

The present Situation of Professional Social Workers
in Germany

by Mrs. Adele Beerensson

Head Manager of the German Association of Social Workers.

The situation of social welfare workers is closely connected with that of welfare work. ^{altogether} The apparent prosperity of German industry ^{and winners} after 1924 showed an increase in welfare work and correspondingly an improvement of conditions for the welfare workers. Since the war welfare work has gone through a series of varying phases of development.

The end of the war marked a period of inner change, a destruction of the old form of state, the rise of the proletariat. With this change there goes hand in hand a transformation in the point of view of welfare work. This attitude toward welfare work had, it is true, occasionally been considered before, but now it took on a more definitive form. From the care of the poor with its ideas of social disgrace, its meagre help, we find a development into modern welfare work with its preventative measures. A way is paved for quite new forms of welfare work, an extension of the field of public welfare work, and that in a period when ^{body} everything was crying for state aid, an establishment of welfare work as a part of the government, the inclusion of ^{quite} whole new fields of welfare work: for disabled soldiers, for their dependents, widows and orphans, pensioners, for those who had ^{their money} lost during the inflation, and others.

During the war and especially immediately after the war ended, in 1918 there was a necessity for including intensive economic assistance in welfare work: the necessity of ^{returning} finding work for the home-coming soldiers or granting assistance until work could be found, finding suitable work for the disabled. ^{invalids}

Such a time of distress brings with it an understanding of the necessity for utilising all possible resources in social work. A strong initiative is developed, impregnated with the impetus of ^{private} ~~free~~ welfare work, born by the ^{up} ~~impetus~~ of humanity, the training for responsibility, the endeavour to restore families which had been ^{destroyed} ~~broken up~~. New forms of hygiene welfare are discovered, ^{as well as} welfare for the growing youth.

^{cal conditions} The period of prosperity in welfare work, identical with that of ^{economic} ~~an~~ industry, from 1924 to 1928, is followed by a period of financial distress, a curtailing of all measures. The increasing distress of broad masses of the people, as a result of the general unemployment, led to an accumulation of people seeking relief and advice, also to a mechanisation of welfare as a result of this. At the same time there can be seen a bureaucratic tendency in welfare work, which even includes private charity work.

It follows that these conditions affect the situation of ~~women~~ welfare workers, whose work is ~~threatened~~ seriously by this mass distress. On the one hand we find an overburdening of ^{social} ~~individual~~ workers, as this distress brings with it also a decrease in personnel, further an impossibility to take the measures this increasing distress requires because of a lack of means.

All these circumstances; too much work, too ^{small} ~~little~~ funds, bring with them a physical and mental ^{and tiredness} ~~encumbrance~~ for the ^{social} ~~individual~~ workers which must be done away with, ^{unless} ~~if~~ the last resources ~~are not~~ to be destroyed, which can assist and quiet the poor, embittered people.

Welfare work in Germany is ^{since the war} ~~carried on~~ for the most part by paid workers ~~since the war~~, that is, since everyone has been dependent on earning their own living, both in private as well as public welfare work and chiefly by women workers. Professional male social workers have entered this field

of endeavor comparatively recently and consequently, ~~as well as because of~~
to the nature of the work, ^{their number is very small} ~~are few when compared with the~~ ^{or} women.

^{social}
The women workers are united for the most part in three professional associations in Germany:

German Association of Women Social Workers.....about 4500 members

Association of Evangelical women Welfare Workers
in Germany.....about 3200 "

Association of Catholic Women Social Workers of
Germany.....about 1800 "

These three associations are ^{further} also united in a work association or kind of federation.

These professional associations, which are in character ^{trade-} unions, must fulfill all the duties required of such associations:

^{demonstrations}
Cooperation in conditions of service ^{establishment} (settlement of wages, vacation, decision as to what is to be done when a worker is ill, notice);

Legal protection for members;

Professional promotion and personal assistance to members.

The associations try further to cooperate in:

^{shaping}
The regulation of welfare work,

all questions of training and further education. ^{known} of the social work

Of late years it has been found necessary to make further efforts for the retention of the social worker's faculty for work, both inwardly and outwardly; for instance, more intensive partnership work within the associations, mutual assistance among the workers themselves, arrangements for informal meeting, increase in opportunities for further training, for every inner and mental enrichment serves as a bulwark against the mass misery which we are daily opposing. —

In addition some of the other large employees and officials as-

sociations try to include welfare workers. These are associations which are not made up of one profession and therefore cannot do justice to the special work of the social workers. A part of the women social workers are organised in two associations, especially in such places where ^{the} ~~a~~ union of officials represents the interests of these workers in conflict with the authorities or municipalities. —

1927/28 the salary list of officials and the wage rates of employees were re-regulated throughout Germany; at the same time the work of the official social workers was regulated, social workers (also called welfare nurses or helpers). This was the first time that social workers were taken into consideration as a special category of official employees.

Since then it has been the practise in Germany to group certain categories of officials and civil servants together and to pay uniform salaries to each group, also to regulate the hours and general conditions of work the same for each group, differentiating according to accomplishment, age and length of service. Work done in private charity and social organisations is similarly regulated, although the rates and ^{compared to the} ~~collective~~ contracts may differ somewhat ^{on account} ~~because~~ of a lack of means.

This collective regulation may have some good sides, for it provides a certain basis and standard in each case for the valuation, for instance, also for country and small town conditions, in which social workers are still new and an appraisal of their work is at present uncertain and not suitable. Collective regulation has however, not only made uniform the external conditions to a certain extent, but also restricted and limited the development of welfare work. —

To-day there is a complete net of private and public welfare work covering ^{over} ~~the whole~~ of Germany, but the development, the work of individuals is bound

bounded by rather narrow borders at least as far as official work goes. There is further a general bureaucratisation and mechanisation instead of free work and individual personal welfare work.

If we look back ~~at all~~ ^{to} at the beginning of social work, which in Germany originated at the turn of the century and at that time was the exclusive work of women, we are bound to state, ——— that there is little left of that which was delegated to the pioneers of the work by some of the far-seeing men in private and public welfare work. Everywhere the work of women is being opposed, the welfare work limited -- often far beyond the amount required by economy.

The direction of most of the departments of welfare is in the hands of men, who have had no professional training. The advance of women in public welfare work ~~takes longer and is~~ ^{grows} ^{and more} difficult, in fact is almost impossible in Germany to-day.

In spite of this we shall not lose sight of our ^{Mission} ~~aim~~, the obligation, which forces us to be of assistance to people in Misery. We shall hold our belief in the necessity for systematic relief above the difficulties of our daily work, and not overestimate the importance of relief, which must always remain an auxiliary measure only.

.