

## Editorial Notes

### I.C.S.W. IN RETROSPECT

IN the words of Dr. Rene Sand "International Conference of Social Work is one new account on the credit of peace" and true enough, in the stress and strain of the modern life, when the war-ridden nations live in constant strife and conflicting loyalties, any efforts which highlight the alleviation of social and moral ills and evils, and aim at social and economic uplift are necessarily a fruitful investment. This permanent world organisation for individuals and agencies, concerns itself with the social welfare and service needs of the people everywhere. In the physically small world of to-day, it is a powerful link among nations, sometimes torn apiece mentally or ideologically. Social work transgresses geography, religion language or political affiliation. The ensuing thirteenth session of the International Conference of Social Work, therefore, is one more milestone in the welfare-oriented goal of the nations of the world.

In the recent issue of *The Social Service Review* (June 1966), a very informative and interesting note has been published about the background of the International Conference of Social Work.

While tracing the history of the International Conference of Social Work it is pointed out that the first conference of this series was held in Paris in 1928 as part of the International Social Welfare Fortnight, which included also the International Child Welfare Congress, the International Congress of Voluntary and Statutory Assistance and the International Housing and Town Planning Congress.

According to the report of that first meeting, the idea of holding such a conference had originated with European and Japanese delegates attending the National Conference of Social Work in 1919 and 1923. Dr. Clotilde Mulon of Paris had made a proposal unofficially in 1919 and Dr. Rene Sand had repeated it in a letter to Julia Lathrop in January, 1923. Dr. Sand was invited by Homer Folks, Chairman, to attend the 1923 conference and present his ideas. After approval by the National Conference of Social Work and the American Association of Social Workers, the proposal was submitted by Dr. Sand to the League of Red Cross Societies, which lent its support to the scheme.

The development of the Conference is not only dependent on the support of the people but also on

the financial support to strengthen its policies and programme. This came from a number of sources. The Russell Sage Foundation provided travel money for the meeting of the Paris Provisional Organization Committee in 1926. Additional funds for the 1928 Conference came from Carnegie Foundation, the Commonwealth Fund, the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, and the Milbank Foundation, as well as from various national organizations and Red Cross societies in different countries.

It is true that the Washington Conference is the 13th meeting of the International Conference of Social Work but actually speaking there were a number of international conferences on social welfare, involving social workers long before the formation of the International Conference of Social Work. One of the first of these was the International Conference on Charity (*Reunion internationale de charite*) held in Paris in July, 1885. The nineteen resolutions adopted at that Conference now seem both ancient and modern. They lend a sense of how far we have come and of how far we must still go.

Among the resolutions that seem like heirlooms are those calling for changes of rules and waiving of fees for marriage of indigent foreigners; for development of primary schools, especially for girls; for strict rules to prohibit begging; for measures to encourage thrift among the working classes (including schemes through which people would contribute goods during the summers and receive help during the winters!); and for development of mutual-aid societies and state-guaranteed funds.

Some of the recommendations of this particular Conference did have a modern air about them and it would be interesting to read the summary of the recommendations of the Conference.

*On creches* — Creches established from religious motives and according to principles of hygiene should be encouraged. Their advantages outweigh the disadvantages, but only in cases in which it is impossible for mothers to care for their children themselves.

*On asylums* — The asylum is eminently useful under the following conditions:

1. That it not contain more than one hundred children;
2. That it be directed by women, religious or lay;
3. That it be conducted in a practical way, with instruction that is very elementary, and that it not be transformed into a school; and
4. That it conserve the character of a charitable institution.

*On child labour* — The Conference expressed concern for working children and adolescents and urged that protection to young workers should achieve the following results:

1. Prohibition of night work for young people under eighteen years of age;
2. Limitation of hours of work for children under sixteen years of age;
3. No work on Sundays and holidays;
4. Time off for religious and elementary instruction;
5. Provision of instruction free if parents cannot pay for it;
6. Inspection of work places by inspectors with power to enforce the law.

*On institutions for the blind and the deaf* — In addition to institutions in areas where they do not exist, workshops should be created in localities in which the deaf might be employed. Children of early age, regardless of the handicap, should no longer be excluded from common schools and should receive ordinary instruction.

*On foundling* — Admission of foundlings into the establishments which receive them ought always to rest on the principle of secrecy.

*On hospital and home care* — Hospital space should be expanded. The system of placing old people in the families of farmers and carefully chosen workers should be studied. Each case should be considered before the decision is made whether the person be placed in an institution or cared for at home.

The delegates who attended the 1855 Conference agreed that there is a dire need on international exchange of documents and correspondence and there should be another international Conference the next year. Accordingly the next conference was held in Brussels in which there was participation from 16 European countries and also from Brazil and the United States. Even in this conference the dream of a permanent organisation was thought to be of paramount significance. It is interesting to note that at the conference banquet, the members of the conference drank toasts to the king, to other dignitaries, to the ladies, especially Harriet Beecher Stowe (not present) for her *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and to the "impossibility accomplished", the creation of what the participants believed would be a permanent international conference on philanthropy.

The editor of *The Social Service Review* in the comments has stated that a full article on these and other early conferences will appear in a forthcoming number of *The Social Service Review*. We congratulate *The Social Service Review* for highlighting the important historical background of the international organisations working in the field of social work. Stray references of this nature are also found in South East Asian literature and early histories of Europe and Middle East. The development of social welfare plans and programmes and social reforms has a common texture though manifestations does vary. *The Social Service Review* should do well to include material on these developments so that a complete picture on international thought development is presented to the readership in the field of social welfare.