Conferences for Social Work

Contributions to this Department will include material of three kinds: (1) original discussion, suggestion, plans, programs, and theories; (2) reports of special projects, working programs, conferences and meetings, and progress in any distinctive aspect of the field; (3) special results of study and research.

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR 1923

HOMER FOLKS

WE ARE in the midst of semi-centennials. The American Public Health Association, founded in 1871, celebrated its fiftieth anniversary last year. The American Prison Association, established in 1870, had its semi-centennial the previous year. The National Conference of Social Work, founded in 1873, is planning for its corresponding celebration in 1923 in connection with its annual meeting to be held in Washington in May.

It surely is not accidental that these organizations, which have contributed so largely to progress in their respective fields, date their origin to the latter half of the first decade following the Civil War. It is as though the people of America, when they recovered from the paralysis, fatigue and dazed condition of the great conflict, when they saw how human life had been spent and human lives broken by four years of terrific war, felt a new realization of these losses and instinctively drew together in great organizations to conserve more efficiently the well-being of the survivors of the Civil War and of the coming generations.

It was not that they devoted new and great sums to the purpose. They could not afford to. They came together for conference, coöperation, thought, planning, a better understanding of these questions as related to the entire country or the entire state,—for team work, toleration, forbearance. And for fifty years these organizations have contributed mightily to these results.

We have recently emerged from another, vastly greater four years' war. We did not suffer and lose—in terms of human life—as much as our allies, though our economic life was shaken to its foundations. We are still in the period of depression and indecision; still somewhat dazed; still feeling our way toward "normalcy." It is not unreasonable to suppose that history will re-

peat itself; that this present period of low tide and stagnation will be succeeded by a great revival of interest in conserving human life and human happiness, which were expended, and were about to be expended without stint, in a war which was to the greater part of the civilized world a calamity comparable to the Civil War in its effects upon our own people half a century ago?

The fiftieth anniversary of the National Conference of Social Work will give us, first of all, the opportunity for a thorough-going reconsideration of our program. At this year's Conference at Providence, the fundamental bases of the various forms of social work were ably and convincingly stated. On that foundation, and in the light of accumulated experience and knowledge of fifty years, the major task of the fiftieth Conference will be to re-state clearly, concretely and connectedly the social welfare program for the next decade or two and in preparation for that rising tide of interest in human welfare which may be expected in the near future.

The anniversary will, in the second place, offer an opportunity for an effective appeal for broader participation in the work of the Conference. It will be an unparalleled opportunity to arrest the attention and arouse the conviction, interest and participation of the citizenship of America. All that may have been learned in the field of public and private social service during the past fifty years will count for little unless we are able to persuade the great majority of our fellow citizens of the soundness of our conclusions and to secure their acceptance by the community. The fiftieth anniversary, therefore, will be, in a sense, a megaphone through which the voice of trained and experienced social work will address its message to the people of the United States.

It should result in a greater sense of com-

munity unity and a more conscientious effort toward mutual understanding, and pave the way for more efficient and effective expression of the vital interest and deliberate will of the people of America to prevent preventable disease, eliminate unnecessary poverty, diminish the need for correction, and place the remaining correctional agencies on a rational and effective basis.

THE NORTH CAROLINA STUDY OF PRISON CONDITIONS

WILEY B. SANDERS

AT THE TENTH ANNUAL SESSION of the North Carolina Conference for Social Service, held in Greensboro in March, 1922, a resolution was passed and a committee appointed "to make a careful study of state, county, and municipal prisons, prison camps, prison farms, and care of prisoners, throughout the state." In order to enlist the sympathetic support and coöperation of representative citizens from all sections of North Carolina, the original committee, consisting of five members with Dr. J. F. Steiner of the University School of Public Welfare as chairman, appointed a Citizens' Committee of One Hundred on Prison Legislation. The response of the Citizens' Committee was prompt and enthusiastic.

In June an executive secretary of the Conference was appointed to help outline a state-wide program of prison study, and to put this program into operation. Accordingly, the Citizens' Committee was divided into seventeen special committees, to study the various problems of prison administration with a view to legislative changes. A one-day conference of the Citizens' Committee is being planned for the last week in November, at which time the chairmen of the special committees will make their reports and recommendations. On the basis of these reports bills embodying proposed changes in existing statutes will be drawn and presented to the next general assembly for enactment. The following topics will be presented and discussed at this meeting:

1. The Administration of Criminal Justice in North Carolina.
2. A System of Classification of Prisoners Through a Receiving Station, Including Provisions for Separate Treatment of the Different Classes.
3. Juvenile Courts and Probation.
4. Provision for the Treatment of the Youthful Offender Between the Ages of Seventeen and Twenty-One.

5. Provision for the Treatment of the Woman Offender.
6. Provision for the Treatment of the Negro Offender.
7. Provision for the Treatment of the Criminal Insane.
8. The Administration of the State Prison and State Prison Farm.
9. Prison Industries.
10. Compensation of Prisoners.
11. Selection of Officers of the State Prison System on the Basis of Fitness and Training Irrespective of Political Affiliations.
12. County Jails and City Prisons.
13. County Road Camps and Work-houses.
14. Better Administration of Parole, Including Extension of Parole to County Prisoners and More Adequate Provision for Supervising Paroled Men.
15. Rehabilitation of Discharged Prisoners.
16. The English System of Penal Treatment.
17. The Illinois System of Penal Treatment.

Meanwhile, the executive secretary and the field agent of the State Board of Charities and Public Welfare are visiting every county jail and county convict camp in the state. A hasty preliminary examination of several jails and road camps has shown the existence of grave abuses, as well as obsolete methods. It is hoped that as a result of this prison survey and the work of the Citizens' Committee of One Hundred on Prison Legislation, the way may be paved for some needed changes in the care and treatment of the delinquent classes.

THE TENNESSEE STATE CONFERENCE

R. F. HUDSON

IT IS THE PURPOSE of the officers of the Tennessee Conference of Social Work to make the Conference spirit, the Conference influence, the Conference program, function the entire year. Necessarily, the year's activity centers around the annual meeting. The social workers of the State have made the annual meetings in Tennessee a real event, and one of far-reaching influence.

In the past it has been the policy of the Conference to conduct district meetings throughout the State—one day sessions in the different sections of the State. At the district meetings there are brought together the social workers of that particular community, together with men and women associated with all state-wide agencies, both public and private. In this manner many people unable to attend the annual meetings have