

608 FAMILIES AIDED IN 1918 BY PUBLIC BUREAU

Under Guidance of the Welfare Bureau, Families Are Helped to Help Themselves.

ALL GIFTS ARE VOLUNTARY

Emergency Cases Are Investigated at Once, Declares Leader; Ben Selling Heads Bureau.

A total of 608 families were aided in the year ending October 31, 1918, by the Public Welfare bureau. In October 113 families were aided, in November 154 and in December 215, the increased numbers being largely due to influenza.

By means of the case system the family is helped to help itself, under the careful guidance and direction of the social workers of the welfare bureau.

The aims of the bureau, which is supported entirely by voluntary contributions, are expressed in the New Year's resolution recently made by A. R. Gehhart, general secretary, "to do our utmost in rehabilitating families during the period of reconstruction and pointing out to the public those tasks which are too big for us to undertake single handed."

Work Done Quietly

Working quietly and faithfully among its shipwrecked families, not only providing them with "lifeboats," but seeing that they are started once more on a career of self help and usefulness, the bureau has avoided rather than sought publicity.

"Our families are so sensitive," quietly explained one of the workers, whose watch over her charges is as close as a parent over a child.

About one half of the applications for aid are made by the families themselves, and the other half are reported by other agencies, visiting nurses, police department, schools, neighbors, various clubs and others under whose observation the family has come to the bureau as cases needing attention.

Rarely is the cause due to an employment, according to Mr. Gehhart, especially during the last year, and in many cases reported as unemployment, the father is found to be physically unfit for work. In the problems with which the bureau must deal that of disability is one of the greatest, closely followed by disease, old age, desertion and non-support and under employment.

"We take up emergency cases immediately," said Miss Amelia Feary, speaking of the work.

Main Causes Sought

"We then get acquainted with the family, try to find the underlying causes which make it impossible for them to meet the distress conditions, and to develop the family in resource and ingenuity so that when the situation again arises they will be able to meet it."

The uppermost symptoms of complications underlying social problems, according to Miss Feary, are often mental defects, subnormality and abnormality in varying degrees, physical defects, social diseases, lack of adjustment in industry, lack of vocational training, inability of mother to plan the family budget on the income.

"A family was about to be evicted for non payment of rent," said Miss Feary. "We paid the rent. The father had been unable to hold a job. There were six children and another one coming. We found the man was unable to stand continuous work, but was opposed to consulting a physician. We persuaded him to see our general clinic at the free dispensary. It was found he was afflicted with four diseases, tuberculosis in an advanced stage, venereal disease, brass poisoning and diabetes, and in two months he died."

Treatment Is Given

"We had the family examined, gave them treatment, taught the mother how to handle her finances, taught her the individual needs of her children of different ages, handled a lawsuit for damages for the death of another child, securing the maximum amount of damages. Not only was the family saved but the community was protected from the spread of two social diseases."

Appreciation of the families helped are often shown. In one instance a man whose family was helped over a tight place, upon later securing a position and being promoted to a place where he employed other men under him, asked the board to send any men they might know of wanting employment.

The influenza epidemic has been the cause of many families needing aid this winter. In many instances the entire family has been ill and the income stopped. The mother or the father has often died, leaving a number of children to be supported.

Miss Feary, who was formerly with the United Charities in Chicago, is taking a number of women under her direction, teaching them the duties of a social worker.

"In order to understand the various phases of family life, and the underlying causes of the problems," said Miss Feary, "the worker needs to be of mature judgment, actuated by an inspiration developed through sympathetic study of social conditions."

Officers of the Public Welfare bureau are: Ben Selling, president; Kurt Koehler, vice president; R. S. Howard, treasurer.

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