HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF
PUBLIC AND VOLUNTARY RESPONSIBILITY IN SOCIAL WELFARE
AND THEIR INTERRELATIONSHIP
IN THE UNITED STATES

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HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT
PUBLIC AND VOLUNTARY RESPONSIBILITY IN SOCIAL WELFARE
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IN THE UNITED STATES
Social welfare in the United States has its roots in the English Poor Law. The early Colonists brought to the New World ideas and methods of taking care of the needy which had been established in England in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and these were held on to longer and more tenaciously than they were in their country of origin.

Two historians of the Poor Law in Colonial America, have described the policies which prevailed at that time.

Orphans and children whose parents were incapacitated were provided for, and children were ordered brought up to a 'calling'. Poor persons had their taxes abated, were given cash or necessary supplies, particularly in time of illness, were provided with medical care; were housed and cared for when incapacitated. Special arrangements were often worked out according to the nature of the case; public and private assistance supplemented each other; children and elderly persons were cared for out of their estates as long as possible; a relative received help from the town for the care of a blind person; articles of clothing were loaned, not given.  

Although this 'coverage' seems remarkable for the period, the aid remained minimal, deterrent and local.

The early settlers had left their homelands because of religious persecution and governmental tyranny. They were people without wealth, who came to America to wrest a living from the wilderness. In the Old Country, throughout the centuries, toil had been the lot of the masses.

By tradition, however, labor was an onerous duty attaching to the laborer. It had never been highly regarded, well rewarded or entirely free. The boast of Americans, the characteristic that made American life seem so vulgar to older civilizations, was that here, for almost the first time in history, labor was prized for its own sake. The promise of America was not affluence, but independence; not east but a chance to work for oneself, to be self-supporting, and to win esteem through hard and honest labor. 1

The very business of surviving called for the employment of every able pair of hands. The ability to look after oneself was a social asset says Bremner, and this ability was rewarded by material well-being. In a situation like this, the person who could not provide for himself was readily seen as a failure, this being attributed to personal defect, since opportunity was claimed to be the same for all. Remnants of this attitude toward the needy persist to the present time.

The variety of cultural backgrounds of the settlers influenced their attitudes toward the needy. There were British Puritan, Scotch, English Catholic, Anglican, Dutch and French as well as Quakers. Most of these people followed a rather strict code of behaviour and expected this from each other. Thrift and industriousness were necessary not only for survival, but also demonstrated by


2 Ibid.; p. 17.

material success the state of grace of the individual. The Puritans in particular decried laziness and poverty, since they considered idleness to be the source of unhappiness and crime, and poverty a proof of low moral worth. "In other aspects of life access to the virtually unlimited resources of a raw undeveloped land, and the hardships of wresting a livelihood on or from it fostered individualism."

The high taxes levied for relief of the poor in their homelands, caused these people to have an intense dislike for this responsibility; coupled with their inherited concept that paupers, beggars and vagrants were criminals, this aroused their contempt for the needy who had to ask for support from the parish. The fact that most paupers were widows and orphans, and the sick, old, and invalid persons, did little to change these attitudes.

One of the practices of the mother countries was to send out to the colonies the people who were not wanted. Thus there were considerable numbers of "demented and maimed persons and convicted offenders," who were among the later arrivals. The burden of caring for those in these groups who were not able to manage on their own was not readily accepted by the colonists. Sometimes the Settlement Law was invoked and these people were deported.

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1 Ibid.; p. 67.
3 Friedlander, op. cit.; p. 61.
With the appearance of the extremes of wealth and poverty, and the increase in numbers who could not provide for their own needs, another Old Country institution was adopted, the almshouse. Tax funds were pooled with private bequests to build them. With the growth of the population, more and more communities used this arrangement. It was thought to be a more humane type of treatment than the custom of "farming out" or "selling out" the pauper, as well as being more manageable financially. In addition, it provided better means of controlling the behaviour of the recipients. Here one sees a continuation of cooperation between public and private resources in providing for the needy. Conditions in the almshouses were extremely degrading and hazardous. The public seemed to make little effort to know what went on, partly because of the prevalent feeling that those who could not care for themselves were a burden to the rest, and also because the doctrine of self-help was so wholeheartedly espoused by all.

There were variations across the country in the use made of the almshouse with some sections maintaining "outdoor relief" to a greater extent than others. In the South with its feudal-like plantations, the sense of responsibility for those in need was viewed as a personal rather than corporate one. There were certain categories of the poor for which the states eventually assumed

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1 Pumphrey, Ralph E. and Pumphrey, Muriel W., The Heritage of American Social Work; Columbia University Press; 1961; p. 27.

2 Ibid.; p. 45.
responsibility. These were the insane, the feeble-minded, the blind, the deaf-mute, the criminal, and the delinquent. State institutions were built in which to house them. The removal of these groups from the almshouses indicated a "recognition of a special claim these persons had on the sympathies of the community."

There were also private ways to provide for special sections of the population. One of these was the relief offered by churches to needy members of their congregations. In the South, the Anglican church had strong ties with the government, and in the Northern colonies the Puritan religious doctrine influenced the colonial governments. Often the combinations of community action and religious pressure was used to bring about solution of welfare problems.

Money was collected at religious services and on other occasions, as well as through special appeals in cases of emergency. As with the other forms of relief, there was a distinction made on the grounds of the behaviour of the applicants; those whose moral behaviour was criticised in the community or those who did not heed the ministers admonitions were denied relief. The sick and elderly who had been known to the parish over a period of time were considered to be the "worthy" poor, while needy newcomers or strangers were considered to be "unworthy" poor. A further indication of the prevailing attitude toward the poor was their disfranchisement.

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Care of the Dependent Under the American Constitution

The Preamble to the Constitution of the United States refers to the desire of the people of the United States in establishing the Union to "promote the general welfare." However, there was no provision made in the Constitution for the assumption of responsibility on the part of the Federal Government for matters of social welfare. The fears of oppression and governmental tyranny which their forefathers had experienced in other countries had been transmitted to the founding fathers and they bent every effort to ensure that within this Constitution there would be protection of political and religious freedom, and freedom from the control of large and remote institutions of government. The people feared that the relinquishing of control of something so personal as individual human welfare to the Federal Government would bring them under political bondage and oppression.

The Revolution had been influenced by the desire for liberty, "resentment of British governmental oppression, and by the French equalitarian philosophy of Jean Jacques Rousseau." Treatment of the poor, however, had not been an issue in the Revolution, consequently many of the provisions of the Poor Law were retained by the newly formed state governments. Although protection against starvation was assured, in order to be eligible for public charity the applicant had to show that he was really suffering.


The Territorial Laws of 1795 provided for administration of relief to be carried out by overseers of the poor, appointed by the justice of the peace, who were to assess the property within their area, provide work houses in which the needy of all descriptions would reside, and where those able to work would be required to do so; they were to refuse aid to those who would not enter the poorhouse; they could put out as apprentices children whose parents were dead or unable to provide for them; enforce the residence laws; ensure that relatives assumed responsibility for their own needy, and extract the appropriate sum if they failed in their duty. A condition of frontier life which encouraged the abandonment of the system of "warning out" was the fact that new settlers were needed and valued.

With the increase in population in the first three decades of the nineteenth century, the total number of poor increased. Moreover, crop failures and unemployment added to the numbers of able-bodied people in need of help. This increased tax burden on the local units resulted in complaints which helped bring about assumption of responsibility for some categories of the needy by state governments. Massachusetts and Connecticut were among the first to pay for those who were "unsettled" or "warned out". Because every town was responsible for its own poor, they had to be residents for a statutory period, and have paid poor relief

1 Ibid.; pp. 54-56.
2 Ibid.; p. 53.
taxes. If they moved to another town and became destitute prior to meeting the residence requirements, they were considered to be "unsettled", and subject to return to the location where they had established residence. They were "warned out", or ordered to leave unless they could provide security by bond of a resident in good standing. Very often the inability to secure such a bond was effective in causing the poor to move on. It was for this group of people that the state governments gradually assumed responsibility. New York also provided for state funds to help those fleeing from the British Army or from Indians.

The Development of Private philanthropy and Social Reform: Pre-Civil War

One of the earliest and best examples of private ways of providing for special sections of the population was the Scots' Charitable Society, incorporated in Boston in 1657.

This society based on ties of common nationality in a strange land, took care of its members and their fellow countrymen in what has come to be regarded as the oldest social agency still functioning in the United States. It was the prototype for thousands of nationality, religious and fraternal organizations which have waxed and waned during the three centuries since its founding.

This society solicited funds from those who might become eligible to be recipients, and the donors had the right to choose their beneficiaries.

1 Friedlander, loc. cit.
2 Pumphrey, op. cit.; p. 30.
The philanthropic association founded for humanitarian motives was another form of private charity which originated early in the history of the country. The Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisoners, founded in 1787, the Massachusetts Charitable Fire Society, of 1794, and the New York Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children, of 1798, are examples of this type of organization.

The Poor Law Commission Report of 1834 in England had repercussions in America; it helped to crystallize concern about the effects of making public aid a right. There was fear lest the recipient "become pauperized if he has a right to relief", and for the wealthy person "whose attitude will be so much more positive if he acts voluntarily than if he is required to produce the same amount of assistance through taxation." A few unorthodox souls ventured the thought that the individual was not to be held wholly responsible for his fate and that economic and social action was just as necessary as self-help.

This trend toward the "environmental approach" was a reflection of the work of England's Edwin Chadwick who had become interested in public health and sanitary reform. The American leader in this field was John Griscom, health Officer of New York City. He "shifted the concept of fault away from the unfortunate sufferers

1 Friedlander; op. cit.; p. 70.
2 Pumphrey; op. cit.; p. 58.
3 Ibid.; p. 59.
and attached it to the landlords and the system under which they 
operated. Both, in his mind, were subject to regulation by govern-
ment, in the first instance through city ordinance."

The mid-eighteen hundreds was a period of response to the 
extreme living conditions of great numbers of people, and feeling 
about the ineffectiveness of the existing measures to deal with 
these conditions. In 1843 a significant voluntary movement, the 
New York Association for Improving the Conditions of the Poor was 
organized. This movement became an example to the cities of the 
nation and there was widespread adoption of its practices. The 
fundamental ideas of this organization included the need for the 
individual approach through volunteer visitors, with an emphasis 
on re-education and moral persuasion; relief was a secondary objec-
tive. As was found by organizations before and after this one,
the urgency of economic needs was so great that attention had to 
be turned to improvement of the environment. This social action 
activity on the part of the Association for Improving the Conditions 
of the Poor resulted in the establishment of the Juvenile Asylum 
in 1851, which was to take care of the homeless and neglected chil-
dren who were considered to be juvenile delinquents. Other areas 
of concern for this group were the fields of housing, sanitary 
conditions, school attendance and poor parental supervision. They 

1 Ibid.; p. 96.
2 Ibid.; p. 103.
3 Loc. cit.
were able to influence the Legislature in such a way as to secure the passing of a law which enabled the vagrant and unschooled children to be brought before the courts. While the principle behind this legislation was commendable, the results were often appalling. However, there was a recognition of the need to develop policy and method involving both individual and group approaches to human problems. The central figure in the Association for Improving the Conditions of the Poor movement, Robert M. Hartley, advocated the assumption by the State of the function of parent.

While the founder of the Association for Improving the Conditions of the Poor was instrumental in bringing about reform, he was of the opinion that the poor should leave the cities; he, too, was a devout adherent to the creed of self-help, and the essence of his advice to the poor was that they should move on elsewhere.

About the same time in history, another voluntary movement mainly concerned with the welfare of children, became active. The Children's Aid Society, under the leadership of Charles Loring Brace, attempted to solve the problems of homeless children, not by placing them in institutions as had been the custom up until this time, but by placing them out in private homes, preferably farm homes and preferably "out West". His philosophy emphasized the effect of environment on the child, and he hoped that by his program of "moral disinfection" these children would develop into worthy citizens.

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1 Ibid.; p. 104.

The Young Men's Christian Association was established in America at this time also. This organization was concerned with an older group of the homeless, and also with those belonging to a higher income level. It worked with the "uprooted youths who had reversed Brace's pattern and emigrated from the countryside to the city. Its functions were to provide a substitute for the friendly and familiar moral influences from which young men had been cut off by their removal to the cities, and to protect them against the dangers of irreligion, intemperance and immorality."  The Young Men's Christian Association also performed a relief function, and in the cities of Washington and Chicago it co-ordinated the relief and welfare facilities of the communities until other organizations were able to take over this job. It was one of the pioneer agencies in collecting factual information on urban social conditions.

There were other reform movements in existence during this period of American history. Dorothea Dix was influential in directing attention to the inhuman treatment of the insane, and being convinced that the local care of this group in almshouses and jails was totally inadequate, she threw her energies into influencing the states to assume responsibility for their care. Some of the obstacles that she encountered were the unwillingness of the state, and often its inability, to finance the building of the institutions which

1 Ibid.; p. 41.
2 Ibid.; p. 41.
3 Ibid.; p. 42.
would provide not only custodial care but curative treatment also. In an attempt to overcome these obstacles Miss Dix turned to Congress for aid, and succeeded in getting a bill passed which appropriated ten million acres of land to the states for the purpose of building hospitals for the care of the insane.

The debate surrounding States' Rights which raged throughout this period influenced President Franklin Pierce to declare that charitable activities were a state function and he refused to approve the bill.

My deliberate conviction (is) that a strict adherence to the terms and purposes of the Federal compact, offers the best, if not the only, security for the preservation of our blessed inheritance of representative liberty . . . If Congress have power to make provision for the indigent insane without the limits of this jurisdiction of this District, it has the same power to provide for the indigent who are not insane, and thus to transfer to the Federal Government the charge of all the poor in all the states . . . to assume all that duty of either public philanthropy, or public necessity to the dependent, the orphan, the sick, or the needy, which is now discharged by the states themselves, or by corporate institutions, or private endowments existing under the legislation of the States. The whole field of public beneficence is thrown open to the care and culture of the Federal Government. 1

This statement showed remarkably keen insight by the President into the fundamental issues of the day which were to be battled for many years to come, and to be only partly resolved in the passing of the Social Security Act in 1935.

The States jealously guarded their rights from interference by the Central Government, and whenever concessions were made, they

were made grudgingly. However, at the time of President Pierce's veto of the afore-mentioned proposal by Miss Dix, there were State representatives in Congress who recognized the inability of the States to provide adequately for the various categories of the needy, and who wanted Federal help. But President Pierce did not believe the "two wrongs make a right," and said, "In my judgment you cannot, by tributes to humanity, make any adequate compensation for the wrong you would inflict by removing the sources of power and political action from those who are to be thereby affected." He thought that Federal aid would result in the sources of charity being dried up in the States, and the States would in turn begin to beg the Central Government for help rather than being the masters of it. The same kind of fear of providing adequately for those in need because they might then come to rely on the source of supply instead of attempting to become self-sufficient, has characterized the attitudes of the "giver" to the "recipient" right down to the levels of the individual agency, and has not been completely eradicated to the present day.

President Pierce's veto established a principle which lasted for eighty years; however, it could not completely overshadow the lasting contribution of Miss Dix: "the idea that disability is no respecter of persons and that adequate and appropriate care should be available for everybody."

1 Ibid.; p. 134.

2 Ibid.; p. 125.
Throughout this period there was a prolific growth of voluntary organizations to deal with every imaginable type of need. There was a preoccupation with specialization of function. To add to the confusion, there were not only competing groups but competing methodological approaches. For example, in the field of Child Welfare there were three main approaches; Brace and the Children's Aid Society, advocating removal of children to new homes out West; the Catholic Protectory in New York advocating removal to private institutions nearby; the Massachusetts State Board of Charities advocating a system of supervised foster homes in or near the child's home community.

Aftermath of the Civil War:

Industrialization, Poverty and Organized Charity

The Civil War of 1861-1865 had a variety of effects upon social welfare organizations and the issues with which they were concerned. Political issues occupied the minds of leaders, and in some respects the pressing social questions were pushed into the background. The issue of slavery was supposedly settled by the War and was no longer highlighted in public debate. The implications of this problem went underground for a period of time.

The Civil War brought increased impoverishment to the South and economic prosperity to the North.

1 Ibid., p. 138.
By accelerating the process of industrialization and encouraging both urbanization and immigration it transformed poverty from a local to a national problem. It accentuated the contrast between the conditions of the rich and poor, and, in so doing, created an atmosphere of discontent and unrest. 1

People moved to the areas where mechanization and the factory system created a new demand for labour. In addition, the market value of traditional skills and crafts was depreciated by mechanization and the labour market was glutted by the numbers of women and children available to fill the new factory jobs. Although there was supposedly "freedom of contract" the employer was able to set the conditions at will because of the masses who were available, as well as being prodded by the need to surpass his competitors. "These hard facts were made yet harsher by the prevailing theory of political economy which held that the welfare of the individual laborers was a matter of small consequence either to employers or to the state." 2

The hardships of the immigrant became particularly severe.

To be an immigrant in the earlier years (prior to the Civil War) was to be part of an experience in the making. You didn't feel unwanted or a misfit, nor did you feel ashamed of your cultural origin. But after the Civil War, with the triumph of industrialism, America became the country where miracles were in full swing and where entrance was an admission to the miracle-making. As an immigrant coming to something no longer experimental but already tested and created, you were suspect of trying to cash in on a good thing. As a combined entrance fee and expiation, you were crowded into slums, forced to do the dirty and poorly paid jobs, made to feel an outsider. 3

1 Bremner; Op. cit.; pp. 42, 43.
2 Ibid.; p. 4.
3 Lerner, Max; America As a Civilization; Simon and Shuster; New York; 1957; p. 91.
The tendency to blame immigration for everything that was disreputable in American life increased greatly. Certain groups of immigrants were the focal points for this feeling because of their places of origin or their religious persuasion. While the furor over immigration kept the issue of poverty before the people, it also served to obscure the basic problems of economics in a haze of religious and national prejudices.

The Social Philosophy of Private Philanthropy

The philosophy of non-intervention in the market by government which held sway in Europe at this time and which found its theoretical justification in the writings of Adam Smith, found acceptance in America. At the same time, religious doctrine emphasized both the possibility and the need for individual regeneration; man could purge himself of his sins and of the bad habits which led to indigence. Bremner says that the overthrow of the authoritarian Puritanical theology resulted in the releasing of a "tumult of energy" which was directed toward the cause of "moral and humanitarian reform".

The emphasis on individual achievement and self-help was given a "supposedly scientific basis by the teachings of Herbert Spencer and his American disciples, and also by the early application of Darwinian biology to social thought. If, as the Spencerian and Social Darwinians asserted, competition was the law of life, there

1 Bremner; op. cit.; p. 11.

2 Ibid.; p. 18.
was no remedy for poverty except individual self-help. The poor who remained poor must pay the price exacted by nature from all the unfit. In accordance with this philosophy, interference on behalf of the poor, on the part of the State or philanthropists, was considered to be dangerous because it would interfere with nature's laws.

Outdoor Relief: A Public or Private Responsibility?

Throughout this period there was a continuing controversy regarding whether or not outdoor relief was to be continued, and if so, who should assume responsibility for it. This controversy was related to the way in which the poor and needy were viewed by those responsible for relief. There was a sharp division of opinion regarding the "worthy" and the "unworthy" poor. Rev. H. C. Duganne, speaking in the debate on Outdoor Relief at the 1881 Conference of Charities and Corrections, said giving of outdoor relief should be discontinued by voluntary agencies because of "the necessity of discriminating between the worthy and the unworthy, those whose misfortune is no fault of their own, and those who are habitually idle and profligate, the innocently poor and the criminally poor." For Rev. Duganne, the public agency should deal with the "unworthy" while the voluntary agency should "extend the hand of true charity" to those who did not cause their poverty through their own vicious

1 Ibid.; p. 19.

2 Duganne, H. C., "Debate on Outdoor Relief." Proceedings of the 8th Annual Conference of Charities and Corrections; A. Williams and Company; Boston; 1881; p. 155.
habits and who could benefit therefrom.

Another speaker at this Conference said that there was no justification for public aid on the ground of charity. "It is not charity, even in the religious sense, to tax the community, to take from unwilling pockets to give to other people."

A speaker from London, Sir Charles Trevelyan, who was advocating the organization of charities, said that because outdoor relief provided a ready-made insurance at public expense, the value of the greatest moral regulator and corrective of all, labour, would be ignored and people would come to look upon relief as a matter of course. He advocated the "gradual substitution of wise, discriminate organized charity, for the 'master evil' of out-door relief."

A favourite distinction among spokesmen for private philanthropy during this era was that between poverty and pauperism.

While poverty is to be deplored, pauperism is to be condemned. It is the result of heredity and environment, and is fostered by public official relief and indiscriminate almsgiving; but, whether caused by hereditary tendencies or the result of a process of demoralization, a lack of character and moral force is involved. Therefore the development of character must be the object sought in the treatment of this pauper class. 3

1 Lowe, M., "Debate on Outdoor Relief." Proceedings of the 8th Annual Conference of Charities and Corrections; A. Williams and Company; Boston; 1881; p. 160.

2 Trevelyan, Sir Charles, "Debate on Outdoor Relief." Proceedings of the 8th Annual Conference of Charities and Corrections; A. Williams and Company; Boston; 1881; p. 165.

3 Todd, Hannah, "Report of the Committee on the Organization of Charities." Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections; George H. Ellis; Boston; 1891; p. 111.
In advocating the cause of organized charity, James Walks said in 1885, that "when we shall have cut off poor law relief, we shall have cut the tap root of the noxious tree of pauperism." 1

An example of efforts to co-operate was the admonition that the state legislature provide generous public aid to private benevolence and philanthropy, in this way the state could perform its duties to dependent children since the private institutions were thought to be better than state institutions.

There were others who felt that the greatest gains were not to be made in struggling against each other, but through efforts to co-operate. Professor Graham Taylor said, "The first point is the necessity of establishing reciprocal relations between our private and public charities." Another speaker said, "There must be ... constantly reciprocal checking and expanding of the two systems of public and private charity to meet the situation."

Dr. A.G. Warner, another advocate of 'cooperation' stated, "Neither the police power alone nor private associations alone can suppress

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1 Walks, James, "The Relations of Organized Charity to Public and Private Relief." Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections; George H. Ellis; Boston; 1885; p. 336.

2 Prendergast, Judge R., "State Aid to Private Institutions." Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections; George H. Ellis; Boston; 1886; p. 161.

3 Taylor, Professor Graham, "Minutes and Discussion." Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections; George H. Ellis; Boston; 1892; p. 327.

4 Sanborn, F.E., "Minutes and Discussion." Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections; George H. Ellis; Boston; 1892; p. 327.
street-begging: the two must cooperate."

The 1890s were a time of controversy regarding the causes of poverty. A minister speaking to the Conference in 1890 said, "poverty and class distinction were supernaturally ordained and inaccessible to cure; the religious man was obligated to share his abundance with the unfortunate to mitigate the severest suffering." Robert Paine thought that it resulted from inadequate preparation of children for industrial competition; Mrs. Josephine Shaw Lowell thought that the poor had to endure deprivation so that they could be kept at work; Miss Zilpha Smith brought in a different element by saying that the poor were no different inherently than others. There were some writers who looked upon the system of free market in labour, low wages, and the problems of poor relief administration, as being interrelated.

One of these writers, Mathew Carey, was convinced that the practice of paying labourers less than subsistence wages (because of the plentiful supply of labourers) encouraged and necessitated their use of relief. He made a comparison of wages paid to a

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1 Warner, Dr. A.G., "Minutes and Discussion." Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections; George H. Ellis; Boston; 1892; p. 430.


3 Ibid.; p. 213.

labourer and his family expenses. The results of the comparison indicated that it was impossible for the family to exist on the rates paid.

This is one of a large class, whom some of our political economists of the new school are not ashamed to stigmatize as worthless and improvident, because they do not, forsooth, save enough out of their miserable wages, to support themselves and families, in times of scarcity, without aid of benevolent societies; whereas it appears that their wages are inadequate to their support even when fully employed. 1

There were no allowances made for time lost through accident, sickness, of employee or dependants, or for seasons of unemployment.

Another writer, Sarah Hale, was alarmed by the results of the common methods of relieving the distress of the poor, and decided that, "the true way was to give employment, paying such a price for labor, as would enable those who were industrious and faithful to provide for their own support." She initiated the practice of paying the employee at least enough for his support. Hale discovered that she could pay the workers almost double the standard rate for some of their work and still sell the products at the prevailing rates without loss. This practice resulted in the employees not requiring poor relief, and also making it possible for them to maintain their self-respect and pride in their work.

1 Ibid.; p. 84.
2 Ibid., p. 91.
They were spared the humiliation to which the applicant for poor relief was subjected, as well as the possibility of a refusal of the request.

The depression of 1893 severely taxed the resources of voluntary agencies and underlined the conditions of life which cannot be controlled by the individual whether he is considered to be "worthy" or "unworthy". The principle of less eligibility was revived, and may be seen in Philip Ayres' proposals for handling future industrial emergencies. He advocated a combination of public and private relief by work. The conditions surrounding the giving of work were that it was to be given to the local heads of families only, with "tramps" and "loafers" being given the least attractive jobs so that they would not be a poor influence on the more industrious. The work was to be difficult so that it would require real labour, and it must be underpaid so it would not attract others.

Not only were the causes of poverty sought out but there was great effort put into determining its extent. People like Riis, Helen Campbell, Amos Warner, and Florence Kelley were convinced that the public needed to be made aware of the facts and then reforms would result.

The Contribution of the Charity Organization Society.

There were two main factors which influenced the development

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1 Bremner, Robert H., From the Depths; New York University Press; Washington Square, New York; 1961; p. 84.
of the Charity Organization Society movement in America. A Society had been organized in London, and following the economic depression of 1873, the public once again became aware of the disorganization and inadequacy of private and public relief. In 1877, Rev. S. Gurteen organized the first American Charity Organization Society in Buffalo.

The main principles of these Societies were to secure the co-operation of all local charitable organizations under a board comprised of their representatives, a central registry of recipients, investigation of every applicant by a visitor in an effort to determine need and appropriate measures for dealing with it. One of the main objectives of the visitors was by personal contact to strengthen the moral fibre of the indigent and encourage them to become self-supporting.

The investigations into the conditions of the poor revealed that the concept of individual fault could not be accepted. Social reform was needed, said the investigators, and these societies became advocates of reform measures in housing improvements, clearing of slum conditions, and prevention and treatment of tuberculosis. They supported the movement for child welfare legislation and other measures designed to secure social justice.

The administrators of the Societies made a career of this employment and their staff for the most part were volunteers, with

a few paid workers who, during the early years, were considered to be less desirable workers than the unpaid volunteer. However, the movement's emphasis on method crystallized the idea that staff with training and continuous experience would be better qualified to carry on these labours. An interesting development was the encouragement of women to engage in social work by the Charity Organization Societies, a concept which was opposite to that held by the Association for Improving the Conditions of the Poor which relied exclusively on men to perform the required tasks.

Some of the problems faced by these Societies included the possibility of jealousies between them and well-established agencies, their ability to harmonize with the existing institutions, and doubts about admitting officers of the city governments because of fears of "political scheming". The Societies planned progressively to take the relief of the poor out of the hands of the city authorities, and to reduce continuously the appropriation of city monies to the support of the poor. Some felt that the situation would be improved by cutting off completely the cities aid and making private charity equal to all just demands. Others argued that to unite with the city was the best way of securing the cooperation of those authorities, especially that of the police.

1 Pumphrey; op. cit.; p. 139.
2 Bremner; op. cit.; p. 52.
3 "Cooperative Benevolence." Appendix to the Committee's Report, Proceedings of the 8th Annual Conference of Charities and Corrections; A. Williams and Company; Boston; 1881; p. 105.
Some criticisms of the Charity Organization Societies were that a heartless and pharisaical spirit characterized their operation, and that they were prone to measure worthiness by business standards.

The Progressive Era: Voluntary Initiative and Social Reform

The first two decades of the twentieth century were characterized by an optimistic attitude and a change in the way poverty was viewed. Instead of seeing it as a matter of dependency only, it was now seen in terms of insufficiency and insecurity. The people who were barely eking out an existence, though they were self-supporting, became objects of concern as well as those who were destitute. There was improvement in the general economic conditions and attention was focused on matters other than those connected with mere survival. There was also a different attitude toward wealth; it was no longer thought to be a curse, as some had thought, nor the measure of virtue as the majority claimed.

There was an enthusiastic revival of the idea that poverty stemmed from economic forces over which the individual had little control and that he should not be held accountable for its effects. This view gained increasing acceptance during the early years of the twentieth century.

It suited the secular spirit of the Progressive era better than any other explanation of want, and it was both a reflection of, and stimulus to, contemporary movements for social justice. Most significant of all, the increasing emphasis placed on the economic (as opposed to the moral) causes of poverty denoted that the historic interest in the condition of the poor was giving way to a newly aroused concern with the rights and grievances of the working class. 1

This view of the causes of poverty carried with it a companion view regarding its cure: the individual reform approach gave way to social reform as the more adequate task to be performed. These new views were reflected in statements made at the National Conference. There was increased emphasis on the responsibility that States should assume for the needy, and as well, a beginning of assumption of responsibility on the part of the Central Government.

Although the doctrines of thrift and self-help still were propounded by many, there was a beginning recognition that there were other desirable virtues also. There was a shift away from the desire to give charity to ensure the salvation of the giver, to that of benefitting the recipient. Julia Lathrop in advocating public charities at the 1905 Conference said,

There is no finer conception in the world as it is, than that of a system of public charities. Such a system sets aside the egotistical Oriental sanction for charity and replaces the almoner's personal effort 'to acquire merit' by the State's solemn acknowledgement of its responsibility for its feeblest members. Instead of the capricious gifts of individuals, we have the unfailing reservoirs of the commonwealth; instead of the uncertainty of individual

1 Ibid.; p. 135.
interest we have, in theory at least, the unflagging devotion of the state to a great humanitarian service accepted by it as a necessary function of government. 1

The battle between the public and private agencies continued with the question of outdoor relief often being predominant. Frederic Almy typified one group with his views that if the poor knew they could go at any time to the public agency and get relief, their desires would know no bounds; the treasury would appear to them to be inexhaustible, and they would come to look upon it as their 'right' to receive aid in any emergency, and they would cast thrift to the winds. Almy's solution to the problem was that "the absolutely necessary relief be given from the adequate public funds, and that this be supplemented by private personal service." 2

This view was supported by George S. Wilson who had conducted a survey in relation to this problem. The conclusion reached was that private rather than public relief was favoured. He too, thought that the attitude of the poor toward the source of supply was more important than the administration of the funds.

1 Lathrop, Julia, "Report of the Committee on State Supervision and Administration," Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections; George H. Ellis; Boston; 1905; p. 420.

2 Almy, Frederic, "Public or Private Outdoor Relief." Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections; George H. Ellis; Boston; 1900; p. 142.

3 Ibid.; p. 140.

4 Wilson, George S., "Outdoor Relief in Relation to Charity Organization." Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections; George H. Ellis; Boston; 1900; p. 251.
The conflict of views regarding State supervision was stated in rather strong language by some of the Conference speakers on several occasions. The issue was complicated by the fact that some private institutions were subsidized by public funds, while some were financed entirely through voluntary contributions. One speaker in 1911 said that if the private institution was in receipt of public funds there should be State supervision, and that the amount of the subsidy should determine the degree of such supervision and the methods employed. He said that the granting of lump-sum subsidies in particular, not based on any definite measure of service rendered, had been attended with unfortunate conditions and "frequently the most insidious influences are brought to bear in the effort to obtain appropriations." The undesirable consequences of such a system are numerous. Wilson's solution to this problem was that, "appropriations are better made upon the basis of payment for services rendered, under contract or otherwise."

Wilson also favoured State supervision of private charities which received no public subsidies, on the grounds that the State has a responsibility toward its dependent members to ensure them of proper care.

The point of view of the private organizations was expressed by Rev. Richard Biedermann. He stated that truly private charities

1 Wilson, George S., "Supervision of Private Charities From the Point of View of an Official Board." Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections; The Fort Wayne Printing Company; Fort Wayne; 1911; p. 35.
2 Ibid.; p. 37.
3 Ibid.; p. 38.
should not be State supervised any more than should a private home; such supervision would be purely paternalistic. He also stated that it was unnecessary, and almost an insulting infringement of private personal liberty; if the activity was carried on by a church, it would also be an unwarranted interference with religious liberty. That this view was an attempted rekindling of traditional resentment against government intervention is confirmed in his exhortation, "Let us not emulate the methods of foreign governments, from which our fore-fathers escaped and where individuals and churches are to this day being supervised and inspected almost to death."

An advocate of further governmental intervention, Frank Garland, refuted the claim to exclusive experimentation on the part of private agencies with the argument that the public must be educated to allow for such activity on the part of government in the interests of social wellbeing. He also claimed that the newer, broader conception of government carried with it the function of promoting the common welfare. Garland was dismayed with the unequal distribution of wealth and its benefits, and said that one way to rectify this situation to a degree was through the government's assumption of responsibility for the needy through the medium of departments of public welfare. The use of such departments would

1 Biedermann, Rev. R., "Supervision of Private Charities from the Point of View of a Private Charity." Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections; The Fort Wayne Printing Company; Fort Wayne; 1911; pp. 41, 42.
2 Ibid.; p. 43.
provide a more even distribution of the burden upon all. Entire and complete coverage would also be ensured.

Bremner says of this period, "... conviction of abundance was the well-spring of the humanitarian movements of the Progressive era." The existence of poverty and untenable living and working conditions was considered to be incongruous with the relative prosperity of the time. There were movements directed at bettering these conditions. Low wages, long working hours, child labour, were attacked.

The Supreme Court ruling in 1908 in the case of Muller v. The State of Oregon, regarding the limitation of hours of work of women in laundries, marked a decisive break with the past in acknowledging the right of the State to interfere with the contractual relationship of employer and employee. The Court's reasons for this particular ruling are noteworthy:

Woman's physical structure, and the functions that she performs in consequence thereof, justify special legislation restricting or qualifying the conditions under which she should be permitted to toil ... as healthy workers are essential to vigorous offspring, the physical wellbeing of a woman becomes an object of public interest and care in order to preserve the strength and vigor of the race ... 2

This ruling was a decisive step in clearing the way for subsequent action. "The principle that individual freedom could be

1 Bremner, Robert H., From the Depths; New York University Press; Washington Square, New York; 1961; p. 129.

curbed to achieve the common good made social reform efforts feasible."

This was a definite blow to the followers of individualistic, self-help, non-intervention, opportunistic theories which interpreted the Constitution in terms of personal gain at the expense of others.

Another factor which was influential in bringing about this change of attitude on the part of government was the social security legislation enacted in Great Britain and some countries of Europe. In this Progressive era there were various proposals for social insurance; legislation was enacted providing for Workmen's Compensation; savings bank life insurance was introduced, enquiries were made regarding some form of old age pension. There was an increased recognition of the need to help those who were either too young or too old to provide for themselves through their own efforts in the labour market.

Difficulties which lay in the path of enacting many of these proposals were the financial hazards, and the disparity of wealth among the states. There was agitation for federal involvement in child welfare matters. This culminated in the establishment of a White House Conference on Children, the first of which was held in 1909, and later the establishment of the United States Children's Bureau in 1912. The first chief of the Bureau was Julia Lathrop, a prominent social worker.

That there was an attempt to investigate the needs of dependent children across the nation is shown in the remarks of the

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1 Ibid.; p. 278.
of the Committee on Resolutions presented to the President at the first White House Conference:

The particular needs of each destitute child should be carefully studied and he should receive that care which his individual needs require and which should be as nearly as possible like the life of the other children of the community. We respectfully recommend ... favorable action upon the bill for a federal children's bureau and the enactment of such legislation as will bring the laws and the public administration of the District of Columbia and other federal territory into harmony with the principles and conclusions herein stated, and ... that you cause to be transmitted to the governor of each State of the Union a copy of the proceedings of this conference for the information of the state board of charities or other body exercising similar powers. 1

From the effects of this conference other movements like the drive for mother's allowances gained impetus. However, there was no uniform, consistent program adopted and the states were allowed to follow their own wishes.

The 1920's - A Turning Inwards

World War I shifted attention to specialized needs and problems. Private charities became concerned with ways of raising funds and out of this grew the Federation. The shift in emphasis to the individual and his maladjustments was also greatly influenced by the work of Freud. This preoccupation with the "inner life" and its importance in the causation of maladjustment turned attention away from the influence of social and economic conditions on the individual.

1 Ibid.; p. 332.
In the 1920s there was a widespread but false belief that everything was booming; that the prosperity of the country had resulted in the effective resolution of major social ills. Poverty was thought of as a thing of the past, along with child labour. The solution of social problems was considered by some to have been automatically achieved by business processes. False reassurances were propagated by the country's leaders and it took the crash of 1929 to dispel these illusions.

Although there were some who recognized that "the satisfaction of human needs recognizes no arbitrary division of functions, no geographical boundaries, no sharp distinctions of creed or color, in truth no artificial division whatsoever," there was much controversy surrounding the division of responsibility, finances, and functions of the private and public agencies. One enthusiastic devotee of the Federation Movement advocated an "association of private agencies, public departments, commercial and civic organizations, and groups of people interested in one phase or another of public welfare," and said that this association should operate through functional committees.

The question of whether or not the private agency was in the

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1 Bremner; op. cit.; p. 260.


3 Ibid.; p. 93.
best position to do all the pioneering arose again. Those opposed to this view said that the private agency is restricted in its investigations because of lack of authority, whereas the public agency would be able to compel the giving of facts.

The private sector held the view that the public agencies did not have as high ideals and standards as the private agencies. They had initiated training of staff which was expected to ensure high standards of practice, and the fact that most of the trained staff worked in private agencies supported this argument. However, there was an increasing interest on the part of public agencies to raise their standards as the number of these agencies grew and more areas of need were included in the scope of their activity. There were difficulties in the appointment of staff in public agencies because of the basis upon which appointments were made, and the absence of uniform civil service standards.

Those who favoured private agencies argued that government, state or local, was incapable of doing a good job because of the system of patronage, of party favouritism and rewards, which operated in the welfare departments even more disastrously than in other departments of government. Because of this there were frequent changes of officials and policies and continuity was hard to sustain.


Advocates of private charities also maintained that governments have difficulty in getting their money and because of this factor the public agencies work would be adversely affected. Further criticism of the public agencies were that they could not enter newer fields of services because of fear of criticism by the general public. Moreover, they could not specialize like the private agencies because the majority of the electorate, who were thought to be the less socially-minded members of the community, might not approve of public monies being spent for these purposes. The private sector was also persuaded that there was a growing class of broad-minded, generous-hearted people who would ensure the adequate provision of services apart from government.

The advocates of increased public responsibility based their arguments on the following propositions: It is the function of government to promote the welfare of its subjects, dependency is often in whole or in part caused by conditions over which the individual has no control and society as a whole should assume responsibility; at present there is a grave injustice in that the burden for social welfare is being borne by a fraction of the population when it should be equally distributed upon all; the standards in public agencies are being raised and the sphere of government activities is being enlarged; no longer does government merely fall heir to the programs and procedures of the private agency and restrict itself to the carrying out of these programs.

1 Ibid., pp. 519-521.
One writer advocated certain functions for each to perform. The public agencies should offer a complete service; they should insist on proper standards of service on the part of public and private, and provide for inspection of all; they should be responsible for those services which require large expenditures of funds for indeterminable periods; they should handle cases that call for exercise of police power; cases of long-standing delinquency involving long continued expense and little hope of restoration to normal standards, services which have been demonstrated by private agencies as desirable and necessary.

The private agency should undertake such services as do not fall under statutory provisions, with a view to demonstrating need and desirability; demonstrate by experiment the value of specialization in social work and strive for acceptance of the best standards by all; emphasize the employing of trained social workers; educate and stimulate public opinion through study and research and by wise interpretive publicity; cultivate the spirit of cooperation.

That there was a dearth of cooperation is reflected in the fears of the private agencies that the public agencies would encroach on their territory and that there would be general acceptance of the role of public agencies in all aspects of social welfare.

There was a growing recognition of the necessity for government to provide a variety of services. Consequently, Departments

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1 Ibid.; pp. 523, 524.
2 Ibid.; p. 524.
of Public Welfare were organized. These Departments usually restricted their work to the areas of poor relief and certain child welfare matters. Concern was expressed about the overlapping of services:

Effort should be made to transfer the work of private agencies to the government with as much expedition as is practicable. Pending such transfer, legal arrangements might be made in many cases for the government to pay the cost of such services rendered by private institutions with fixed plants - always with proper control of such expenditure of public money. 1

Some spokesmen denied that taxes would be increased as a result of increased governmental control. They claimed that good public administration would in fact reduce over-all cost and be cheaper than dual control because the cost would be more equitably distributed.

The Depression Years:

A New-Found Partnership between Public and Private Agencies

The Great Depression was one of the greatest single events which brought about a change in thinking regarding welfare matters and the responsibility of the State in making provision for its citizens. It was such a shocking eye-opener that even the Hoover administration could not deny the true state of affairs.


2 Ibid.; p. 460.
Previous to this time there were only four large cities whose public relief agencies employed trained social workers. There were private family agencies in about four hundred large cities, and "self-respecting families in financial need went to voluntary agencies, which 'protected them' from the disgrace of applying for 'pauper aid'."

Development of the public relief agencies had been held back by the fact that private agencies received subsidies from public funds on the basis of their claim that their "methods for preventing destitution and for achieving rehabilitation were more economical."

During the first part of the Depression when unemployment increased from 2,860,000 in the spring of 1929, to over four million in January, 1930, relief was administered mainly by the voluntary agencies. It was only a few months until the financial resources of the voluntary agencies were completely exhausted. Although there were frantic appeals for money by the Community Chests and Councils, funds were not forthcoming because of the complete and widespread economic disaster - there was little money to give.

President Hoover believed that the relief needs should be met by voluntary agencies through funds contributed voluntarily. His attitude prolonged the hardships encountered by the voluntary agencies in trying to meet the demands for relief.


2 Ibid.; p. 118.
Plans were made to give jobs to the unemployed, to "spread the work," to give free medical and hospital service as well as for special appeals to get more money.

By September, 1930, unemployment had increased to over 5,000,000 and county and municipal relief officers had to provide an increasing amount of relief. Because of this development the role of public relief began to be seen as one of the principal functions of government. The States' revenues from taxes had also decreased, but in order to keep unemployed families from starving some states finally were forced, in 1931, to provide state unemployment relief. In the spring of 1931 unemployment had risen to over 8,000,000 with only further increases in sight. Farmers, industrial workers, and employees were all included in the catastrophe. It brought to the attention of all, as nothing else could, that the risks of life fall upon all; not just the morally corrupt or the lazy may find themselves in the position of having to ask for help.

Not until there were multiplied calamities and persistent requests for federal aid were any appeals made in Congress. Families were broken up; disease increased; sick people went without medical care; children were passed from neighbour to neighbour because the parents had no food; suicides increased; T.B. and malnutrition increased; most of the savings of the middle class were lost. When bills for federal aid were passed in Congress, President

1 Ibid.; pp. 118-119.
Hoover vetoed them. Finally in 1932, he passed the Emergency Relief and Reconstruction Act. This action opened the way for provision of relief and public works projects.

There were some lingering hopes on the part of the private agencies that when unemployment ceased they would be able to resume their old position. However, the crisis proved beyond a doubt that the combined resources of government, business, and private philanthropy must be used in making adequate provision for the needy.

By the time of Roosevelt's election in 1932, the unemployed had increased to 15,000,000; in some states 40 percent of the total population were receiving relief, and in some counties as high as 90 percent received aid.

In the ensuing months many temporary emergency relief measures were taken, but it finally became obvious that a permanent welfare system was required, with the federal government sharing expenses. This awareness led to the passing of the Social Security Act in 1935, which act remains the basis for social security measures in the United States. The Act introduced three main programs: 1) social insurance, a Federal old-age insurance system plus federal-state unemployment compensation, 2) public categorical assistance programs supported by Federal grants-in-aid for Old-Age Assistance, Blind, and Dependent Children, 3) program of health and welfare

1 Ibid.; p. 121.

The Social Security Act represented an over-riding of the Pierce veto after the passage of eighty-one years. It was hailed by its supporters as a means of insuring sound democracy and as opening the door of opportunity for the Social Work profession to provide the leadership in a new era of humane, efficient, and constructive welfare administration. 2

Although these programs seemed like a revolutionary step, "it may be said that the measures then adopted were largely implementations, amplifications, and in some instances but partial fulfillments of the program of preventive social work formulated before World War I." 3

The reaction of the private welfare community to the Federal Government's initiative was mixed and although suspicion of public programs died hard it was generally conceded that the scale of the present crisis was far beyond the resources of any combination of private agencies. One speaker in 1931 said,

Whatever may have been the attitude of private charity toward public relief in the past, there has been a growing tendency upon the part of thoughtful leaders in the field of family service to cope with the realities of the present situation and to subordinate cherished traditions and sentiments to the needs of the present crisis. 4

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1 Ibid.; p. 133.
It was during this time of crisis that cooperation between public and private charities existed in fact.

Together they have done the case work and distributed relief. They have merged identities and cut away duplication of effort. They have so fused philanthropy and public service as to break down the line between them. They have met a social need shoulder to shoulder without overmuch jealousy or friction. 1

Instead of the private sector keeping the public sector at arms length there was pressure applied by the private to get the public to assume responsibility for the overwhelming need.

Some of the value in working together is expressed by Elizabeth McCord.

(It) has the effect of keeping the private agencies in vital touch with the breadth of the mass job, and the public agencies with the developing thought of the specialized fields. . . . the work of both would be rooted in the same understanding of people, and interwoven but not overlapping. 2

There was general agreement that with the passing of the depression government would probably assume more and more responsibility for social welfare and at an accelerated rate. The important thing was to develop an awareness of the need for effective government, to secure good government and retain it. The task of enlightening the public so that good government could be secured was one which the private agency thought itself well equipped to do. 3

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There was no relinquishing on the part of private agencies of their claims to being "flexible, expanding, contracting, shifting its emphasis, and of changing its policies to keep pace with the changing needs of a community." There was no acknowledgment that private agencies are equally capable of stagnating and remaining in existence long after they cease to serve a useful function.

Issues in the 1940's and 1950's

World War II caused serious disruptions in American life. The flow of population to large centres where people were occupied with war work, insufficient recreational facilities in these areas, the great increase in mothers going to work with attendant problems of care of the children, general disruption of family life, and the general health and moral conditions in those communities used for military training locations, together with the evacuation of Japanese from the West Coast, changed the nature of Social Services to a large extent. Following the War there was an increase in services for disrupted families, as well as for people with psychiatric problems. The work of social agencies was complicated by the increased shortage of trained personnel. During the War, "a nationwide effort of co-ordination of all available resources was attempted under the guidance of the office of Community War

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Services, which was organized under the Federal Security Agency. The Office was guided by an Inter-departmental Advisory Council, with representatives of all Federal agencies engaged in health and welfare work."

Voluntary organizations co-operated with public organizations to overcome problems caused by shortage of recreational facilities; the United Service Organization was formed in 1941.

The American Red Cross provided medical and casework services in military camps and assisted the families of the servicemen through its Home Services Division. Private social agencies, together with public welfare departments cooperated with the defence councils in giving civic protection, improving nutrition during rationing and war shortages, and (with the support of public health authorities) in rendering 'social protection' against venereal diseases. 2

The War demanded all the effort and attention that was available and differences of opinion were submerged in meeting immediate needs.

Following World War II the social services witnessed an increasing emphasis on family as the basic social unit, and a preoccupation with co-ordination of the mass of agencies that existed, as well as efforts to define responsibilities and financing. There was an attempt to define the functions which were to be performed; by public and private agencies, but there was little real resolution of this problem. Both camps proclaimed


2 Ibid.; pp. 136, 137.
the need for planning community welfare programs so that there would be minimal gaps in service or duplication of effort. Both also maintained that the services should be made available to all who needed them rather than be offered to only a portion of the community.

Making services universally available was a relatively new concept. Formerly it was thought that the welfare services (except those offered under the Social Security Act) should be restricted to a particular segment of the population. A study carried out by Bradley Buell in Syracuse redirected attention to the fact that the welfare services are used by a large percentage of the population. The findings of this study revealed that from 60 percent to 75 percent of families in the urban community studied utilize the services of the health, welfare and recreation agencies. The universality of needs was once again acknowledged and this provided some impetus for later Federal enactments.

There was cooperation between government and voluntary agencies in the establishment of referral centres which were set up to "guide" people to the proper resources in time of need. Agencies shared staff to operate these centres.

Various suggestions were made for the division of responsibility between public and private agencies. One view was that the logical function of each was dependent upon the needs it was set

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up to meet. In addition, the function of each was dependent upon the characteristics of public and private agencies. The following characteristics were cited as typical: The private agency represents the will of the individual or group which sees a need and is motivated to meet that need; the public agency derives its authority and funds from the general public and is accountable through the legislature to the public; the private agency is accountable to its constituency through its Board; the public agency offers quantitative services whereas the private agencies' services are more qualitative; the public agency lacks flexibility, diversity, and quality, whereas the private agency tends to be more flexible in setting goals and limiting intake, and is also freer to change, experiment and demonstrate; the private agencies service is limited through lack of funds. There was little recognition of the fact that voluntary agencies also are often slow to change policies, and that they sometimes carry on traditional programs longer than the public agencies do, after the need for the program has ended. There was little recognition that private agencies sometimes have vested interests which are not set aside in favour of proven need.

During this period in time there was renewed recognition of the fact that the public agency represents the public interest,

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and that it is the inherent responsibility of government to secure
the ultimate good of all. This was a totally opposite view to
the one expressed earlier that "the best government is the least
government."

The 1950's were a period of unrest in the United States. The
Korean War, McCarthyism, periods of high unemployment, the space
race, racial conflict, increased juvenile delinquency and crime
rate, and population explosion, were only some of the major issues.
Some of these issues diverted attention from the social services
and some of them increased interest in them by highlighting the
interdependence of the American people and the need for universal
coverage rather than piecemeal efforts to ensure protection
against the hazards of life over which the individual has no control.
With the advent of the Kennedy Administration, interest in social
problems was rekindled and there was a new attack on poverty. Thus
far there is no comprehensive system of social welfare measures
in the United States.

Among the important changes in the Federal Social Security
Act was an Amendment in 1950 which added a program of Aid to the
Permanently and Totally Disabled. Following this, the 1956
Amendments marked a milestone by including in the purposes of the
assistance programs the objectives of self-support and rehabilita-
tion; moreover, the Federal Government accepted responsibility to
provide financial assistance to the States to help them establish
social work programs to strengthen family life.
The breakdown of family life across the nation was thought to be an issue of such magnitude that federal aid was needed to help prevent its further deterioration and to help families become re-established. In order to supply qualified staff to carry out this new program Congress authorized money for training of public welfare personnel. Money was also authorized to conduct research into the causes of family breakdown and to finance demonstration programs. However, this ideal situation did not materialize because Congress failed to appropriate the money for training programs; it also curtailed appropriations for some of the other programs. Commenting on these developments, Cohen observed "how important it is to exercise eternal vigilance in the legislation. The victory of one session may easily turn into the defeats of another via the appropriation route."

This legislation added to the list of recognized human needs that of rehabilitation. Implicit in it are the ideas of equality of opportunity which reflect the dignity and worth of each person. Rehabilitation and self-support are viewed as essential if a person is to be able to enjoy social living. Commenting on the change in outlook Virginia Ferguson said,


2 Ibid.; p. 95.
There has been a significant change from local and state to Federal responsibility in the entire field of public welfare.... The development of the grant-in-aid device for equalizing funds for social welfare purposes is particularly significant. It has meant a larger share of public service in the areas most in need of such service and least able to pay for it. 1

She goes on to say:

Today voluntary effort in Social Welfare is regarded as supplementary to, rather than as a substitute for, sound public provision. In redefining their functions private agencies have given consideration to the need for expression of minority viewpoints and have recognized as one of their functions that of innovator and interpreter. 2

There were others who claimed for the private agency the task of interpreting the social welfare program to the community.

There is no instrument at hand which can be as effective as a well-organized private social agency in bringing before the eyes of the intelligent citizen the picture of the social problems that arise out of our amazing material progress. 3

Granger maintained that by conviction the private agencies must support high quality of public service and must interpret public welfare to the citizen body and defend it against unfair attack. However, interpretation is not the sole prerogative of the voluntary agency. The public agency must engage in this


2 Ibid.; p. xiii.


activity also because it is the creation of the general public and as such is obliged to keep the public informed about its activities.

The private agency has often made the claim that it is in the best position to experiment and demonstrate new services. Although some proponents of this view recognize that public agencies have better facilities for research and experimentation, and have more ready access to data and resources on a national level, they maintain that the superiority of the private agency in this function is in its being unhampered by official regulations which are a part of a bureaucracy, and neither does it have to secure public agreement that the funds devoted to experimental activities are spent in the interests of the community.

There is a failure in this argument to acknowledge the fact that private agencies which are in a position to experiment are often large and subject to bureaucratic controls just as much as the public agencies. Moreover, the advent of the modern fund raising methods is such that the constituency of the private agency is almost the same as that of the public agency, therefore the private agency has a responsibility to carry out the wishes of its constituency in much the same measure as does the public agency.

It may be noted however, that there is no guarantee that the private agency will in fact carry out this responsibility.

1 Ibid.; p. 72.
The method of fund-raising cultivates a misconception - the Community Chest is not a trustee of the public, and it cannot ensure that the funds raised will be properly spent. It has no control over member agencies other than what they choose to give it.

There is nothing inherent in government auspices which precludes pioneering and experimentation; evidence of its experimental activity may be found in the area of atomic research, highly individualized service in public welfare agencies, and casework services such as that which is offered to families and children under child welfare service and related programs.

An important role which the private agency is in a favourable position to play is that of standard setter and critic - of public service as well as of its own. Although the private agency must support public welfare programs there are times when it is required to oppose what it considers inadequate administration or unwise planning in governmental programs. "In a sense, the voluntary agency is a spokesman for the beneficiaries of the social services, and it may be called upon to be critical of particular operations at the same time that it is defending principles."

Although the 1956 Amendments did not produce any dramatic


2 Granger; loc. cit.
results they did pave the way to a better approach to the problems facing the welfare community. Commenting on the acceptance of the fundamental principles underlying the social security programs by the Eisenhower Administration, Cohen said:

Thus, we now move forward on the assumption of a bipartisan - and nonpartisan - support of these basic programs. This is a factor in the situation which did not exist in the formative period when these programs were being put into operation, and there were constitutional, economic, administrative, emotional and political objections to these programs. 1

This does not mean that there will be complete agreement in these matters in future. Cohen goes on to say:

We can expect that in the kind of society in which we live there will be a strong diversity of opinion on specific program changes in social security. The complexity, and magnitude of the issues involved... raise fundamental questions such as those relating to incentives, motivation, costs, standards of adequacy, the role of public and private agencies, and the relationship between Federal and state governments. Conflicts over these issues seem likely to be intensified rather than minimized, and, unfortunately, the general public seems less likely to understand the implication of the issues as they become more complex. 2

The 1958 Amendments added two important benefits to the total Social Security program, providing dependents' benefits for disabled insurance beneficiaries and removing the limitation to rural areas of Federal grants for child welfare services. The latter change reflected, at last, a recognition of the mobility

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2 Ibid.; p. 91.
of America's population and its concentration in urban areas with attendant problems of child welfare.

The 1962 Amendments extended the benefits provided for in the 1956 Amendments. Funds were increased for Child Welfare, and for training workers. The emphasis in these Amendments was on making the social services a reality rather than just an aspiration, and to improve the services in order to prevent or reduce dependency.

Eveline Burns sees as one of the most difficult issues of the time,

the discovery of the appropriate compromise between individual self-determination and the interests of the community as a whole... Uncertainty as to the moral justification for invoking compulsion is undoubtedly one of the reasons why we are cautious in the use of government for social welfare objectives. ¹

Burns sees the role of government in Social Welfare as an ever expanding one, and as a "powerful instrument for meeting basic needs, for supplementing and supporting private enterprise and the family system." Although theoretically government has been accepted as a legitimate social agency, comparison of earlier expenditures with recent ones would indicate a resistance to it.

"In comparison with our total national product, we are devoting a smaller proportion of our admittedly greater income to welfare than we were in the early thirties: a drop from 6.1 percent to 5.1 percent."

² Ibid.; p. 71.
³ Ibid.; p. 66.
Soul Searching Among The Voluntary Organizations

According to Kramer, "there has been a changing alignment between public and voluntary social welfare services which has resulted in a clouding of differences between them." He cites four ways in which this has become evident: 1) increasingly, tax funds are available to voluntary agencies in the fields of child welfare, mental health, hospital and medical care, vocational rehabilitation, etc. 2) there has been a continued liberalization of legislative intent and perhaps practice in public assistance, so much that the much vaunted superiority of private agency casework skills over public welfare has tended to be less; 3) public agencies have moved into fields formerly preempted by voluntary agencies, such as adoptions; the broadened base of voluntary support, achieved through federated fund raising, has resulted in a situation whereby the number of contributors to what was formerly regarded as private philanthropy is almost as large as the number of taxpayers.

With the expansion of governmental activity in the field of social welfare and its entrance into areas which were formerly thought to be the sole territory of the voluntary agency, the voluntary organizations began to study their position in relation to the new developments. The decrease in voluntary giving was also a cause for looking at their practices and wondering what their future role

2 Ibid., pp. 17, 18.
should be. Some of the questions the voluntary community asked itself were: 1) does voluntary social welfare require some kind of policing to achieve optimum effectiveness and response to expectations of the public? 2) who represents the "public" in determining what is to be expected of voluntary social welfare in the national and local communities? 3) what element of submergence of voluntary agency self-interest exists when these agencies voluntarily join together in common planning or in other undertakings?

As the extent of public welfare services increased, the role of the voluntary agency as a complementary instrument becomes more vital. Private agencies and private agency groups have much to learn in the art of influencing legislation concerning, and administration of, public social welfare services. 2

Granger admonished the voluntary agencies not to think that they had a monopoly on professional skills, and that they needed to keep aware of the fact that wherever there was a situation of a client receiving services, whether the services were designed to relieve external or internal pressure, the basic principles of social work were involved. "The very nature of the responsibility implicit in the person to person helping relationship, with its inherent potential for constructive and destructive uses places all such services clearly in the professional realm". 3


With regard to the functions voluntary agencies should perform, Granger said, "Voluntary agencies as a general rule, should not undertake maintenance needs; . . . instead they should define their areas of service, which may include the provision of some social resources, particularly on a demonstration basis."

New Patterns of Collaboration in Child Welfare

The 1958 Amendments to the Social Security Act marked a decisive step in preparing the way for expanding governmental activity in child welfare services.

Traditionally, child welfare services were the main prerogative of voluntary agencies. With the changes in legislation, more services were now offered to children by public agencies than by private agencies. The results of one study indicated that in 1956, in 28 out of 38 states surveyed, more than four-fifths of the money spent on child welfare services was administered directly by public agencies. With the expansion of public services to children it is expected that private agency programs will become more selective and specialized. Federal Child Welfare Services funds have been used directly to strengthen voluntary agency services through consultation and staff development, and indirectly, through recruitment of additional personnel trained under the educational leave program of public agencies. There is cooperative planning between public and

1 Ibid.; p. 75.

voluntary agencies on a state-wide basis. There is also cooperation in studies and surveys, as well as in demonstration projects and facilities for the emotionally disturbed, mentally retarded, and physically handicapped. Public and private agencies are working together on staff development programs, and in devising standards.

The enlarged role of government in the field of child welfare has raised in acute form the perennial question of the propriety of making public funds available to private agencies.

During the crisis in the 1930s private agencies administered public funds but an early decision was made limiting Federal grants to public agencies. This development plus the later one of mandatory cash payment directly to the individual recipient, was crucial in establishing a pattern which was followed for some time.

This pattern of nonsubsidization of voluntary welfare by tax funds helped to maintain the distinction in social function between public and voluntary welfare. It asserted the principle of direct accountability for expenditure of tax funds by public agencies and preserved the essential independence of the voluntary agencies.

Since that time there have been changes which allow direct payment to agencies providing care to recipients. At the present time public funds are used directly in the operation of private agencies in three major ways: 1) construction of buildings for hospitals and nursing homes; 2) purchase of services from private agencies with public funds, particularly in child care, homes for

1 Ibid.; p. 27.

aged, hospitals and clinics, and vocational rehabilitation; 3) support of projects in research and experimentation.

The practice of subsidizing private agencies out of public funds has its dangers, however, and some typical objections to the practice are summarized below. The practice is said to create inequities and to perpetuate gaps in the provision of essential services. Private agencies establish policies and rules of eligibility which are not related to the coverage of need; consequently in areas where public agencies are non-existent there are frequently glaring gaps in services; public subsidy tends to disguise the extent of need and protects elected officials and others from having to come to terms directly with these needs; a public subsidy system puts roadblocks in the way of the citizen's responsible relationship to his government. For example, one child-placing agency in one state obtained 72 percent of its operating funds from public sources but accepted no Negro children; a voter cannot express his disapproval by trying to vote the board of directors out of office; a system of public subsidy tends to weaken the fund-raising efforts of voluntary agency boards and other private groups; This situation accounts, in part, for the failure


3. See for example, "Public Services Through Private Agencies - Some Problems." Social Service Review; March, 1959; p. 70.
of private agencies to develop more lay and professional leadership to fight the battle for improved and expanded public services. Private agencies very often have achieved vested interests in tax dollars to the point where their leadership may fear antagonizing legislative and governmental groups. The failure of grants paid to private agencies to meet the cost of care results in admission of greater numbers in an attempt to meet the costs, standards of care are lowered in the process.

Clearly there is no simple answer to the complex problems inherent in the relationship between public and voluntary agencies. It is probably illusory to look for a comprehensive formula which will provide a sound guide to the distribution of responsibilities for each and every situation; but a prerequisite to the achievement of good standards of service and maximum accountability is ruthless honesty in inquiry capable of distinguishing reality from rhetoric.

1 Berkowitz; op. cit.; p. 107.
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