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A study of the White House conferences as they have contributed to advancements in the field of child welfare

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A STUDY OF THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCES AS THEY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO ADVANCEMENTS IN THE FIELD OF CHILD WELFARE

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE ATLANTA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

BY

FRANKIE PAULINE WILKINS

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

JUNE 1947
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Purpose of This Study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Scope</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of Procedure</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. HOME CARE FOR DEPENDENT CHILDREN</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother's Aid</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Establishment of the Children's Bureau</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. MINIMUM STANDARDS OF CHILD WELFARE</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sheppard-Towner Act</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomplishments of the Act</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. CHILD HEALTH AND PROTECTION</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Services</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth and Development of Children</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prenatal and Maternal Care</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Care For Children</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health Service and Administration</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicable Disease Control</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk Production and Control</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Training</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Parent and Public Education</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Infant and Pre-school Child</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The School Child</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Guidance and Child Labor</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational and Physical Education</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Classes</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth outside of Home and School</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Handicapped</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State and Local Organizations For The Handicapped</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically and Mentally Handicapped</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially Handicapped, Dependent and Neglected</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Socially Handicapped-Delinquency</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. CHILDREN IN A DEMOCRACY</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Child In The Family</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families and Their Incomes</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families In Need of Assistance</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion In The Lives Of Children</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Services In The Community</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection Against Child Labor</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children Under Special Disadvantages</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children In Minority Groups</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children In Migrant Families</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion of The Conference</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Problem

The purpose of this study is to trace the advancement of child welfare toward national concern as influenced by the four White House Conferences, and to present a study of the results of each conference as it has broadened government interest and participation. It should serve as an index to the field of child welfare with emphases placed on the contributions of these conferences toward the extension and improvement of services rendered to children and their families.

Since the early beginnings of child welfare services there have been many social and economic developments in the United States affecting child welfare. The most important historical series of special conferences relating to social welfare have been the four White House Conferences, which have been held at approximately ten-year intervals from 1909 to 1940.

These conferences gave national recognition to the fact that the index of our social, political and economic life is the welfare of children. The outgrowths of these conferences have contributed greatly to the improvement and extension of child welfare services. They have not dealt with the child alone, but with the well-being of the entire group which the child is but one member.

The programs of child welfare are guided in such a manner that more


children may be properly safeguarded at birth, may be given a chance to survive infancy, may have the advantage of family life, may be helped over the pitfalls which too often lead to delinquency, and when their own families fail them, may be given adequate care and protection. Each White House Conference held has focused its attention toward these channels and brought forth progressive measures for the betterment of these conditions.

Scope

The four White House Conferences from 1909 to 1940 will be covered. This study is limited to the results or outgrowths of these conferences as they have influenced advancements in the field of child welfare.

The first White House Conference in 1909 set forth principles and procedures for the care of dependent children. It popularized foster care for children who could not or should not be kept in their own homes. Two outgrowths of this conference have made it outstanding in the history of child welfare in this country. The first state law, Mother's Aid, appeared implementing the principle of keeping children in their own homes through financial aid. The second outgrowth of the conference was the creation of the Children's Bureau.

Included in chapter II under the Conference of 1909 will be a study of Mother's Aid and the Children's Bureau as each is related to the field of child welfare.

Chapter III will include the Conference of 1919 as it widened the scope

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1Atkinson, op.cit., p. 2.

of the first conference to include other subjects, principally child labor and the health and protection of children and mothers.

The Conference of 1930, chapter IV, goes beyond the other two in that it embraces not only children in need of assistance or protection, but community and social factors affecting the development of all children. The most important outgrowth of this conference was the Children's Charter which formularized the "right of the child as the first right of citizenship."

Chapter V will present the fourth conference on "Children In A Democracy." From this conference child welfare not only benefited from the organization of the National Citizens Committee and the Federal Inter-Agency Committee but also a wealth of concepts resulting from discussions presented related to the welfare of children.

Method of Procedure

The material in this thesis has been secured through examination of literature available in the local libraries. All available books, papers, bulletins, and reports containing material pertinent to the subject have been compiled and used for bibliography.

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1Ibid., pp. 77-82.
CHAPTER II

HOME CARE FOR DEPENDENT CHILDREN

The first White House Conference was called in 1909 by President Theodore Roosevelt and expressed its keynote in the words: "Home life is the highest and finest product of civilization. Children should not be deprived of it except for urgent and compelling reasons."

This conference on home care for dependent children is accredited with initiating nation-wide concern of home care for dependent children. The principles created have become laws which have contributed to advancements in child welfare services. The first principle that children should not be removed from their homes for reasons of poverty alone was a modern expression of a conviction that had been gaining ground for many years. A second principle embodied the thought that in cases where normal children must be removed from their own homes, a carefully selected foster home should be substituted.

This Conference recommended that institutions for children be on the cottage plan, preferably; that child caring agencies should be incorporated with state's approval and the state should inspect their work; and that the causes of children's dependency should be studied and so far as possible ameliorated or removed.

Two outgrowths of this Conference have made it outstanding in the


2Ibid., p. 77.

3Ibid., p. 78.
history of child welfare. As previously stated it urged that whenever possible children should be kept in their own homes through aid to dependent mothers. It recommended that such aid should not be from public funds, but should be administered by private charitable agencies. Within two years of the date of the conference the first state law appeared, implementing the principle of keeping children in their own homes through financial aid. This grant, commonly referred to as Mother's Aid, will be discussed in this chapter as the outgrowth of the Conference of 1909 which has created nationwide concern and has been a gross advancement in the field of child welfare.

The second outgrowth of the conference was the establishment of the Children's Bureau. This Bureau was created by an Act of Congress in 1912, after years of effort on the part of many groups. Effective federal interest in the special problems of child life dates from this creation. Special attention will be given later to the development of the Children's Bureau and how it has contributed to the advancements of welfare services to children and their families.

Mothers' Aid

The normal development of children is one of the main functions of government. The best education requires a proper home training, and it thereby becomes the duty of the State to conserve the home as its most valuable asset whenever factors, other than the improper guardianship of the parents, threaten its destruction.

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1Ibid., p. 78.
2Ibid., p. 79.
The mothers' assistance law has two reasons for its existence, a humanitarian and an economic one. There are in many communities a large number of children and women who cannot maintain their homes without assistance. It is an authoritative belief that as a principle of justice no home should be broken up for poverty alone. Private resources are not adequate in cases of long-continued dependency. The State therefore came to feel responsible for this group. It is cheaper in dollars and cents to maintain children in their homes than to support them in institutions, and children cared for by their mothers have the best chance of becoming healthy, normal children.

Before mothers' aid laws were enacted a number of States and localities had recognized the wisdom of the principle of such aid and had applied it in a limited way. As early as 1906 the juvenile courts of some counties of California granted county aid to children in their homes; in 1911 the State began to reimburse counties for some aid given to half-orphans. Through a resolution by the county board of Milwaukee County, Wisconsin in 1912, aid to mothers for the care of children was given through the juvenile court.

In 1913 a total of eighteen States enacted mothers' aid laws. The experimental character of much of this early legislation, due largely to haste with which the idea was adopted, is seen in the revision and numerous amendments found necessary as the laws were put into operation.

Although mothers' aid legislation must be drawn with due consideration of the conditions existing in each State or other divisions of the government,

1Ibid., p. 1.
2Ibid., p. 2.
3Ibid., p. 2.
and especially with regards to laws on related subjects, certain fundamental principles must be observed if such laws are to be effective child welfare measures. These may be summarized as follows:

1. Application broad enough to permit aid whenever by such means a suitable home may be maintained.
2. Age limitations to conform with education and child labor laws.
3. Amount of aid to be based on the needs of the individual family, with due regard to other available resources.
4. Inquiry into each case to determine the home condition and the assistance needed for the proper care of the children.
5. Continued oversight in order that the welfare of the children may be protected and the aid adjusted to meet changing conditions.
6. There should be safeguards necessary to protect the public treasury against fraudulent or unwarranted claims and against burdens that should be borne by other communities or by individuals legally responsible and able to furnish support.
7. Administration should be lodged in the public agency best fitted to carry out the provisions of the law as a constructive child welfare measure.
8. Appropriations adequate to carry out the purpose of the law, with respect both to funds required for aid and to expenses of administration.
9. Some form of general oversight by the State combined with educational activities to develop high standards in the work of the local administrative agencies.\(^1\)

With the passage of the Social Security Act in 1935 these principles were supported and extended. The federal cooperation and financial help in granting aid to dependent children which the Act makes available thus enables the states to carry out more effectively a responsibility they had already accepted.

The extension of federal aid has been due to the fact that federal funds have been made available, and also to the encouragement of more effective administration and more liberal standards of eligibility brought about by the Social Security Act.\(^2\)

\(^1\) Ibid., pp. 3-4.

Federal standards relating to eligibility for aid to dependent children reflect views which some states had already begun to develop when the national law was passed. The effort of the Act has been to stimulate a more flexible and inclusive interpretation. This is evidenced in the fact that each state is allowed the freedom of determining its own standards.

For residence, the federal Act sets a specific maximum. Many of the old mothers' aid laws had limitations, usually requiring long periods of local as well as state residence. No state plan can be approved under the Social Security Act which excludes a child on the grounds of local residence. States are at liberty to reduce even this requirement if they wish and still be in conformity with the federal law.

The federal Act provides the matching of funds for the support of children up to 16 years of age, but states with approved plans may set the age limit either lower or higher as they desire. The trend toward liberalizing the age requirements has special significance in relation to states compulsory education and child labor laws, since it makes it legally possible to provide for dependent children so that they may remain in school at least until the minimum working age.

The provisions with regard to the relatives with whom a child receiving aid may live are more inclusive in the new plan. Many of the early state laws limited assistance to children living with their mothers. Under the Social Security Act funds are available to needy children living with

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1Ibid., p. 21.
2Ibid., p. 21.
3Ibid., p. 29.
any of a number of other relatives.

Causes of dependency, under the early laws frequently limited to the death of the father have been extended in the Federal Act to include also the death of the mother, the physical or mental incapacity of either parent, or his or her continued absence from the home.

Citizenship is not required in the federal provisions for aid to dependent children. The responsibility of relatives for support is usually recognized in connection with need, but few states have any specific property limitations.

As required in the old mothers' aid laws, federal funds may not be used for the support of children in public or private institutions. While it is recognized that there are and will always be children with special needs who can probably best be cared for in institutions, public and private child welfare agencies since the 1909 Conference have felt it inadvisable to break up a family where the major problem was loss of parental support. Providing a cash allowance for the care of children in their own homes is most economical and also the most constructive means of meeting his needs.

This early recognition of care for the dependent child in his home, which was originally termed mothers' aid in the 1909 Conference, has proved itself profitable. Child welfare has extended and improved these services to state-federal programs through the Social Security Act.

The trends of the past years, since the inclusion in the Social

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1 Ibid., p.29.

2 Ibid., p.30.

3 Ibid., p.30.
Security Act, toward increasing coverage, more adequate financing, more effective organization and administration, and more constructive service, all point to continuing progress in providing adequate nation-wide assistance to dependent children. Although many problems remain, federal and state legislation furnishes a base for far-reaching growth. It offers opportunity to develop to the fullest extent knowledge and skill, a kind of service which will not only care for children now dependent but will also help to prevent future dependency. Progressive trends from Mothers' Aid to Social Security is evidence that the family can be kept together if the parent can be offered practical and constructive guidance.

The Establishment of The Children's Bureau

By Act of April 9, 1912, there was established in the Department of Commerce and Labor a Children's Bureau. This creation has as its object, according to the Act, "to investigate and report upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of children and child life among all classes of our people." The need most keenly felt by those who agitated for the establishment of a Federal Children's Bureau was that of a center of information regarding all the children of the country and regarding the social and economic conditions affecting their welfare. The Department of Labor was selected as the proper place for the bureau. Under its protection the bureau began its work on the complete problem of child welfare.

The most immediate need that presented itself to the bureau was the need for facts about the protection of life at the very beginning. Its first

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investigation was an inquiry into infant mortality in industrial centers. This subject was selected because of its fundamental bearing on social welfare and the human need to save life. The method of approach was from the social and economic side, as the infant mortality rate had come to be regarded by leading authorities as a sensitive index of social welfare. The findings of the bureau from studies carried on indicated the close connection between low wages and infant mortality, between certain civic conditions and baby deaths. These are social problems and they indicate clearly the comprehensive nature of the bureau's field of work.

This field was further explored when conditions of material and infant welfare in rural areas were investigated. The infant mortality studies reveal the need of investigation into the welfare of mothers. The bureau secured data and made public the welfare of mothers in isolated communities, data on the mortality and morbidity of mothers and the care received by them.

In such studies the bureau has the task on ascertaining conditions surrounding child life throughout the country. As a result of the information secured through its investigation the bureau has sought to "ascertain and to popularize just standards" for the life and development of all children of America. An attempt has been made to popularize the knowledge gained through research and field study.

1Ibid., p. 456.

2Ibid., p. 456.
CHAPTER III

MINIMUM STANDARDS OF CHILD WELFARE

In the year 1919, the Children's Bureau organized the second White House Conference which directed its attention toward the advancements of minimum standards of child welfare. Included in such standards were those related to children entering employment, protection of the health of children and mothers, and protection of children in need of special care. These standards reaffirmed the conclusions of the White House Conference of 1909.

The developments following this Conference included the establishment of child hygiene or child welfare divisions within many of the states. In 1937 every state had such a bureau under medical direction. Another development in cooperative effort to reduce unnecessary loss of maternal and infant life was the passage in 1921 of the Sheppard Towner Act. The objective of this Act was the "promotion of the welfare and hygiene of maternity and infancy." By 1929 forty-five states and the territory of Hawaii were cooperating under its provisions.

The Sheppard-Towner Act

The Sheppard-Towner Act later became an Act For The Promotion of The Welfare and Hygiene of Maternity and Infancy. The Act was first introduced in the Sixty-Fifth Congress but failed to pass. After meeting another failure in the Sixty-Sixth Congress it was finally passed by the Sixty-Seventh Congress on November 23, 1921.

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The ultimate object of this Act is the reduction of the sickness and death rates of mothers and babies.

While certain minor provisions of the original bill were omitted and a few stipulations added, the bill as passed carried out the original purpose of the measure in that provisions were made for (1) the administration of this aid by the Children's Bureau, (2) Federal financial aid to the States, (3) the application of such aid to the problem of reducing maternal and infant mortality and its use in protecting the health of mothers and children, and (4) the vesting of the States of complete authority to initiate and to administer plans subject to approval by the Federal Board of Maternity and Infant Hygiene.

The accomplishments under this Act have greatly contributed to advanced thinking and planning of services to mothers and their children. Those individuals and organizations whose concern is the welfare of children have likewise witnessed progress in the field due largely to provisions of the Maternity and Infancy Act.

Accomplishments of The Act.— The general trend of activities may be summarized briefly as follows:

1. The education of the general public as to the need and value of skilled supervision during pregnancy, and medical and nursing care during and following confinement.
2. Better infant care through the teaching of mothers.
3. Stimulation of the medical and nursing profession to meet the public demand for better health protection of mothers and infants.

The fundamentals of a comprehensive and forward-looking program for furthering health promotion as it refers to expectant mothers, infants,

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and pre-school children included the following:

1. Continued education to develop public appreciation of the value of prenatal, confinement, and infant care.
2. Stimulation of complete and early registration of births.
3. Development and extension of facilities for areas where no maternity and infancy work is done.
4. Establishment of permanent health conferences for prenatal, postnatal, and preschool consultations.
5. Establishment and maintenance of community public health nursing service and of follow-up work after consultations.
6. Provisions of hospital facilities for all complicated pregnancies and confinements and for illness of infants and young children, or where this is impractical, provision of adequate medical attention and home nursing.
7. Increased local appropriations to cover all public maternity and infancy activities.
8. Improved training by medical schools in obstetrics, and pediatrics, especially in their preventive and public health aspects.
9. Cooperation between State public health authorities and medical practitioners for the effective carryingout of preventive measures.
10. Development of local responsibility for providing the facilities necessary to carry on permanently public health activities.¹

CHAPTER IV

CHILD HEALTH AND PROTECTION

During the period from the first White House Conference in 1909 and 1919 there was real progress in the organization of public services. Child Hygiene Divisions were created in the State Departments of Health, Children's Bureaus were organized in the State Departments of Welfare, and schools and State Departments of Labor organized more effectively the community resources for the training and protection of the young workers.

As a result of the combined efforts of the Children's Bureau and other agencies, both public and private, the infant mortality rate in the United States was so reduced that in 1930 it was estimated that more than 122,000 babies survived in 1929 who would have died if the conditions of 1909 had prevailed. Likewise, the number of children being cared for in their homes by mother's pensions had increased.

Through such progressive measures as these it is evident that those individuals and organizations interested in the welfare of children became cognizant of the fact that if the needs of all children are to be met adequately, there need be great expansion and progressive improvement in public services. With this view in mind the Children's Bureau, in 1930, organized the third White House Conference on Child Health and Protection.

The purpose of this Conference was to study the present status of the health and well-being of all the children in the United States and to

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ascertain what ought to be done, and how to do it.

Special subject committees under four main sections, Medical Service, Public Health and Administration, Education and Training, and The Handicapped, brought together information and opinions on what was being done.

From these committees there were compiled reports covering every conceivable phase of child care. These reports have proven to be a monumental record of the conference, surpassing the achievements of any other conference held on children's problems. The principles to be discussed are embodied in the noteworthy document known as the Children's Charter.

Medical Services

Growth and Development.-- The function of the Committee on Growth and Development was to gather information respecting the growth and development of children from individuals, laboratories and world literature, and to determine what parts of it could be accepted as knowledge and be made available for the solution of the practical problems.

The main objective was to appraise the existing knowledge descriptive of the growth and development of children from conception to maturity. The committee pointed out the obstacles to normal growth and development which may be imposed by disease and socio-economic circumstances; to indicate places where data are lacking, inadequate or discontinuous, and to suggest fruitful pathways to follow in the approach to fuller and greater knowledge. The Committee likewise endeavored to evaluate the significance of these facts and to view them in a proper perspective from the standpoint of the health and protection of children. These facts were considered both from

\[\textit{Ibid.}, \ p. 879.\]
the point of view of their strict scientific accuracy and of their significance and importance in practical questions of the care and guidance of children.

Prenatal and Maternal Care.— Although the subject of prenatal and maternal care in its entirety is not ordinarily included in the field of child health it has a very definite bearing upon the life of the child at one of the most critical and important age periods. The following excerpt gives evidence of this fact.

The importance of prenatal and maternal care becomes evident when one considers that the United States is credited, possibly unjustly, with having one of the highest maternal deathrates of any of the great nations of the world. Then, too, the deathrate among infants in the first weeks of life is not only distressingly high, but has remained practically unchanged, while the rate has been successfully reduced in the remaining months of the first year.  

Through the assimilation of the facts and principles presented, the Committee pointed out the main causes for infant and maternal mortality. For the betterment of these conditions the committee suggested (1) preventive measures through application of present obstetrical knowledge and public education, (2) adequate care for maternity cases in the home and hospitals in both urban and rural communities, (3) more accurate statistical data as to the number and causes of deaths, for a better understanding of causes and more effective prevention of casualties, (4) competent provisions be made for training and proper supervision of midwives under medical control, (5) adequate training of nursing attendants for maternity care, and (5) adequate medical education with sufficient financial support.

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3Ibid., pp. 67-90.
Medical Care For Children.— To comply with the specifications, namely, to ascertain what was being done throughout the Nation in the way of medical care for children and what was lacking, the Committee on Medical Care for Children endeavored to ascertain the qualifications of all groups presumably trained to prevent and cure disease. These groups were composed of physicians, nurses, medical social workers, nutritionists, and dentists. This in turn involved a study of the institutions, graduate and undergraduate, giving such training, to determine whether their courses were adequate. Information was also secured to determine the number of workers and whether their services were available to all communities. A study was made of the number, distribution and types of hospitals and other institutions having to do with the health of children. A study was also made of the families to determine whether they had been educated to the point of utilizing to the best advantage the facilities offered for the prevention and cure of disease. In securing this data three methods were used, namely, the questionnaire, interviews, and correspondence, and assembled data.

For the improvement of conditions of medical care for children, the Committee recommended that extensive, careful, and scientific investigation should be carried out in many localities and among all classes of people. It further recommended the continuation and extension of oral hygiene and reparative dentistry with experimental and clinical work on a large scale to determine the part played by mineral metabolism as influenced by dietary procedures in the incidence of dental decay. It was urged that administrative authorities in the various schools be pressed to consider seriously the adequacy of their curricula for preparing their students to give advice
regarding essential preventive measures.\(^1\)

Public Health Service And Administration

Communicable Disease Control.— Economic and humanitarian motives demand that every known effective means of disease control be fully utilized and that further studies to increase knowledge be expedited. In reporting the statistical data on communicable disease the Committee estimated 3,000,000 cases of diseases reported annually. These diseases, about half of which occur in children, cause about 15 per cent of the total deaths. To the number of deaths and the economic and social losses from cases, is added the permanent disabilities resulting from communicable diseases which may handicap the child through his entire life.

In summarizing the findings and needs of communicable disease control the Committee brought out the following facts:

1. There are many gaps in the knowledge concerning certain diseases, such as, the relative importance of the various factors contributing to the spread of disease, the specific causative agents, and other matters which, if known, would greatly simplify and focus efforts toward control.
2. The need for a more satisfactory determination of relative values of factors which control the spread of infection.
3. The necessity for well-equipped, full-time public health service for both rural and urban districts.

The committee recommended that provisions be made for the establishment of well-organized health departments; that the value and necessity of protection from disease be made a part of the pre-school and school health programs and be brought before the adult population; that encouragement be given to


the improvement of housing, work conditions and of recreational facilities; that adequate hospital and other facilities be provided for the care of patients with communicable disease.

Milk Production and Control.— The supervision of milk, cream and other dairy products is of vital public concern and economic importance and should receive the coordinated attention of all state and local agencies.

In order that the supervision of milk and milk products may become general, and in order to educate the people as to the importance of adequate milk consumption the Committee recommended that the federal government should prepare and institute a coordinated program of education and supervision, and that all states be urged to develop and put into operation a program coordinated with the federal program.

Education And Training

The Parent and Public Education.— Recognizing the family as the most important agency in the health and protection of the child the Committee on Family and Parent Education endeavored to bring to the Conference basic knowledge concerning the functions of this institution.

In order to meet the needs of different races, cultures, and changing economic and social conditions the Committee had as its guide the three functions of the family, namely, the care and training of the young, the nurturing of traditions, and the building-up of an adult life.

The Committee recommended further research on the social and economic factors affecting family life. The relationship of these factors to the

\[1\] Ibid., pp. 115-125.

family is worthy of the same careful consideration that has been given to the condition of production in relation to industry and commerce. The committee felt that family consultation centers should be established with a staff composed of specialist in home economics, housing social work, law, psychiatry, psychology and sociology. The purpose of these centers would be to give advice and information on the different problems on family life.

In considering all races and minority groups special attention was given to Italians, Mexicans, Negroes, and other groups, in order that their families might attain that economic security necessary for stable life.

In view of the responsibilities and obligations placed upon the family as the primary agency for child health and protection, this Committee strongly recommended that educational departments and organizations of the different states be requested to study the possibilities for organizing parent education as part of the system of public instruction, and that the professional groups and organizations concerned with children also be asked to study their opportunities and obligations for parent education.

The Infant and Preschool Child.-- In this report two main objectives were undertaken. The first was the study of the young child in institutions which carry on an educational training program, the second a study of the life of young children in the home.

The Committee expressed its conviction that the period of early childhood is of great importance in the development of the individual and in the preparation of the future citizen. It urged upon the entire conference the

most serious consideration of the needs and possibilities of a program for
the well-being and protection of the young child.

The School Child.-- The first principle in education and training for
a democratic society is that each individual child should develop to his
highest possible level of attainment. In keeping with this principle each
child must be considered as a whole.

The Committee on The School Child recommended that study and research
be applied to the following topics:

1. Professional training of teacher and administrative and supervisory personnel in the school health programs.
2. Professional training of physicians and others who participate in the health service programs.
3. The education "in service" of teachers and other participants in the school health program for improved qualifications for such work.
4. The migrant school child.
5. Administrative procedures for health work in the schools.
6. Budget provisions for school health work.
7. Problems of mental hygiene.¹

In order that the health of the whole child might be protected and pro-
moted, the Committee recommended that the home protect and promote the
health of the pre-school child so that he will enter his school life in
sound health, free from remediable defects.

That school building and surrounding be provided which meet recognized
standards in construction and equipment, and in their adequate maintenance
and operation.

That the school curriculum be built around the interests, needs, and abilities of the child with adequate provision for the mentally gifted and the handicapped.

¹Thomas Mood, "The School Child," White House Conference 1930, (New York, 1931) p. 188.
That every student teacher in training be required to pursue courses that will enable her to understand the child as a whole and to promote his physical, mental, emotional, and social growth.

Equalization of opportunity be sought in all schools for all school children so that they may achieve the best health of which they are capable.¹

Vocational Guidance and Child Labor.-- Experience shows that vocational guidance is desirable as an integral part of every school organization. It was the opinion of the committee that in every community the vocational guidance program should be conducted by a bureau or special department responsible to the superintendent of schools.

Inasmuch as many child workers are from the families of unskilled and other low-paid wage-earners, or from farm families among whom the struggle for existence is acute, and because the incomes for these families are for the most part below the income needed for any desirable standard of living, child labor is plainly, in a large measure, a question of poverty.

For reasons as these the Committee recommended that direct attention be given to the solution of such problems as adult unemployment, farm economics, and of adult incomes sufficient to ensure a decent standard of living for children.²

Recreation and Physical Education.-- It was the opinion of the Committee on Recreation and Physical Education that physical education should be placed in every school curriculum. The minimum of legislation is to require thirty minutes in the day for physical education; prescribe that the

¹Ibid., pp. 189-190.

program be suited to the individual, require a passing mark for promotion and graduation and allow credit for the physical education course.

The program should be based on individual needs and determined by a thorough examination. In adjusting the program to the needs of the individual, the classification of pupils was urged. Among factors to be considered are: physical strength, endurance, skill; health, organic and nutritive; social training needs; mental health needs; emotional training needs.

Special Classes.--It is sound policy to provide special treatment and training for all types of exceptional children. Through such training it is possible for the children of greatest capacity to make a larger contribution to the common welfare and for the majority of those with limited capacity to become self-supporting. The fundamental principle of special education is to "help the individual to help himself to the limit of his capacity."

The work of the Committee on Special Classes dealt with the public school education of all types of exceptional children. This term includes both the handicapped and the gifted, or children who deviate from the normal child to such an extent as to require special treatment or training.

The Committee recommended the organization of a National Council for Handicapped Children made up of representatives of the national organizations interested in such children. The purpose of the council was to promote aggressively measures for making effective the recommendations of the

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Committee of Special Classes of the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection.

Youth Outside of Home And School.-- It was estimated by the committee that 40 per cent of the life of most children and youth is spent outside the home. This time is spent in both organized and unorganized leisure activities, commercial activities, and employment. Therefore, these activities exert a lasting, as well as, an important influence on the child's life.

Studies on this phase of child development led the committee to urge homes, churches, schools, neighborhoods and civic units to use wider supportive methods for enriching and motivating the lives of children and youth.

The Handicapped

State and Local Organizations For The Handicapped.-- The state has a distinct responsibility to see that all its children are protected, given proper support, care, and education, and are provided with opportunity so that each may develop to his fullest capacity. In meeting this responsibility states are brought into relationship with the Federal Government on the one hand, and local governmental bodies and private child-caring agencies on the other. It is essential, therefore, that every state have a central authority through which these relationships may be maintained.

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One of the most important developments in the field of private child welfare activities is the interest in community organization and in coordination of effort in behalf of all handicapped children.

It was the opinion of this committee that group thinking and joint planning, based on the result of research concerning community needs, lead to concerted action for rousing public opinion to correct anti-social conditions; for improving standards of work; for securing more adequate funds for both public and private child welfare organizations; and for proper allocation of funds.

This Committee presented the following recommendations for consideration:

There should be in every state a welfare department with special responsibilities for children; and there should be available in every jurisdiction, well coordinated, the various services necessary for the protection and care of all handicapped children.

Child welfare organizations, public and private, should participate in promoting a unified plan of service to children, since all social effort is one purpose; each organization should have a flexible program to permit growth and adaptation to changing social needs.

Programs of child welfare can be made effective only by means of sufficient qualified personnel.

Physically and Mentally Handicapped. — The endeavors of the Committee on Physically and Mentally Handicapped are expressed in The Bill of Rights For The Handicapped Child.

The Handicapped Child Has A Right:

1 Ibid., pp. 278-290.
1. To as vigorous a body as human skill can give him.
2. To an education so adapted to his handicap that he can be economically independent and have the chance for the fullest of life which he is capable.
3. To be brought up and educated by those who understand the nature of the burden he has to bear and who consider it a privilege to help him bear it.
4. To grow up in a world which does not set him apart, which looks at him, not with scorn or pity or ridicule, but which welcomes him, exactly as it welcomes every child, which offers him identical privileges and identical responsibilities.
5. To a life on which his handicap casts no shadow, but which is full day by day with those things which make it worth while, with comradeship, love, work, play, laughter, and tears; a life in which those things bring continually increasing growth, richness, release of energies, joy in entertainment.¹

Socially Handicapped, Dependency and Neglect.— The recommendations of the White House Conferences on Dependent Children of 1909 and 1919 were accepted and reaffirmed by this Committee.

In addition to recommending the extension of principles and programs brought out by the two preceding Conferences, this Committee further recommended that serious thought and special effort be given to adapt child welfare services to the needs of the Negro, Mexican, Porto Rican, Indian children, and other children, where there are special problems of race, nationality, or mass migration.

The Socially Handicapped-Delinquency.— The Committee on Delinquency presented to the Conference noteworthy date on the responsibility of guardians in the prevention of delinquency. The guardians of the child have a duty to provide some such richness of wholesome ideas and interests as can answer his ideational needs. The duty is theirs to present in their own

lives such patterns of honesty, sincerity, and courage as will challenge
the child’s emulation.

In the presentation of data on the principles of treatment the
Committee expressed the opinion that treatment involves understanding of the
individual child and recognition of the fact that adults who surround him
weave into him the drives of their own lives, which in turn must be under-
stood.

The Committee recommended that in every community there must be an
agency equipped to deal with the child. The personnel of this agency must
have definite qualifications for the understanding and treatment of behavior
problems of children.

There must be state-wide services which can stimulate and develop local
understanding of juvenile delinquency and provision for dealing with it.

At the closing of the Conference nineteen points embodying the main
recommendations of the various committees were presented. These points in
final form represent the core of the conference findings. In documents of
the Children’s Charter they went on record as the aims toward which the
Conference hoped to lead public thought and action for the welfare of
children.

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1 Judge Fredrick Cabot, "The Socially Handicapped-Delinquency," White

2 Katherine Glover and Evelyn Dewey, Children of The New Day (New York,
CHAPTER V

CHILDREN IN A DEMOCRACY

The White House Conference on Children In A Democracy addressed itself to the interests of all the children of the Nation and to every aspect of child welfare. This interest was extended to home life, material security, education, health, and general preparation for the responsibilities of citizenship.

The general report upon which there was substantial agreement and which was adopted by the Conference stressed a number of topics. Among these were the following: The Child in The Family, Religion in The Lives of Children, Educational Services In The Community, Protection against Child Labor, and Children Under Special Disadvantages.

The Child In The Family

Families and Their Incomes.-- The basic economic problem of children is the economic problem of the Nation.

The conditions of the family's capacity to serve the child is an income sufficient to provide the essentials of food, clothing, shelter, and health, as well as, a home life that means for the child education, happiness and character building.


In order to enable families in all income groups, especially those at the lower level, to spend their incomes more effectively, the Conference recommended education in consumer purchasing and the encouragement of public and private agencies to improve the marketing of consumer goods.

Also that work programs, including both construction operations and the provision of services, should be adapted to meet the needs of the rural as well as the city population.

The income of many families has been made more adequate and secure by the development of various types of social insurance. The economic-security measures incorporated in the Social Security Act of 1935 have become an accepted part of the national life. Old Age benefit provisions have been transformed by amendments enacted in 1939 into a type of family insurance through old-age survivors benefits.

Most of these economic-security measures are already a part of the program of State and Federal governments and will become more effective as public opinion attains greater economic understanding and social insight.

Families In Need of Assistance.— There are many contributing factors to a changed economic situation in which many families and children are left without an assured livelihood. Some of these factors are, unemployment, disability, low wages, and other factors beyond the control of persons concerned. It is becoming the established American policy that these families be given adequate economic assistance. Such economic assistance has been referred to as general relief, public assistance, work programs, old-age assist-

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ance, aid to dependent children, and allotment of surplus commodities.

The Conference recognized that economic aid must be given from public funds to a considerable number of people; that local, state and federal governments should share the responsibility; and that new untried methods be introduced and earlier measures extended.

Religion In The Lives Of Children

The group contributing to this phase of the study of children in a democracy felt that the child, whether in the family, the school, the church, or leisure time activities, needs to have a personal appreciation of ethical values consistent with a developing philosophy of life.

The primary responsibility for the religious development of the child rests upon the parent. Here the foundations are laid for the moral standards that are designed to guide his conduct through life. In addition to the important role of the family, part of the responsibility for the religious development of the child is shared by the church and other social organizations that are connected with their guidance.

It was estimated by the Conference that approximately one-half of the children and youth in the United States receive no religious instruction outside of the home.

To this end, the Conference recommended:

That a critical and comprehensive study be made of the various experiences both of the churches and of the schools in dealing with the problem of religious education in relation to public education. The purpose of such a study would be to discover how these phases of education may best be provided for in a total program of education, without in any way violating the principle of the separation of church and state..."
Educational Services In The Community

Formal education is centered in the school and extended to other agencies, such as the library and the recreation center. Thus the library, the school, and the recreation center join in a comprehensive educational system.

It was the opinion of the Conference that educational programs whether they refer to class instruction, to recreation, or to reading, should be available equitably to all children. Since the primary responsibility of democracy is to establish and maintain a fair educational opportunity to which every American child is entitled, the Conference approached this equity as an essential part of the program of action.

It was recommended that the content of education should deal with the personal, social, and economic issues of the day; its methods should take account of scientific discoveries in child growth, child care, and the learning process. The management of the educational services should seek always to combine maximum efficiency with the requirements of individual initiative and freedom.

The traditional concern of American education with ethical values as well as mental and physical development should continue to be the fundamental obligation of the schools. It is desirable that the teaching and administrative staffs should maintain among themselves and in their attitudes toward children the processes and viewpoints characteristic of a democratic society. Such attitudes will thrive only in an atmosphere of freedom to teach and freedom to learn.

Within any community, state or region, opportunity for leisure time activities must be planned. Recreation for children in a democracy should reflect the values that are implicit in the democratic way of life. This
means among other things, a program that emerges from the life of the people; a leadership that responds to the vital needs and interests of children; a relationship with people in the community that involves them in responsible participation, both in planning and in management.

**Libraries.**— Whether for leisure, education, vocational advancement, research, or for dissemination of knowledge, the library is an indispensable public service. School libraries have become a cardinal feature of modern schools and in recent years many traveling and branch libraries in isolated areas have been developed.

The Conference recommended that states should encourage and assist in the extension and development of local public libraries and give financial aid for the maintenance of such services.

It further proposed that libraries should provide for special collections and personnel to serve children with provisions made for material and advisory service for parents on subjects relating to child care and training.

**Protection Against Child Labor**

As previously stated in chapter IV child labor was one of the great concerns of the White House Conference of 1930. The recommendations set forth were strengthened and extended by the 1940 Conference. Although there had been considerable progress made in this area, it was again recognized in this Conference that child labor still presented serious problems in spite of progress in its control under state and federal laws.

It was the opinion of 1940 Conference members that prevention of the exploitation of children and youth in premature and harmful labor should be

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1*ibid.*, pp. 32-42.
accompanied by educational training, open to all children. Such education recognizes the changing conditions of employment, and adaptations that are needed in all educational programs. The Conference proposed that such education should be adapted to the individual needs of pupils and should equip them with the knowledge, skills and habits that they will need in making adjustments to the industrial and social problems of the modern world.

Children Under Special Disadvantages

A true concern for all children must take into account that many of them exist under handicaps in competition with their fellows. To meet the needs of these children it is important to extend activities in housing, education, recreation, libraries, economic security, health and medical care and to adapt many of them to rural conditions.

Children whose handicaps are less tangible, arising from unhappy or disrupted family relationships or emotional and psychological disturbances, need to be discovered, studied, and treated according to their needs, within their own homes if possible. Until recent years, society had made little public provisions for social services to children that will reach them in their own homes before their difficulties have become serious or have led to grave consequences.

This Conference recognized that in a democracy, responsibility for the care of children centers in the family. Social services furnish the means by which society helps to meet the special needs of children whose well being cannot be fully assured by their families and by those community services

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1 Ibid., pp. 43-46.
that are intended for all children alike. The primary objective of child welfare service is to provide for every child who has some special need whatever assistance and guidance may be required.

Children In Minority Groups.— It is evident that children who come from families of minority groups often suffer several types of handicaps. This is true because such parents have less chance for employment and economic advancement; they experience a degree of social exclusion; and they receive an unequal share in public and private services, such as school, recreation, medical care, and welfare services.

Statistical findings of the Conference indicated the largest minority group and the greatest sufferers from discrimination to be Negroes, but also that minority status is experienced to a degree which varies from time to time by Indians, Mexicans, Jews, and some foreign born peoples.

The educational program for reducing inequalities of the minority groups will be of long duration. It will be based on the conviction, held by the Conference, that the denial of opportunity to any child, on the basis of race, color or creed is undemocratic and is dangerous to the welfare of all children.

This Conference proposed that an effort be made to obtain equality of opportunity for children in the places and institutions that have potentially the greatest influence upon children. The first of these is the family; parents have a particular obligation to protect and strengthen the natural tolerance of their children. Schools are second in position to foster tolerance and promote cooperation.

\[1\textit{Ibid.}, \text{pp. 62-67.}\]

\[2\textit{Ibid.}, \text{pp. 67-69.}\]
Children In Migrant Families. -- The obstacles confronting the child of the migrant family places him under special disadvantages.

Studies made of the problems of migrant families indicate that neither the legal nor the economic problem, nor those of health and schooling for the children, can be handled by the states alone, to which these migrants go. The benefits offered through labor organizations are seriously retarded by the handicaps of unsympathetic employers and local public opinion.

The problem of these families is national in scope. The Conference recommended that shelter, education for children, health supervision and medical care be made available locally wherever and whenever needed. A plan that will assure migrant families and their children essential minimum provisions for their well-being must place administrative and financial responsibilities where they belong, and must assure the availability of services and facilities wherever such families may need them. It was further recommended that the Federal Government accept responsibility for the development of an inclusive plan for the care of migrant families.

Conclusions of The Conference

The recommendations submitted to this Conference on Children In A Democracy are essential to the well-being of the children of America. It was the belief of this group that its proposals are well within the capacities of the American people and that the economic well-being of the country will be enhanced by them.

The White House Conference on Children In a Democracy held these to be the convictions of the American people:

1 Ibid., pp. 70-74.
That democracy can flourish only as citizens have faith in the integrity of their fellow man and capacity to cooperate with them in advancing the needs of personal and social living.

That such faith and such capacity can best be established in childhood and within the family circle. Here the child should find affection which gives self confidence, community of interests which induces cooperation, ethical values which influence conduct. Secure family life is the foundation of individual happiness and social well-being.

That even in infancy, and increasingly in the later years, the welfare of the child depends not alone upon the care provided within the family, but also upon the safeguards and services provided by the community, State, and Nation.¹

¹Ibid., pp. 84-85.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

The four White House Conferences which were concerned with the welfare of children have brought together the most accurate and complete body of knowledge in regard to children which any related conference has presented. They have periodically considered existing conditions, and pointed out the direction in which to proceed. The substance of the findings of these conferences were not all new, but the recommendations and opinions never had been co-ordinated before. Likewise, experts working in so many different directions have not before pooled their findings in the making of a picture of the child as a whole. They represent, therefore, the accomplishments and conclusions of normal times, and are the more valuable to guide the efforts which will be more and more essential to the field of Child Welfare.

Progress has always taken place first by the gathering of facts. After the process of gathering facts has gone on for a certain period then with the aid of progressive thinkers these facts fall into molds which later become laws.

Each conference held was composed of specialist in various fields which the welfare of the child is an intricate part. Each conference has made a distinct contribution to the field of Child Welfare, through an assimilation of facts, in making its program as extensive and inclusive as it is today.

Perhaps the most extended progress has been the public program of child care. The Children's Bureau, established in United States Department of Labor after the first Conference of 1909, has consistently exercised leadership, particularly in exploring the most urgent needs of children.
As this Conference was gravely concerned with the home care for the dependent child, efforts were directed toward provisions of care. As the first widow's pension law was written in 1911 it accepted the principles of the 1909 White House Conference. With the passage of the Social Security Act these provisions have been changed to Aid To Dependent Children. The Act committed the Federal Government to participate in the well-being of children in need, and placed upon the Bureau the obligation of promoting public child welfare services in all the states.

The second Conference of 1919 directed its attention toward the advancements of minimum standards of child welfare. Included in such standards were those relating to children entering employment, protection of the health of children and mothers, and protection of children in need of special care. These standards reaffirmed the conclusions of the 1909 Conference.

The third Conference on "Child Health and Protection," was also organized by the Children's Bureau in 1930. The emphasis swung from dependent and handicapped children, although they were included, to all children, wherever they lived and whatever their situation. In fulfilling the purpose of the Conference which was to find out what was being done for children, what should be done and how to do it; various committee reports brought forth new principles and theories on protective care for children. This contribution to the field of Child Welfare has brought about a recognition of the importance of caring for the pre-natal child through medical provisions for the mother. Recommendations were broad enough to include all phases of child life that may be injurious to the health and well-being of the child. So far reaching were the principles enunciated by this Conference that they were embodied in the note-worthy document known as the Children's Charter.
The fourth White House Conference on "Children in a Democracy" addressed itself to the interest of all the children of the nation, and in every aspect of child welfare. This interest was extended to home life, material security, education, health, and general preparation for the responsibilities of citizenship.

In keeping with the theme of the Conference, "Our Concern, Every Child," efforts were extended to include the special problems of minority groups and those children under special handicaps.

In addition to study and discussion before and during the Conference, steps were taken to carry out the findings presented. Accordingly, a non-governmental Nation Citizen's Committee was formed to carry out the responsibility for follow-up activities, and a Federal Inter-Agency Committee to coordinate the work of Federal departments whose work touched on matters affecting children.

Definite progress has been made toward the welfare of children through contributions of these Conferences. More intelligent and more adequate ways of helping children, both in the public and private fields have been introduced.

In keeping with the advancements set forth by the White House Conference, authorities in the field of child welfare must continue to investigate conditions and report their findings. Through such fact-finding processes those agencies serving children can remain aware of what is being done and what is needed for improvement. There must be careful evaluation of the services rendered with respect to their relative place in the whole child welfare field.
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