

ROCHESTER HISTORY

Edited by BLAKE McKELVEY, *City Historian*

VOL. XX

OCTOBER, 1958

No. 4

A History of Social Welfare in Rochester

By BLAKE McKELVEY

Rochester has received high praise in recent decades for the generosity and professional standing of its welfare programs. Statistical analysts have placed it near if not always at the top among comparable cities in percentage of donors and in the per capita value of their contributions. Indeed the drives of the Community Chest have so frequently surpassed their goals that the town has earned a reputation for opulence. It is more difficult to measure and evaluate the work sustained by such outlays, but here, too, the merits of local agencies have often attracted outside plaudits. Yet the situation has not always been so happy, either in comparison with the accomplishments of some other cities or in relation to the community's needs. And of course it is on this latter basis that final judgment rests.

Rochester's response to its welfare problems has had a long and varied history. Charitable residents endeavored, even in the youthful Flour City, to alleviate the pangs of the sick poor, the misfortunes of homeless orphans and the miseries of destitute widows. In the turbulent decades following the Civil War, Rochester developed hospitals to shelter the sick, industrial schools to instruct street waifs, homes to succour misguided maidens, and other functional institutions. The severe depressions of the mid-seventies and mid-nineties posed critical issues and created a desire for central leadership and coordinated action. Rochester in 1873 devised one of America's first Benevolent Associations which sent volunteer visitors into needy homes during

ROCHESTER HISTORY, published quarterly by the Rochester Public Library, distributed free at the Library, by mail 25 cents per year. Address correspondence to the City Historian, Rochester Public Library, 115 South Avenue, Rochester 4, N.Y.

the next few years. After a lapse in the eighties, when disharmonies separated religious and ethnic groups, the city made a new move toward integration with the formation of the Society for the Organization of Charity in 1890. However, the onset of the depression three years later prompted that body to assume urgent relief tasks to the neglect of its major function. Fortunately, other bodies supplied leadership, and Rochester soon had its Children's Aid Society, its rescue missions, three thriving Y's and its first health association.

Inspired religious leaders and women's groups led the attack on new urban problems. Foremost among their accomplishments were the institutional churches, the Women's Educational and Industrial Union, the People's Sunday Evening, the first local settlement houses and other agencies devoted to "the common good" which became the name of an earnest monthly bulletin (1910-14). The depression of the nineties was soon forgotten, yet the lesser crises of 1905 and 1908 were severe enough to spur a new cooperative effort which resulted in the organization of United Charities in 1910. It established a confidential Exchange and placed increased emphasis on the elaboration of humane treatment designed to encourage self-help and rehabilitation.

We have studied these developments at greater length in an earlier issue of *Rochester History*. They were, in large part, locally inspired and directed, but the further progress of the city's welfare programs displayed a closer relation to outside trends. A new conception of social work, characterized by professional rather than sentimental standards, was taking hold among the lay directors as well as the paid personnel of agencies throughout the country. A succession of world-shaking events — wars and new scientific insights as well as the great depression — helped to make welfare problems nation wide. No alert community could afford to plod its own course independently.

A Period of Self-Appraisal

The turning point for Rochester came with the publication in 1915 of a critical evaluation of the city's relief measures by the New York Bureau of Municipal Research. Still less-favorable findings of that survey, which George Eastman had financed, prompted his decision to establish a similar bureau in Rochester. One of its first tasks was a restudy in great detail of the Department of Charities. The Bureau brought Francis H. McLean, general secretary of the American Asso-

ciation of Societies for the Organization of Charities, from New York to conduct its survey. A staunch proponent of careful investigation in each case, and individual treatment, he found the Rochester procedure totally deficient in these respects. He criticized the institutional segregation of unwed mothers and the haphazard placement of children. He deplored the failure of the public agencies to make use of the Confidential Exchange maintained by United Charities or to join the private bodies in other cooperative efforts.

The United Charities gave an implied endorsement of these findings by inviting the Bureau to sponsor a similar survey of its own procedures. Again McLean found much to criticize. The case investigations conducted by the family welfare department of United Charities were, he declared, broad in scope and properly directed towards rehabilitation, but the treatment plans did not seem either well conceived or effective. Moreover, U. C.'s efforts to rally community support had not produced sufficient results, and its Confidential Exchange was not fully used even by the private agencies. He urged a clearer division of functions and authority. Thus he proposed that U. C. give responsibility for pressing cases of improper guardianship to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children or some other appropriate body. He recommended that U. C. confer independent status on its family welfare department, which might be called a Social Welfare League, and devote its own energies to the creation of a truly effective central council. Such a council, by enlisting the cooperation of all agencies and sects, would, he declared, supply leadership in the application of his survey recommendations and other fresh ideas; it could determine community policy in regard to illegitimacy, church extension, and such urgent matters as the use of psychiatric services.

Rochester was not ready to adopt all of McLean's recommendations, but several of them proved effective. The commissioner of charities determined, after a first-hand study of procedures in neighboring cities, to engage a trained investigator and make an experimental approach to individual treatment. As director of the new work he chose Miss Elsie V. Jones, an experienced leader in the field whose appointment elicited praise. The city soon added four more case workers. Meanwhile, U. C. incorporated one of its service departments as the Legal Aid Society and cooperated with the Social Workers Club in founding the Public Health Nursing Association. Having thus disposed of two earlier func-

tions, U. C. changed its name to the Social Welfare League of Rochester, and abandoned all pretense of providing a central council. In this more limited capacity the League intensified its services. It proceeded to open two district offices, as McLean had proposed; it assigned one staff member to work with unmarried mothers and made a tentative beginning at giving psychological and mental tests to problem children.

* * * * *

Urgent social need and local leadership joined with outside inspiration in the formation of the Community Chest. Rochester did not stand alone or even at the forefront in the country's generous response to appeals for war relief. Several other cities had established war chests to conduct unified drives in support of the war agencies before George Eastman and Harper Sibley took the initiative early in 1918 in a movement that led to the creation of the Rochester Patriotic and Community Fund. Yet the thirteen men who attended the third meeting on March 29, at which the charter was adopted, made a fundamental advance when they decided to invite all worthy local charities to abandon separate drives and join the war agencies in one united campaign. This first combination of city welfare appeals with those of national and war-relief bodies soon attracted imitation elsewhere.

Meanwhile some Rochester leaders made a careful study of the campaign techniques of earlier war chest drives in Cleveland and Detroit. Others debated standards of admission and rules for use in determining agency budgets. April and May were busy months for the members of the budget and executive committees which met for an hour or more almost every day. They approved the requests of 34 local bodies but held those of four others for later study; by rejecting the application of Mechanics Institute, they finally determined that the Chest should limit itself to a social-welfare campaign and not undertake to encompass all worthy causes. Pulsating with the enthusiasm engendered by the war, Rochester carried the first drive well over the top as 103,000 pledges totalled \$4,776,193, nine-tenths of which went to war relief.

Other cities rivalled that outpouring of patriotic dollars, but Rochester gained a new sense of accomplishment when, a year later, it undertook a second drive now chiefly for local agencies and successfully topped the \$1,250,000 goal. George Eastman had accepted presidency of the Chest, and his generous gift of \$150,000 launched the week-

long drive, but it was the hard work of numerous committee members, team captains and individual canvassers who gathered over 61,000 pledges that brought success to this and to the next half-dozen drives. Only in 1923 and 1926, when the pressure of new agencies for a share in the proceeds had pushed the goals to new heights, did the totals fall short of the mark. Large donors, although listed in the press, fell off slightly, but the number of contributors increased each year until 1927 when they again reached 100,000 — the marvel and envy of all chest executives elsewhere.

Under the leadership of George Eastman, the Chest achieved an efficient organization. Its corporate membership was slowly expanded to enroll most of the city's business leaders and such other citizens as Rush Rhees, president of the University of Rochester and Bishop Thomas F. Hickey of the Catholic Diocese. The appointment of Harry P. Wareham as executive director in 1920 assured a stable administration. Most of those chosen to serve three-year terms on the budget or executive committees attended the many sessions these assignments involved, and the example of faithfulness set by Eastman and Rhees among others created a fine morale. But the steady pressure of new institutional applicants for assistance not only pushed the participating members up to 55 by 1925 but also spurred a search for suitable methods of judging and supervising these varied agencies.

The first attempt to assume this function came in 1922 with the appointment of Oscar W. Kuolt as service secretary. His work with agency executives soon revealed opportunities for greater cooperation and for improvements in performance. Meanwhile, the city's mounting social needs, even in good times, created a constant pressure for larger outlays. The Chest engaged the Bureau of Municipal Research to make a study of these trends and undertook itself to introduce a uniform budgetary system.

No statistical survey could determine whether Rochester was extravagant in its welfare outlays, yet evidence of duplication pointed up the lack of a central council to promote constructive cooperation. Both the Catholics in 1917 and the Jews in 1924 had established welfare bodies, but further integration with the general service institutions awaited the formation of a top-level body. Many agency executives desired an opportunity to compare their facilities and techniques with those of other institutions and to gain mutual support for new services. They

also felt a need for a clearer definition of the purpose and scope of welfare agencies. Fortunately the community councils of a dozen other cities offered a suitable pattern.

Two special problems helped to precipitate action. The four private hospitals, faced with the prospect of an early completion of both a new municipal hospital and a university hospital, had urgently sought larger support. When the United Hospital Fund drive in 1923 surged 50 per cent above its goal, a move to grant the community a larger voice in their future development seemed to promise continued backing. Three of them undertook, with Kuolt's assistance, a Dispensary Functional Survey which enlisted the cooperation of the department of charities.

Meanwhile an outbreak of petty crimes among youth groups had prompted the formation of the Rochester Juvenile Survey Committee. This body, which combined the energies of several organizations, engaged Henry W. Thurston of the New York School of Social Work to study the problem. After an intensive investigation of the life histories of a sampling of 64 lads who had recently appeared before the Children's Court, the survey concluded that practically all had suffered from such a disjointed succession of treatment plans at the hands of agencies, which had neglected to report or to check earlier reports, that the considerable sums spent in their behalf had been wasted. The impact of the indictment, arising from the blighted lives of numerous city youths, spurred action.

While Thurston proposed only a Child Welfare Council, the simultaneous concern of the hospitals helped to give it a broader character. Such a body also promised an opportunity for cooperation between the public and the private welfare officials. The city's experiment with case investigators had received a setback when staff disharmonies resulted in the resignation of Elsie Jones and the dismissal of her associates early in 1922; moreover the task of reviving individual treatment was proving difficult. Meanwhile the Board of Education was pressing forward with a visiting-nurse and visiting-teacher program which attracted wide praise as a demonstration of the part public schools could play in constructive social work. This activity, usually supported in other cities by private backers, had produced a group of experienced visitors whose Big Sister Council and Big Brother work had greatly benefited numerous poor children. It had created the Theodora House for pre-delinquent girls which was now eager to join in the formation of a

central council. Thirty-four agencies hastened to send delegates to the first organization meeting on October 30, 1924.

Progress in Integration

The organization of the Council of Social Agencies in December ushered in an era of progressive integration. Although their problems were legion, Isaac Adler, who served as president during the first three years, and Oscar Kuolt as general secretary took full advantage of the cooperative spirit, which animated their lay and professional colleagues, to quicken the morale and raise new standards among the numerous workers of the institutions they represented. The Council hastened to divide the 49 social agencies which joined its fold into four functional groups. It authorized the appointment of an assistant secretary to work with the Children's and Family Divisions, and another for the Health Division, but postponed the organization of the Character Building Division until the others could be successfully launched. The Council worked out a division of responsibility between the city and the private agencies whereby the former took care of chronic and long-term cases, while the latter supplied chiefly temporary needs and specialized in rehabilitative efforts. It created a climate of opinion which induced the municipal authorities to reexamine their child-placement procedures and prepared the way for closer cooperation under the new city-manager charter.

The Council soon encountered the old problem of prescribing standards for admission to its membership. The university's Strong Memorial Hospital was quickly voted in, but the application of the Men's Social Department of the Salvation Army was tabled until it should organize a local advisory committee. Two original members early suspended operations and withdrew; others, such as the Rochester Girls Home and the Infant's Summer Hospital, revised their functions with the aid of the Council's staff. Kuolt and his associates took full management of the Confidential Exchange which they renamed the Central Index and promoted as a major instrument for cooperative service. When Kuolt recommended legislative efforts to establish a domestic relations court in Rochester, the Council named a committee to study that procedure in other cities. Three months later, as the number of pleas for political action increased, the Council created a permanent advisory committee on legislation and subscribed to a legislative information service.

An early request from the Chest for an evaluation of the work of a member agency presented a ticklish situation. The Council determined to forswear such investigations and to devote its energies instead to the development of cooperative services among its members and to the professional improvement of their staffs. It resolutely avoided any competition with its constituent bodies. Thus, when its committee on mental hygiene discovered that the City Health Officer was preparing to establish a clinic in that field, the Council quickly suspended its own efforts there. It granted the time of a staff member to aid in a demonstration of temporary foster-home care but directed that no such time be devoted to casework or case supervision — the proper province of the agencies.

If the Council would not itself undertake to appraise its member's activities, it did not hesitate to propose such investigations by competent outsiders. An early example occurred in 1927 when the newly-formed Character Building Division, desiring a comprehensive view of the field, initiated a survey of the city's recreational facilities. The Bureau of Municipal Research agreed to undertake the project and brought Charles B. Raitt from Los Angeles to direct the work. Raitt, an expert in the field, so impressed local recreational enthusiasts that they promoted and secured his appointment as director of parks under the new city-manager government. Unfortunately, a fatal accident at the beach shortly after he took charge enabled a political faction to force his dismissal just as the lengthy and excellent report on the city's recreational facilities was ready for release. The Council, hoping to avoid unnecessary conflict, held up the report, but the controversy continued, ending only with the tragic death of Raitt, heartbroken over the collapse of his career. By the time of the report's release in 1930, many opportunities for action in that field had passed.

Yet it was fortunate that the Council had safeguarded its relationship with the civic authorities, for both were facing an economic emergency that would demand their fullest cooperation. While the unemployment crisis was brewing in the late twenties, the Council and the Chest had an opportunity to determine policy on several pressing matters. The Chest, besieged by numerous requests from member agencies for permission to conduct capital-fund drives, formulated a list of rules in 1927 to govern such campaigns and the building operations that should follow. It gave clearance to a \$1,000,000 drive for a new

J.Y.M.A. building, and to the Boy Scouts for a lesser sum to establish a summer camp, but it deferred a similar request from Highland Hospital until the needs of the several hospitals could be coordinated.

The initiative for an expansion of services or an innovation in program continued to come from member agencies or from new citizen groups. Thus the Y.M.C.A. determined early in 1927 to establish a branch in the old Third Ward to serve Negro men and boys, matching a provision by the Y.W.C.A. for women and girls in that area three years before. The Presbyterians dedicated their home for old folks on Thurston Road later in 1927, and the Rochester Association for the Blind opened its White Memorial building on Monroe Avenue the next February. A number of forthright citizens gathered that same month to form a local Birth Control Committee. The Council generally avoided the frequent requests for an endorsement of new ventures, but it did take action to encourage volunteer participation in its member agencies by creating a Department of Volunteers in 1928 with Mrs. William J. Baker as chairman. It also endeavored to spur the university's search for an instructor able to conduct graduate courses in social work.

The need for an enlightened approach to social welfare became acutely apparent as a result of a controversy over child care. A routine investigation by the State Board of Charities in the summer of 1926 had resulted in a number of sharp criticisms in its annual report the next January. The Board accused the Rochester Children's Aid Society, which handled the placement of over 500 children each year for the city and county, of poor management and an improper placement of its wards in cheap boarding houses. When the county cancelled its contract with the Aid Society, the latter protested that the only reason for its failure to place the children in private homes, as originally planned, was the refusal of the county to grant sufficient funds for a proper investigation of the numerous homes this required. The society hastened to appoint two trained investigators, but the county judges, after consulting officials of the Child Welfare League of America, named a Board of Child Welfare to supervise the placement of county wards. The child-caring institutions in the Council, becoming suspicious of that body because of its failure to use or contribute records to the Central Index, made several unsuccessful efforts to reestablish private-agency supervision over child placement. The S.P.C.C., which had

created the Children's Aid Society in 1895, reabsorbed that body and assumed the placement of children intrusted to its care; the Board of Child Welfare, retained supervision over widow's allowances, and Kuolt concluded, after repeated conferences, that the best hope for improvement was through the slow education of the responsible officials. As a first step he scheduled a Child Welfare Institute in December 1929, but by that date the economic crisis had obscured all others.

The growth of unemployment had long since commanded major attention in Rochester. A startling increase in the number of relief applicants in 1928 had boosted the city's welfare costs nearly 30 per cent. The family-caring agencies had felt the burden early that February before the public officials began to take over. Both were uncertain as to whether the unemployed should be regarded as temporary or chronic cases, private or public charges. The number of applicants continued to mount, and by February 1929 the resources of the private agencies were again under strain. Kuolt, in reporting the situation to the Council, followed President Hoover in blaming the drop in employment on the too rapid introduction of new machinery. Whatever the cause, the board determined to call a conference of all bodies concerned with the problem and prepared a list of 23 groups as a starter.

Social Welfare in the Depression

Despite the 1928 warning signals, the city's welfare agencies, like others throughout the country, were as unprepared as the civic and business leaders for a major depression. Rochester reacted more quickly than most cities partly because its industrial specialization made it somewhat more vulnerable to mass layoffs than were the commercial centers. The vigor of its response displayed a self-confidence that helped to ease the blow for many residents and placed Rochester in the forefront of the attack on unemployment. When the task proved too vast for local solution, the city, somewhat crippled by its early exertions, welcomed state and federal assistance. The broader support came none too soon, for the economic earthquake had shattered the security of many families and created unprecedented housing and delinquency problems.

Rochester's early confidence was amply demonstrated both by the Chest and the Bureau of Charities. The former, despite the fact that it did not quite meet its announced goals in 1928 and '29, had the cour-

age to boost them in the next two years. The disappointing returns in May 1930, when the pledges fell some \$125,000 short of the mark (\$1,623,435), were not disheartening, and the leaders rallied to stage the first emergency relief drive of any chest in the country that December. Their efforts finally made up the year's deficiency, saving most of the welfare agencies from the necessity of reducing their services in a time of acute need. Meanwhile the city, now under the administration of a city manager, saved the day for many unemployed, when, in December 1929, it transferred the unencumbered balance in several bureaus to the relief fund which sustained an outlay of \$690,000 that year.

The publication of several pleas for economy touched off a mass meeting of the unemployed at Washington Square on March 5, 1930. A handful of Communists captured the headlines on this occasion, spurring a group of alert ministers to call a conference on unemployment two days later. That gathering, originally proposed by the Council of Social Agencies, included several of its own leaders and representatives of the Federation of Churches, the Chamber of Commerce, the Bureau of Municipal Research, the Central Trades Council and several major firms. From it came the Rochester Civic Committee on Unemployment with Henry H. Stebbins as chairman. Former Congressman Meyer Jacobstein accepted charge of a sub-committee on temporary employment; Earl Weller of another charged with measuring the number seeking jobs. These and six other sub-committees tackled various aspects of the problem. One, by an investigation of the excessive charges by private employment agencies, spurred the city and then the state to establish a free central employment office in Rochester. Another encouraged the city to inaugurate a work-relief program, for which the council voted to borrow \$250,000 in December 1930. While work was commencing on nineteen hastily approved projects, another committee was lining up fourteen Rochester firms, headed by Eastman Kodak, for a simultaneous announcement of their adoption of a scheme for unemployment insurance.

That announcement and other aspects of the Civic Committee's work attracted wide interest, but unfortunately the situation in Rochester was becoming increasingly grave as each passing month exhausted the reserves of several more firms and swelled the ranks of the idle. In an attempt to discourage the opening of soup kitchens and bread

lines, where relief applicants would feel conspicuous and be demoralized, the Council of Social Agencies backed an effort of Father Walter A. Foery, its vice-president, in establishing a central office to distribute such supplies to accredited families. The task of maintaining traditional welfare standards, including an interview and a careful appraisal of the individual's need, proved difficult in face of the emergency. Yet the Council negotiated an agreement between its family-caring agencies and the welfare bureau whereby the former supplied the services of their trained investigators to assist the latter in sorting the flood of applicants for public relief. The Council gave its approval that April to a move by the Family Welfare Society to organize a committee to study the housing problem as it affected relief clients in the city. A few months later it welcomed to its expanding fold the newly organized Industrial Workshop for the handicapped.

When in April 1932 the strain on private budgets seemed to have reached the limit, the Chest reluctantly voted to reduce its goal to a more realistic figure. However, protests from the hospitals prompted the directors to restore most of the cut and to press hard for ample subscriptions. Perhaps the death of George Eastman had something to do with the drive's failure for, despite a gift of \$100,000 in his will, the total fell 18 per cent below its mark. This time the Chest refused to undertake a supplemental drive, and the agencies had to pare their services. When the Bureau of Municipal Research made a comparative survey of Rochester's relief outlays, as compared with those of Dayton, Cincinnati and Cleveland, the results proved so startling that doubts arose concerning the survey's accuracy. The Bureau, with the Council's assistance, made a recheck which showed that Rochester had in fact expended larger sums on relief per resident than any city studied. The heated discussion which followed emphasized the need for some other cure for the depression.

The suspicion that some outdoor relief orders for food were being short changed or misapplied by greedy merchants prompted the city to establish a center for homeless men where such derelicts could be sheltered and fed at 9½ cents a meal. MacSweeney's Hotel, as it came to be known, soon had a varying clientele of between 2000 and 2200 men. Many in the Council deplored the lack of an interview and of other social-work techniques, but Rochester at least supplied its homeless men

with a cot, a blanket and a simple meal, which helped to account for the absence of any well recognized Hooverville in the city's vicinity.

It was not so easy to determine where relief outlays should or could be cut. The Civic Committee on Unemployment had made an earnest search for substitutes. One sub-committee, promoting a revival of subsistence gardens, enrolled 1896 families in the program in 1932 and trebled their number in the next three years. Another sub-committee headed by Libanus M. Todd conducted a highly publicized drive in November 1931, with team captains and all, and rounded up pledges by 10,000 citizens to spend in excess of \$6,000,000 within a year for unanticipated work projects. A recheck of this novel drive six months later showed that over half had already redeemed their pledges.

Still the applicants for relief and for the city's work-relief jobs continued to mount. Fortunately the state had commenced, late in 1931, to grant matching funds for relief work projects, and Rochester was one of the first to get assistance of this sort, \$43,000 on November 19. There were of course protests, demanding state economy, but the Rochester corporation counsel drafted a bill calling for a state appropriation of \$100,000,000 to extend loans to cities for relief work. That bill failed, but others passed, and the city received over a third of a million dollars within the next six months.

This is not the place to discuss the successive work-relief measures of the state and federal governments. Yet it should be noted that, because of the alert and generally efficient character of the local administration, Rochester got its full share of TERA funds from the state and successively of C.W.A., C.C.C., W.P.A., N.Y.A. and P.W.A. funds from the federal government. Not only did their varied work-relief projects give jobs to several thousand Rochesterians at a time and lift a great burden from the local welfare budgets, but they also supplied funds for the revival of some earlier social programs. Thus some of the staff workers, dropped when the Chest failed to meet its goals, secured positions with the New Deal services or at tasks sponsored by local groups with the backing of federal funds. The recreation and character-building agencies found the state and federal authorities ready to assume the costs of numerous projects, some of a cultural nature, for both youths and adults. The child-caring and family societies also discovered opportunities to initiate activities under New Deal budgets that gave employment to their trained workers.

These were but incidental advantages from the vast expansion of social welfare programs under the New Deal. The Civil Works Administration, which expended over \$3,506,000 in Rochester during the first nineteen weeks of 1934, gave jobs to musicians as well as ditch diggers. The Civilian Conservation Corps enrolled 767 from Monroe County that spring and a year later increased the quota to 900, giving many of these Rochester lads a taste of life in the Rockies and other distant forest areas. The National Recovery Administration, in the conception of which Meyer Jacobstein of Rochester played a significant role, created new social bonds among the workers and the managers of various industries and aroused such a hopeful response throughout the community that it found vent in a great morale-building parade, with over 65,000 marchers and an estimated 175,000 cheering onlookers, on September 27, 1933.

Much of the enthusiasm engendered in the early surge of the New Deal evaporated within a few years, but its many schemes left significant contributions. The old-age security program, passed at Albany in 1930, enrolled 1400 in Rochester by that December and steadily expanded its coverage during succeeding years. The National Youth Administration spurred the development of a New Era Health, Education and Recreation Program at Rochester in 1933 which drew many teenagers into constructive activities that contributed in many ways to their growth. The Home Owners Loan Corporation took up the work started in that field by the Rochester Chamber of Commerce and extended its financial assistance to several thousand local home owners within a year. Even the hospitals, which at first felt neglected by the recovery measures, were by the mid-thirties eagerly discussing a new hospital insurance plan which would greatly transform their fiscal situation.

The emergency prompted the establishment of a central intake office to coordinate the services of the private agencies, public city and county welfare bureaus, and state and federal relief-work programs. Although this venture proved unsuccessful in 1933 and had to be abandoned, the inter-relationships were numerous and significant. Local public welfare bureaus faced rapidly mounting expenditures during the early thirties, but fortunately state and federal funds helped to relieve the fiscal burden. Together these public outlays soared far above those of the private agencies. While this trend destroyed their earlier relationship,

as approximately equal partners in the service of the public, it placed a new pressure on the private agencies to assume the role of an advance guard, ever ready to explore and try out new welfare theories and techniques.

Reevaluation and Readjustment

In the late thirties, when the state and federal authorities had assumed the major burden for unemployment, the local welfare agencies had a chance to reappraise their work. The challenge of the depression had created a new atmosphere and engendered a new spirit in welfare workers throughout the land. New York had maintained the leadership it achieved with the passage of the Public Welfare Law of 1929 which had stressed the maintenance of normal family life. Rochester had been one of the first cities to take advantage of its provisions for work relief. Its old Department of Charities, which became the Bureau of Public Welfare in 1930 and achieved departmental status two years later, had adopted many of the procedures of the private agencies with which it worked closely during the early thirties; its leaders began at the mid-decade to take a more active part in the deliberations of the Council of Social Agencies. Both shared the zeal for new and progressive approaches displayed by the legislators and administrators at Albany where the State Department of Public Welfare was reorganized between 1936 and 1941 into one devoted to social welfare.

* * * * *

While most of the relief funds now came through state channels from the federal government, the local agencies resumed the initiative in the search for fresh ideas. The Council of Social Agencies, having survived, under the able presidency of Marion B. Folsom, the drastic cuts in staff and budget during the early thirties, decided to streamline its structure and to create a Central Planning Committee composed of representatives of each of the functional divisions plus an earlier research committee. The Council determined to limit its member agencies to those managed by a board of directors and staffed by paid workers whose services met professional standards. It granted representation to the public welfare departments — city, county and state — and to the three major religious bodies, and it welcomed the affiliation of other appropriate bodies through the department of Volunteers. In this re-

organization, finally perfected in 1939, it limited the size of the divisional committees and made them elective by the Delegate Assembly, which supplanted the old central council; it created a new group of functional sections to bring together representatives of the agencies.

Some of the leaders who approved these moves for increased efficiency were more excited by a counter move towards democratic self expression. A disciple of the community-coordinating councils developed on the West Coast had visited Rochester in 1936 and inspired an effort to establish one in the city. The Council of Social Agencies participated in the formation of a committee to study the plan which seemed especially attractive because of the promise it offered of encouraging local neighborhoods to assume the initiative in their own social rehabilitation. However, an effort to apply the scheme in nearby Syracuse did not impress those who visited there, and after a year's deliberation the active leaders recommended, instead, that a Department of Neighborhood Organizations be created within the Council of Social Agencies. Even that move was deferred by the need to give attention to a series of surveys undertaken by the Community Chest.

The great increase in the volume of public welfare as contrasted with that of the private agencies, which reached a proportion of nine to one by 1935, had induced Chest leaders to undertake a reappraisal of their activity. They desired not only reassurance concerning the need for private social agencies in general but also specific evidence of the merits or defects of the particular agencies they supported. The board of directors accordingly appointed a survey committee, which brought a succession of experts to Rochester to study the problems and the operations of practically all of its affiliated bodies.

The seven probing investigations, commencing in 1937 and continuing through the next four years, supplied a thorough overhauling of social work in Rochester. Their reports, each running to over a hundred closely-typed pages, did not pull punches, nor were they quietly put on the shelf. Indeed the appearance in June 1937 of the first one, by Paul T. Beisser on "Child-Caring Services in Rochester," stirred immediate controversy. His proposal, that the child-placement function be taken from the SPCC and restored to the County Welfare Department, revived the heated discussions of a previous decade over the same issue. One reason, that the state would reimburse the county but not a private agency, did not seem weighty to all. The Central

Planning Committee, asked to evaluate the survey's findings, recommended that action be deferred on that matter until the SPCC had an opportunity to finish its study of mental hygiene programs.

The Central Planning Committee under the chairmanship of Vilas M. Swan, who succeeded Folsom as President of the Council in 1937, did a herculean job in reviewing the recommendations of that and the four subsequent reports referred to it. Special sub-committees studied each proposal at the start. Some of them met repeatedly with the agencies involved in an effort to work out practical arrangements to implement suggested reforms. A few of the proposals encountered strenuous opposition, and some appeared impracticable, even undesirable, to the committees. The Central Planning Division, as the committee was now called, eventually became so overburdened with this work that the Chest in 1941 engaged C. M. Bookman of the Cincinnati Community Chest to make a restudy of Rochester's seven surveys, integrating their proposals from the standpoint of desirable community organization.

The six surveys referred to Central Planning had made a total of 392 recommendations, and Kuolt was able to report, in October 1942, that 202 of these had already been put into effect. Some of the rest were still under study, although the pressure of wartime activities was now hampering progress. Among the more significant changes proposed was a reemphasis on the care of children within the family rather than a hasty removal to new situations. The practice of the SPCC had attracted criticism on this point, both in the Beisser report and in that of Gordon Hamilton on "A Survey of the Family Agencies and Related Services." Rochester, too quick to remove a child from a sub-standard home, was also, according to Mary C. Jarrett's "Report on the Care of the Aged," prone to send its aged to institutions. Fortunately two agencies were already expanding their visiting-nurse and housekeeping services, and new boarding homes were appearing though the Council of Social Agencies was reluctant to undertake the responsibility of making an accredited list of them.

Arthur L. Swift's "Survey of Character Building Agencies in Rochester" praised the city's commitment to the principle that recreation was a public function but deplored the decline of the city's original inspiration in this field. His proposal that a recreation council be formed had spurred the organization of a Youth Council,

which did not, however meet the need, and a new move for a high-level council occurred in 1937. He emphasized the value of private-agency leadership, especially in depressed areas where their group-work programs could often attract children unresponsive to the public recreational opportunities, but he repeated that the major responsibility was a public one and one that the city had not adequately performed. In similar fashion the two reports by William G. Smilie, on the "Health Agencies" and the "Facilities for the Care of the Sick," recommended a more rapid adoption by the public health authorities of some of the private-agency techniques, such as special clinics, and the development of more low-cost hospitalization and improved health education.

In the midst of this flood of recommendations from outside experts, the Rochester Council of Social Agencies found time to consider several troublesome local problems that vitally concerned an increasing number of its affiliates. Of course neither of the two major problems—juvenile delinquency and poor housing—was peculiar to Rochester, and yet the recognition of their local aspects and the decision to do something about them encountered embarrassing difficulties. The opposition commenced shortly after a Committee on Youth Problems began a survey of the city's problem children in the spring of 1937. A simultaneous survey by the Family Division of the housing of 5000 welfare recipients prompted a recommendation the next January for the creation of a Citizen's Housing Commission. When the City Council rejected this and other proposals to that effect, social-work leaders took an active part in the organization of a Citizens Planning and Housing Council in 1940. Yet the best it could accomplish, during the next four years, was a revision of the law to give the old city planning bureau more status and power as a commission early in 1944. Those concerned with juvenile delinquency had finally secured an amendment of the children's court act in 1942 which considerably extended its coverage, though it still lacked the breadth the family-court act they had originally demanded would have provided.

The Council was somewhat divided over the propriety of engaging in what might be described as pressure drives to persuade the city council or the legislators to adopt desired measures. Its major function was inter-agency coordination, yet it could not refuse to voice their views on issues so intimately connected with social welfare

as delinquency and housing. A second and more intensive study of a number of children's court cases, made by Dr. Earl L. Koos a staff member in 1943, revealed evidence of a close affinity between the two major problems and such other troublesome matters as illegitimacy and broken homes. The Council determined with some hesitancy to approve the recommendation of two of the surveys that the Community Home for Girls, established fifty years before as the Door of Hope for fallen women, be closed and that unwed mothers and their children be treated by the general case-work agencies like all other needy persons. But the Council refused to endorse a resolution by some of its members demanding that the city enforce its ordinances against prostitution; this, the majority held, was beyond its province. It did finally agree, in December 1943, to establish a Department of Neighborhood Services as an aid in the coordination of grass-roots efforts to raise the social standards of depressed neighborhoods.

The renewed vitality of the private agencies was made possible, of course, by the hopeful recovery of the Community Chest. After five years of disappointment, when the drives fell far short of their goals, the Chest had cut its budget below a million for the first time in 1936, but the public rallied, during a three-weeks extension, to carry the drive's total slightly above that figure. With renewed confidence the budget committee raised its sights in succeeding years and with but one disappointment. In 1942, when wartime needs and enthusiasm swelled the total pledges to an all time high of 144,160, the subscriptions reached \$2,428,629, or 103.4 per cent of the goal. Moreover the per cent remaining unpaid at the close of the year dropped fairly steadily from 4.18 in 1934 to 2.19 in 1941. Although these increased resources did not keep pace with those of the public agencies, they were sufficient to sustain vigorous activities by the private agencies which were, moreover, able to collect a larger share of their budgets from fees after 1940 when war-time prosperity arrived.

* * * * *

The depression had not only increased the burdens and the outlays of the public welfare authorities, it had also greatly enlarged the scope of their services. Under state leadership they had come to recognize and assume a preventive function as well as that of rehabilitation, both of which presented more complications than the

simple tasks of distributing outdoor and home relief in earlier years. The new approaches demanded improvements in staff organization as well as training. While many of these decisions came from Albany, the city and county welfare departments did regain much of their autonomy by the close of the decade, when, however, the outbreak of war again transformed the situation.

As the private agencies withdrew their staffs from the close working arrangements maintained with public welfare in the early thirties, the department inaugurated a series of orientation programs in 1934 to give the new workers some training on the job. It conducted a second series of in-service orientation courses four years later when the transfer of TERA workers to civil-service status gave these job holders an incentive to improve their classifications. The department required special skills from a few staff members, and in 1935 it announced a policy of granting TERA fellowships at half-pay to qualified workers who desired leaves of absence for graduate study. Of course some of the special jobs called for the appointment of well-trained and experienced experts, as in 1935 when a worker from the Children's Service Bureau was engaged to set up a child-study service for children in foster homes.

Some public welfare officials had learned the utility of the Central Index during the mid-thirties, and the department continued to pay its share of the cost. It was, however, not so easy for the public as for the service agencies to make referrals between services because of the obligation to consider the legal claims of each individual as well as his human needs. However, many of these difficulties disappeared as the officials became accustomed to meeting with each other and with the heads of private agencies to discuss mutual problems. Thus the special needs of children in relief families were increasingly referred to the proper bodies. This process could work both ways, and in 1940, after an investigation of the Men's Welfare Bureau had revealed the inadequacies of "MacSweeney's Hotel," that eight-year old makeshift of the depression was closed. Destitute single men regained the status of citizens, with the same rights as other dependents to institutional or home care based on a careful investigation of their individual situations.

The Department of Public Welfare had lost some of its autonomy with the acceptance of state and federal funds and the necessity of

conforming with their standards. The city commissioner did not even attend the frequent meetings conducted with the local staff by state supervisors until 1934. This situation changed with the appointment of Emmett Gauhn as city commissioner a few years later, while Jesse Hannan as county welfare commissioner likewise asserted stronger local leadership. The divisions between their respective responsibilities were revised and more clearly defined by legislative acts in 1936 and 1940 when the titles of the city and county authorities became, like that of the state, departments of social welfare. The outlays under the old-age security act of 1930 had bounded upward with the extension of its coverage to those over 65 in 1937, and the number of eligible recipients of social welfare funds had increased with the inclusion in 1940 of the blind, and later of disabled veterans of the Second World War

While they vigorously reasserted public supervision over public charges, both Hannan and Gauhn displayed an eagerness to cooperate with the private agencies. Thus the former secured a reversal of the supervisors' decision of 1937 to cancel the contract with the SPCC for child placement. He withheld action pending an experiment by that body, the Council of Social Agencies, and the University of Rochester, with a professionally directed guidance center. Gauhn on his part developed a fine relationship with the private bodies and promoted the interchange of information.

The Near Present

With the return of peace in the mid-forties Rochester embarked on a new phase of welfare administration. The social principles developed in the previous decade retained their hold but the emergence of a metropolitan community brought a rearrangement of responsibility in both the public and private spheres. Moreover a significant evolution occurred in the application of the doctrine of social welfare, transforming it into one of social security. The public authorities continued to bear the major financial burden, but under different arrangements, while the private agencies endeavored, as in the past, to acquire fresh insights and to perfect, in their demonstration laboratories, new programs for human wellbeing.

Several changes in the state welfare law hastened reorganization on the public level. The county abolished its old, much-criticized

Board of Child Welfare and transferred to the city all responsibility for child placement. The city was encouraged to develop a Division of Child Welfare along approved lines ready for inclusion, a year later, in the County Department of Social Welfare. The consolidation of the city and county offices was thus effected without the risk of perpetuating an outmoded board in the children's field. The county department's legal staff and other features were, however, incorporated in the new set-up, which took effect on January 1, 1947. The city created a welfare service office to perform coordinating functions in its behalf and at the county's request.

The consolidation had the immediate effect of provoking fresh criticism of the high costs of welfare. The totals, now easily ascertainable, appeared staggering for prosperous times. Although the local taxpayer had to bear only 4 per cent of the total costs in 1947/48, as compared with nearly 60 per cent a decade before, he paid national taxes too and felt their bite with equal irritation. An investigation seemed appropriate and the Board of Supervisors assigned it to the Bureau of Municipal Research. Again the Bureau engaged an outside expert, William P. Sailer of Philadelphia, as consultant and produced a carefully documented report that ran to more than a hundred pages.

The report found many points to criticize. It made numerous recommendations, most of them, however, of a minor character. The investigators had quickly discovered that the major outlays were apparently irreducible—old-age assistance, hospital care, aid to dependent children and other items of child welfare—each of which had doubled within the decade. These were human-welfare costs, not hard-time penalties such as the home-relief item which had declined sharply in the same period. The report proposed some reorganizations designed to achieve administrative economies and suggested a greater stress on the intake investigations and a more rigorous enforcement of the responsibilities of relatives. The Supervisors quickly approved the recommendations and ordered them put into effect. A few staff reassignments occurred and a more determined prosecution of claims against negligent relatives produced some results, yet the county manager's estimate of the welfare costs for 1950 was \$12,4255,535, an unprecedented figure, and the actual outlays reached \$11,843,361. Although slightly better than half this sum was recovered from the state and federal government, the prospects for taxpayer relief seemed

dim. Fortunately a new welfare device, social security, was already commencing to take effect. The number receiving old-age benefits almost doubled between 1948 and 1950, reaching 18,313 in the county, and their benefits more than trebled, approaching \$750,000, which saved many from reliance on public welfare.

* * * * *

The Council of Social Agencies was a step ahead in this respect, for a special committee, headed by Marion Folsom, recommended in October 1950 that the chest agencies be free to join the Social Security system and that the Council staff take the lead if it so desired, as it did. It was the Council's business to provide leadership and, except in the matter of metropolitan integration, it endeavored to perform that function. It encouraged both the city and the county to take advantage of state youth funds made available in 1946; it spurred the Chest to come to an agreement with and absorb the labor chest; it promoted neighborhood organization in several blighted districts and continued to press for city action in the housing field; it granted the approval of full membership to several new agencies and undertook additional research functions. It gave a well merited cold shoulder to some rather supercilious criticisms by an outside investigator, but brought out the glad hand to celebrate its own twenty-fifth anniversary.

The first extended discussion by the Council of the desirability of serving the entire metropolitan district occurred in September 1945. It started with the appearance of a new research bulletin, "Facts and Figures," compiled for several years by Dr. Rex Johnson of the Council staff, which endeavored to view area problems and trends comprehensively. Unfortunately the costs involved in any extension of institutional services into all portions of the county gave pause. The Chest had experienced opposition to the collection of subscriptions from the outlying towns, in a few of which local charities stood jealously on guard. While the Chest met and surpassed its goal annually during the period after 1945, producing totals that exceeded \$2,000,000 each year, a metropolitan expansion of the private agency programs would have to be cautiously planned; meanwhile the Council endorsed the reorganization of public welfare on a countrywide basis and the still broader integration of the hospitals of eleven counties

under the Rochester Regional Hospital Council formed in 1951 as the merger of two earlier regional bodies.

The Council of Social Agencies faced sufficiently critical problems within the city borders. Its Department of Neighborhood Services launched a program of youth activities in the slums around Baden Street on the northeastern rim of the commercial district and along Clarissa Street on its southwestern segment. Greater familiarity with the conditions in these depressed areas confirmed a conviction held by some of the Council leaders, notably Rabbi Philip S. Bernstein and the Reverend Dr. Harold Nicely, that the city must surmount its dislike for public housing and make a determined effort to clear the slums and rehouse their unfortunate inhabitants. After a full discussion before the Delegate Assembly, as well as by most affiliated agencies, the Council directed Dr. Nicely to visit the Republican county leader in 1949 and impress on him the need for forthright action in this field.

It was uncertain what finally brought action on the housing front in 1949. No doubt the Council's views and those of other interested groups such as the Better Housing Association, had their effect, but so also did a crime wave that erupted in the Baden area earlier that year. The occurrence of three murders in one Kelly Street block within a week focused attention on that severely blighted district. The No. 9 School program of the Department of Neighborhood Services could reach but a handful of the polygot inhabitants who congested that community. The revitalization of Baden Street Settlement under the leadership of Irving Kriegsfeld, its new director, had only just begun. The problem, however, was not unique to that area, or to Rochester, as the outlays of the State Youth Commission amply demonstrated. The local use of its funds enabled the Department of Neighborhood Services to increase its program in the Baden district and also in the Clarissa Street area where the city's fifth social settlement, Montgomery Neighborhood Center, finally took shape in November 1951.

The Central Planning Division gave careful consideration to the application of a half-dozen other institutions for membership in the Council and the Chest. The Rochester Orthopedic Center for the training of persons with sight handicaps secured temporary support from the Chest in 1949 and permanent status the next year. The

Friendship Nursery which gave day care to the children of working mothers, had relied at the start, in 1928, on modest fees and then successively on various New Deal funds and the Labor Chest; its admission to the Council in 1945 helped to effect a union of the two chests. The Monroe County Branch of the American Cancer Society joined the Council that same year, and the United Cerebral Palsy Association, which opened a house on East Avenue the next year, soon won acceptance too. The Council, however, deferred the application of the Boy's Club until the Chest could meet the pressing needs of existing agencies in that field. It gave encouragement to the efforts of Dr. Albert Kaiser to establish an Association for Multiple Sclerosis to care for local victims of that disease who were said to number almost 100 in 1951.

The Council stimulated and helped to plan important changes in the programs of several older members. It helped to arrange conferences between the various orthodox and reform agencies whose consolidation produced the Jewish Social Service Bureau in 1943. In similar fashion it encouraged the studies that led to the transformation in 1950 of the People's Rescue Mission, animated by an evangelistic compassion for homeless men, into the Men's Service Center with a program directed towards rehabilitation. The Council followed with keen interest the expansion of the Rochester Hearing Society into one of Hearing and Speech in 1951 with a double program of training. It also gave approval to the Industrial Workshop's plans when it became the Rochester Rehabilitation Center in 1946, and to Baden Street Settlement which added casework to its program at that time.

The Council, which had in the course of its twenty-five years promoted numerous investigations of various aspects of the Rochester scene by qualified experts, reacted with some diffidence when an uninvited team of sociologists from Michigan State University endeavored to assess the city's "moral integration." Their evidence, couched in highly technical terms, seemed to indicate that "Gorgetown" was not as well integrated as neighboring "Bellview" (Syracuse), although earlier indices had led the investigators to expect a contrary finding. Their data seemed to disclose a greater cleavage between the man on the street and the leaders who directed Rochester's economic, social and civil affairs, than had appeared in the three other cities

studied. The publication of their report prompted inquiries by Rochester sociologists, who found the questionnaire and other techniques used to be extremely superficial. The Council determined to say nothing about the Michigan study, but its board did undertake at the next meeting to reassess the functions of the Delegate Assembly. And while the difficulties presented to free discussion and debate in a body of over two hundred members, were evident, the Council did help to decide significant policy issues on public housing and medical insurance at forum sessions of the Delegate Assembly in 1946 and 1949 respectively.

The Council paused in that latter year to celebrate its own twenty-fifth anniversary. Emery A. Brownell, executive attorney of the Legal Aid Society and a member of the Council board since 1936, had charge of the banquet held in the great hall of the Chamber of Commerce. Over 500 attended, honoring past-presidents Marion B. Folsom, now treasurer of Eastman Kodak, The Most Reverend Walter A. Foery, now Bishop of the Syracuse Catholic Diocese, and Vilas M. Swan a public-spirited attorney who had retired only the year before after twelve years at the helm. Clarence M. Gifford, the new president, presented James M. Spinning, Superintendent of Schools and a board member for seven years, who delivered a witty narrative of historical highlights of the previous quarter century. It was of course impossible to name all who had contributed time and thought to the Council and its affiliates. Twenty member agencies had dropped out over the years, some with their work accomplished, others to merge with new bodies or to join the Department of Volunteers. New agencies had taken their places, increasing the total to seventy-five by 1949.

We have emphasized institutional developments in this review, but the thoughts of the banqueters at the silver jubilee focused on the personalities that had taken part in the movement. Among those now deceased who had rendered long service on the board were Dr. S. J. Appelbaum, Miss Kathleen d'Olier, and former Children's Court Judge John M. B. Stephens who had succeeded Isaac Adler as president in the early years. Four others with lengthy records were present: Mrs William J. Baker, Mrs. Henry G. Danforth, Mrs. Dewitt B. Macomber and Arthur M. Lowenthal who had been a mainstay during the depression period. Three whose contributions could not be forgotten were C. Schuyler Davis who had greatly assisted the Council

and the agencies in developing sound budgetary practices, Herbert W. Bramley who had chaired the much expanded Citizens Social Planning Council which had provided broad local leadership during the depths of the depression, and S. Wirt Wiley who had taken the initiative in the revitalization of the Council of Social Agencies after that interlude. That reorganization had brought a group of younger leaders to the board, many of whom were still actively on the job, and it was to them and to the numerous professional and lay representatives of the agency that the messages of the three past presidents were delivered.

Many leaders of the Chest, the Council's companion body, joined in the festivities. Among them were Raymond N. Ball, Gilbert J. C. McCurdy and Sol Heumann, who had assumed some of the responsibilities formerly borne by Eastman, by Edward Bausch, James E. Gleason and Roland Woodward. Richard P. Miller, who had taken over as director of the Chest after the retirement of Harry P. Wareham in 1945, had already enlisted a new group of younger executives whose enthusiasm assured a continuing support for the welfare agencies.

If the professional staff members were less in prominence on this occasion than the lay directors, the reverse was true at a second large banquet in the same hall on June 6, 1951. The occasion was a surprise party for Oscar W. Kuolt who was about to retire as general secretary at the end of thirty years of service in Rochester. Clarence M. Gifford again presided and numerous board members from the Council and the agencies attended. But it was the professional workers, particularly some with memories stretching back over many years, whose presence gave the meeting a reminiscent quality. Tobias Roth, who had come to the city a few months ahead of Kuolt and had steered the J. Y. M. & W. A. through troubled but expanding years, was there, and so was William J. Nolan, who as secretary of the Catholic Charities since its formation provided another continuing link with the past. A few could recall the early work of Sara James for the Family Welfare Society and later for the city Department of Public Welfare, and that of Daisy I. Rice in organizing the Confidential Exchange. Both Charlotte S. Creighton and Virginia Vigneron, her successor as secretary in charge of the Children's and Family Divisions, were present and eagerly discussed some of the significant developments in these fields. Even Kenneth Storandt, who had come back to Rochester only the year before as an understudy for Kuolt,

could remember the dramatic events of his earlier years on the staff when the city was first becoming aware of its slum problem and of the need for neighborhood integration. The tone of the occasion was garrulous, and Kuolt accepted the outboard motor presented by the staff with characteristic humor. Little was said of the ongoing program of community social planning and action, to which he had contributed so much over the years; fortunately Rochester had learned to take its social responsibilities seriously but without a sober face.