

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE,
AN ANALYSIS AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

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A THESIS

Presented to the Department of
Sociology in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for a Bachelor
of Science degree with honors

June 1949

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION

The story of public assistance in the United States reflects the development and growth of American thought in the fields of government, economics, political theory, and related fields, but most especially, the developments in the field of social work. The changes of theory regarding human rights that dominated social work in the various phases of its history can be seen to be based in the culture of the time. At many points social work philosophy was far more advanced than popular notions for the proper treatment of the poor, but by and large, the prevailing ideas were very much the same as the commonly accepted ideas of the functions of the government and individual responsibility. It was only slowly and often painfully that the underlying ideas in government, economics, and human rights changed and allowed the more modern theories, based on scientific investigation in social work, to take hold and become accepted in this country.

The evolution of public assistance from colonial times to the present was a slow gradual process with many setbacks, many detours, and many stopping places. Changes during the first three hundred years of our nation's existence came about very slowly and the fundamental ideas on

public assistance were changed only under the most obvious need and malfunctioning of existing policies. The most rapid group of changes was always made in times of stress when the public was acutely aware of the fact that its needs were not being met. The most vital period of growth was during the great depression especially in the years from 1929 to 1935. It was during this time that the states recognized the inadequacies of their public assistance systems and were forced to bring them up to date in order to meet the demands of their people. This was the period, too, of active federal participation and dominance in meeting the national crisis. The federal government had long been held out of the picture by President Pierce's interpretation of the Constitution, but with the inauguration of the Roosevelt administration, the federal government acknowledged the welfare function of the government and instituted an emergency program to meet immediate needs. In 1935, additional progress was made for permanent federal participation by the enactment of the Social Security Act whereby the federal government announced its intention to set up a permanent program of security and insurance to protect the individual from future need. The idea of local government responsibility in caring for its own people has always been respected from colonial times to the present; it is an idea that was brought to this country from England as part of our Old World heritage and one that

yielded slowly to changing conditions. The federal government acted in accordance with this idea whenever possible, but it still met with local opposition. The local authorities were faced with the dilemma of desperately needing federal money and yet they hated equally as strongly the regulations imposed on them as to the use of that money.

The whole growth and development of public assistance in America can be seen by tracing its history from colonial times to the present. This thesis has been divided into two parts; the first part is devoted to a broad survey of the history of public assistance in the United States relating it to its cultural setting, attitudes, theories, and dominating influences in each phase. Conditions and developments in the Eighteenth, Nineteenth, and Twentieth Centuries has been outlined; these events act as a base for the second part of this paper. Part II. is an attempt to analyze the part of this history dealing with the Roosevelt administration as a social movement. The whole history has been considered as a General Social Movement growing from one stage to another in line with the cultural drift of our country. Various definitions and classifications of social movements have been attempted, but no absolute agreement has been found. A definition given by J. Steward Burgess¹ is broad enough to cover social movements in their wider aspects. It reads, "A joint endeavor of a considerable group of persons to alter or change the course of events by their joint activities".

1 J. Steward Burgess, "The study of Modern Social Movements as a Means for Clarifying the Process of Social Action", Social Forces, V 22, October 1943-May 1944, p. 269.

This definition was worked out by the students of Temple University in their series of Modern Social Movements classes.

Several classifications of social movements are offered by Dawson and Gettys¹ and Blumer² which are useful in considering this material. Dawson and Gettys classify social movements into (1) Spontaneous Movements which are expressive and non-purposeful, such as, dancing manias, religious ecstasies, and demonstrations; (2) Unorganized Mass Movements which are mainly individualistic in nature, such as, fashions, fads, crazes, booms, migrations, rushes, panics, and stampedes; and (3) Organized Social Movements which are directed and purposeful, such as, mobs, revivals, political reform movements, revolutions, etc. Blumer divides this social phenomena into (1) Elementary types of spontaneous movements as in the case of crowds, masses, and publics; (2) General Social Movements characterized by their long run aspects and gradual change of values and institutions usually in line with the cultural drift and out of which specific social movements grow and crystalize; (3) Specific Social Movements which are usually consistent with the general movements, have well defined objectives, organized officials, program, membership, and methods of control over that membership.

¹ Dawson and Gettys, An Introduction to Sociology, The Ronald Press Co. (New York, 1929) pp. 771-787.
² H. Blumer, New Outline of the Principles of Sociology Edited by Alfred McClung Lee, (New York, 1946) Barnes and Noble Co. p. 199-220.

With this definition and the classifications given, the general trends in public assistance since colonial times can be considered as one of the movements coming under Blumer's classification of a General Social Movement out of which Specific Movements grew, stimulated action, and died. These trends were in keeping with the cultural drift as shown by the other developments in the fields of political theory and government responsibility for the individual. The New Deal Movement grew out of this General Social Movement and was, by and large, the most extensive of these Specific Movements. It has been treated here with some emphasis to show how it grew from the past, met the demands of the people, and the conditions of the times. By Dawson and Gettys' classification, this same activity during the depression period would be an Organized Social Movement of the political reform type since the approach used by the Roosevelt administration was to bring about changes through legislation.

The purpose of defining, classifying, and citing the stages, and history of public assistance as a social movement is to give unity to the analysis which makes up the second part of this report. Part I. is devoted to the facts, the "what" of public assistance; in the second half, the "why" has been considered. Why have the changes occurred? Why did they develop so slowly? How have attitudes of relief clients and the public changed? Why is federal responsibility in welfare fields now accepted as never before in history?

All these questions have been considered in the analysis of the General Movement of public assistance through history and the Specific Movement of the depression years.

Ever since Cain's first searching question, "Am I my brother's keeper?", man has considered his relation to his fellowmen as of the utmost importance. His feelings have ranged from the rugged individualism of colonial days to a still partial acceptance of the welfare state acknowledging the federal government not merely as a passive protective agency which governs best by governing least, but rather, as an active force protecting the rights of all men against the malfunctioning of our economic system and guaranteeing them security against forces beyond their control. With this acceptance of a fuller functioning of the federal government and the accompanying changes in political and social theory, we are gradually moving into a partnership between the individual and his government. The distrust is vanishing with familiarity, fear is giving away to security, and man is facing his government on equal terms as a friend instead of as the feared monster it has appeared for so many hundreds of years.

CHAPTER II.

THE COLONIAL PERIOD

The founders of this country were Englishmen, and as Englishmen, they transported their knowledge, ideas, theories, traditions, hopes, and fears along with their material possessions to America and planted them here as a basis for growth. They were typical of the people and country from which they came; they were a bit more hardy perhaps, a little more non-conforming in regard to religion and their rights, but they were Englishmen, nonetheless, steeped in English tradition and prejudice. As they set up their colonies, they proceeded along lines with which they were familiar. They formed into townships, established governments, and churches, and took up their lives in the struggle for survival in a new land.

The physical setting in which they found themselves was conducive to individualism. There was an abundance of land, each family was largely self-sufficient, and a reasonable amount of work by a household brought enough to eat if the crop was good. There was cooperation and mutual dependence on neighbors and friends in hard times. A person's standing in a village rested on his property ownership, his personality, work habits, church attendance, and civic leadership. Everyone was willing to help a good hard working,

churchgoing man if he was known, but strangers were rare and were regarded with suspicion. The villages were small and isolated with travel slow and dangerous; due to these conditions, and our English heritage of local responsibility, the villages and townships grew up as independent bodies responsible to themselves and with a tradition for caring for their own. Josephine Brown, commenting on the tradition of local responsibility stated:¹

"Care of the poor has been recognized from earliest colonial days as fundamentally a function of local government. The system of local poor relief was transplanted root and branch to the Eastern seaboard from Elizabethan England in the ruthless early seventeenth century, and was later carried by pioneer settlers across the continent. This English heritage made poverty a disgrace, branded the poor man as unworthy and shiftless, and attached to relief an indelible stigma."

The Puritan idea that the worthy man was under the protection of God and therefore prosperous was also dominant in these times. Poverty was inevitably seen as a falling out with God due to some lack or deliberate willfulness within the person. It was a self-evident fact that if a man worked hard, went to church, was humble, did his duty to God, and lived in a clean house, all his needs would be provided. Man, in those days, was a rugged individualist; with God's help, he was the master of his fate. Only the forces of nature were beyond his control, and with his bare hands, he could carve out his own fate. The West constantly beckoned

1 Josephine G. Brown, Public Relief 1929-1939 (New York, 1940) p. 3.

the more venturesome, and land meant an opportunity to live and be self-sufficient.

With their Old World heritage, religious ideas, and new physical setting, the colonies continued to develop their theories of government and philosophies on man's relation to his fellowmen. They were still reacting against the oppressions met in England so that they set up their government as a protection against the common enemy and established the rules necessary for survival. Their religious ideology was as intolerant as that from which they had fled with non-believers or non-conformists severely condemned. The government was considered best that governed least so that people were left free to deal with one another on equal terms with a minimum of protection or interference. In the beginning, there were no large extremes of wealth so that if a family needed some temporary help, they turned to friends and neighbors as equals. Later, the rich gave to the poor condescendingly as a superior gives to an inferior and most often accompanied the "gift" with moral teachings and directions on how to live the good life.

From the very beginning, public and private agencies for help for the poor existed side by side. The earliest private agency, for the most part, was the church which aided its members and the poor in its parish.¹ The church knew

1 H. H. Stroup, Social Work An Introduction to the Field
(New York, 1948) p. 41.

the people and their needs intimately; it maintained religious standards in giving and emphasized the moral poverty as well as the physical poverty of those who needed help. The church maintained institutions for the poor and other unfortunates as well as providing "outdoor" relief to its parishioners.

The public agencies during this time should also be stressed. It is often thought that public agencies for the care of the poor is a modern development. Actually, Massachusetts had enacted a poor law by 1642 and in 1647 the legislature of Rhode Island followed the Massachusetts example by undertaking the care of the poor as a public responsibility:¹

"It is agreed and ordered, by this present Assembly, that each Towne shall provide carefully for the reliefe of the poore, to maintayne the impotent, and to employ the able, and shall appoint an overseer for the same purpose."

The office of overseer mentioned above was a public office which was extremely unpopular; often men had to be threatened with fines before they would accept it. For a time, it was only a part time responsibility of a public official, but it soon developed into an office in its own right. The overseer had sweeping authority in dealing with the poor and destitute. He decided whether "indoor" or "outdoor" relief was advisable. Among his duties was the enforcement of residence requirements as a protection to

1 Stroup, op.cit., p.61.

the township from strangers and drifters who were apt to live on the bounty of the town. He also maintained a constant check on relatives of the poor to see if they could care for the town's dependents; he received any and all property of the poor and managed it for the welfare of the dependent with an eye to repaying the town for any aid given.

The two kinds of aid given were "indoor" (institutional care) and "outdoor" relief (aid in their own homes given in kind or in money). Later there was much discussion as to which type was more beneficial to the recipient, or rather, less harmful, but during this period, both types were given. By the end of the Eighteenth Century, the following types of aid were offered in the various states: ¹

1. Outdoor relief given to "paupers" in their own homes
2. Farming out of single "paupers" to the lowest bidder for care in exchange for work.
3. Contract with the lowest bidder for the care of all "paupers" of a given locality.
4. Care in almshouses under direct control of the public officials.
5. Indenture of children - apprenticeship

The grouping together of the poor, insane, sick, handicapped, dependent children, and all other unfortunates into a public almshouse was a situation full of dangerous consequences for the people who were forced to inhabit them.

¹ Brown, op.cit., p.8.

Often it was the only way a community would, or could, "discharge" its responsibilities to its poor and sick. The town often tried to make the receiving of aid as unpleasant, and thus as inexpensive, as possible. Where almshouse care was provided a needy family could move into one or be broken up; the town would then care for them in exchange for the labors of all those who could work. The costs in human misery and suffering were not considered since poverty or misfortune was due to personal fault and community responsibility only existed to the extent of keeping the people from starving. Almshouse inmates were branded with the stigma of being a burden on the town and were treated accordingly.

The first provisions for assistance provided in this country reflected the ideas we inherited from England. A combination of these ideas, religious beliefs prevailing at the time, and the views concerning the proper function of a government provided the foundation for the beginnings in public assistance. It was on this foundation that later practices were built.

CHAPTER III

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The beginning of the Nineteenth Century ushered in the Industrial Revolution which set in motion a series of events that were destined to make the United States the greatest nation on earth. Our increased wealth and power due to our tremendous productivity did not come without a cost. Our land was turned into sites for huge cities, our plains were cut by railroads, our forests nearly destroyed. Beauty was sacrificed for utility as the American people rolled up their sleeves and dashed into the race for economic gain. Economic prosperity became "the good"; a man was ranked by his earning power and possessions which were the key to prestige. A class consciousness started slowly developing with increased extremes of wealth and poverty which was made possible by a fuller development of our capitalistic system of private property and the laissez-faire attitude of our government.

The tremendous economic gains made in the Nineteenth Century had a wide effect on the lives and mode of living of the people. The first cities were largely unplanned; people were allowed to live in darkness and filth as everything was pushed aside for business. The poor, the most

recent immigrants, and the unfortunates collected in the heart of the city to live in squalor by night and slave for the new mechanized industries by day. For these workers, the day was now passed when they could command their own lives. They were no longer independent, self-sufficient men with the power of their own lives in their hands. They had to depend on others for the tools to work; they could live only so long as the growing economic system could provide them with jobs. Starting from the first major depression of 1837 and following in a cycle of approximately every twenty years, these people were deprived of the necessities of life due to forces beyond their control which caused them untold suffering. It is common that our personal and social morals differ so widely; if we knew these people as individuals we would not permit them to suffer, but since they were the impersonal masses, their plight was their own.

Labor, during this period, was imbued with the same traditional ideas of individualism as the capitalistic owners and the administration in Washington. Everyone was supposedly free to work or quit their job, everyone could bargain with their employer on equal terms for benefits they thought their due. Gradually, labor saw the weakness of their position, and the first attempts at organization were made, but they were always handicapped

by their lack of class feeling and the traditions of individual freedom of action.

The Nineteenth Century, too, saw the end of the frontier in America and the passing of the last opportunity to move on and establish homes on new land. The closing of the frontier forced people to build up the land already settled; now, extensive internal development was the only thing left.¹ As the cities grew and industry centralized in various sections of the country technological developments moved at a swifter and swifter pace. The most obvious trend, considering the changed cultural setting taking hold in America, was the increased need for adjustment by the worker to his economic position. The new arrivals in the country and the farm youth were attracted to cities and were often unemployed for a period of time. They were without friends and the protection of a family group; they soon found themselves at the mercy of public and private agencies offering inadequate aid with one hand and the Bible with the other. The periods of depression taxed the private and public agencies (where public agencies were allowed to exist), and the people's needs were rarely adequately met. There was no attempt to provide anything but the bare necessities of life. The cost of simple recreation and pleasures which were vital to the health and well being of the people were not figured into the

1 A fuller discussion of this theory of the influence of of the frontier is given by Frederick Jackson Turner in Democracy, Liberty, and Property by Francis W. Coker, (New York, 1948) p. 234.

local budget as legitimate expenditures. The loss in human values by forcing people to live in this manner was not recognized. The costs of increased crime was put down to man's innate wickedness but never to the policies that forced them to express themselves in socially undesirable ways.

While the Twentieth Century saw public assistance in the ascent dominating the field of social work for the poor, the Nineteenth Century was the period where it was fighting for its life, and in some places for periods of time, quite unsuccessfully. Private welfare was an outgrowth of the days when neighbor helped neighbor, and friend helped friend. But times had changed, and now, it was the rich giving to the poor whom they did not know as individuals. They were only acquainted with the broad "causes" of their poverty. The rich and the poor coming together in this relationship never could develop a meeting of the minds. The poor were used to sharing with one another; they gave all they had willingly if a friend needed help more than they. They gave freely, and yet, they did not feel called upon to investigate, lecture, and command obedience to their own way of thinking. The private agencies, on the other hand, gave only inadequately and allowed each family only a small portion of what they had while forcing their ideas of temperance, cleanliness and thrift on the people.¹

¹ The contrast in the attitudes of the poor toward one another and that of the private agencies towards them is discussed in Democracy and Social Ethics by Jane Addams (New York, 1902) Chapter 2.

The public, for the most part, rested their faith in private agencies to carry most of the burden of poor relief and limited public assistance as much as possible. The New York Society for the Prevention of Pauperism in 1817 made a study of the causes of destitution; their findings are listed here:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Ignorance | 6. Lotteries |
| 2. Idleness | 7. Pawnbrokers |
| 3. Intemperance | 8. Houses of ill-fame |
| 4. Want of economy | 9. Gambling houses |
| 5. Imprudent and hasty marriages | 10. The numerous charitable institutions of the city |

In view of these findings basing poverty mainly on personality causes, they attempted to stop begging on the city streets and to channel all giving through one agency. This Society was set up to give aid outside of institutions; to facilitate this system, they inaugurated a home visiting system by districts.¹

Another private organization was created in 1843 in New York called the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor. They made careful distinction between the poor (persons not habitually destitute) and paupers (those confirmed in poverty due to personality factors); they attempted to aid only the poor. They also used the visitor system although they gave no material aid; they made referrals of "worthy" cases to other agencies. The Association helped unify the private agencies who were previously operating as separate bodies causing inefficiency and duplication of aid. One of their strongest positive

¹ Stroup, op.cit., p. 45.

forces was their efforts in improving the physical and social conditions of the poor by insisting on housing regulations within the law, establishment of bathing facilities, the stressing of the manufacture of pure food, and the aiding in the establishment of other agencies¹ to aid children, workmen, and the handicapped.

The influence of the Charity Organization Movement of 1877 was perhaps the most important of any of the private agencies set up at this time. They were firmly convinced that the problem of relieving the suffering of the poor could and should be handled by private means. They used their influence to limit public assistance to indoor institutional aid since they believed that private philanthropy could carry the burden of "outdoor" relief. Private help was considered more desirable than public assistance because of the lower administrative costs and because public assistance was thought to have especially deleterious psychological effects on the people. Partly due to the attitude of this organization, public assistance lost favor and had to wait until the great depression of the 1930's to gain wide acceptance when the private agencies proved inadequate to the burden suddenly thrust on them. Despite the attitude of private agencies toward government responsibility to the poor, these agencies made gains in the understanding of the problem, and it was

¹ Stroup, op.cit., p. 47.

in private agencies that the theories of social work took root.

The public assistance programs were slowly changing during this time. While the private agencies were reorganizing and establishing standards in the field of social work to meet the increased load, public systems were moving into the hands of larger and larger administrative units. These steps, for the most part, were not taken willingly, but were forced on the states by obvious need. More and more, the states were to feel the weight of social responsibility and the need for them to enter the field of welfare. By acceptance of this function, however grudgingly, the states took over another function which was at one time primarily the concern of the church.

One of the conditions recognized at an early date that called for state responsibility was the vast increase in the unsettled poor. The growth of cities stimulated the migration of people in the search of jobs. They came to the city and moved often so that they were never eligible for assistance by local authorities. Only an administrative unit as large as a state could meet this situation during the emergency periods of widespread unemployment. Disaster relief was also something too big for the local governments or private agencies to handle with any degree of efficiency so that it was necessary for the states and occasionally the federal government to make appropriations at these times.

One of the earliest developments in the Nineteenth Century was aid to people as they were divided into categories according to their type of need and cause of their difficulties. Those obviously suffering due to no fault of their own were the first helped. Physical suffering can be seen more quickly and called forth sympathy; psychological suffering had to wait another century for recognition and care. The people who had been dumped into local almshouses were finally classified into groups and separate institutions were established for their care. The insane, deaf and dumb, blind, juvenile delinquents, the crippled, and veterans were the first helped. People in these classes were transferred from almshouses and maintained in institutions especially set up for them and which were designed to meet their special needs. Those not handicapped in any way were left in local almshouses to be provided for by local "indoor" relief. It was necessary for the states to set up these institutions for these special classes because there were too few in any one locality to maintain a separate institution there. The various states developed these institutions irregularly at different times, there was no uniformity, no common methods. There was no state institution for dependent children until the middle of the Nineteenth Century although some of them had been rescued from the almshouse by private organizations. Where the state did not, or could not, establish institutions of their own, they often subsidized private institutions to

carry on the work. Every effort was made to keep the government out of welfare, and when private agencies were already established, the state government would subsidize them rather than enter the field itself.¹

It became evident in time that if the state governments were going to maintain institutions, they would have to set up the machinery to inspect and supervise them. In many states, State Boards of Charities met this need; the first state to organize such a board was Massachusetts in 1863. Its duties were to inspect and advise county and state institutions, but it was given no jurisdiction over "outdoor" poor relief.

Other states soon followed the Massachusetts example; in 1874 the first Conference of Boards of Public Charities was called in New York with four states sending delegates. This was the beginning of what later became the National Conference of Social Work. They saw the problem of poverty in its wider aspects, the need for information and statistics on disease, insanity, crime, and related problems. It was through these conferences that information and methods started to be exchanged and the states recognized their common problem.

One of the biggest problems that had to be faced by the separate states was caused by the intricacies, inconsistencies, and lack of uniformity within the states themselves concerning "indoor" and "outdoor" relief. In

¹ Brown, op.cit., p. 21.

Oregon, for instance, in 1849 the county probate courts were responsible for the relief of the lame, sick, blind, aged, and the infirm. In the West, the distances were much greater and towns smaller so that most of the authority for relief rested in the county from the beginning. As the counties developed, the increased needs were met by patchwork amendments which, in some cases, put the financial responsibility on two, three, or four different types of local units within the same state. The picture was further complicated by court decisions, opinions of the attorney generals, and many confusing interpretations of the law. A step to clarify matters and organize a state was finally taken in 1895 in the form of the Indiana Reform Law which required reports to a central state office from all local relief officials. This did not pass the control over relief into the hands of the state, but it did make possible a rudimentary form of state regulation and supervision which was emulated by other states. The data observed from these reports were never accurate due to the inadequacy and incompleteness of the local records.

While public assistance was growing in its administrative and "indoor" relief aspects, the battle for "out-door" relief by the city or county was raging. As the cities grew and depressions occurred in a rhythmic cycle, the demand for more and more help alarmed the people. The influence of Malthus's theory had profoundly effected

thinking people in America; they feared starvation for all if the demands of the non-productive poor and unemployed were to be met.¹ The idea persisted that the poor were responsible for their own condition; they should not expect help, but if they got it at all, they should be profoundly grateful. This fear and suspicion of the poor and of "outdoor" relief was shown in an excellent manner in an extract from Josephine Shaw Lowell's, "Public Relief and Private Charity". The sections on Public Outdoor Relief -² Theory and Practice in 1883 are quoted below:

"Outdoor relief...fails to attain any one of the objects which should be aimed at by relief from the public funds.

1. It fails to provide that no one shall starve for the common necessities of life, because, however lavish may be the relief, unless self-restraint and providence be conferred upon those who receive it, all that is bestowed will often be wasted by them in riotous living, and the innocent and helpless beings dependent upon them will be left to suffer far more than had the relief been denied.
2. It fails to save the recipient of relief and the community from moral harm, because human nature is so constituted that no man can receive as a gift what he should earn by his own labor without a moral deterioration, and the presence in the community of certain persons living on public relief has the tendency to tempt others to sink to their degraded level.
3. Outdoor relief cannot be of short duration, because when it has once been accepted, the barrier is broken down and rarely, or never, thereafter, is the effort made to do without it, and thus all such relief has the tendency to become regular and permanent.
4. The taxpayers are the losers by outdoor relief, because, although the amount given to each individual is, undoubtedly, smaller than would be required for that individual in an institution, yet outdoor relief is so infectious and, once obtained, is so easy a way of getting a living,

1 Brown, op.cit., p. 39.

2 Edith Abbott, Some American Pioneers in Social Welfare, University of Chicago Press, 1937, pp. 159-160.

that far larger numbers demand and receive it than could be induced to enter an institution, and thus the total cost of public relief is always increased by giving it outside of the workhouse or almshouse.

5. The chief object, to convince the public that the poor are adequately cared for by public officials, has never been attained by either system, and may be left for time, experience, and education.

Outdoor relief, in fact, cannot be defended; it has none of the redeeming features of private charity, because there is nothing personal or softening in it, nor has it the advantages which might, perhaps, be derived from an acknowledged and openly advocated communism, for the principle underlying it is not that the proceeds of all men's labor is to be fairly divided among all, but that the idle, improvident, and even vicious man has the right to live in idleness and vice upon the proceeds of the labor of his industrious and virtuous fellow-citizen.

We have already accepted in this paper the postulate that the community should save every one of its members from starvation, no matter how low or depraved such member may be, but we contend that the necessary relief should be surrounded by circumstances that shall not only repel everyone, not in extremity, from accepting it, but which shall also insure a distinct moral and physical improvement on the part of all those who are forced to have recourse to it--that is, discipline and education should be inseparably associated with any system of public relief.

And there is still another point to be insisted on; while the acknowledgment is made that every person born into a civilized community has a right to live, yet the community has the right to say that incompetent and dangerous persons shall not, so far as can be helped, be born to acquire this right to live upon others. To prevent a constant and alarming increase of these two classes of persons, the only way is for the community to refuse to support any except those whom it can control--that is, except those who will submit themselves to discipline and education. It is certainly an anomaly for a man and woman who have proved themselves incapable of supplying their own daily needs to bring into the world other helpless beings, to be also maintained by a tax upon the community.

If, then, outdoor relief is proved to be not only useless as a means of relieving actual, existing suffering, but an active means of increasing present and future want and vice, the only other means of giving public relief is within an institution, and this will be found to render possible the attainment of all the objects that should be aimed at by public relief."

The objections, tone, and philosophy of this writing is not materially different from that found in the Josiah Quincy Report of 1821 which did so much to increase the use of almshouses during the Nineteenth Century.¹ From 1821 to 1883 there were no material changes in the basic ideas of human rights and needs as is seen in these two reports.

Many leaders in the growing field of social work attacked the system of public "outdoor" relief by the city and saw it as causing pauperism instead of relieving it. They had completely reversed the cause and effect in their thinking. As poverty increased, their attacks on public relief agencies increased also. During the depression of 1857 when case loads increased and larger sums of money were needed, there was increased danger of political patronage in the use of relief money. The funds were entrusted to poorly trained officials and inexperienced people lacking social work training. Most of the trained social workers of this period were in private agencies which had developed standards and personnel. Later, during the depression of 1873, the abuses and corruption in public welfare aroused such a storm of protest that private agencies were again

¹ Sophonisba F. Breckinridge, Public Welfare Administration in the United States, Select Documents, University of Chicago Press, 1927, pp. 30-39.

stimulated to take over the work. The evils in public welfare were thought to be inherent in the system, no attempt was made to correct them, so that in 1879 the system of giving "outdoor" relief by the city was declared illegal and abandoned in eight of the largest cities in the country.¹

When the small pittances formerly granted by these cities were cut off everyone waited to see what the result would be. In Josephine Lowell's book, quoted previously, the author claims that the result was nothing.²

"We have comparatively full statistics from Kings County of the amount expended each year for her dependent classes, both from public and private funds in and out of institutions, for the ten years ending September 30, 1882. Until 1879, public outdoor relief was given by the county to the amount of \$100,000 or more yearly; it was then cut off in the middle of winter, without warning, without any substitute being provided, and the result was--nothing.

In fact, except for the saving of the money and the stopping of petty political corruption which had been carried on by means of the relief, and the cessation of the spectacle of hundreds of people passing through the streets with baskets of provisions furnished by the public, it would have been impossible to discover that the relief had been stopped. And there was, besides, in 1879 and 1880, a smaller number of persons supported in the almshouses than in any other of the ten years from 1873 to 1882..."

Due to the cutting off of public relief in New York, the demands on private organizations increased during the winter and later fell off. The opponents of public assistance saw this as an indication of the rightness of their stand that people would not work unless they

1 These cities were Brooklyn, N.Y., Baltimore, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., St. Louis, Kansas City, and San Francisco.
2 As quoted in Abbott, op.cit., p. 157.

1

were compelled to be on their own.

"People, very soon after commencing to receive public aid, lose their energy and self-respect, find it easier to rely upon the industry of others to furnish them their daily bread than to exert themselves to earn a livelihood; their children learn to think that getting provisions and fuel from the overseer of the poor is perfectly right and proper, and they are almost certain to follow in the footsteps of their parents, especially as it requires a great deal less exertion than to earn their living by honest labor."

The people managed to keep alive without public help until their jobs were restored, but the probable psychological and physical damage caused by worry, anxiety, and insecurity was an additional burden on the poor. Public assistance had to be resumed later, but this was an expensive experiment when dealing with human lives; the suffering caused by the delay in public assistance growth until the 1930's cannot be calculated.

There were those who defended the giving of public assistance as the only efficient method of dealing with the problem. Labor, on the whole, was in favor of the handling of relief by the city; they did not want alms from the rich. With aid from a public agency which maintained a more impersonal attitude in their contacts, they felt that a man could be helped without losing his self-respect. Stanton Coit, founder of one of the earlier settlement houses, took his stand on the side of public assistance:

2

"It is to be deeply deplored that...the people who started

1 Abbott E. op.cit., p. 155.

2 Brown, op.cit., p. 44.

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."

Due to these conflicting opinions and philosophies on the value of "indoor" vs "outdoor" relief, private vs public help, it took the coming of the Twentieth Century for the realization to become apparent that the field was big enough for both "indoor" and "outdoor" relief, public and private welfare agencies.

The last major development in the Nineteenth Century was the thwarting of efforts to have the federal government take some responsibility for the care of the poverty stricken. The climax came in 1854 with the efforts of Dorothea Dix to obtain land from the federal government which could be used to establish institutions for the care of the insane. The federal practice of giving land grants began in 1785 for the maintenance of public schools. Later these grants were also given to be used as seats of government or to defray the costs of erecting public buildings.

1 Brown, op.cit., p. 34.

This help had never been questioned or thought of as pauperizing the states, endangering states' rights, or in any way contrary to the constitution. In the case of giving land for the care of the insane, however, President Pierce maintained these things of be true and vetoed the bill after it had passed both houses of Congress. It was not only the damage of this veto that struck at the heart of fuller federal participation, but also the comments made by President Pierce to the effect that the federal government could not take the responsibility for the insane any more than it could assume the responsibility for the care of indigent persons. He cited the tradition of local responsibility, the danger of bureaucracy, and the stifling of local initiative which was contrary to the American ideas of government. He threw the responsibility back on to the states to solve their problems as best they could. In case of disaster, the federal government stood ready to aid for a short time for a specific need. During the years 1867-1868, the federal government appropriated money for general relief purposes in southern states but only when the situation had reached the proportions of an emergency. There were efforts during the depression of 1893-1894 to stimulate federal aid for the unemployed, but these efforts met with the solid answer that the federal government had no responsibility in the matter. Due to this

policy, the federal government became far removed from the lives of the people, and in part, became an "emergency" government.

For three-quarters of a century President Pierce's interpretation of the "welfare clause" in the Constitution stood as a force holding the federal government from any welfare activities. In 1854 there were no federal agencies in social service work; the United States Census was established during the Nineteenth Century primarily as a statistical gathering agency. With the start of the Roosevelt administration in 1933, the clause enjoining the federal government, "to lay and collect taxes, duties, imports, and excises, to pay debts, and provide for the common defense and general welfare of the United States" took on a new meaning, and the federal government entered the field of social service from which it had been barred for so long a time.

Fundamentally, the beliefs about the poor remained unchanged during the entire century as can be seen by the use of the same methods without a growing consciousness of their inadequacy. Public relief was tolerated whenever there was a fear of violence from the unemployed poor. The giving was not accompanied with kindness or understanding, but always with the implication that the recipient was inferior. Poverty was thought to be inherited or self-caused and indicated a weakness always to be borne by these unfortunates.

During this century, there was less farming out and indenture used, but public assistance fell into disfavor due to corruption, lack of standards, and trained personnel. Private agencies were developed with trained staffs and insisted that there was no place in welfare for public agencies. This was as surely the century for "indoor" relief and private charity just as surely as the next was the century for "outdoor" relief and public agencies with improved social work standards. Almshouses were the basic form of poor relief, "paupers' oaths" were used universally, and workhouses increased everywhere. This move was hastened by the Josiah Quincy Report of 1821 and others attacking "outdoor" public relief. Another trend caused by the growth of the country and the magnitude of the problem was toward fuller state responsibility for welfare while the federal government was limited in its participation.

Just as the Nineteenth Century saw many changes in our country, the Twentieth Century was the time of the most revolutionary changes of all. The changes made during this period and the conditions bringing them about will be outlined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRE-DEPRESSION YEARS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Up until the year 1929 when a new economic crisis arose in the country, the developments in public assistance administration, methods, and philosophy had proceeded at the same rate as in the centuries before. From 1900 to 1929, the trends started in the Nineteenth Century were developed more fully and became more widespread throughout the states. Local, state, and federal participation in public assistance and other welfare matters developed within limits, but no new concepts were introduced to change the public's idea of their functions or the scope of their responsibility.

In the local governments, the theory concerning the poor in need of relief had remained largely the same. The grants were deliberately designed to be smaller than the lowest wages that the client could earn if he was working. This doctrine, based on the assumption that if relief was adequate, people would not work, was still the result of the old English and colonial ideas concerning human nature; it was this that was responsible for keeping assistance on a low level as long as it prevailed. It took the more advanced thinking of social workers and the evidence of former relief clients streaming back to work when jobs

became available to partially overcome these ideas so that more advances could be made in providing adequately for the poor. While the old theories prevailed, however, the town saw it as their right and duty to direct the lives of their clients. They gave instructions as to what the client might eat, wear, how he should live, as well as subjecting his morals and general behavior to official supervision. Oddly enough, the same people who opposed state and federal regulations over local governments were the same ones who forced restrictions and rules on the clients without a thought of harming the initiative of the individual. The only method used to rehabilitate the individual was to make relief as unpleasant as possible in an effort to force him off the public relief roles and on to his own feet.

During the early years of this century "outdoor" relief given by the city was still struggling with public disfavor. In eight large cities it had been discontinued entirely from the time of the depression of 1873, and in some, it was not reinstated until 1929. While these cities had completely outlawed public assistance as inherently evil, other cities were keeping up the fight and making improvements in the administration of public "outdoor" relief. One of these cities was Denver, Colorado; it had appointed as director of its Department of Social

Welfare of the City and County a trained social worker, Miss Gertrude Vaile. She believed public welfare work had a place in the welfare picture and advocated the use of methods developed by private agencies. She told the National Conference of Charities and Correction meeting in Baltimore in 1915:¹

"I believe that the principle of poor relief by public authority is absolutely right. Not only should a government, in the mere exercise of its police power, be prepared to see that no one shall be driven to desperation for lack of the necessities of life; and not only is the whole burden of relief unduly heavy to be borne by a generous few,--but in the search-light of the modern spirit another fact stands out with glaring distinctness. The poor and suffering are so, not only by their own fault or peculiar misfortune, but also by the fault of us all. Government permits working and living conditions which create poverty and sickness --yea, even licenses some of them; and it is only just that organized society as a whole should struggle with the responsibility and pay the cost."

Through the use of trained social workers in the administration of public welfare agencies, the standards of the public agencies rose and the hostility between public and private agencies gradually lessened. Public relief had earned the right to exist; the only question which remained was the division of work between them. Further evidence of the bridging of the gap between public and private agencies and their growing cooperation was the admittance of the Denver City and County Bureau of Charity to the membership of the American Association for Organizing Family Social Work which had formerly only admitted

¹ Brown, op.cit., p. 51.

private agencies and was a national standard-setting body.

While these methods were being used to raise the standards in local public welfare agencies to make them more acceptable, trends were also developing along state lines. It will be remembered that the states were gradually drawn into the picture, first to meet emergencies and disasters; then to handle problems too big for the local units, such as the unsettled poor problem; and finally to set up institutions for certain categories which also meant developing State Boards to supervise these institutions. The state was still far from the dominating factor in public assistance, but their interest continued to spread to other welfare activities and in some states permanent programs were developed. The state programs grew unevenly with no uniform standards from state to state; they had very little contact between them to make it possible for them to learn from each other's errors.

As provisions were made for certain categories of the poor in institutions in the early 1800's, the states first used the category system in their aid outside of institutions. Veterans were one of the first groups to be aided in this way. It was reasoned that they were really armed employees of the government engaged in "seasonal" hazardous work and were thus entitled to special

state legislation. The appeal of the veteran was backed up with emotional and political force and was largely successful. In 1910, all but six states provided for Civil War veterans, and in 1918, thirty states provided for World War I veterans in addition to the federal pensions and bonuses. At this same time, one hundred years after the states had started giving categorical assistance in institutions for the needy, other groups were helped by state laws; aid to the blind in 1907, mothers' aid in 1911, aid for the aged in 1923.¹ These were the most important state participations before 1931, but they were very cautious beginnings. These laws provided for the use of very little state money; as a consequence, they were dependent on local money and initiative in order to be put into effect. The laws operated only in part; they were permissive rather than mandatory. As more and more state money was allotted for these purposes, the mandatory features tended to increase and the supervisory function of the state was more clearly recognized and applied. In 1904, only fifteen states had established Boards of Charities, but in 1913, all of them had done so. Their function was chiefly concerned with state institutions while local authorities still had the control of public "outdoor" relief. The White House Conference held in 1931 reported these conditions in the early part of the century:

1 Brown, op.cit., p. 26.

1913 21 states exercised no state supervision over any form of local relief

27 states supervised only almshouses; outdoor relief was left to the discretion of local officials

In 1931, the time of the report, the situation had not been greatly changed. It was reported that five states still had no state departments concerned with general public welfare problems. The report on state public welfare organizations that did exist did not mention "outdoor" relief as a concern of the state departments of welfare. Public "outdoor" relief was a local matter until the time of the depression when states were forced to step in as the cities' resources failed. Later, when state bankruptcy was feared, the national government was finally permitted to enter the field.

Some of the states took action in 1931 to meet the unemployment problem; they began to appropriate funds and to supervise state and local expenditures. By 1939 the State Department of Welfare in three-fourths of the states supervised or directly administered relief in the local units. These changes in administration from the local units to the state was not accompanied by any radically changed views on the poor or the unemployed. In the year 1933, for instance, eight states had maximum amounts that could be given to the poor. In others, the relief was given in small amounts of cash or in kind.

The "relief in kind" method was especially indicative of the attitude toward the poor which persisted up through the years.

Although local officials were always important, the authority over public assistance gradually passed from town, to county, to the state. This shift was made necessary by the use of state funds for welfare purposes and the desire of the state to protect these funds from local fraud and misuse. It had become apparent that indifference and neglect was shown by local governments when the leverage of state funds and state administration was lacking. It was just as true that the state governments were reluctant to assume responsibility without some inducements later made by the federal government.

The early efforts in the 1900's to have the federal government assume welfare functions grew out of the progressive dissatisfaction with the state organizations or from the disinterest of the states to set up any welfare organizations. It was suggested in 1901, and again in 1921, and 1923 that a federal bureau of welfare be set up. The proposed functions of this bureau was to collect statistics, spread educational material, information, etc. in an effort to coordinate the public welfare of the various states. Part of the outline for the re-organization of the Executive Departments recommended by

President Harding and his cabinet concerning the Department of Education and Welfare in 1923 is given below as an illustration as to what was involved:¹

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND WELFARE

a. This is a new department, to have four major subdivisions, each in charge of an Assistant Secretary, as follows:

Education	Social Service
Health	Veteran Relief

b. Existing bureaus and offices to be transferred to the Department of Education and Welfare are as follows:

From the Department of the Interior:

Bureau of Education	St. Elizabeths Hospital
Indian Schools	Freedmen's Hospital
Howard University	Bureau of Pensions

From the Department of Labor:

Women's Bureau (part)	Children's Bureau (part)
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From the Treasury Department:

Public Health Service

From the War Department:

Soldiers' Home

From the Department of Justice:

Office of the Superintendent of Prisons

Independent Establishments:

Smithsonian Institutions
Federal Board for Vocational Education
National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers
Columbia Institution for the Deaf
Veterans' Bureau

This plan failed to be adopted, but it was an indication

¹ Breekinridge, op.cit., p. 765.

of the type of thinking that was emerging in opposition to the paralyzing effect of President Pierce's veto on federal action in the field of welfare.

The Federal Children's Bureau created in 1912 grew out of a White House Conference on Dependent Children called by President Theodore Roosevelt. The Children's Bureau was made part of the Department of Labor; it embodied the most important welfare activity of the federal government before the depression. It made investigations and reported on the welfare of children; it acted as a clearing house for information found in its own research and that of other agencies. It furthered the principle that poverty alone was not cause enough to separate children from their families and encouraged states to set up programs for child care and protection. Private agencies were not impressed with the standards of work, personnel, or policies in public agencies at this time and opposed the introduction of public agencies in this field. Mary Richmond, in 1923, expressed this suspicion of social workers of public agencies:¹

"There are a few public outdoor relief departments in the United States of which it can be truthfully said that they are advancing the permanent welfare of the families that are their clients. All of these few are exposed to the danger that a change of administration may wipe out the gains they have laboriously made. The best protection they have is the private agencies in their several communities, when these agencies are also doing good social case work in families and understand, therefore, the conditions necessary to make such work a success in the public departments."

¹ Brown, op.cit., p. 52.

This type of opposition disappeared later when trained social workers introduced accepted standards into public agencies and the policies of these agencies became more consistent.

Other federal welfare activities had been attempted from time to time, but they had always been defeated or allowed only short life. During the depression of 1921-1922, attempts were made to obtain federal aid of the unemployed, establish a system of employment offices, enact unemployment and old age insurance laws, and to establish a system of public works. The Sheppard-Towner Act of 1921 provided for health work with mothers and children, but it was necessary to discontinue it in 1929 because of lack of funds. The situation in the federal government in 1929 in regard to welfare activities showed that the Pierce veto still held. There were twenty-one offices, bureaus, or departments handling some form of welfare work, but not one provided for relief to persons in need.

Public assistance at the start of the Twentieth Century still showed the influence of pioneer and Puritan America. Studies made from time to time during the period from 1911 to 1932 revealed that methods and theory had changed but little in three hundred years. Relief was still administered in the local units by untrained people

who were engaged in part time jobs and who saw no need for training and were required to have none.

The characteristic attitude of these workers and the policies that guided them was indifference to the poor. The main object of their policies was to function at a minimum expense to the public. The relief given was based on personal knowledge of the case with a careful distinction made between the worthy and the unworthy; both classes, however, carried the stigma of a "dependent". The records kept in these local offices were inaccurate and incomplete. The names of the clients were printed in newspapers as a regular matter of policy. The system was particularly susceptible to petty graft and much use was made of relief as a political power before the regulating effects of the state brought these practices to light.

In the field of social work, private agencies still dominated, but they gradually gave way to improved public agencies as social work standards and trained personnel started the job of saving public assistance from the reputation of abuses it had earned in the earlier periods. It was not the idea of public assistance which was attacked by social workers of this period; it was the inefficient methods, corrupt practices, and their lack of professional standards. In time, social workers recognized the need and necessity for public assistance and aided in raising

the standards of public agencies. In 1929, a study made by the Bureau of Social Statistics showed that "the lion's share of the rising burden of relief in at least twenty-two American cities, is borne by the taxpayers."¹ From 1929 through the depression more and more money was spent for public assistance, and the existing agencies did their utmost to meet the problem even though it soon became clear that their efforts would only end in failure.

¹ Brown, op.cit., p. 56.

CHAPTER V

THE HOOVER ADMINISTRATION

In the period between 1929 and 1933, the country was in the greatest slide downhill in its economic history. The machines of industry slowed down and stopped with a deadening silence. It was a time of desperate need among the people calling for many changes, decisive action, and adjustments. The vast increase in unemployment brought renewed activity into the field of public assistance and caused a re-examining of the questions that had been debated for years. The responsibility of the local, state, and federal governments were brought back into sharp focus and the position of public and private agencies in social work again reviewed as the crisis mounted. Private agencies still clung to their faith in their own superiority over the public "dole" and accordingly accepted the unemployment load and tried to support it as best they could. It was only with the experience of the early days of the depression that private agencies learned their own limitations and conceded the necessity for the growth of public agencies in the field. The public's attitude on public assistance also gradually changed as it became apparent that private funds were exhausted and only public

welfare could carry on. Even public assistance was largely inadequate until federal support could be brought into play. The development of public agencies proceeded first with the growth of local administrations, state, and finally federal. In some cases, it was necessary to set up state and federal agencies first before enough pressure could be brought to bear on local authorities to meet their responsibilities to the people. The putting into effect of the Federal Emergency Relief Act in May, 1933 was the first step in truly acknowledging federal responsibility for unemployment relief and was in turn the source of growth for permanent programs that evolved in 1935.

The first signs of the depression were seen in welfare circles in the spring of 1929 when the usual seasonal decline in cases failed to appear. At that time, there were 2,860,000 unemployed while the figures gathered by the Children's Bureau showed that unemployment continually rose during the following summer. During 1930, the number of unemployed rose from four million to seven million; the peak was reached in the spring of 1933 when the estimates of unemployment went as high as thirteen or fourteen million.¹ During the first few months following the great stock market crash, both private and public agencies took the increasing burden in their stride. The people from long habit turned to private agencies for help, and the private agencies, in

¹ Other estimates range from 13,300,000 to 17,000,000

turn, assumed it to be their responsibility to render aid. The economic situation grew steadily worse in 1930 when the spring and summer brought an untimely drought to many agricultural states which had been previously little effected by the financial upsets in the rest of the nation. The Red Cross gave aid to the drought victims, but the need for public money was soon apparent.

In the world of social work at this time, public welfare officials were bannng together to form the American Association of Public Welfare Officials. This organization was later influential in aiding to pass relief measures in the emergency period, but they organized mainly in the hope of bringing about a permanent program rather than as a result of having insight into the needs of the immediate situation. Private welfare agencies and their leaders still held a conservative view of public agencies and withheld their full acceptance of them. They favored the uniting and cooperation of agencies within the field of private welfare where they were sure of standards and administration rather than risk joining forces with public agencies. They were alarmed at the drift the public was taking toward public assistance and feared that the aid would be handled indiscriminately and do more harm than good to their clients. Some leaders in social work called for cooperation between the two camps to improve standards in public assistance, but the crisis had not become severe

enough to convince many that private agencies alone could not do the job without public agency support. The position of the federal government fitted into this pattern of thought perfectly; it took several years of human suffering and a new administration to finally accomplish the changes necessary.

The Hoover administration was not unmindful of the severe economic dislocations that were taking place. The administration, however, had strong faith in the "natural" processes in the economic system that would restore balance in a short time. It steadily resisted any new measures to deal with the problem and had undying faith in the adequacy of existing agencies. To further these ends, the President appointed Colonel Wood to develop a program to deal with the unemployment problem. He set up a non-partisan group under the name of the President's Emergency Committee for Employment to encourage the states and local governments in meeting their relief needs. President Hoover's method of meeting the depression was therefore based on the principle of local responsibility, lack of responsibility on the part of the federal government, and faith in private agencies. These concepts shaped the administration's attitude in opposing active federal participation as long as it was in power. The Committee, after a study of the situation, recommended a large federal public works program to reduce unemployment, but this was disapproved in

favor of letting "natural" processes take their course unaided.

In the meantime, the local communities were meeting the situation as best they could. As unemployment grew, it necessitated more and more need for relief expenditures just at a time when city funds were also curtailed. Since tax returns were low, it was necessary to cut down on city employees and other expenditures which, in turn, created more unemployment. Thus the vicious circle continued. The first low rumblings for federal support came due to the suffering caused in these local situations. In December 1930, the administration in accordance with its policy of resisting anything new while expanding existing agencies, recommended an appropriation of \$150,000,000 to provide employment in various federal departments which were already engaged in works authorized by Congress. It also recommended secured loans to farmers ruined by the drought. The Senate passed a bill (which was defeated in the House) calling for an appropriation to be given to the Red Cross for unemployment relief. The Red Cross, however, indicated that it would refuse to take the responsibility for the administration of these funds.¹ Within the states ten million dollars was raised for the Red Cross by having every state employee contribute a day's pay. Some states made provisions for emergency disaster relief which were

¹ Brown, op.cit., p. 71.

defined as "acts of God". Massachusetts went further and appropriated three million dollars for the construction of public buildings to take up the slack in employment. The trend was developing more and more fully for the states to take responsibility; in 1931, Oklahoma issued \$300,000 to its counties for direct relief and the same amount for seeds, and allowed the local units to issue bonds to pay for relief expenditures. Illinois, however, had one of the most serious problems of unemployment and yet its governor did not recommend the use of any state funds in the belief that private agencies were adequate. This uneven and spotty development among the states was the way President Hoover hoped to meet the crisis. He said in his Lincoln Day Address in 1931:¹

"Throughout this depression I have insisted upon organization of these forces through industry, through local government and through charity, that they should meet this crisis by their own initiative, by the assumption of their own responsibilities. The Federal Government has sought to do its part by example in the expansion of employment, by affording credit to drought sufferers for rehabilitation, and by cooperation with the community, and thus to avoid the opiates of government charity and the stifling of our national spirit of mutual self-help."

Thus, the federal government's role was limited to encouragement of the states and local units, but no direct financial aid was to be expected.

The most persistent administrative need was for a full picture of the whole unemployment situation. This need was met by two private organizations the Association of

¹ Quoted in Brown, op.cit., p. 73.

Community Chests and Councils and the Family Welfare Association of America. They made a survey of local needs and resources and studied the effects of unemployment, the deterioration of family morale, and the values and dangers of made-work. The United States Census Bureau was requested to make a comparative study of the first three months of 1929 and 1931 with the following

¹
results:

1929	1931
Money expended for unemployment relief, public and private	
\$22,338,114	\$73,757,300
Families helped per month	
333,861	1,287,778

The surveys showed that the local communities were reluctant to set up new administrative machinery to deal with the "emergency", and as a whole, they did not have the resources to operate effectively. Several cities went bankrupt in their attempts to care for their own. The Association of Public Welfare Officials and the Children's Bureau of the federal government were the only two national agencies at the time to recognize the importance of state participation in relief and the full inadequacy of local resources. In some cases, the Community Chest retarded local developments because its very existence freed local officials from a feeling of responsibility for the unemployed. The Chest was handicapped, however, in that it

¹ Brown, op.cit., p. 73-74.

had assumed a community responsibility without the right to compell the community to discharge it since all contributions were voluntary. The local communities finally saw the need for public agencies as the Chests and other private agencies struggled with the problem and were failing to provide adequately.

This admission came from social work circles also; the future of social work was seen as a working together of public and private organizations. At the Minneapolis National Conference of Social Work in June 1931, private agencies received the challenge of the public agencies¹ which made clear their position:

"Public welfare is here. And we public welfare officials are here. We are up against a staggering situation which we are as anxious to meet adequately as you are to have us. We are just as worried as you are. The situation is forced on us just as it is forced on you. We are people just like you. Some of us are good and some not so very good. Most of us are honest, but some of us are not. But we are all desperately anxious for help with the enormous task that has been thrust upon us. Where should we look for help but to you? We need and want you. Of course if you come with a superior air we shall not like you and may not get on very well with you. But if you bring with your help a faith in our good faith and a patience with our limitations you will find us deeply appreciative of all you can give us. Don't treat us as upstarts. Treat us as partners."

Public assistance grew more and more to have fuller status in social work. The Association of Public Welfare Officials set to work on an educational campaign to stress the importance of public welfare work on the public's thinking. This

¹ Quoted in Brown, op.cit., p. 81.

organization still had a permanent public welfare program as its major goal, but as a means to that end, it stressed the principles of responsibility of the state and federal governments, the need for public funds to be spent only by public agencies, work relief, qualified personnel standards, uniform settlement laws among the states, and interstate agreements regarding dependents.

While the field of social work was in the process of being unified by the demands made upon it, changes were occurring in local and state control over public assistance. New York took the lead in 1931 under Franklin D. Roosevelt by setting up a state relief program with a different philosophy. Roosevelt said in August 1931 with regard to this problem:

"Our government is not the master but the creature of the people. The duty of the State towards the citizens is the duty of the servant to its master. The people have created it; the people, by common consent, permit its continued existence.

One of these duties of the State is that of caring for those of its citizens who find themselves the victims of such adverse circumstance as makes them unable to obtain even the necessities for mere existence without the aid of others. That responsibility is recognized by every civilized nation.

While it is true that we have hitherto principally considered those who through accident or old age were permanently incapacitated, the same responsibility of the State undoubtedly applies when widespread economic conditions render large numbers of men and women incapable of supporting themselves or their families because of circumstances beyond their control which make it impossible for them to find remunerative labor. To these unfortunate citizens aid must be extended by government --not as a matter of charity but as a matter of social duty."

1 As quoted in Brown, op.cit. p. 89.

With this philosophy of not charity, but a social duty, New York made its relief plans. The developments in New York were especially important because the experience gained here on a smaller scale was invaluable when the federal program was put into operation by Roosevelt and his administrator in New York, Harry Hopkins. They met all the problems of methods, standards, eligibility, etc. there first and set precedents that were copied by other states and later incorporated into the federal programs. The New York program was financed by a 50% increase in income taxes; it provided for the state to reimburse 40% of the funds spent by the local authorities. In this way, local funds were loosened since it meant that state money only went to local groups who were willing to help themselves. The program was administered by Harry Hopkins as head of the Temporary Emergency Relief Administration. He was a trained social worker and saw the necessity for maintaining state standards. Political subdivisions to be eligible for state aid had to make some effort at self-help, and in addition, had to accept the higher state standards as to personnel and methods. Relief, in this way, was seen as a specialized function in the field of social work needing trained personnel for proper handling.

New Jersey soon followed New York's example and set up a similar program also preserving local autonomy

but also accepting state responsibility. In 1932 and 1933, a majority of the states followed suit as it was seen more and more clearly that local contributions alone decreased purchasing power and tended to slow down industry even more. The states had a broader borrowing and taxing power which could more adequately meet the situation. State programs were desirable since the localities with the heaviest burdens were most often the one that had the smallest resources on which they could draw. The suffering was not evenly spread over the state or the country; those hardest hit were the ones least able to handle their own problem.

The federal administration's position had changed little with two years of suffering in the country. Hoover still maintained:¹

"I am opposed to any direct or indirect government dole. The breakdown and increased unemployment in Europe is due in part to such practices. Our people are providing against distress from unemployment in true American fashion by a magnificent response to public appeal and by action of the local governments."

His advisers spoke of "invisible relief" meaning the aid given by friends, relatives, and neighbors; this aid, in addition to private and local help, was the only aid President Hoover saw necessary.

The first petitioners for full federal participation raised a cry for the facts on unemployment and relief needs in the country. They were sure that gross inadequacies in

¹ Quoted in Brown, op.cit., p. 99.

the states would be revealed and the necessity for federal aid would be obvious. On December 1931, the battle was taken up in Congress by the introduction of the Costigan and La Follette Bills. These bills called for federal appropriations for public assistance and an investigation of the total relief situation. It was argued that federal participation was necessary because some states had constitutional prohibitions against the use of state money to assist counties with relief while others were stopped by lack of funds due to their inability to levy state income taxes. The whole weight of testimony by welfare workers and welfare organizations were thrown on the side of these bills as they told of the need they had seen at first hand. They emphasized that they had only an incomplete picture of the situation; no one knew the full extent of the suffering that was being borne.

The opposition to these bills was voiced by the Sentinels of the Republic, the United States Chamber of Commerce, the People's Lobby, the Woman Patriot Publishing Co., and the President's Organization on Unemployment Relief. The arguments were well known and had been used for years to hold the federal government out of welfare. They are given below:

1. It would impair credit of the United States and result in an unbalanced budget.
2. It would be unconstitutional, violate local responsibility and mean an action which had no precedent in aid given in other depressions.
3. It would end private independent effort.
4. It would weaken the morale of the people and the states

5. It would cause bureaucratic control.
6. It would cause delay.
7. It would endanger states' rights
8. The states were capable of carrying the burden.
9. The federal "dole" would increase the demands for relief
10. It would lead to extravagance and waste

The people proposing federal participation had the facts of suffering on their side; the facts of the states' reluctance and inadequacies that had been demonstrated for two years. They saw it as a national disaster calling for national remedies. The welfare clause was liberally interpreted authorizing federal responsibility; they pointed to the precedents set in other fields where federal aid had been given in other years. The federal government had a much broader credit base and sources of income which were needed. The fact that two billion dollars had already been spent by the federal government for those who owned property such as securities, banks, railroads, insurance companies, industries, etc. was a powerful argument. If the federal government could give aid to the propertied classes, why could it not do the same for the unemployed? The states needed leadership that only the federal government could give through the use of its funds and the enforcing of its regulations.

By 1932, the need had increased even more. In Congress, Senators Costigan and La Follette had combined their original bills which again failed to pass. Questionnaires were sent out to the mayors of all cities in the

United States; the replies confirmed the picture given by the welfare workers of overwhelming need, municipal bankruptcy, and relief on a starvation basis. There were no national figures available, but estimates put one out of six families on relief rolls. The suffering was unevenly distributed with some sections reporting 35% on relief; these sections feared riots and the inability of the government to control the unemployed if trouble ever started. The federal government released wheat and cotton, which it had in stock since 1930, to these stricken areas, but it steadily resisted any other direct aid. Because of the inability to get the Costigan-La Follette bill through Congress, a substitute bill was brought forth authorizing federal loans to states instead of outright grants. The money was to be advanced from future grants to states for highway construction to be used to meet the relief situation. In this way, it was hoped that hunger riots could be averted by preventing the closing down of relief agencies within the states. The states had developed the practice of diverting funds from education, health, recreation, etc. to relief. Senator Borah spoke out against this bill as an evasion of federal responsibility and an un-¹sound policy:

"So far as I am concerned, I am opposed to the Federal Government shirking its responsibility and undertaking

1 Quoted in Brown, op.cit., p. 123.

to lend to the States or the cities money with which to discharge its grave responsibility. The Federal Government owes a duty itself direct to the citizen. The responsibility is now ours, and we must meet it directly. The States have already incurred heavy responsibility, the cities have incurred heavy responsibility, and it would not be sufficient for the Government to do nothing more than to provide loans to the States or cities.

It is a dangerous, inefficient, and unfair program, this program of loaning to the States or cities...I am not willing in view of the awful conditions, to intrust them with Federal money."

Some federal action was drastically needed to save relief offices in Chicago, Philadelphia, and other large cities from closing down. Congress, working under this pressure, passed the Wagner-Rainey Bill authorizing public works and establishing the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to make loans and advances to the states. This bill was vetoed on July 11, 1932 by President Hoover because he objected to the inclusion of public works in the bill which he feared would unbalance the budget. On July 16th a similar bill was passed and signed, but Hoover made clear that it was an action forced upon him by Democratic leaders in Congress. State applications came quickly from the states that intended to apply for federal money now open to them. These state obligations were later cancelled in 1938, but at the time of the loan, it was understood that the states were responsible for the money loaned, and it would be taken from their future highway funds. The federal loans were regulated in such a way

that not more than 15% of the total appropriation could be given to any one state; this was based on the theory that the relief needs were more or less evenly distributed although this limitation was later removed. Only \$280,000,000 was loaned to 42 states and two territories while \$19,600,000 went to political subdivisions within six states. This was only a quarter of the total money available, but the reasons for this lack of interest in federal loans was apparent. Some states were still reluctant to assume responsibility for relief which borrowing and managing these funds would require. The law required the state to certify that it could not get funds for relief from any other source which the states could not truthfully do. In order to borrow, some states needed legislative authority; others had no agencies already set up to handle the money after it was borrowed. All in all, it was considered a device for the spending of state and local money rather than federal. The people urging federal responsibility saw this bill as the acknowledgment by the federal government of this responsibility while those opposing federal participation insisted that it did not imply any fundamental precedent. This bill, whether it acknowledged federal responsibility or not, was the only federal relief measure passed during the Hoover administration.

The functioning of the Emergency Relief Division of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation handling these

loans under the law brought far from satisfactory results. The governors of the states applied for the funds and were responsible for them. The money was channeled into existing state systems over which the federal government could not regulate. At times, the money advanced in small monthly payments prevented the states from making any long range plans or commitments. The policy of lending money directly to cities tended to weaken state control over its subdivisions and resulted in compromising the states position in enforcing its regulations.

With only the Wagner-Rainey Bill to its credit, the Hoover administration approached its fourth year of the depression still looking for prosperity around every corner. There were approximately twelve million unemployed in January, 1933¹ while Congressional testimony on the situation painted the picture worse than ever with agencies failing while demands increased. The most common and inexpensive way to keep the people alive was through the use of soup kitchens and bread lines. No attempt was made any longer to keep up standards of relief; all efforts were concentrated in just keeping the people from starving. Low undercurrents of discontent, unrest, and impatience were observed on the part of the unemployed. Public leaders saw the danger in the situation of riots and chaos if the unemployed found a leader to voice their needs and take drastic action themselves. The states themselves were

¹ Quoted from a speech by Senator Costigan in Brown, op. cit., p. 137.

divided concerning the loans since the money was an advance of highway construction funds, rural sections in the states did not want to use this money for relief to relieve the suffering that was centered in the cities.

On January, 1933, the Federal Emergency Relief Act was introduced into Congress, but it was not passed or put into effect until the Roosevelt administration had taken power. President Roosevelt was inaugurated March 4, 1933 and the Federal Emergency Relief Act was passed on May 8th. President Roosevelt immediately appointed Harry Hopkins as its head. The teamwork and experience established in New York was applied on a national scale to tackle a similar but much more difficult problem.

CHAPTER VI

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT'S EMERGENCY PROGRAM

At the beginning of the Roosevelt administration, the situation in this country looked dark; the number of people unemployed had climbed to fifteen million which resulted in four million families, or approximately eighteen million persons, receiving relief from public funds. Eighty percent of this money came from Reconstruction Finance Corp. loans to the states so that the federal government was in a dominant position in public assistance. President Roosevelt sensed the lack of security on the part of the people and sought to reassure them while presenting a true picture of the country's condition. In his Inaugural Address President¹ Roosevelt stated:

"Values have shrunken to fantastic levels; taxes have risen; our ability to pay has fallen; government of all kinds is faced by serious curtailment of income; the means of exchange are frozen in the currents of trade; the withered leaves of industrial enterprise lie on every side; farmers find no market for their produce; the savings of many years in thousands of families are gone.

More important, a host of unemployed citizens face the grim problems of existence, and an equally great number toil with little return...and the only thing we have to fear is fear itself--nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."

¹ Quoted in Brown, op.cit., 145.

With the passage of the Federal Emergency Relief Act, the New Deal administration started a series of emergency measures designed to be a stop-gap until full employment could be restored. This act provided for an appropriation of \$500,000,000 to be used for cooperating with the states in giving aid to the unemployed. The money was to be administered in two separate funds; half was to be used on a matching basis giving one dollar of federal money for each three of public money spent in the state during the preceding three months; the other half was held as a discretionary fund to be used for states who could not match funds with the federal government and yet had relief needs to be met. This act implied drastic changes in the position of the federal government; it was no longer lending to the states; it was making grants and acknowledging federal leadership and responsibility while still respecting local authority. This new concept of the role of the federal government necessitated federal action in the interests of the mass of people who were suffering under an economic system over which they had no control. The social interpretation of the "welfare clause" had reached wide acceptance and was the basis for the legislation passed in the Roosevelt administrations. When the Federal Emergency Relief Act (FERA) had been in effect only a month, 45 states had been granted \$51,000,000 on a matching basis. Due to the poor financial condition of the states,

however, after 1933 the funds were used in the states at the discretion of the President. This system of matching and federal aid had a desirable effect on the states which tended to increase the spending of their own funds for relief purposes.

The objective of the federal government from the start was to use its money to aid the victims of the depression. It favored work relief rather than direct relief which was used as a temporary measure until work projects could be set up. The meeting of this situation called for mass action for which social workers were not ready. Social workers had been trained to deal with the individual; on the whole, they entered into the program wholeheartedly, however, because they saw this as the means of setting up a permanent program for all classes of needy people. Social workers made an important contribution to the federal program by working directly with relief clients in the establishment of their eligibility under the local laws. Social workers did not at first realize that the federal government's primary aim was to aid the needy unemployed who were brought to this condition by the depression. As a consequence, there was disappointment in welfare circles when the federal emergency program was ended in 1935 and the responsibility for general relief was returned to the states and local units. President Roosevelt stressed that

federal aid did not relieve the states and local units from making efforts to aid themselves and that the money was meant for the needy unemployed and not for other social work activities. The FERA was meant to be administered in all the states; its terms were made broad deliberately so that local and state units would be free to interpret the provisions in a manner most suited to local conditions. In actual practice, it was impossible to distinguish between the unemployed and the unemployables; all needy persons were helped under this act including even low paid full time workers. For the first time, it was possible to make plans to gather the much needed statistics on a national basis. It was found that the need was more extreme than anyone had thought with many more types of relief clients for which no provisions had been made. The administration of the FERA was always faced with the conflict of wanting to provide for everyone including the marginal cases, on the one hand, and the necessity of having the funds go as far as possible on the other. In relation to public works, there was the conflict of wanting to get the work done as efficiently as possible and the desire to give the maximum of relief.¹ These questions had to be settled in terms of practical considerations and often ended in a compromise.

¹ For a fuller discussion of this problem see America on Relief by Lane and Steegmuller (New York, 1938) pp. 25-28.

Five months after the FERA was established, provisions for a Civil Works Administration was enacted into law. The CWA was established for only five months; but during that time, it set to work formulating plans for a work relief program. This program was arranged so that half of those employed came from relief rolls and the other half from those out of work but not on relief. In January, 1934, it reached its peak when 4,260,000 were employed on its projects. When the CWA was closed, the people were transferred to FERA rolls with little investigation. Due to the overload of cases, those not eligible for relief were sometimes transferred to the FERA resulting in an increase of the number on relief rolls.

With the prospect of operating with reduced funds in the spring of 1934, the relief rolls were shifted for those not eligible and a return was made to the "means test" for direct or work relief. The new federal emergency relief program had three main points:

1. An Emergency Work Relief Program for cities which took over the unfinished work projects of the CWA.
2. A Rural Rehabilitation Program for farmers in distress in an effort to help them gain independence through loans and advise on farm problems.
3. A program for people in one industry towns by which they would be transplanted to farms and helped to be self-sufficient.

Every effort was made to make people as independent as possible by providing them with work. The federal government

maintained its position that FERA funds were for needy unemployed; to see if this class was being adequately provided for, they send out questionnaires to the states asking for the types of clients on relief rolls. The answers revealed that the dependent, old, unemployables, etc. were being maintained on these rolls. The federal government had intended the local units to care for these classes of needy so in 1935 many were dropped from FERA relief rolls. The unemployables previously on FERA rolls had ranged from 5 to 25 percent in various sections of the country. In Southern states where all relief money was coming from the federal government, they were dropped; in other states where the state was contributing to the total relief fund, they were allowed to make their own decisions. Although work relief was emphasized, direct relief was given to those not eligible for work and those who were employed but making starvation wages.

One of the first steps in long range planning came with the report of the Committee on Economic Security which made recommendations for measures that would promote greater economic security. The plans included a huge works program, insurance for the unemployed, and those over 65. The committee followed the trend developed in the states of providing assistance by categories. These categories were selected for aid, but unfortunately, it resulted in leaving

many groups unprotected. The recommendations of the committee guided Congress in its passage of the Social Security Act on August 14, 1935. The act provided for the setting up of the Social Security Board which went into action when funds were appropriated in 1936.

The Federal Works Program was planned in 1935 for the unemployed. The federal government also planned to help the states and local governments with their aid to dependent groups, but this was largely seen as a local responsibility. The Emergency Relief Appropriation Act passed in 1935 provided \$4,880,000,000 for relief and work relief on useful projects to remove the 3,500,000 employables from direct relief rolls. The work projects were operated under the Works Project Administration which sought to provide jobs for the twelve million unemployed not on relief, but it was under a compulsion to provide for those in greatest need. People were gradually transferred from the grants of the FERA to the security wages paid by the WPA. Thus, the main functions of the FERA were completed when work was provided for its clients. While improvement of work projects and work done by the WPA was accomplished with experience, it never provided work for all those who needed it. Many unusual occupations could not be provided for at all. Social workers were disappointed at the liquidation of the FERA which they

had hoped would become the start of a federal public welfare department.

The foregoing pages have been a quick survey of the action taken by the federal government from 1933 to 1935. In order to see the shifts in philosophy, attitudes, and concepts of those administering relief, it will be necessary to go back and look at the Federal Emergency Relief Administration in more detail, examine their problems, and their attempts at their solution.

The FERA established in 1933 put the federal government in a dominant role in dealing with relief problems.¹ The act kept the responsibility mainly centered in the states, but the federal government stood by to supervise and help organize or reorganize state systems. One of the most important developments in the states was the separation of relief given during the emergency from the permanent relief agencies which had been giving poor relief. This kept the emergency program from having a great influence on permanent relief agencies and testified to the administration's belief that the emergency was temporary. With the two types of organizations separated, the emergency setups were easier to control and allowed for the

1 The governors of the states made application to the FERA to make arrangements for funds under the matching basis. Reports were required from the states concerning the administration of these funds and the maintenance of standards that would be acceptable. The FERA had the power to assume control of the administration of relief in any state if irregularities or lack of organization were found.

speed necessary in dealing with the urgent problems of providing assistance without needless delays. A FERA ruling effecting private agencies established the policy of having public funds administered only by public agencies. Under the Reconstruction Finance Corp., public funds had been available to private agencies who now had to reorganize and delimit their programs when denied public funds.

The work of the FERA with the states tended to make them more uniform and brought some order out of the chaos that existed without federal leadership. The changes made possible by the FERA revolutionized the system of public assistance which had been relatively unchanged for more than three hundred years.¹ The FERA was divided into various divisions; one of the most important was the Division of Relations with States. This division was the point of contact with the states and was engaged in giving advise and assistance to the states. The good staff morale maintained in this division was especially important in that the states observed the running of an efficient organization and copied it in their own systems. In the beginning, there was an authoritative element in the relations of this

¹ The assistance of the FERA was in providing funds, administration supervision, establishment of policies and rules meant to safeguard federal funds and standards to relief.

division to the states. Many of the state organizations were new and had inexperienced personnel; they were fearful of departing from the suggested pattern of the federal government. There was no time to question in the speed with which these organizations were set up; speed was of the essence; relief was news which kept the public eye on the efforts made by the states and the federal government. Due to the inexperience of some of the state administrators, they failed to distinguish between permissive, suggestive, and mandatory instructions from Washington; as a result, they took everything received as a matter of policy. This inexperience also caused many petty decisions to be relayed to Washington before action could be taken by the local units. In time, the states became less dependent and started making their own interpretations of federal policy. Local planning was handicapped greatly by the granting of federal funds on a monthly basis which prevented planning ahead. A feeling of resentment grew up in some rural areas where the federal program was looked upon as a foreign element tolerated only because of the need for federal funds. Local officials resented having many of the decisions made for them in Washington and the necessity to live up to federal standards of personnel and methods. The objections and local prejudice stirred up during the

emergency relief program played a part in the general reaction to federal control when the Social Security Act was being considered and lead to certain restrictions on the powers of the Social Security Board.¹

Other divisions of the FERA not dealing directly with the states were the Statistical and Reporting Service which gathered systematic, factual information on a nationwide basis; the Work Division aiding self-help cooperatives; the Transient Bureau which helped set up provisions in the states for this class of destitute. The Emergency Education Program to aid unemployed teachers and provide education for the poor was also organized under the FERA. The Federal Surplus Relief Corporation was organized under the FERA and the Department of Agriculture in October, 1933 and started its program of distribution of surplus commodities to relief cases. A more detailed discussion of the functions of the divisions of the FERA have been included in Appendix A. The FERA organization with its many divisions, branches, and activities was loosely joined to allow for flexibility in the whole program.

The manner in which relief was given reflects some of the necessities and speed of action and also some of the changed attitudes concerning the clients of public assistance brought on by this crisis. Social

¹ The attitude in the localities toward federal regulations is illustrated in We Too Are the People (Boston, 1938) Little, Brown and Co. by Louise V. Armstrong, especially Chapter 3. The entire book is written from the experiences of a social worker who found herself appointed as Relief Administrator of the FERA in a small town in Michigan during the depression years.

workers found their place in the FERA in the Social Service Division which was responsible for intake, the establishment of eligibility of the clients, amounts of aid to be given, and the responsibility for visiting the clients. The local offices actually handling this work were supervised by the State Social Service Division which in turn was supervised by the national. This work, it was recognized, called for experienced and trained help. It was from these workers that the public attitude toward relief was formed so that it was an especially important and trying position. The local offices in rural areas had the added difficulty of sending its workers out to the clients because of the long distances involved and the inability of the clients to reach them. In this manner, social workers contacted people who had never before been exposed to social work or its methods. It was a broadening experience for both. Most of the experienced social workers in these agencies were obtained from the ranks of private social work agencies. Wherever possible, local workers were used so that the mores of the community could be combined with social work methods for wider acceptance by the local groups. Despite the wide variations involved in the actual administering of public assistance, Washington tried to set the pattern to develop uniformity.

The change in attitude toward the poor had been slow and existed in various stages among the workers giving assistance.¹ These earlier concepts of poverty due to individual failures still hung on and influenced workers dealing with clients in 1933. Following World War I when many "respectable" families were aided by the Red Cross and the contributions of psychiatry of scientific data on human problems became known, there

1 The new religious ideas of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries along with the economic changes tended to destroy the idea of dependency as being solely the fault of the individual, that is, the poor are sinners being punished by God while the rich are the virtuous. During this time, also, the poor were considered lazy and incompetent and since they would not exert themselves and preferred relief, relief should be as unpleasant as possible. The Charity Organization Movement of the last quarter of the nineteenth century introduced a more humanitarian element into the giving of relief. They were occupied with a search for the causes of poverty and worked out plans for rehabilitation of their clients. There was a definite development of maternalism on the part of the social worker as she set about to order the client's life. The "interview of persuasion" was developed with a moralizing philosophy in which the client was protected from himself. Relief in kind and the "work test" were logical outgrowths of these theories and were widely used. Mary Richmond in his definition of social casework as "those processes which develop personality through adjustments consciously effected, individual by individual, between men and their environment" stresses the adjustment necessary in the individual, not in the environment.

was a change of attitude about people in need of help. A new respect for people and their worth as human beings was more and more recognized. This new attitude entered the professional schools of social work which began to turn out workers who did not attempt to control or dominate. This new theory had a chance to be tested during the depression of the 1930's. It was obvious to the workers who came in contact with relief clients that they were not degraded and demoralized; they were perfectly capable of managing their own affairs. This new philosophy was voiced by Virginia Robinson in her book, "A Changing Psychology of Social Case Work", written in 1930. It was a repudiation of authoritative methods by social workers:¹

"The case work relationship is a reciprocal relationship in which the case worker must accept herself and the other equally, in which all of her attitudes towards the client would be such that she would be content to be at the other end of such a relationship herself."

Although this philosophy was held by professional experienced social workers, not all those who gave aid to clients were professional. Throughout the country every type and degree of the attitudes footnoted above were held and put into practice. There were enough social workers in the field to make this the turning point in philosophy and practice. Despite the fact that social workers had been trained to deal with the personal problems of the clients, the lack of personnel, time, and

¹ Quoted in Brown, op.cit., p. 227.

funds largely limited activities to providing people with adequate material aid. Assistance, for the most part, was given in cash and more responsibility was placed on the client to supply information and changes in his status. The field of social work also underwent a change in this period due to the necessity of working with members of other professions and fields. They came in close contact with labor, business executives, lawyers, doctors, etc. which broadened their perspectives and gave them greater understanding of the other professions.

The problem of eligibility for relief was decided in the local and state units which were allowed to interpret the broad federal provisions in their own way. From July 1934 to July 1935, the only boys eligible for the CCC were those from relief families. After July 1935, it was extended to take in the sons of marginal families. The rolls of students given aid under the NYA was largely left in the hands of the school officials. One of the biggest problems of eligibility was trying to distinguish between the unemployed and the unemployables. Federal aid was meant only for the unemployed, but in actual practice, this distinction was impossible to make.

The adjustment between direct relief and work relief under the FERA led to many problems. Work relief was meant only for the unemployed while other needy persons were to be aided by direct relief. Aid given while

a man was working on a project was in the form of wages at a "fair rate". The clients were allowed to earn the amount of relief to which they were entitled under a budget deficiency worked out by the states. Some of wages were received in kind in 1933, but under the Emergency Work Relief Program all wages were paid in cash. According to the provisions of this plan a client had to work at least three days a week, but if his budget deficiency was less than the amount, he would earn in that time, he was aided through direct relief. It was provided by federal regulations that no discrimination could be made because of race, color, creed, or political affiliation, but in practice, local pressures and prejudices were powerful forces in the treatment of Negroes, aliens, political, and labor groups.

Developments and improvements in work projects came with experience. In 1930 and 1931 at the start of this experiment in mass employment in public works, most of the projects were in large cities and of such a character as to have little economic value. They were used to meet the prejudice and objections to the "dole". With the short life of the CWA in 1933-1934 projects began to grow larger and were thought to be of more value. The unemployed not on relief as well as relief clients were used for labor and paid the prevailing rates for

their job. The start of the Emergency Work Relief Program saw the return of the budget deficiency scheme and the employment of only relief clients. The work projects became more numerous and diverse to cover as many types of work as possible while special efforts were made to establish projects in rural areas as well as in cities.

The standards of relief issued by the federal government was for the states to prevent physical suffering, maintain living standards, and meet the emergency needs of the immediate family. The final decisions regarding standards and the planning of budgets remained with the states which lead to wide variations depending on local conditions. The money available was never adequate; food needs were met first while the rest of the money was spread over as many items as possible. The average monthly relief grant in the United States rose from 1933 to 1935 as given below:¹

May 1933	\$ 15.15
May 1934	24.53
May 1935	29.33

It must be remembered that the variations among the states made some allotments much higher than the average and others much lower. The local and state agencies making these decisions on the proper allotment to allow always had to contend with two forces, those needing aid and demanding higher allotments, and those not on relief

¹ Brown, op.cit., p. 249.

wanting to keep expenditures as low as possible. To meet this situation, the use of federal funds tended to raise standards all along the line.

In earlier centuries, the organization of people on relief for the purpose of making demands and having their complaints heard would have caused horror to the American public. Yet in the 1930's, pressure groups were organized among the unemployed. The Workers' Alliance was formed in 1935 with the end of FERA, the return of unemployables to the states, and the initiation of the federal work relief program. From time to time committees would invade local relief offices and state their complaints; most of the dissatisfaction was caused because relief offices refused to pay rents¹ except in cases of eviction. These organizations of the unemployed were influential in determining some of the policies in Washington when future legislation was considered.

The FERA tried to discourage the practice of giving aid to those engaged in full time work but making only starvation wages. This practice amounted to a subsidy to industry and had a depressing effect on all wage rates. The giving aid to part time workers was equally dangerous. Factories would be tempted to operate on a part time, rather than a full time basis, in order to make its employees eligible for relief.

¹ The WPA recognized the client's right to organize; social workers on the whole were sympathetic to the problems of labor. The ruling of the FERA to give aid to strikers unless the strike was ruled unreasonable by the Department of Labor was also evidence of a friendly attitude.

Clients in some administrations were afraid to accept short time jobs for fear that they would be dropped from relief rolls and not be able to return when they were again in need. Some agencies issued guarantees of reinstatement in such cases; they also encouraged their clients to refuse jobs with low standards. This resulted in criticisms of relief clients who were accused of preferring relief to work. Any job refusal was seen as the worthlessness of relief clients. The agencies adopting this policy protected its clients when they refused low standard jobs, but they dropped them if they refused bona fide jobs with wages at prevailing rates. The FERA investigated the criticisms of "job refusals" by relief clients and found them to be largely untrue.¹

¹ These studies were made in Baltimore, Maryland; Alleghany County, Virginia; Washington, D. C.; Memphis, Tennessee; and Buffalo, New York. The results of the studies are reported by Arthur, Henry B., "Summary Study of Alleged Job Refusals by Relief Clients", FERA MONTHLY REPORT November, 1935, p. 6 and also in "Alleged Refusal of Employment by Relief Clients", FERA MONTHLY REPORT June 1935. Part of the results shows that out of 603 cases only 20 were discovered to have made an unjustified job refusal. It was reported that "contrary to popular assertion, most relief persons are extremely anxious to 'get off relief' and will take any acceptable job". This information is found in Brown, op.cit., pp. 269-270.

It lead to an effort to educate the public and interpret the activities of public agencies. Clients on relief bore out the findings of the FERA when they transferred from direct relief to work projects as soon as the projects were set up.

One of the biggest obstacles lying in the path of adequately meeting the problem of administration of assistance to millions of people was the lack of trained personnel. The Social Service Division required social work personnel, but many of the administrative positions were filled from other fields. The social workers, themselves, were taxed to the limit in meeting this need. They were not trained in administration, but they often had to take over these jobs with inadequate preparation. The long range effect, however, was a broadening of the curriculum in professional social work schools to meet this need for social workers in administration which called for special executive ability.

The problem was complicated in some states by the insistence that only local people be employed in the public assistance offices. Other states used relief clients in the hope of cutting down administration expenses. These practices were discouraged by the federal government, but it took time to get relief clients replaced by experienced and qualified personnel.

To meet the problem of training, institutes were held for visitors and aides with instructors from professional schools and private agencies. Due to inadequate facilities, no field work was possible and nothing substantial was accomplished. Sometimes, the workers went away feeling that they had had professional training simply because the course was given at a college. Another method tried was job training for those already employed in public agencies. During 1934 and 1935, the FERA send a thousand students to accredited schools of social work. To safeguard standards, no new training centers were set up so that the training was handled by existing schools. These students received short courses and returned to their home agencies. The schools tried to meet the needs of these students in the time they had available for training and added courses dealing with social work in rural communities. A survey showed these students who had received training were more useful to their agencies and often had to be protected from too rapid promotion to stay within their abilities and training.

Despite these efforts to introduce trained workers into public assistance offices, most of the rank and file learned on the job as best they could. As a whole, they supported New Deal reforms more readily than the more conservative professional social workers. The FERA was a

social agency run for the most part by those who were not social workers. The combination and contact between professional social workers and representatives from other fields working together on this emergency program provided the nucleus for a public welfare staff in the permanent social security program.

CHAPTER VII

THE PERMANENT WELFARE PROGRAM

From the year 1935 to the present, the history of public assistance is centered around efforts to set up and maintain permanent welfare agencies. The year 1935 saw the end of the federal emergency program and the beginning of plans for federal, state, and local permanent welfare systems. The year 1935 was the year of transition in which the federal government set up new lines of responsibility to be shared by the federal government and the states. The shift was away from general relief to a program of social security in the form of categorical assistance and insurance. The federal government agreed to continue aiding the employable unemployed through public works and to give states grants-in-aid for the aged, blind, and children who met certain qualifications.

The President's Committee on Economic Security which had been studying the welfare situation reported on January 15, 1935¹. It recommended that provisions be made for unemployment compensation, old age insurance, old age assistance, and aid for dependent children.

¹ A full discussion of the Committee's report and the steps leading up to the passage of the Social Security Act is given in From Relief to Social Security by Grace Abbott, University of Chicago Press, (Chicago, 1941), pp. 199 ff.

It also recommended that the states be made responsible for the unemployables, but to meet this burden, it was suggested that they bring their ancient laws up to date and substitute modernized public assistance systems. The Advisory Group of social workers on this committee strongly urged the establishment of a public welfare department to coordinate federal, state, and local welfare activities. They believed that the assistance plans to help people by categories would leave many groups unprotected with no provisions for their welfare which would make it necessary for them to fall back on the local units for aid. They wanted the federal department empowered with the authority to require states to consolidate their welfare agencies. In order to do this, they believed it was necessary for federal grants for general relief to continue. The recommendations of this group went unheeded; they were going against the trends of the times which was the assertion of states' rights and a movement for freedom from control by the federal government.

The Social Security Act as originally introduced called for federal grants to the states for old age assistance and insurance, aid to dependent children, and unemployment compensation insurance. It established a Social Security Board as a part of the Department of

Labor which was to administer the old age and unemployment compensation insurance. The United States Public Health Service was to administer the public health provisions; the Office of Education in the Department of Interior was to handle the vocational rehabilitation; the Children's Bureau was given the maternal and child health, crippled children, and child welfare services. An attempt was made to continue the life of the FERA by making it the agency for old age assistance and aid to dependent children. The bill was changed before passage to include provisions for the blind, but the other changes limited the bill more sharply. Provisions for standards of assistance was removed and only the maximum amount that could be granted clients was stated.¹ The original bill gave the federal government some power over choice of personnel and methods, but the changes removed the power over the selection of state personnel and applied only to methods used. The Social Security Board was established as a separate agency to administer grants for the aged, children, and the blind. The FERA was rejected as a part of the emergency program when its proposed activities were put under the Social Security Board.² The Social Security law in its

¹ The federal reimbursement to the states of 50% was granted only if payments to the aged were under \$30.00 a month; one-third reimbursement was to be made for \$18.00 for the first child and \$12.00 for each additional child for aid to dependent children; if the payments to the clients exceeded these amounts, the additional cost had to be borne by the state concerned.

² The use of the FERA in the permanent program would have

final form defined a dependent child so as to limit the group which could be helped, whereas the FERA's definition had been much broader.

The transition from the emergency program to the provisions of the Social Security Act was mainly accomplished on the initiative of the states. The Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 provided \$4,880,000,000 for relief and work relief on useful projects. Some of this appropriation was used by the FERA for relief during the transfer of employable persons to the works program. The transition period was a hard one for the people in need and for the states who had to set up the new administrative machinery. The states needed money to care for the unemployables and the unemployed who were not working on projects; they needed advice and financial assistance to save their social work staffs and carry them over the transition period so that it would not be necessary to start their permanent programs with new personnel; finally, they needed help in planning the permanent departments to care for the categorical assistance groups and integrate them with the general relief functions of their state departments of welfare.

The efforts to make this transition smooth were hampered by the failure of Congress to appropriate money for the Social Security Act until February 1936.

meant building on to an agency which had met the realistic problems of the depression days, but the reaction against its authoritarian manner was strong, and it was allowed to die.

This delay caused much suffering in the country.¹ The states had been given their last grants from the federal government for general relief, and the money lasted for only a very short time. The FERA encouraged the states to use part of the money to keep on their social workers until the permanent program could be set up. The FERA aided in the transfer of 3,000,000 people to the WPA and tried to avoid as much suffering as possible, but the winter of 1936 saw the programs only partly developed² and much suffering did occur.

The states varied widely in their ability to change from the emergency program to a permanent one. The states in the South and West had no strong traditions of local authority or traditional methods of caring for the needy; they were able to make the transition with a

1 Failure to appropriate funds was due to the filibuster by Senator Huey Long of Louisiana which prevented a vote before the time fixed by Congress for adjournment.

2 When the FERA had made its last grant to the states and the states were put on their own to make the transition from emergency relief to public welfare programs, several courses of action were open to them during the transition period. Some of the states had their Departments of Public Welfare take over the duties that had been carried by the FERA; others, had the ERA continued with funds from within the state; while others, let the FERA end but provided no state agency to take over the duties for general relief.

minimum of difficulty. The states in the East, however, had strong attitudes about public assistance stemming from their old laws and for them it was a process of breaking down in order to build anew and the progress was much slower. One of the universal difficulties within the states was the presence of political interference with laws and the appointment of personnel.

In order for the states to take advantage of the federal Social Security Act, it was necessary for them to set up new state agencies to administer the act within the state and to appropriate money to carry the state's share of the burden. The Social Security Act returned the states to a matching relationship with the federal government for the care of the categories singled out for help. Since the plan depended on the initiative of the state, it returned to the idea of local responsibility for the care of the needy. The emergency program, for the most part, never did take root in the local units; it was felt to be a foreign element to be discarded when the need was gone. The new division of responsibility that developed through the Social Security Act was for the states to be responsible for general relief and for the making of organizational and financial changes necessary for participation in the Social Security Act while the federal government agreed to provide work relief for the employables, make grants to the states for the categories to be aided, give direct relief in the form of

emergency benefits to farmers, and continue the distribution of surplus commodities. The type of aid offered under this new program was insurance, assistance to certain needy groups, and health and welfare services. For the old age insurance, the federal government assumed sole financial and administrative responsibility. The other groups were aided by federal grants to state agencies. The Social Security Board was responsible for:

- Old age insurance
- Unemployment Compensation
- Assistance to the needy aged
- Assistance to the needy blind
- Dependent Children

the other provisions of the act were carried into effect by other already existing federal agencies.

Amendments to the Social Security Act made in 1939 increased federal reimbursement for aid to dependent children to 50% and increased the amounts covered by federal reimbursement to be given the aged and blind from \$30.00 to \$40.00 a month. Another amendment provided for a means test for old age assistance, dependent children, and the blind. A third amendment moved the date of the first payment of old age insurance from 1942 to 1940 and allowed the benefits to cover an aged spouse and dependent children; it also provided for survival benefits to be paid widows and minor children.

The many people not provided for in the various

categories fared less fortunately. The main programs for general assistance by the federal government was emergency grants to farmers and the distribution of surplus commodities. If a person was not eligible under the categories aided or was not working on the WPA, he was dependent on the local government for aid which they could not often give due to lack of funds. The state governments were taxed to the extreme trying to care for the unemployables, matching federal funds for categorical aid, and providing for the employables who could not find a place on the federal work programs.

After the passage of the Social Security Act, various attempts were made to reorganize the federal welfare agencies. In 1937, the President's Committee on Administrative Management recommended a plan for the reorganization of the federal government which included the establishment of a Department of Public Welfare with a Secretary who would be a full Cabinet member. This new department was to have charge of welfare, education, and health activities all of which was to be coordinated under one head. In 1937 and 1938 Congress failed to act on this plan. Under the Reorganization Act passed in April 1939, the President submitted his Reorganization Plan #1 which called for the consolidation of federal agencies having similar functions. Those

effecting public welfare are given below:

A Federal Security Agency which resembled the proposed Department of Public Welfare but lacked the status of a major department. It included under its jurisdiction:

- Social Security Board
- United States Employment Service
- Office of Education
- Public Health Service
- National Youth Authority
- Civilian Conservation Corps.
- All agencies administering the Social Security Act except the Children's Bureau.

A Federal Works Agency which included agencies dealing with public works and the administration of federal grants or loans to state and local governments for construction:

- Works Project Administration
- Bureau of Public Roads
- Public Buildings Branch - Procurement Division
- Branch of Building Management of the National Park Service
- United States Housing Authority
- Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works

A further reorganizational step was the establishment of the Bureau of Public Assistance within the Social Security Board. The Bureau personnel were professional social workers who recommended acceptable state plans for the three types of public aid given. They supervised state plans, advised and assisted state administrations in the problems of organization. The Bureau strongly recommended to the states that they have the three categories administered by one state agency for efficient management. The Social Security Board had the power to deny payments to the states if their plans fell below

standard, but this power was used sparingly due to the suffering it was sure to cause the needy.

The activity within the states from 1935 to 1939 centered in state legislation designed to meet the requirements set by the Social Security Act. A large number of bills concerning public assistance was passed; eighteen new state public welfare agencies were established while four others were reorganized and strengthened. It was necessary to meet the federal regulations that the benefits of Social Security must be in effect in all political subdivisions of the state, there must be financial participation by the state, and one state agency to administer each section of the plan or the entire plan. In this manner, the use of state money was necessary before federal money would be granted, but the matter of the financial responsibility within the state was left to the state and its political subdivisions to decide. Many states had no local financial participation. It was difficult to get uniformity in methods and standards within the local units and this tended to keep the level low. The contacts between the state and its local units were made by the state's field staff which helped the local agencies and saw that aid was distributed in all parts of the state. The old agencies that existed within the states for mothers' aid, aid to the aged, and the blind were the base for the

new provisions which were grafted on to them. In 1936 and 1937, half of the states had the three categories under one state agency while others had separate agencies for each type of assistance. The establishment of adequate general relief developed much more slowly than in the categories. In seventeen states, general relief was handled by the same agency, but in others there were no funds or supervision in the patchwork systems.

The value of statistics and research was not forgotten in the permanent program. The work in gathering statistics started by the FERA had been continued by the WPA, and the Social Security Board established a Bureau of Research and Statistics in 1936 to perform this function. The Bureau gathered statistics on categorical relief and general relief which it released monthly in the Social Security Bulletin. It was helpful in giving advice to research and statistical units of the states and served to stimulate activity in the private agencies.

The more detailed problems of the permanent organizations have been treated at length in Appendix B. It is only necessary to mention here that some of these problems were concerned with groups not included in category assistance, decentralization of control, the responsibility of relatives, policies concerning records, settlement, work projects, institutions, and standards of aid.

The use of social workers during this time had moved from positions of "investigator" in 1932 to a fuller understanding of their proper functions. Social workers were used by the WPA to interpret the work to the clients, determine eligibility, etc. They found their place in the permanent program with duties calling for the determining of eligibility for the categories, approval of state plans which had at least the minimum requirements including proper state personnel. Many local units saw no need for trained personnel to give public assistance and used the relief offices for political patronage which constantly interfered with the building up of a capable staff. In August 1939, the Social Security Act was amended to provide for the payment of half the administrative costs of aid to dependent children and the blind if the personnel were employed on a merit basis. The acceptance of the federal government as an interested party in the handling of assistance within the states indicated that the reaction against the federal government was dying out. Previously in 1937, a step in the direction of providing trained personnel was the ruling that federal funds could be used to pay the salaries of staff members on educational leave at schools of social work.

While federal participation in public welfare was first permitted at a time of industrial crisis for

the entire nation, it grew into a permanent program in which federal responsibility for some phases of welfare was recognized. The developments were along the lines of aid to selected groups which resulted in many persons unprotected or cared for inadequately. When the second World War started in 1941, the states were still caring for their own under the Social Security Act and filling out and developing their programs within their own states. The war ended the employment problem; the unemployed, some of whom had been on relief for years, went back to work and even many of the so called "unemployables" returned to work. The needs of the people in many cases ceased to be financial difficulties and became more of a personal nature as the war required many adjustments within families and communities. The families of service men received special consideration by both public and private agencies, and the veteran became another group to be aided by the federal government. The state organizations developed at their own rates and took advantage of the provisions of the Social Security Act.

The battle for adequate provision for the needy was not won with the federal Social Security Act or with the subsequent development of state public assistance systems. One of the biggest welfare departments to be developed by the states was the New York Department of Welfare. It employed large numbers of professional social

workers to carry its huge burden, but it was chronically understaffed and suffered from lack of sufficient funds to carry on its work. This department was under strong attack in 1947 when its methods and policies were called into question by the use of a few sensational cases in the hope of proving inefficiency in the department. The New York newspapers took up the story and soundly criticized the department for wasting public funds by "coddling" the poor. The manner of the attack not only reflected on the department and its workers, but also, on the people who were receiving aid. Through the use of these isolated cases, the poor in New York were discredited as shiftless, morally degenerate, alcoholic, and unworthy. The criticisms of the department resulted in many investigations by city and state officials who were aroused by the stories of relief clients who were being housed in hotels.¹ The investigation showed these arrangements were made only in emergencies when no other housing was available and with the knowledge and approval of the state department and the mayor of New York. By the time these revelations were made, the New York department had undergone much adverse publicity. The newspaper campaign against current relief practices showed that people outside of professional circles were not yet ready to accept modern social work principles and pointed to the need for a more adequate interpretation of the needs of the poor, the

¹ New York Times, May-November 1947.

psychology behind proper aid, and the problems of a welfare department dealing with thousands of clients with a small staff and insufficient funds.¹ The newspapers received a sound rebuff from many groups for their biased treatment of these welfare stories. An article written by A. J. Liebling reviewed the entire handling of these stories by the New York newspapers and showed their biased nature as well as the half-truths,² and half-hearted retractions.

"The editors of the Times, if called upon to explain the play they gave this story, would doubtless say that they had been actuated not by the details of an isolated case but by the principle of the thing. It would be interesting in this instance to know the nature of the principle upon which the Times proceeded.

...The principle involved in the treatment given the Mink story--if, indeed, it was a case of principle and not of sheer ineptness--seems to be that the poor are poor because of their sins and whatever they get is too good for them. In effect, the Times' story served to discredit, by implication, all applicants for relief and to provide an argument against increasing expenditures."

The professional field was not impervious to these attacks; they noted that the result of the New York publicity worked adversely on the people on relief rolls. The clients living in hotels, who were the object of so much publicity, were moved hastily to the

1 Some of the books written in an attempt to meet this need for interpretation include, How to Interpret Social Work by Baker and Routzahn, Toward Public Understanding of Casework by Viola Paradise, and The Public Assistance Worker by Russell Kurtz. (Russell Sage Foundation) They give suggestions to social workers on how to win public support for their programs.

2 A. J. Liebling, "The Wayward Press, Horsefeathers Swathed in Mink", The New Yorker November 22, 1947.

only accommodations available for them--the city owned "flop-houses". The more fortunate ones were moved into condemned tenements until other housing could be arranged. The general result of the publicity was to undermine public confidence in the welfare department and made further appropriations for adequate staffs, investigations, and relief aid for clients harder to obtain. Some of the premises of modern public assistance were under attack; they had to be strengthened and interpreted to the public. These premises were reviewed in the Social Work Journal by Donald S. Howard:¹

1. Primary emphasis is on self-maintenance by the client
2. Assistance agencies are not responsible for all social ills.
3. An unmet need is its own reason for meeting it
4. Assistance should be adequate and constructively given
5. Cooperation of federal, state, and local governments is required
6. Administration of public welfare must be efficient

In the April issue of this same publication, an article "Social Security: Prop or Pillow?" discussed the opposition that was forming to the Social Security Act.² This reaction against social security was being spearheaded by vested interests who were interested in protecting their own resources rather than the rights of the people. The author pointed to the commercial insurance companies who wanted to see social security discredited, to ancient ideas of the degenerate poor, to the fears of the costs of social

¹ Donald S. Howard, "Public Assistance Returns to Page One" Part II Social Work Journal, July, 1948.

² Alton A. Linford, "Social Security: Prop or Pillow?" Social Work Journal, April, 1948.

security, to the charges that aid to dependent children was breaking up homes, to the opinion that the federal government should not be interested in public assistance, and the charge that social workers were merely sloppy, sentimental idealists who "coddle" clients and build up relief rolls to protect their own jobs. Linford believed the acceptance of these ideas reflected the views a person had concerning people. It was impossible to accept them if a person believed that people are better motivated by hope, security, and freedom rather than by fear, hunger, and threats. And so the battle continued-- change had been brought about, reaction to that change had set in and had its effect. The federal government had started on a course from which it could hardly turn; the future developments in public assistance were and are in the hands of the American people.

PART II

ANALYSIS OF THE NEW DEAL MOVEMENT

ANALYSIS OF THE NEW DEAL MOVEMENT

I. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In the analysis of the foregoing history of public assistance, no attempt is being made to analyze the entire General Movement except as a source of origin of the Specific Social Movement of the Roosevelt administration. The developments in public assistance has been traced through the centuries in the United States to show the slow changes that have taken place, how the changes were brought about, and the long history in public assistance that confronted the Roosevelt administration as they stood ready to take steps to meet the economic emergency. The present purpose is to analyze the New Deal Movement, as it has been called, and more especially its welfare activities, to explain its techniques, motivations, organization, origin, and its success in making dynamic changes in a system long static.

II. ORIGIN

The policies of the Roosevelt administration would never have been devised or put into effect if it had not been for the social setting and attitudes of the people at that time. The changes were not foisted off on the American

people when they were too weak and confused to protect themselves; they were changes that sprang into being through demand. The people had witnessed the collapse of their laissez-faire economy. The government's policy of hands-off business which resulted in the killing off of competition, speculation, and business excesses in the 1920's had finally come home to roost. It was a rude shock for the American people, and they reacted violently at the next election against Hoover and his hopeful policies of restoring balance through the "natural processes". The people realized the fruits of these policies as the depression deepened and misery spread. The people wanted an explanation; they wanted the situation defined; they wanted to take steps to improve conditions and see that it would never happen again.

The common misery stimulated many plans, some for the mere tinkering with the machinery of government and industry and others based on the theory that capitalism was completely wrecked and needed to be replaced by a new form of government and a new basis for economic activity. This was the era of dozens of plans, the Townsend Plan, the EPIC Plan, cooperative plans of all types, etc. which gathered adherents from small areas or included only one or two specific changes appealing to special groups.¹ The search was stimulated for "the man" who would

¹ Luther Whiteman, Glory Roads, Thomas Y. Crowell Co. (New York, 1936).

have the answer and restore prosperity to the country. The American people show a peculiar contradiction in their thinking about government which was brought out in this crisis. They steadily maintain that the power and right to make decisions rests solely in the people, and yet, in time of crisis they hunt for the man who will show them the way. Their belief is not in themselves, but in a superman in whose hands they are willing to place their liberty, at least, until the end of the emergency. When they are again secure, they demand that the restrictions be removed, complete freedom be restored, and the processes that caused the original crisis is again freed to grow to another breaking point.

In their search for a leader and the approach of the elections of 1932, the figure of Franklin D. Roosevelt grew in prominence. He had been an efficient governor in New York, held high office in the federal government, and had won the respect of the people of New York with his progressive policies and concern for the rights of the common man. Roosevelt won Democratic support for his candidacy to the Presidential post, and when he was elected a Democratic Congress was swept into office to make his legislative changes relatively easy.

The people supported Roosevelt because they wanted¹ positive action, and he promised to give it to them.

• Perhaps the Presidency could have gone to any Democrat

1 A summary of the Democratic Platform in the election of 1932 is given in The Growth of the American Republic by Merison and Commager, V. II Oxford University Press (New York, 1942), pp. 587-588.

who promised some kind of action, but in Roosevelt, they got a man who was equal to the job of taking the initiative in overhauling the entire capitalistic system. The people were in the mood for, and indeed, demanded change; they were willing to support any reasonable measures that did not violate the accepted mores in any extreme degree. To the extent that it was necessary for the new administration to make changes that certain groups deemed extreme, it met with opposition. The majority of all classes accepted the fact that the economic, political, and human values were in need of adjustment. The depression threatened the interest of the entire nation; everyone was concerned; everyone needed the help of the federal government. It was only with the years of conditioning in the depression that the federal government after three hundred years was permitted to enter into public welfare activity. It was permitted through unprecedented need and the character of the national crisis that paralyzed states and made any effective action of necessity on a federal level.

Roosevelt was a master at sensing the needs of the people and the speed with which they would permit reform. When the demand was for sweeping reform, he pushed new bills through Congress to meet the demands; when in later elections the trend turned toward conservatism, he followed

the trend and modified his policies accordingly. He realized that even in a situation as serious and widespread as the depression, the people were not willing to forsake capitalism for any other type of economic system or government. He limited his changes to the structural framework of capitalism and tried to patch the holes as best he could. This was a real time of danger for the American system of government. Roosevelt reassured the people that a solution could be found that would work under our present form of government by modifying our economic practices. Morison and ¹ Commager state:

"Indeed it is probable that the New Deal did more to strengthen and ultimately to save the capitalist economy than it did to retard or destroy it. That economy had broken down in many nations abroad, and its collapse contributed to the rise of totalitarian governments which completely subordinated business to the state. The system was on the verge of collapse in the United States during the Hoover administration, and it is at least conceivable that had that collapse been permitted to occur, it might have been followed by the establishment of an economy very different from that to which Americans were accustomed. Historically the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration did for twentieth-century American capitalism what the Theodore Roosevelt and Wilson administration had done for nineteenth-century business enterprise: it saved the system by ridding it of its grosser abuses and forcing it to accommodate itself to larger public interests."

His policies were viewed by many conservatives as radical; by those who wanted more drastic changes, he was the defender of a wrecked capitalistic system that the country had long outgrown. His middle-of-the-road policies won

¹ Morison and Commager, op.cit., p. 639-640.

him much support and the confidence of the people. The plans offered the people based on the welfare system in New York were soon put into operation on a national scale. The FERA program pending in Congress was made into law at this time so that it could be set up under a more sympathetic administration than Hoover had offered. This act, followed by many others, providing for the relief of the unemployed, aged, mothers, children, and workers was a step in the most extensive and rapid reform achievement in American history.

The opposition to the New Deal Movement could be expected to come from big business and financial interests when one of the New Deal aims was to strengthen the position of workers and small business men. The position of the opposition was that no positive action should be taken to restrict the practices of business. Their faith was put in government subsidies to business and the "natural processes" which they believed would return the country to "normalcy" if left unrestricted. An interesting comment on the "natural processes" theory that reflects the administration's concern for the human element was made in 1933 by Adolph Berle, Assistant Secretary of State:

"...they take so long to do it and crush so many men in the process that the strain on the social system becomes intolerable."

Big business, which wanted help without restrictions on

1 Thomas Greer, American Social Reform Movements, (New York, 1949) Prentice-Hall, Inc., p. 243.

its activities, was joined in its opposition by those who were steeped in the American tradition which limited the federal government to emergency activity and trusted the government to the states. This fear of the federal government and centralized power has been present since the time of the Revolution and has been voiced down through the centuries in the cry for states' rights and more recently in the fear of socialism and economic planning by the government.¹ The fact of a national emergency was clear, but some groups still insisted that it was only of state concern. Roosevelt took a bold step in his liberal interpretation of the "welfare clause" when he took it to mean that the federal government not only had the right, but was bound to enter into the welfare field in the interests of the people. A further opposition to the new laws aiding dependent groups came from those who believed the poor, the unemployed, the sick had no right to public aid and that their plight was of no concern of anyone except themselves. Rugged individualism had led to public disaster, but it was not as yet dead.

III. IDEOLOGY

The whole New Deal Movement was justified and upheld by an ideology that was not wholly alien to American values. It determined to make the necessary adjustments

¹ The dangers in the trend of national governments toward economic planning is given in Road to Serfdom by Friedrich A. Hayek, University of Chicago Press, 1944.

within the capitalistic framework; it chose not revolution, but the more difficult task of moderation and rebuilding. It did not try to reverse the fact that business was dominant in American life; it attempted instead to give the workers a firmer position from which to bargain and acknowledged their rights to security from an unpredictable and fluctuating economic order. It did not attempt any destruction of private property; industry, as well as labor, was aided for it was only in that way that the American system could be continued. Checks were put on industry, first through attempting to enlist voluntary support under the NRA, and later when this failed, more positive steps to restore the balance between production and consumption. In order to facilitate the principle purpose of restoring industry and labor to their own feet, broad humanitarian measures were proposed for the emergency period so that the unemployed could find help. Labor was encouraged to protect its own rights, organize, press for insurance, and care in their old age. The rights and dignity of the worker was stressed as never before in history; relief was needed, but it was not meant simply to keep men alive. It was meant to be adequate and given as a right and not as charity. The administration used trained social workers for this purpose because they recognized that training was necessary for the proper protection of human rights in the new and trying situation that many of the people found themselves.

The economic balance between production and consumption had to be solved, and as a means to this end, the strengths of capital and labor had to be brought into closer harmony.

The administration was voted into power because it promised reforms that it believed the federal government could legally make. The "welfare clause" was the legal instrument by which the federal government gained admittance into untried fields and upheld the constitutionality of most of their acts.¹ The ideology capitalized also on American tradition and sought to tie in the New Deal reforms with past reform movements.² Roosevelt recognized and played up the similarities between his attempts at reform and those of Jackson and of the Progressives of an earlier date. The Progressive Movement was aimed at eliminating the abuses of capitalism as was the New Deal. With this reform heritage in the face of abuse, the American people realized they were reacting to an intolerable situation in the same manner as their forefathers.

IV. ORGANIZATION

Strictly speaking, it was not necessary for the New Deal Movement to organize in the same sense that other movements found necessary. The supporters of the New Deal did not have to make the people aware of a need; it was

1 For a discussion of the Supreme Court decision upholding the Social Security Act, see Appendix C.

2 Morison and Commager, op.cit., p. 591-592.

only too keenly felt by them already. They knew that labor was the group hardest hit by the depression; they saw the need on the faces of their neighbors and friends, and children. The campaign and election of 1932 was the answer of the Democratic party to this need as it sponsored and supported the New Deal. After the election, the organization of the movement was institutionalized as part of the government. The President set the wheels in motion to assure the passage of legislation which would put the New Deal programs into effect. Through its successes in Congress and with the people, the administration passed into law measures providing for immediate relief for the unemployed by direct relief and work projects and the distribution of food. Efforts were made to stimulate industry so that it could again take on its normal function of providing jobs for the labor of the country. As the emergency aspects of the situation eased, the government realized labor needed permanent protection, help, and insurance in addition to public assistance. It pressed for the Social Security Act and tried to stem the tide of reaction that would keep the federal government limited in its welfare activities.

The stages of a social movement as outlined by Dawson and Gettys were followed by the New Deal Movement.¹ There was first a Preliminary Stage which was characterized

¹ Dawson and Gettys, op.cit., p. 787-808.

by social unrest which corresponds to the situation during the Hoover administration as the depression became more and more serious and the people more aware of their needs. The Popular Stage was entered with the start of the campaign of 1932 which was the period of collective excitement and enthusiasm for the New Deal program. This stage continued, in this case, even through the stage of Formal Organization and Institutionalization up until the seriousness of the depression lessened and the desire for reform burned itself out. The Formal Organization of the movement, the third stage, was accomplished when the Democratic party recognized Roosevelt as its head and formed behind the New Deal policies to plan political action necessary for election and the later passage of the new laws. The Democratic party was an active and powerful force in American politics; it gained for the New Deal many supporters that it would never would have been possible to get if it had been sponsored by a new third party. The fourth stage, Institutionalization, was reached by most of the New Deal sponsored measures when they were incorporated into our pattern of laws. Some of the laws declared unconstitutional failed to gain this final stage, but for the most part, New Deal measures were upheld and the programs they supported stayed in effect. Sutherland discussing social control

adds another requirement for true social reform which is the acceptance of the changed pattern.¹ He says, "New generations must be brought up to accept the changed way of life as the natural accepted order before the social decision is really complete". That is, the changed way of life must be accepted as the natural way before it is effective in social control to guide patterns of behavior and thinking. In summary, it may be said that in the beginning the New Deal was striving to meet an emergency situation for which reform was demanded. It acted with all the speed possible in a democracy; it made errors; it had to experiment in a new field with the social workers available; above all, it had to provide for the needs of the people. One of the biggest obstacles it had to meet was local tradition which was the source of a reaction that later set in for a re-assertion of states' rights and state responsibility for its own. This reaction was seen in the absence of wide federal powers in the Social Security Act and the wording of the act which left most of the decisions in the hands of the states. The permanent program was set up on a cooperative footing between the federal government and the states with important decisions residing in each.

1 R.L. Sutherland and J.L. Woodward, Introductory Sociology 2nd edition, J. B. Lippencott Co. (Chicago, 1940) p. 799-800.

The supporters of the movement came from all classes and from all sections of the country. The Eastern city worker, the small business man, the poor and minority races in the South, and the farmers in the West, all were effected by the depression, and all looked to Roosevelt and the Congress for help. Thousands who had never voted the Democratic ticket before deserted the Republicans and streamed into the Roosevelt camp in the hope for relief. In later elections, the trend became more and more conservative in Congress, but the Democrats had by that time passed all their major reform bills and the main interest had shifted to the winning of the war.

V. TYPES OF INTERACTION

The types of interaction of this movement were on several planes of activity. The interaction between the federal and state governments was necessary to the administration of the New Deal programs. The provisions for the administration of the welfare laws were reviewed in Part I and need not be repeated here. Many of the states, stimulated by their smaller political units, found themselves in a dilemma concerning federal aid. The people of these states wanted and needed federal leadership in welfare and the kind of programs that could only be possible through federal support. The local

officials resented the direction and orders from Washington and the removal of the final authority from their jurisdiction. The relief program became a foreign thing imposed largely from the outside and accepted only with regret. As soon as the emergency aspects of the program lessened, the rebellion against this authority set in and demanded that the permanent program be set up on a plane of state initiative and planning along with federal aid. Josephine C. Brown writing about this problem

¹
stated:

"The emergency relief administration was in many respects a foreign and superimposed program in local communities, particularly in rural areas. Where local autonomy was strong, as it was in most of the rural counties, the result was conflict and resistance. The fact that large amounts of Federal and usually of state money accompanied the "foreign" program, was often the only reason why it was accepted. It was especially unwelcome because it deprived the locally elected officials of a function which they felt should have been theirs. The speed with which the program moved and the pressure under which the staffs had to work made it difficult to use committees and volunteers, the channels through which social agencies ordinarily interpret their activities. The consequent lack of community participation meant that there was built up little real understanding of the program on the part of the average citizen.

The objections and prejudices which developed in local communities, whether or not they were justified, undoubtedly played an important part in the general reaction to Federal jurisdiction which imposed certain definite restrictions upon the powers of the Social Security Board when that permanent agency was authorized by Congress in 1935."

The federal government, itself, treated the emergency program as a temporary thing and encouraged the

¹ Brown, op.cit., p. 216.

emergency agencies to be established apart from the already existing ones in order that speed of administration could be assured. The federal government's contacts with the states were at first made by the Division of Relations with the States of the FERA which advised the states in the establishment of their public assistance programs. The states, in time, developed an independent attitude by forming their own interpretations to meet their local needs as was originally intended when the broad provisions of the acts were formulated. The later relations between the state governments and the federal were on a more cooperative basis.

The rapport Roosevelt established with the people was something that would be hard for any President to equal. The circumstances of the social setting was partly responsible for this. He was the man they had picked when their need was the greatest; they turned to him as a source of help, reassurance, and guidance. He knew this need of the people and reassured them again and again that the only thing to fear was fear itself. These words could only have been spoken by a man who knew the people well and realized that the main danger to the country was in the lack of confidence by the people in their government to solve the problem through democratic processes.

Roosevelt became famous for his "fireside chats" during which he took the people into his confidence, explained his policies, and proposed federal action. Constant interpretation, publicity, slogans, etc. were used to keep public confidence high. The public felt a renewed interest in the federal government; its activities made up most of the talk of the day. The people felt that their needs were important to that man in the White House and elected him again and again to the Presidency. Roosevelt sensed not only the needs of the people but also the spirit of the times. The mistakes of the administration were sorely criticized especially by vested interests which had much to lose from the controls placed on unrestricted industry. The public was extraordinarily tolerant of these errors and fumbings with experiments because they knew the government was trying to find a solution to a problem that profoundly effected them all; the rapport of good feelings, and friendly sympathetic help established by Roosevelt did much to win him wide public support.

Another type of interaction that was important was on a more personal level than the other two; it was the interaction between the governmental employees and the people who came for help. In the last analysis, it was the interaction between these two groups that was responsible for the success or failure of federal and state policies. Men did not deal with laws; they dealt with

other people and from them took their attitude of support or rejection. The government realized the importance of this interaction and tried again and again on the personal level of worker-client relationship and on the federal-state level to have its workers trained and competent. There were not enough social workers trained for the job at hand; social workers were attracted from the private agencies where they had obtained their experience and training. They cooperated with the government to raise the standards of public assistance. The trained social workers met the confused and often frightened client with kindness and respect, and treated him as a respectable citizen who had a right to the help offered.¹ Some clients were handled more roughly by inexperienced workers and those who were still dominated by the "poor are trash" philosophy.

VI. METHODS OF CONTROL

The methods of control used by the administration to insure public support and the passage of its sponsored legislation rested mainly in interpretation to the public and control over the Democratic political machine. The public was constantly informed on the issues of the day, the present situation, and future plans. The actual means to reform lay through the Democratic party and their control in Congress. Through interpretation, the public

¹ Edith Abbott, "Is There a Legal Right to Relief", Social Service Review, June 1938.

regained its faith in the coming of better times and that the federal government was taking active steps to hasten that day. Roosevelt assured himself of full public support by telling the people the full seriousness of the situation and thereby creating almost a war atmosphere and morale in the country. Roosevelt said¹ in his First Inaugural Address:

"I shall not evade the clear course of duty that will then confront me. I shall ask the Congress for the one remaining instrument to meet the crisis--broad executive power to wage a war against the emergency as great as the power that would be given me if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe. . . . The people of the United States have asked for discipline and direction under leadership. They have made me the present instrument of their wishes."

It became patriotic to save on food, to deal only with the NRA firms, to volunteer for emergency work, and to spread work as far as it would go. Everyone was called on to help in some way and participation brought support. Roosevelt made many speeches and took many trips around the country to see for himself the situation in the various parts. The people were eager to see him and know him; his personal charm, speaking ability, and interest in the working classes all helped to create a devotion in the hearts of the people that was nearly worship.

Although the people aided by direct relief, work projects, etc. were free in their political affiliations,
1 Quoted in Morison and Commager, op.cit., p. 589.

the very nature of the situation tended to perpetuate Democratic power. The people would not vote against a system that was giving them much needed help even though they were perfectly free to do so if they wished.

The policies of the administration were aimed at improving the condition of the lower classes and small industry without unduly restricting big business which was essential to recovery through its function of providing work. The New Deal's policy of encouragement and reasonableness of action kept opposition down and allowed for easier control over the people. The tendency, also, for the New Deal to go with the trends of the times kept the administration in step with the majority of the people and thus the need for positive control was lessened by minimizing the irritations the people were asked to bear.

The focus of public attention on Washington kept Congress in the limelight so that the public was informed on Congressional action. For the most part, a fully controlled Democratic Congress cooperated with the President, but when necessary, the President defined the situation to the public and called for public opinion to make itself felt. At the height of its activity, politicians were eager to be identified with the President and the New Deal; they endorsed its policies and pointed proudly to their voting record in support of New Deal reforms.

VII. PSYCHOLOGY OF THE MOVEMENT

The crux of any social movement will be found in the understanding of its psychological appeals to the people, the reasons why it succeeded or failed, and what function it served for the people. This is emphasized by Hadley Cantril in his book, "The Psychology of Social Movements", in which he seeks to find the meaning of the movement to the individual.¹ Turning to this problem, it is possible to divide the New Deal Movement, especially its gains in the field of public assistance, into positive psychological appeals and negative factors that confronted the people and determined the extent of their support.

The depression period previously described lead to a re-examination of the values held by the American people. During this time when the needs of a large portion of the people were not being adequately met, the situation was ripe for change. These years were critical ones in which the people were more suggestible to specific changes than they would have been at any other time. In the field of welfare, modern philosophies had been growing since World War I; the depression era gave these philosophies their test and gained wide acceptance among professional social workers. The people were ready to accept these philosophies which said to them what

¹ Hadley Cantril, The Psychology of Social Movements, (New York, 1941), Chapters 1-3.

they knew to be true; they were not to blame; they were victims rather than parasites of the economic order. The people were highly ego-involved in the situation. They had lost considerable self-respect and community respect due to their economic decline which made physical privation harder to bear. This new philosophy of the New Deal and social workers gave people an answer which held them blameless and served to enhance their self-respect rather than depreciate it.

Some of the factors that made the New Deal Movement attractive and helped to enlist supporters were (1) the people's willingness to believe that a solution could be found within democratic processes of government, (2) the focusing of activities and direction of energies, (3) the meeting of the people's needs, (4) the definition of the situation that enhanced their egos, (5) the limitation of changes to the things the people would accept.

One of the factors that tended to encourage opposition and make the people reluctant to accept the New Deal (negative features) was of necessity of the same type encountered by all social movements tending toward reform. It called for change and adjustment to new patterns and a forsaking of old lines of behavior. Old patterns which operated satisfactorily in the past were inadequate to meet the crisis situation, and sometimes, proved to be

the very cause of that crisis. In a changing society, adjustments are always necessary to maintain the balance of interrelated cultural elements and these adjustments when made cause confusion until some consensus regarding the definition of the situation is again established. In a rapidly changing culture where many adjustments are taking place simultaneously, this consensus is never fully established and the culture takes on a disorganized appearance and causes much strain for the people of that culture.

Another negative element supporters had to overcome concerning the New Deal Movement was that it constituted unprecedented federal action in every phase of American life. It implied huge expenditures which violated the old American tradition of economy in government and a near worship of a balanced budget as the epitome of success of an administration regardless of the human values involved.¹ Some were slow to see the validity of the New Deal interpretation of the "welfare clause" and looked upon any extension of federal activity as a setting up of a rigid bureaucracy that would be worse than any economic depression. This fear of the growth of federal power and of laws which regulated and maintained the general welfare inspired much of the opposition to the movement.

¹ For a fuller discussion see Thurman Arnold, The Folklore of Capitalism, Chapter 12, pp. 311-331.

VIII. RESULTS

The New Deal existed as an active social movement in relation to public assistance and welfare from the time of its inauguration in 1933 until 1935 when most of its reforms were institutionalized as law. It met the emergency situation first with the FERA program and then with a new program that returned most of the responsibility to the states with the federal government taking the responsibility for the unemployed by setting up work projects. The next step was the permanent program worked out with the cooperation of the states and dependent on their initiative. All through these programs the federal government insisted on the establishment of standards for personnel and type of aid as best it could with limited funds and in the face of the reactions that set in against federal regulation of the management of welfare within the states.

This era above all others marked the entrance of the federal government into welfare and brought the actions of its agencies into direct contact with its citizens. The federal government became a thing acting upon and acted upon in return by the people; it became a more personal government interested in the problems of its people that effected the national welfare. It was also the era of the setting up of a permanent program of welfare under federal regulations and a definite commitment of the government not only to stay in welfare for the

emergency but recognizing it as a proper federal activity at all times. It was the time for the recognition of the rights and dignity of the laboring citizen, his civil right to organize and strive for economic security under advantageous conditions in their contacts with capital, his right to unemployment insurance, old age benefits, and help when sick. The farmers' plight was not passed by and every effort was made to help the farmer directly and through business to create a market for his goods. The special concern of the administration for the rights of man was shown by the wide use of social workers trained to respect the rights of the poor and the attempts to train hastily recruited volunteers for this important work. The fact that social workers were not ready for this unprecedented burden does not reflect on the administration when it was forced to use whatever personnel was available.

At the end of the depression, attention was turned to business, winning the war, and finally to a return to a peacetime economy. The effects of the war has been seen in the states where the trend has been the desire to throw off federal wartime regulations and restrictions and return to a policy of economy in government. States have been again holding relatives responsible for their dependents,¹ and adding lien laws to

1 D. Stevens and V. Springer, "Maine Revives Responsibility of Relatives", Public Welfare, July 1948.

attach the property of the poor on death.¹ Since most of the decisions of eligibility, settlement, responsibility of relatives, liens, etc. are under the jurisdiction of the states, considerable reaction could set in against the advanced views of social workers and the New Deal, but the general framework and principles behind the Social Security Act are accepted and will stand as one of the major accomplishments of the New Deal Movement.

IX. EVALUATION

The New Deal Movement has been previously defined as a Specific Social Movement of the political reform type. It is typical of other movements of this type in some of its aspects and unique in some others. It is typical in that it had a definite acknowledged leader to plan its activities and interactions and to whom the followers could pledge allegiance. It was an organized and planned movement using the techniques of the Democratic political party to gain its objectives. Its organization was aided a great deal by an already enlightened public who was aware of a need and in search of some plan. It was not necessary for the New Deal Movement to crystalize the discontent, but it was necessary for it to formulate a course of action and get public support for its plans. It is also typical as a political reform movement in that it

1 Otto Walls, "Indiana Re-enacts its Lien Law", Public Welfare, May-June 1948.

followed the stages of the Preliminary, Popular, Formal Organization, and Institutionalization, but since the Roosevelt administration lasted over a period of thirteen years considerable reaction set in from time to time as the New Deal attempted to adjust itself to the demands of the people.

Another condition that made it similar to the other American reform movements was the social situation under which it arose. Most reform movements began to meet a demand or to start a demand for the correction of some undesirable set of circumstances. They have their common source in the discontent of the people when they feel that the status they would like to attain and what they can attain is permanently separated. The appeal was to the people to assert themselves and correct forces they felt they had a right to control and change. The campaign of 1932 called on the people to allow the Democratic party to carry out the people's will and correct the causes of their grief. It was a call for people to regain their self-respect through democratic processes; much of the appeal was rational argument, but like other political campaigns, it was also emotional and full of threats for the failure to take action. The very nature of the problems being discussed in the campaign and the high ego involvement of the people gave even the rational arguments a strong emotional tone.

Through the nature of the movement as a national reform movement effecting every section of the country, it was essentially different from other modern reform movements in scope and the appeal to specific groups. The more recent social movements had tended to be less ambitious than those of former years; they had learned from bitter experience that the opposition of the status quo interest groups was not united if they singled out one phase of the social, political, or economic order in need of reform rather than meeting the united opposition of all vested interests threatened. They also learned that they had a much better chance for success if they tried to enlist their members from a few integrated groups rather than spread out their efforts over the public at large. The New Deal, since it was national in character, had to go against both these trends. Adjustments were needed in many phases of economic life; fundamental attitudes and values had to be changed for action. Their efforts on behalf of the "have nots" was motivated by the recognition of the rights of all people, and the necessity to put labor in a stronger relative position with capital. Since the success of the movement depended on legislation, victory in a national campaign was necessary and so was the enlistment of support from many different groups widely separated and with no common feeling of unity.

The natural history pattern suggested by Jerome Davis in his "Contemporary Social Movements" was followed, in the main, by the New Deal Movement as given below:¹

1. A need - Someone to voice this need
2. Propaganda, agitation
3. Growing consciousness of this need
4. Organization
5. Concerted action - strong leadership - new converts
6. If successful - Institutionalization
7. Bureaucracy - inflexibility - reaction dominant
8. New need - institution changes or in time replaced

As before stated, the New Deal did not have to crystallize the discontent of the people, but merely had to show the way for action. At the Institutional Stage, some reaction had already set in to curb federal powers over the states; the bureaus set up did not become rigid enough to resist change and most of the emergency bureaus were removed when need for them was gone as in the case of the FERA program.

Roosevelt was the heart of the New Deal and its brain also. He never once allowed the control over his office to slip into other hands; he had his "Brain Trust" and listened to their opinions, but he always took full responsibility for his acts and was never dominated by advisers. Roosevelt was responsible for guiding the New Deal through its difficult reform measures, for the ability to time his adjustments to the public will, and inspire confidence from all classes of people. He was swept into power by the pent-up demand for action against

¹ Jerome Davis, Contemporary Social Movements, (New York, 1930) The Century Company, pp. 8-10.

abuses and for this job he was given dicatorial powers. Many of his actions had to be hastily devised and failed to achieve their ends. If reform had come slowly and gradually, there would have been no necessity for a New Deal. Until we are able to accomplish this, men like Roosevelt will be sought out and given power in time of crisis. We can hope for the American people that they will use it and return it to the people as Roosevelt did.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

The Federal Surplus Relief Corporation was an experiment designed to remove the excess goods from the market in an effort to raise prices. The federal government distributed these goods as additional grants to relief clients. It was an unwise practice as far as the morale of the relief client was concerned, but it did supply needed food. When the FERA was ended in 1935 and no federal funds were granted to states for relief, surplus commodities became the only aid available where there were no state or local funds.

Another service provided for relief clients under the FERA was the provision for medical aid. The states interpreted this to mean in some cases general medical aid and in other states only emergency treatment was allowed. Only those eligible for relief were given this care, but there was a general rule that no hospital bills could be paid with federal funds. There grew up a close association between social workers, doctors, and public health officials in which social workers saw the inadequate facilities in rural areas and gained a new awareness of health needs.

An answer to the transient problem had been long overdue, but it was of such a nature that no one state

could solve it. The FERA developed a program to meet the needs of these people who, on the whole, had left their home communities in search of work. The states were given additional grants to be used for those needy who had no legal settlement in the state. The Federal Transient Bureau of the FERA was established to cooperate with the states in determining policies and standards of service. When this agency closed in 1935, employable transients were compelled to compete with residents for places on the Federal Works Projects and often they were at a decided disadvantage.¹

Schemes of self-help and barter were encouraged under the FERA. In August 1933, \$3,000,000 was granted to twenty-six states to aid organizations formed for cooperation to meet their common needs. These groups grew food, canned, cut fuel, made clothing, etc.; they aided in the conservation of crops and prevented waste. These organizations helped people's morale as they struggled for economic self-sufficiency. It was estimated that every federal dollar spend on these groups created nearly seven dollars in benefits.

Still another activity organized under the FERA was the educational program designed to aid unemployed teachers and give the poor a chance for more education.
1 Lane and Steegmuller, op.cit., Chapter 3.

In 1933 and 1934, subsidies were given to some Southern states to keep their rural schools open. Other services were open to those on relief and those who were not, among these were, student aid, adult classes, vocational training, classes for the physically handicapped, parent education, and nursery schools. Special classes were held for those in industry and those on work projects. These activities were transferred to other agencies when the FERA was terminated; this was a partial acknowledgment of the right of the poor to an education as well as material aid.

APPENDIX B

GENERAL ASSISTANCE

The provisions for public assistance by categories was not without its difficulties and disadvantages. It resulted in the creation of a "residual load" of needy dependent solely on state and local funds and surplus commodities. The giving of relief by categories also resulted in payments to individuals without considering the needs of their families; this resulted in inadequate payments while the giving of assistance by general relief treated the family as a whole.

DECENTRALIZATION

At the end of the emergency, applications for assistance had been made at the central agency and help was given by the WPA, NYA, CCC, and surplus food as needed. With the end of the emergency period, the system broke into a number of uncoordinated agencies caring for their own intake. Different definitions of need and eligibility were common leading to much confusion. The attachment of categorical aid to already existing agencies tended to blend the new philosophy with the old and retarded the acceptance of democratic principles in the giving of aid.

RESPONSIBILITY OF RELATIVES

The decision on the responsibility of relatives of the needy was left to the state, but the federal government's opinion was that the matter should be settled in the best interests of the needy and the legally responsible relative. Edith Abbott made known the views of social workers in this matter as given below:¹

"If the poor laws are to be written in the light of modern social welfare theories, any attempt to enforce by legal machinery the responsibility of relatives, one of the surviving provisions of the sixteenth-century poor law system, should be completely abolished."

POLICIES CONCERNING RECORDS

The federal government made no definite stand regarding the responsibility of relatives, but it did in regard to public assistance records. The states often had to policy of making such records public and open to political use until July 1941 when the federal government ruled that they must be kept confidential. The Social Security Act also included a provision for a fair hearing for anyone denied assistance. This provision was important because it gave control to the states over local procedure and practices.

SETTLEMENT

Another problem that came with returning to state domination of public assistance was the problem of settlement. The federal government had set the limitations for

¹ Edith Abbott, "Poor Law Provision for Family Responsibility", Social Service Review, December 1938.

settlement requirements, but in individual states, they were designed to eliminate outsiders. During the depression, there had been much mobility, and many found that they had lost settlement in their home state and yet were not eligible for aid in the new state in which they made their home. The federal government tried to meet this situation by encouraging discussion of the problem between the states in an effort to reach reciprocal agreements.

WORK PROJECTS

The development of work relief under the federal government had been conducted so that the people were paid a security wage related to the type of work they performed. There were periodic investigations required by law to see that only those in need were carried on the rolls. During 1938 and 1939, work relief started under local auspices, but it was the type in which city jobs were given to those in need while they were paid under a budget deficiency plan. The jobs given by the city to their relief clients even included firemen and police officers; the city plans had the characteristics of the old work test of the seventeenth century.

INSTITUTIONS

The use of local almshouses still existed, but the Social Security Act tended to discourage their use. The

act provided that no benefits could be paid to those in a public institution. The trend was towards a closing down of local almshouses and consolidating them into larger district units and their gradual replacement by infirmaries for the cure of the chronically ill.

STANDARDS

The effects of all these changes were reflected in the standards of aid offered by the states. As compared with the grants made during the depression by the FERA, the average amount of work relief wages and categorical assistance was higher while the average general relief benefits were less with great variations in all parts of the country. The general relief provided after 1936 was inadequate to meet the needs of the people; the amounts granted did not fall very much below FERA levels, but prices had risen so that the grants provided only a starvation living. The states with the largest loads were also the ones with the greatest resources; they were better equipped to handle their problems than the states with a smaller number of dependents. Conditions during the winter of 1939-1940 were nearly as serious as those of the past depression period; it was described in the March, 1940 issue of the Social Service Review:

"One of the most severe winters within the memory of the present generation has brought added cruelties to the
1 Notes and Comments by the Editor, Social Service Review
March 1940, V 14, p. 133.

bitter situation faced by very large numbers of unemployed men and their families. The situation in Omaha, Nebraska is unfortunately typical of widespread suffering that has been meagerly and grudgingly relieved by our state and local governments since federal aid for home relief through the Federal Emergency Relief Administration came to an end. This long and exhausting period of hardship and deprivation has been endured with great courage by the relief clients. In Omaha, with the thermometer at 18 below zero, the indifference of the county commissioners about providing fuel has continued. The suffering among the destitute has been almost indescribable. The federal government has seen this tragedy but has done nothing. The state government will do nothing...."

Even the federal work project wages were deliberately kept at a less eligibility level which was lower than the prevailing rates for the same work in private industry. A further reaction against attempts to provide adequate aid can be seen in the Appropriation Acts of 1939 and 1940 by which relief workers were removed from the projects after eighteen months continuous employment; they were not permitted to return for thirty days at which time it was necessary to establish the client's eligibility again.

APPENDIX C

"In the course of the next two years practically all the states set up old-age pensions and unemployment insurance systems that met the requirements fixed by the Social Security Board. Inevitably, however, the Social Security Act was challenged on constitutional grounds, and conflicting opinions in inferior federal courts created uncertainty as to the effectiveness of the law. In a series of notable decisions handed down on 24 May 1937, the Supreme Court sustained all the crucial provisions of the Act, and announced a concept of national welfare so broad that it constituted, in theory, if not in effect, a reversal of many of the conservative decisions of the early New Deal period and a return to the Marshall interpretation of the Constitution. Thus Justice Cardozo, sustaining the unemployment insurance provisions of the Security Act, observed of unemployment that,

The states were unable to give the requisite relief. The problem had become national in area and dimensions. There was need of help if the people were not to starve. It is too late today for the argument to be heard with tolerance that in a crisis so extreme the use of the moneys of the nation to relieve the unemployed and their dependents is a use for any purpose narrower than the promotion of the general welfare.

Such an interpretation of the Constitution, had it been adopted earlier, might well have sustained the A.A.A. and Railway Pension legislation. Not the least significant aspect of the Social Security legislation was that it discovered a method for implementing nationalism."

Quoted from Morison and Commager, op.cit., p. 617.

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