adequate agencies whose policies were practically those of charity organization societies.

During the seventies, provision for the homeless was for the most part limited to several nights’ shelter under revolting conditions in
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district police stations. Prisoners and homeless men mingled freely, with no attempt to provide more than some sort of shelter, and often without proper provision for sanitation. Following a successful experiment with a separate shelter for homeless women, the Boston Overseers of the Poor were assigned the care of homeless men in 1875. A shelter was opened offering adequate facilities, and the installation of a work test decreased the numbers who had previously applied for help at police stations. Standards for physical care had at least begun to emerge. The distinction between public work and work relief in the seventies was clearer than during the previous depression. Public work was largely limited to stone-crushing and the construction and repair of streets, while work relief included wood yards, street-cleaning, track maintenance for the railroads about Boston, and sewing-rooms for women, a range of projects interesting in the light of work-relief achievement in later depressions. The effect of low scales of pay upon industrial wages was never questioned, nor were particular efforts made to suit the work to applicants.

Information on the depression of the seventies is more easily available than for that of the fifties; but this alone does not account for the more clearly defined and purposeful development shown in unemployment relief. Social work itself had begun to take on a more complex organization as reflected in the increased assurance with which it approached the emergency.

1893–1897

The winter of 1893–1894 called forth extensive emergency measures. It was followed by a revival of industry, but the succeeding winters brought unusual demands upon established social agencies, since emergency organization had been largely terminated after the first winter. In contrast to earlier depressions, organized effort was at a level which provided a sound basis for emergency measures and emphasized united action for community needs. Charity organization societies, the oldest founded less than twenty years earlier, had laid equal stress upon co-ordination of efforts for community betterment and individualization of the treatment of those in distress. Social settlements, too, deeply entrenched in their neighborhoods and ardent for social reform, stood ready to con-
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tribute their energies to meeting the unemployment crisis. Labor organizations had come to possess strength and had become a factor in the consideration of emergency measures; unorganized labor made itself felt through such demonstrations as Coxey’s Army.

Although the results were far from reliable, efforts to measure unemployment showed a much wider interest on the part of many groups in various methods of securing data. The Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor had been collecting annually since 1886 information on seasonal and yearly variations in employment in manufacturing industries. In two studies, replies from a representative group of cities formed the basis for general estimates, and surveys were also made in particular cities under the direction of the police, tenement house inspectors, and social settlements. Usually house-to-house canvasses or investigation of selected industrial plants were relied upon for data, but in Boston trade union figures were also used. In the nineties attempts were made not only to study the extent of unemployment more exactly than ever before, but also to evaluate relief measures. The experience in groups of cities was exchanged in summary form, and the Massachusetts Board to Investigate the Subject of the Unemployed issued a timely volume in which discussion on the basis of visits and public hearings included frank criticism of methods as well as much precise information.

Persons active in social reform diverted their energies for the time being to relief measures. The leaders in emergency work possessed a sound background not only in relief practices but also in broad social and industrial principles. Studies, evaluation, and self-criticism were the order of the day. Complacent satisfaction existed too, but keen understanding of the weaknesses and fallacies of work relief or of emergency set-ups gave evidence of a flexibility which did not stop short of abandoning plans when a better method was presented.

The social work structure of communities tended toward centralization of effort in numerous relief committees. Many of them after the first winter of the depression abandoned all functions except that of planning and left to decentralized units, already established or recently created, the burden of the work. Generaliza-
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tions about relief committees in the nineties run the risk of crystal-
lizing into a simple pattern a multiplicity of needs, organizations,
and goals. In Philadelphia, for example, the Citizens' Permanent
Relief Committee, organized to raise funds for disaster, assumed
responsibility for financing and organizing local relief work. The
Committee's previous experience furnished a basis for careful ad-
ministration of funds, whenever possible through existing agencies,
and for a broad scope of work including an investigation of loan
sharks and provision for small loans and free legal advice. In
Chicago the emergency furnished the opportunity to modernize an
outworn agency which conceived of family social work merely in
terms of relief. The temporary central committee became the
Chicago Bureau of Charities, the forerunner of a union of agencies
which later formed the present United Charities.

Sometimes central relief committees undertook a single task,
such as care of the homeless, or as in the case of New York's East
Side Relief-Work Committee, confined themselves to work in a
single area otherwise uncared for. In general the work of central
relief committees fell under one or all of the following heads: (1)
raising funds for existing agencies or for the committee's own enter-
prises; (2) co-ordinating the work of established agencies or those
created because of the depression; (3) administering emergency
projects either as direct relief in the homes or as work relief.

Hastily organized central committees were often constrained by
the immediate need for funds to launch unwise publicity. Appli-
cations from persons not in genuine need were thus stimulated,
although larger funds were undoubtedly raised through these spec-
tacular methods than would have been possible otherwise. Mass
handling was not inherent in the work of the committees, but where
established agencies failed to function or did not exist, inexperience
and pressure of work undoubtedly led to undifferentiated treatment
of individual problems. Relief committees sought, on the whole, to
protect the expenditure of their funds by investigation of all appli-
cants either for relief or work relief; but even where this was del-
egated to existing agencies the size of the problem alone would have
accounted for the frequent breakdown of the plan. Where the
resources of central relief committees were used to strengthen exist-
ing organizations for social work through the contribution of funds,
staff, or supplementary services, less criticism of final results was to be found.

Strong feeling against any form of public relief had been engendered prior to the depression. Consequently relief committees using public money or working closely with public departments, drew criticism upon themselves because of the danger of political entanglements. Work-relief projects of relief committees were the particular target of critics. Wages and weekly work assignments were often so small that they failed in many places to cover the family's need. Frequently they brought together large numbers of men or women on poorly organized makeshift undertakings. In some communities relief committees were blamed for not working out their plans through established agencies, and yet many felt that needy applicants would have been deterred by connection with agencies whose clients were considered chronically dependent. In many cities committees improved the standard of care for the homeless under either public or private auspices, emphasizing more adequate shelter, food, and clothing, and the necessity of demanding work in return.

On the whole, at their best, relief committees built upon the deeper social trends of the era, not upon impulsive reactions to temporary emergency situations. Their work resulted in the establishment of necessary agencies and sound modification of method. At their worst they embodied all the haphazard, narrow, even wasteful character of poor social effort. The fault was not so much in relief committees as such, or in their possibilities for co-ordinating community undertakings and raising large sums of money; the weakness lay rather in lack of the leadership which characterized the more successful committees in New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia.

The battle against corrupt public outdoor relief had been fought before the nineties. Where public departments still functioned, as in Boston, they retained a share in administering unemployment relief, but even in these communities their activities were overshadowed by those of private agencies. Distress again stimulated the establishment of numerous charity organization societies whose scope included not only investigation and relief of needy families, but also organization of registration bureaus, care of the
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homeless, management of employment bureaus, and community planning.

When the first winter’s growth of emergency agencies ceased, existing private societies and the churches had to carry the continuing burden of unemployment. The resulting financial stringency was met in a variety of ways: funds were allotted from central committees, efforts to secure regular contributions were increased, and in some instances agencies drew upon their endowment funds. With rapidly growing case loads, private agencies compromised their standards of investigation and were often forced to give relief at their offices instead of in the homes. By this time paid staffs were employed in most large cities to carry the heaviest share of the work, although volunteers were also working in every capacity demanded by the emergency. Training for social work was still carried on informally by the social agencies themselves. During the depression, however, the advantages of training were so apparent in the efficient handling of unusual tasks, that impetus was added to the development of plans for more formal education of social workers. For the most part private agencies met the needs with flexible organization of resources and a searching inquiry into fundamental philosophies which increased their prestige and strengthened their internal structure.

Emergency measures included a number of schemes for the distribution of food, free or at reduced prices. Many newspapers raised and even themselves administered large relief funds. A novel program of subsistence gardens for the unemployed originated in Detroit and spread rapidly to other communities. Allowing for the inexperience of workers, the vagaries of weather, and the poor soil sometimes under cultivation, garden programs were on the whole successful. Garden produce supplemented the cheap, monotonous, and often inadequate diet allowed by relief agencies. Most of the plot-holders worked willingly and took pride in producing something for their families. Opportunities to sell the surplus, or to work on collective farms for wages, offered cash returns to some of the gardeners.

In the nineties, cities were still struggling against inadequate and unsanitary care of the homeless in police stations. Genuine wayfarers were recognized as requiring different treatment from chronic
idlers and vagrants, although both classes were expected to work for their care. Absence of the work test, in fact, was one of the reasons for condemning police-station lodgings and free shelters or missions. Wayfarers' Lodges had achieved great popularity. Whether run under public or private auspices their standards of cleanliness, fumigation of wearing apparel, and work tests were heartily endorsed. Here and there the need for medical examination and treatment was recognized. Investigation of individual cases was attempted especially where transportation to another community was requested. In the main, however, the work was motivated by a desire to make the work test severe enough to discourage new arrivals and to give adequate care for the time being, rather than to emphasize social treatment.

Work relief emerged in the nineties as one of the major forms of helping the unemployed. Direct relief had become associated with the concept of incapacity, while work was believed to give the "deserving" unemployed a means of maintaining their independence and morale. The auspices under which work-relief programs were conducted were sometimes public, sometimes private, and often a combination of both. Outdoor labor on streets, parks, quarries, sewers, and wood yards was supplemented by indoor centers for both men and women where laundering, rug weaving, and sewing were done.

In practice, many disadvantages were observed. Widespread advertisement of work-relief opportunities attracted large numbers of applicants and made adequate preliminary investigations impossible. Some critics deprecated mass employment of men on streets or in parks, thus exposing them to public gaze as persons in need. More fundamental criticism was concerned with the uneconomic basis of work relief. The total amount earned by each worker was too often pitifully small in relation to the desired goal of self-support. Existing wage levels were frequently disregarded, or workers were assigned without due consideration of their capacity to do a particular job. Heavy labor was the most common work available and no consideration was given to "white collar" employees. Winter weather and the inexperience of the men made the work expensive and thus increased the feeling that relief rather than real work was being offered. Sufficient data from many cities con-
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firmed the impression that, by and large, work relief successfully dispelled at least one of the dangers feared from it—namely, that applicants might be content with work-relief conditions and make no effort to find real work.

From another point of view, however, the offering of employment at inadequate total wages defeated its own purpose. How could a man be expected to maintain his family through his own efforts when he earned such a mere pittance in the end? In many communities the winter's wages must have been more adequate than in others, for testimony indicated that families were often able to pull themselves through the crisis with no additional help. In fact in a few cities such as Philadelphia, the work-relief wage was based on the family's budgetary relief needs.

On the whole, however, work relief to an individual man or woman must have meant a poor, and often a totally inadequate, substitute for real wages. Wherever panic seized a community and work relief was quickly organized, the conditions under which the men labored were undesirable. Where small units, careful planning, and straight thinking on the economic and social questions involved led to better organization, plans were more satisfactorily carried out. At its best it was held as expedient only in such an emergency as the first winter; and in Boston, where the centralized expenditure of over $100,000 was carefully analyzed, the feeling prevailed that established agencies, public and private, could have handled the situation in their own way with better results. The total benefit to each individual worker was in too large proportion the intangible gains derived from employment rather than adequate money with which to support a family.

Occasionally the line between work relief and public works was not kept clear. At best the latter were held up by legislative delays and difficulties in organization methods, but lack of an accurate account of their scope makes any evaluation separate from work relief impossible.

1907–1908

According to a report from the various states given in 1908 at the National Conference of Charities and Correction, the depression of 1907–1908 as far as relief measures were concerned was both
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less prolonged and less severe than the depression of 1893–1897. By 1907–1908 private agencies, particularly charity organization societies, had attained a status in the eyes of the community which resulted in their domination of the field of unemployment relief.

The experience of the nineties had left a conviction on the part of socially minded people that mass handling through emergency organizations was highly undesirable. Therefore concern over the needs of the unemployed was focused by existing agencies upon such relief measures as would lead to little publicity, and to the development of facilities already available in the field of social work rather than creation of new agencies. The natural result was a tremendous increase in the burden borne by the private agencies, in addition to the growth in their work normally taking place as they became better known. As a matter of fact there was no great diminution of their load when better times came.

Certain modifications in accustomed procedure had to be made in response to pressure. One agency, faced with a large deficit, was forced to close its doors, which so stimulated public contributions that it was able to reopen in a few days. Although standards of work were necessarily lowered and constructive services other than relief often omitted, deviations were looked upon as temporary. Increases took place in both volunteer and paid staffs, the latter being allowed more independent responsibility than heretofore. The Field Department of Charities and the Commons through the Emergency Winter Exchange letters gathered and distributed data on current relief activities.

Public agencies were expected to be responsible for a definite part in the relief programs, such as care of the homeless. While emergency organizations were not entirely eliminated, in many instances their formation was forestalled by action on the part of established social agencies. Joint planning was encouraged, but administration of relief measures was for the most part decentralized. Work relief, for example, was carried on in small units, with no attempt to meet large-scale need in this particular way. Care for the homeless reflected the contemporary concern for the individual as evidenced by the services, limited though they might be, which were available at many shelters for returning men to their home towns, placing

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them in jobs, or referring them to the proper agencies for further specialized treatment.

If private agencies seemed to pre-empt the field of emergency relief, they did so only by virtue of the energetic and wise leadership they displayed. For example, Miss Mary E. Richmond as head of the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity vigorously attacked the problems of the unemployed from several angles: daily registration of applications from the leading agencies was inaugurated; an agreement was reached with the city government as to responsibility for certain categories of homeless men, which marked an important step in improving relations between public and private agencies in Philadelphia; a campaign was conducted through schools, churches, and trade unions to acquaint working people with the services of the agency. In many other cities private agencies led the way in establishing avenues of communication between all organizations involved in unemployment relief plans, the specific methods varying with local needs. Had the depression lasted longer, the resources of private agencies might have been insufficient and other leadership might have come to the fore.

1914–1915

Industry had been in a sluggish condition before the outbreak of the World War. The first months of the war intensified unemployment, but as soon as orders for munitions and supplies began to flood the country, an abrupt transition to "boom" conditions took place. Short-lived though it was, the depression produced some distinctive contributions toward the prevention and relief of unemployment. There was evident a turn toward more searching study of fundamental economic causes of depressions and the formation of permanent plans to prevent at least some of the disastrous results. The American Association for Labor Legislation fostered local groups in which plans and recommendations were drawn up for the regularization of industry, prevention of seasonal unemployment, development of public employment exchanges, advancement of public works, and the establishment of a nation-wide unemployment insurance system. This first comprehensive program against unemployment secured no action at the time and little progress in the direction it indicates is apparent even today; but it undoubt-
edly had a powerful educational influence upon public thought and discussion.

As in previous depressions, a number of investigations were undertaken as to the extent of unemployment. Studies of the period were motivated by desire to develop sound methods of research as well as to discover reliable statistics upon which to project emergency plans. Existing data were limited, although a few states had been collecting information about employment over varying periods of time from trade unions and from certain industries. Outstanding in both scope and method was a study made by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company based on figures secured from its industrial policy-holders in 29 cities. The information obtained for New York City agreed closely with that secured by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics in sample block areas.

For the first time during a depression, several agencies operating nationally participated actively in formulating principles and directing the work of local groups. By means of conferences, field visits, and correspondence, the American Association for Labor Legislation, the Charity Organization Department of the Russell Sage Foundation, and the American Association of Societies for Organizing Charity kept in close touch with social workers and agencies throughout the country.

Three states organized official state-wide committees on unemployment relief, since it was felt that city or county units would be unable to handle the broader problems which concerned the whole state. The Massachusetts Committee undertook as its major responsibility to speed up legitimate public and private employment; but it also urged local appropriations for public works and advised on work-relief plans and local relief programs. In Colorado the necessity for securing immediate funds to continue road construction by work-relief labor led the state committee to make a successful appeal to the Rockefeller Foundation for $100,000, the state itself administering the money thus secured. The California State Commission concentrated on the problem of the migratory worker. It remained an advisory body formulating policies for uniform state-wide practice.

Local planning groups were created in many cities; sometimes they raised relief funds or administered a special part of the emer-
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gency program such as work relief or the care of the homeless; sometimes they limited their activities to co-ordination. Among this group were many semi-official bodies with representative membership, called mayors’ committees, which placed particular emphasis upon long-time planning programs even though their own participation in such plans was fragmentary. In Chicago a series of commissions, which began work as early as 1912, were concerned principally with modification of industrial practices and the improvement of public employment bureaus in Illinois. The two successive Mayors’ Committees in New York considered not only industrial programs, but organized and administered through subcommittees home relief, work relief, training classes for women, specialized services for the homeless, and a Bundle Day. Their efforts were characterized by decentralization of administration, the units being financed and often managed by small groups in the neighborhood or in the particular field of work.

Since they traditionally opposed the creation of new relief machinery, existing social agencies were once more forced to expand in order to carry the brunt of unemployment relief. Standards of work were relaxed for the time being, but cutting of red tape did not affect procedures such as the following: applicants were visited promptly, within twenty-four hours in many places; adequate relief based on individual needs necessitated a knowledge of the family’s background which could be gained only through investigation. Not only were trained workers in great demand for emergency work, but personnel, both paid and volunteer, was constantly drained off for war work. Personnel practice tended, therefore, to hold reliable workers through salary increases and other recognition of services.

The depression of 1914–1915 saw a marked increase in the confidence placed in established public agencies, which had by this time assumed definite responsibility for the care of the homeless, for public works, and for outdoor relief where that was practiced in the particular community. In communities where no public relief department existed, emergency municipal appropriations were considered as ill-advised as any other hastily organized measure. In both Pittsburgh and Baltimore, active opposition from social workers prevented assumption by the municipality of a relief func-
tion. In New York, however, relief funds administered by the Police Department cared for families until established agencies could take them over.

In spite of the war hysteria, comparatively few emergency agencies were organized under either public or private auspices. The Emergency Aid Committee in Philadelphia, which originated in response to demands for help from the stricken countries of Europe, soon created a Home Relief Department to deal with the local unemployed. Staffed entirely by volunteers, the Committee maintained workshops, conducted a program of work relief on public improvements, and set up relief-giving units, its work being financed in part by contributions and in part by an appropriation from municipal funds which a group of established agencies had previously refused to accept.

Free food distribution took place in some cities, and Bundle Days were popular as a means of collecting clothing and supplies. The idea originated in the collection of articles for war sufferers and spread rapidly as a means of helping the unemployed at home. Publicity necessary for the success of Bundle Days complicated the situation by attracting large numbers of applicants. When distribution was left to regular social agencies their intake was clogged; when emergency committees undertook the task the enterprise took on many of the spectacular features of a breadline. Collections were large, and sorting and repairing the garments gave work to some of the unemployed. As a relief measure, however, experience showed the scheme to be ineffective, cumbersome, and even positively harmful.

While the major responsibility for the homeless was carried by public agencies, private agencies were continuously urging higher standards of work, particularly the maintenance at shelters of a social service staff to sort out aged, ill, feebleminded or juvenile persons and refer them to proper sources for treatment. Sometimes private agencies lent staff members to demonstrate the value of a program suited to individual needs. Food, cleanliness, and a bed were no longer the only objectives. The homeless were beginning to assume the proportions of a state problem, and in Chicago, Mecca for homeless men from east and west, the local committee stated its conviction that nothing but federal participation could
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assure their proper care, a prophecy which was fulfilled only in 1933. Co-operative shelters, managed by the men themselves, were successful in certain communities but were never able to secure enough support to maintain adequate standards.

Efforts to find real work were directed toward "share-the-job" programs, and toward strengthening public employment bureaus by securing more funds for them and improving their management. The enthusiasm of local committees sometimes involved public employment bureaus far more deeply than they should have been involved in the actual management of programs of work relief or public works.

Demands for clothing and medical supplies abroad opened new opportunities for the use of work relief. Decentralized units were the accepted practice, and working with them pointed to the advisability of securing supervisors with experience in manufacturing particular kinds of goods. Greater effort was made than in earlier depressions to fit a worker to a particular job and to study his individual needs. Bandage rolling, making surgical dressings, lumbering, furniture making, raffia weaving, and manufacturing clothing for European war sufferers were new relief industries in 1914–1915. Classes for vocational study and training of young girls and women were developed under scholarship grants from relief funds in New York and Boston, and social services were provided at the workshops in Chicago. Following the trend of the period, the economic result of work relief was seriously questioned. The competitive element was seldom absent, and it was discovered that wage rates had a definite effect upon the labor market. The cost of the products of work relief was usually more than in regular industry because of lack of skill of workers and lack of experience of supervisors. Marked gains were apparent in the variety of work offered, in successful experimentation with small units, and in greater concern displayed as to future industrial possibilities for the individuals employed.

Public works were clearly differentiated from work relief, but the usual legal and financial difficulties held up actual achievement and led to recognition by the informed public that reserve funds would have to be set aside during good years to be expended during depressions on previously planned public works.
The pattern followed by unemployment relief in 1920–1922 was determined in no small part by recent war experience. The newly organized financial federations and councils of social agencies followed much the same methods as had been found effective by War Chests set up to relieve distress due to war. Ex-service men made a plea for preferential attention and special legislation. The widespread interest in their plight and the funds available through veterans’ organizations resulted in a few places in special assistance through relief, employment offices, or provision for the homeless. For the most part, however, the unemployed veteran was cared for by whatever resources were available in the community.

Patterned after war-time mobilization, President Harding in September, 1921, called a nation-wide and semi-official Conference on Unemployment representing for the most part the employer group. As the first attempt on the part of the federal government to deal with unemployment and its results, the Conference had considerable significance. After hearing reports of its subcommittees, the Conference as such went out of existence but attempted to carry out its functions through the appointment of national committees. One of these, the Committee on Civic and Emergency Measures, in its capacity of clearing house for data on unemployment relief, rendered inadequate and often inaccurate service. Likewise its rigid insistence that mayors should assume leadership in local organization for relief created duplication of effort, inefficiency, and not infrequently the domination of political interests over community welfare. In many cities, however, mayors did no more than assure themselves that necessary measures were being undertaken by existing social agencies without themselves attempting to set up an emergency program as prescribed by federal authority.

An accumulation of employment statistics showed improvement in method and a wider range of sources from which data were available. Augmented by the continuous statistics of social agencies, they made possible a more accurate measurement of the problem of unemployment in particular communities. Comparisons between cities were, however, still of questionable value. Variation in basic methods of compiling statistics existed, and among social
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agencies the presence of factors other than unemployment often influenced the function and scope of the work. Great improvement in unemployment statistics resulted from the depression.

Financial federations and community councils had varying success from city to city in securing additional budgets to meet depression needs and in the effectiveness of their efforts to co-ordinate action for the emergency. Chicago had an unusually successful Conference on Unemployment under the auspices of the Council of Social Agencies.

Few emergency agencies were organized, the existing organizations for public and private social work adjusting the additional load among themselves. With wide variations in practice, the general trend was toward individualization in care of the unemployed which was not only traceable in the treatment of distressed families in their homes, but also apparent in the management of work-relief projects. Private agencies necessarily made adjustments in staff, relief policies, and procedure. The emergency was recognized as probably temporary, and current methods were changed to expedite necessary service to the unemployed. Investigation was directed toward present needs; relief standards on the whole were maintained on a fairly adequate basis by reduction of intake and omission of certain budget items which previously had been included in the relief given. Administration requirements were simplified to relieve pressure upon staffs even at the expense of complete records.

In some places, such as Philadelphia, financial stringency alone forced the private agency to turn to the public agency for help in carrying the unemployment load; but in the communities studied, although theoretical objections continued to be raised, private agencies seemed in practice to accept public agencies more readily as participants and to work out co-operative relationships with better grace than formerly. As a result, in a number of communities clearer definitions of responsibility between the two groups began to take form.

Care for the homeless by private agencies was perhaps on a higher plane than public care, but for lack of funds a large share of this work was also carried under public auspices. Individualization of treatment was at least widely discussed, and in a few cities social
workers from private staffs were lent to public agencies. Similarly regulations as to sanitation, food, bedding, fumigation, work tests, and other standards of shelter care were more frequently emphasized than in earlier depressions.

Work relief was not undertaken on a large scale by either public or private agencies. Private agencies carried it on as an adjunct to their case-work services, and small numbers of clients were assigned to the work according to their ascertained needs. In one community at least—Philadelphia—the private family agency undertook a diversified program, paying wages for real jobs for which other funds were not available in institutions, such as hospitals and settlements, and in parks. While the program could not be compared in extent to the mass activity characteristic of other emergency periods, it demonstrated the value of careful selection and constructive services, not only in Philadelphia, but in other communities where it was tried. Technical and legal delays often hindered public works from serving as an effective means to relieve unemployment. In certain cities, however, public works projects gave employment to large numbers of men, thus relieving the strain on other relief measures.

On the whole, distinct progress was made in 1920-1922 toward integration and joint planning for emergency relief. Federal participation stimulated general public interest and feeling of responsibility, and gave individual communities the sense of being part of a concerted campaign against distress. Similarly the existence of community funds and councils set up local machinery through which social agencies could feel themselves participants in a joint program. The established agencies, while they shared in community planning, did not lose sight of their individual responsibilities for providing flexible and adequate care for the unemployed and pushing forward case-work standards.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The years from 1857 to 1929 included six periods during which special relief measures were undertaken—two of these being long and severe depressions and four of comparatively brief duration. In the short depressions following the prolonged period of distress in the nineties (1907-1908, 1914-1915, 1920-1922), the need for
special unemployment relief measures was usually confined to a single winter. Conditions preceding and accompanying hard times varied. During earlier depressions, profound economic maladjustments due to overexpansion of railroads and industries created conditions from which it took the United States a long time to recover, while in 1907–1908, for instance, ten years of comparative prosperity had fortified the country to withstand the short emergency. Not economic factors alone, but the outbreak of the World War, precipitated the crisis of 1914–1915 and cured it within a year by creating a demand for goods that brought on a hectic prosperity, interrupted up to 1929 only by the depression of 1920–1922.

Each period of distress witnessed a revival of relief measures previously used but modified to meet current needs. While old measures were adopted, certain new ones were successively devised, such as the garden plans of the nineties and the mayors' committees of 1914–1915. Too frequently the glaring weaknesses of certain emergency measures were forgotten from one period of unemployment to the next. It mattered not that New York City as early as 1857 experienced difficulty in organizing public works to meet immediate need. Again and again, with no preliminary planning, public works were projected and then delayed by legal entanglements and administrative barriers beyond the point where they could have any value in relieving emergent unemployment.

Not only had the country relied upon a somewhat fortuitous development of relief measures; it had neglected the recommendations of competent advisers for the prevention of and preparation for unemployment emergencies. As soon as prosperity returned, the incentive for deliberation as to causes and remedies vanished. Each depression took us unawares, unprepared to handle the need on any except an emergency basis. No action followed recommendations that cities and regions should establish permanent committees on unemployment, to study the problem throughout all stages of the business cycle, and to be ready to come forward with carefully worked-out plans when a crisis impends.

The reader who hoped to find in this report a panacea for all depressions has no doubt already become deeply disappointed in the multitude of experiments which were successful in particular cities, but which, when tried in other communities, met with gen-
eral criticism. Cities, no less than persons, bring to a given situation all that has hitherto gone into their growth. Each community has a different background and reacts differently to an emergency. For this reason uniform plans have never been successfully formulated for the country as a whole, a fact which was clearly demonstrated in connection with the mayors’ committees of 1921–1922. General policies and principles developed by national or state groups must always allow some leeway for adaptation to differences in local conditions.

In any given depression, therefore, a wide range of effectiveness is to be noted. Cities which took the lead in devising new methods at one period were supplanted in leadership by others when hard times next descended upon the country. Nevertheless it is to be noted that out of depression has frequently come the beginning or strengthening of constructive forces in a community. At such periods widespread distress arouses interest in social needs and increases the participation of large numbers of people in measures for relief. Sometimes, it is true, a mushroom growth of sentimental and poorly organized schemes seems the only result, but at other times and places wise leaders emerge with plans for sound and lasting improvements.

As we have traced the several phases of unemployment relief through almost three-quarters of a century, we have actually been observing at the same time the expanding history of social work in the United States. From uncertain attempts to meet local distress in isolated spots, methods have been formulated, sometimes too rapidly it is true, but they have never become static. Increments of knowledge from the allied fields of economics, statistical measurement, political science, and psychology have contributed a more exact approach and set new goals for achievement. The operation of measures for unemployment relief in each depression throws the whole structure of social work into sharp relief against a regularly recurring situation. After the first long depression, that of the seventies, the charity organization movement developed in this country, and succeeding crises found these societies increased in numbers, influence, and popularity. Only when hard times rendered transiency an acute problem was progress made toward adequate standards of care for the homeless. Clearing bureaus, the fore-
runners of the social service exchanges which are indispensable in the social work fabric of today, were opened in large cities in times of depression to simplify abnormal pressure on social agencies. More exact definition of function, as well as agreement on some division of responsibility, were forced upon social agencies by the stress of recurring hard times. Through the studies of unemployment among women and girls made in 1914-1915, vocational guidance and training received new recognition. Emergency relief measures by themselves, however, were growths too forced to develop roots; it was the impact of the depression on established agencies which, in the aftermath of depression led to improvements.

The method followed in this report allows us to view the progress of social work as if in a series of flashes upon the screen of history. Instead of the slow motion of steady growth, we catch glimpses of what happened at successive periods and under especial conditions of pressure. If we lose in detail we should gain in clarity through such a process. It is possible to trace briefly and in several different directions the developments that took place within the period we have studied.

Co-ordination of effort to avoid duplication and the creation of unnecessary agencies was doubtless aimed at during all periods by those concerned with organization to cope with distress. Unrecorded examples may have previously existed, but as early as 1873, in one community at least, a Citizens' Committee worked out plans for dividing the burden of unemployment between existing agencies; and in other communities registration bureaus were organized. By the next depression, large centralized administrative groups reached their zenith; and later depressions saw the delegation of relief administration to smaller units, preferably under the direction of already existing agencies, while the central organization devoted its efforts to planning and co-ordination. Social thought came to demand on the one hand community-wide planning and control, and on the other that approximation to case-work treatment of the unemployed which could be secured only through decentralization of the actual administration of relief. The trend toward coordinated effort reached a new level with the appearance of state committees in 1914-1915, and was carried further in the post-war depression of 1920-1922 by the attempt to plan for the relief of un-
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employment on a national scale, by establishing local financial federations and councils of social agencies, and by the efforts of national functional and promotional social agencies which had been organized only a short time previously for the purpose of assisting local member agencies to develop programs in given areas of social work.

Progressive refinement of methodology in another field related to unemployment relief is illustrated in the measurement of unemployment. The extent of unemployment was at first anybody's guess, and attempts at a closer estimate in successive depressions resulted in more exact statistical analyses of series of data from widely varied sources. In the end, efforts to measure the exact volume of unemployment were abandoned, and the attention of social statisticians was concentrated on securing continuous series of reports on the numbers of persons actually employed. Changes from time to time in this index of employment, when corrected for population changes, are now our most reliable source of information about the reverse fluctuations of unemployment.

Contemporary opinion as expressed not only by private agencies, but by the semi-public citizens' or mayors' committees in the early depressions, ran strongly counter to the use of public agencies as suitable bodies to administer unemployment relief. As early as 1857 they were denounced as extravagant and partisan, prejudice against them still persisting as late as 1920-1922. It was lack of private funds at that period rather than real conviction which dictated the assignment to public agencies of a large share of the burden of unemployment. Often a particular field, such as care of the homeless, was by common consent regarded as a public responsibility, apparently more as a matter of custom than as the result of conclusions based on careful study as to allocation of functions.

Co-operative relations between public and private agencies improved as a few strong and well-administered public agencies came into being and made their work respected; but by and large, this long-established distrust of the competency of public departments continued until well into the present century. Up to the late nineteen twenties, private family agencies disregarded the fact that public agencies were already carrying at least three-quarters of the
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ordinary relief load; and their present complete acceptance of the principle that the relief of unemployment is and should be in the main a public function represents the quite recent abandon-
ment of a traditional position.

Mass handling of the unemployed, which was characteristic of relief operations in early depressions, gave way to an awareness of and consideration for the individual, paralleling that remarkable development of case-work theory and practices which has taken place in social work during the period covered by this study. Changes in the treatment of the homeless perhaps illustrate the point most strikingly. In 1873, shelter for this group was provided only in police stations. Later, special institutions were set up which supplied employment as a work test or as work relief, and provided sanitation, improved diet, and elementary medical care. Interest began to develop in the study of each man’s background and capacity, out of which came the later experiments in placing social workers in shelters to contribute varied services for selected groups of homeless people.

Methods of administering direct relief also reflected an increasing interest in particular needs. Commissaries, the chief virtue of which was their cheapness, were succeeded by a system of orders on grocers or even occasionally by cash relief. Relief given in niggardly amounts at irregular intervals, perhaps only when the family demanded help, evolved into more adequate relief given regularly throughout the period of unemployment. Social workers of the present century came to know more about budgets and balanced diet than did their predecessors of the seventies, and if weekly allowances were (and perhaps still are) inadequate because of lack of funds, knowledge of the probable results of undernourishment has made social workers agitators for a decent standard of living for those on relief.

Gradual abandonment of mass methods of relief was reflected even in the kind of public statements released by social agencies in successive depressions. In earlier periods, public advertising of new enterprises and large funds stimulated applications for relief from many persons who were not, as well as from those who were, in genuine need. It attracted to the larger cities numbers of non-
residents who should have been cared for in their own localities, and
aggravated both the distress of the unemployed and the difficulties of the organizations trying to help them. Lessons thus learned resulted in later depressions in a more educational type of publicity which led to real gains in public understanding of the methods and aims of social work.

The long history of work relief as a means of caring for the unemployed also shows some changes in emphasis from depression to depression. Its early beginnings were found in the work test, employed in shelters for the homeless and used with a deterrent motive. The impossibility and unsuitability of a work test for large groups of involuntarily idle people were early recognized, but the varieties of work relief employed in the early depressions were strongly influenced by work-test experience. Heavy outdoor labor was exclusively relied upon, and wood-cutting and stone-crushing, the latter clustered thick with reminders of prison labor, were characteristic occupations. In succeeding depressions the scope of undertakings was broadened to include workshops, where women and men of delicate physique might be employed at garment-making or light hand labor. Still later, repair work on public and private institutions was added, together with construction work, which made it possible to vary the jobs available and make use of existing skills among the relief workers. Physical fitness for a particular task began to be considered in the assignment to relief jobs. Relief wage rates and their effect on industrial wages, and the danger of undertaking projects which by competition with industry might reduce the chances of regular employment, were problems which seemed to bother no one during earlier depressions. By 1914–1915 they were giving real concern to the sponsors of work-relief programs, although even then the total earnings of individual workers were only in scattered instances as large or as regular as those secured through real employment.

From comparatively small beginnings, work-relief programs reached a peak in the 1890's which was not again to be approached until the depression of the 1930's. Dissatisfaction with the results of large-scale mass projects conducted during the nineties by special emergency committees caused a reaction in subsequent depressions in favor of a program of small, decentralized projects conducted
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by agencies equipped to meet the different needs of unemployed people.

Among emergency agencies, breadlines, soup kitchens, and clothing centers, in spite of ever-recurring protests, have been hardy perennials, springing up in depression after depression. Occasionally strong emergency organizations with a wide program succeeded in meeting the particular needs of their communities and became accepted as administrators of relief to the unemployed. They usually incurred the criticism of established agencies, however, on the grounds of poor organization and widely advertised efforts to help unselected groups. Their persistence raises some questions. Were existing resources for relief in such communities really adequate, in spite of repeated statements by established agencies that they were able to carry the load? Or did the emergency agencies serve a heterogeneous mass of people whose real privations were never established and who would have been found ineligible for relief if they had applied to the regularly established agencies?

Hard times have left their imprint upon the structure and quality of social work. They have aroused community interest in existing organizations for relieving distress. Both professional and lay leaders in social welfare have been challenged to new efforts to meet problems of the division of functional responsibility, of money raising, of administrative policies, and of the relationship between public and private agencies.

Basically, emergency measures cover the same general field from depression to depression, but their form and efficacy vary greatly according to the specific conditions of the moment in any given city and the stage of our knowledge of how to deal with them. A certain repetition of motif and a definite growth in concept of how the task is to be accomplished are both found—the one stabilizing, the other developing the outlines of emergency unemployment relief. Out of both factors may come growth.
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