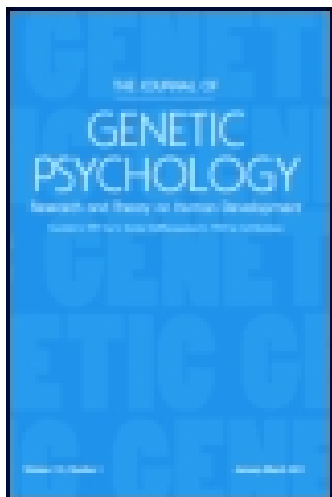


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## EXPLORING THE NEW WORLD FOR CHILDREN

By SAMUEL MCCUNE LINDSAY, PH. D., LL. D., New York City

A new world for children has been discovered in this Twentieth Century of ours just as truly as Columbus discovered a new continent in the Fifteenth Century. The work of exploration and conquest of this new child world will not take as long as it did to make the American continent of real use to men. Homeless and neglected children are going to be better cared for because we are going to do more for all children and because we know more about the problems of childhood in general.

Within ten years scientific child study has made tremendous advances. Efforts to restrict child labor and prohibit the premature employment of children have been organized efficiently on a national scale in the formation of the National Child Labor Committee, and for many of the states individually through strong state or local organizations. The play activities of childhood are being studied and directed and strong associations formed to secure properly-equipped playgrounds, and this movement is now correlated in a National Playground Association with its congresses and meetings for propaganda. The diseases of childhood, infant mortality, occupational disease and dangers inherent in low or deficient standards of living are receiving expert attention from such competent bodies as the National Conference of Charities and Correction and the American Academy of Medicine. The Russell Sage Foundation organized for the improvement of social conditions established among its projects a Children's Department with Dr. Hastings H. Hart as its Director, and put Dr. Luther H. Gulick at the head of another department to promote play and the physical development of children. The University of Pennsylvania organizes a Psychological Clinic and a Hospital School under the direction of Professor Lightner Witmer, and at once comes into vital relation to the schools, the juvenile courts and the public institutions of Philadelphia, where the University is located, and becomes a centre for consultation for a larger area.

Clark University is about to establish a Children's Institute. The Juvenile Court is gaining ground everywhere and its advocates of a better system of justice for the child are also organized on a national scale. Everywhere the public school

is the focus of discussion as it has never been before. Important experiments in industrial education are being tried and discussed under the direction of important public commissions and state and national organizations which promise in time to adjust the public and the school curriculum to the real and practical needs of larger groups of children than at present. This enumeration might be almost indefinitely extended and still not give a complete list of the recent and significant changes in the environment of the Twentieth Century Child. All the facts noted may be summed up in a single phrase. There has come into American life within the past decade a change in the social attitude of mind toward children the like of which is not true of any other country or of any previous period. Perhaps no better proof of the changes can be cited than that furnished in the deliberations and conclusions of the Washington Conference on the Care of Dependent Children which was called together by the President of the United States as a logical part of his programme for a great national effort to conserve the nation's resources. The declarations of that Conference both mark a higher achievement than we were aware of, and set a higher standard which will measure our efforts for dependent children throughout the entire country in the future.

There is another and more fundamentally important respect in which these explorations in the domain of child life may be correlated. Nothing is more encouraging than a realization of how all these forward movements merge, or at least reach common ground, in a general and united demand for more accurate knowledge of children. This demand is focussed in the project for a National Children's Bureau at Washington which has already received the official endorsement of the President of the United States. Congress has been asked to establish a Children's Bureau as an integral part of the Federal Government at Washington. The objects sought are (1) thorough and adequate investigations by competent authorities vested with all the powers and resources of the national government and operating on a national scale, with such international comparisons of data as may be practicable, of all the problems of child life and specially of such questions as infant mortality, the birth rate, physical degeneracy, orphanage, juvenile delinquency and juvenile courts, desertion and illegitimacy, dangerous occupations, accidents and diseases of children, employment, legislation affecting children in the several states and territories, and such other facts as have a bearing upon the health, efficiency, character and training of children; (2) publicity of such information as may be obtained through the researches of the government's experts, and of

the results of the experience of private investigators and of the efforts in the several states to deal with children whether publicly dependent or not in the promotion of their well being and in the advancement of their health and efficiency,—such publicity to be given in the form of reports, bulletins, circulars of information, etc., addressed to parents, teachers, legislators, and social workers in language and form adapted to the understanding of all and calculated to secure immediate practical results. The publications of the Agricultural Department addressed to farmers and stock raisers, and the circulars of many public health authorities in their preventive work in dealing with contagious diseases furnish admirable models of such literature, and also suggest what far-reaching practical results might be expected from similar efforts to disseminate information about children.

Such work is peculiarly a function of our Federal Government under the American Constitutional System. President Roosevelt said in a message to Congress transmitting the Report of the Conference on the Care of Dependent Children which endorsed the bills then pending in Congress to establish a Federal Children's Bureau which were prepared and introduced at the request of the National Child Labor Committee: "The national government not only has the unquestioned right of research in such vital matters, but is the only agency which can effectively conduct such general inquiries as are needed for the benefit of all citizens." The New York Times, which in many other directions did not approve Mr. Roosevelt's constitutional interpretations, in commenting on this message the following day, Feb. 16, 1909, said editorially: "Perhaps the right is not exactly 'unquestioned,' but it is in the light of precedents and by fair interpretation, unquestionable."

The press of the country has very generally and quite cordially endorsed the bills to create a Children's Bureau, as have most organizations and public meetings of citizens engaged in children's work, saving only a few that have been half suspected of not wishing any search light thrown on their own methods or results.

We live in a nation composite as to population, but more composite in its legislative machinery. In so far as the problems of childhood are capable of being dealt with by law, the law will not be made for the most part by our national legislature—the Congress—but by the forty-six state legislatures or the six territorial legislative bodies, each for its respective jurisdiction independently of the others. This procedure has manifest disadvantages when compared with the simplicity of legislative regulation in England, for example, where Parliament has power to enact a veritable Children's Charter which the re-

cent Children's Act of 1908 may be called—but it has also some advantages to which reference has been made. The chief advantage is the wider range of experimentation which is possible under our 52 compartment system, and this is precisely the advantage that we have not been able to capitalize because we have had no central agency or bureau to gather information and make comparative studies beyond state bodies. The lack of accurate knowledge or the ability to secure at small cost definite information of what has been done or tried in one state by the legislators and social workers who seek to legislate in another is almost unbelievable in spite of state and national conferences of workers. Much of our superfluous laws with their lack of possible enforcement and a great deal of our unscientific and crude attempts at legislation might be avoided and an enormous saving of money effected as the direct result of the easiest and least costly part of the work of the Federal Children's Bureau. The proof of this statement is found in the vastly better condition of state legislation on Child Labor and Women's Labor as the result of the work of such private agencies as the National Child Labor Committee and the National Consumers' League. If private agencies, national in scope, but with limited powers and resources, can accomplish an appreciable improvement in existing law, how much more may be expected from the government bureau?

The definitely expressed opposition to a Federal Children's Bureau comes first from Congressmen who think that the national government is already doing through the Census, the Bureau of Education, and the Department of Commerce and Labor, or may do through these or other existing bureaus all that the new measure proposes. This is not true. No duplication of existing work is desired. The quantitative measurements of the Census and particularly its vital statistics would be used by the new bureau as the basis of further inquiries, qualitative in character and therefore not properly a part of census work. The Census will interpret its own statistics, of course, but if the mortality of infants in one city is greater or less than in another city of the same size, it is not the function of the Census authorities to go beyond the statement of fact. It would be the function of the Children's Bureau to send a special agent to make supplementary studies that would explain the causes and if possible the remedies for the people of the less favorably situated city as ascertained by the Census. There is no doubt that many of the powers and duties assigned to the proposed Children's Bureau might be added to some of the existing bureaus if added appropriations were provided, but it is not believed by those who are working for the new bureau, after careful consultation with those in charge of allied

bureaus, that it is either economical or advisable to add to their overcrowded programmes. There is also a distinct advantage in having a separate bureau labelled "Children's Bureau," so that the most unlettered citizen of the republic may know where to appeal for help in dealing with his children.

A second objection comes from those who look askance at the increase of the powers and expenses of the Federal Government. Those whose constitutional theories demand that the central government be reduced to the necessary minimum will find less to object to in the Children's Bureau if they rightly understand that it gives no new administrative powers to any federal official and that the expense involved will be more than offset by the actual savings accruing to the states in information that furnishes the basis for wiser and more economical legislation and provision for public duties to children which now devolve on the states alone. Such information the states must either go without and pay the penalty for their own ignorance, or secure for themselves in a less satisfactory way, through the expensive labors of state commissions.

The new programme for children which will make the new world for the child inhabitable even as it is being explored, calls for a union of forces of parents, of teachers and social workers, and the basis for such union consists in a fuller and more easily distributed knowledge of the results of expert dealing with the problems of the child, whether such expert knowledge comes from the teacher or officer of the state experimenting with hundreds of thousands of children or from the mother who by instinct meets and solves the same problems for her own child.

In either case the acquisition and dissemination of that knowledge which will increase health and happiness, multiply numbers, prolong life and efficiency, and promote industry and intelligence is vital to the state and nation. However much may be done by private initiative through education and philanthropy it is the supreme duty of the nation to do its full share to supplement and co-ordinate such efforts on the part of its citizens. All who desire the greatest good for the children of the nation, which the Earl of Beauchamp so appropriately called the capital of the nation, are invited to join in pressing upon the attention of Congress the need for a Federal Children's Bureau.