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## THE COMMON WELFARE

### A NEW FORCE IN THE WAR ON FEEBLE-MINDEDNESS

Alexander Johnson has resigned the general secretaryship of the National Conference of Charities and Correction to become the head of the new Extension Department of the Training School for Feeble-minded at Vineland, N. J. His resignation will take effect as soon as the executive committee of the conference fills his place, or at latest immediately after the close of the fortieth conference in Seattle. The department at Vineland of which he is to take charge constitutes a new method and weapon of attack upon the racial and social evils of degeneracy. So far as is known it is the first organized scheme for spreading far and wide the facts as to the prevalence and effects of feeble-mindedness, and for carrying on a persistent propaganda in behalf of preventive measures.

The Training School at Vineland is primarily an institution for the care and education of feeble-minded youth. Under the superintendency of E. R. Johnstone, extensive researches have been made into the causes and hereditary nature of mental abnormality. By tracing back, through personal visits to the homes by field workers, hundreds of genealogies; by comparing like and unlike matings and charting their succession of offspring; and by intensive study of individuals, the department of research, under the direction of Henry H. Goddard, has brought together a mass of data from which it is now felt reliable deductions can be made and on which preventive measures can be safely based.

To supplement this laboratory of research the

new extension department comes as a publicity and propagandist agency. The hypotheses and proposals which enter into its program are somewhat as follows: There have been three stages in our modern thinking about feeble-mindedness. In the early days it was held to be entirely possible, by careful training, to fit the feeble-minded boy or girl to take a normal place in the work of the world. After that hope was dashed it was believed that society had discharged its full obligation to its defectives and itself when it had segregated all the obviously feeble-minded in institutions and appropriated sufficient money for their comfort during life. Presently it was discovered, however, that the ordinary processes of commitment reached only a few of the pronounced cases, and that there were in addition great numbers of border-line people, whose abnormality could be detected only by elaborate tests and who yet constituted a real menace to the purity of the human stock. In addition, it was learned that the increase among the feeble-minded is much more rapid than that of the whole population. English figures place the birth rate in normal families at 4 and that among the feeble-minded at 7.3. Mere custodial care of flagrant instances was therefore seen to offer no hope of even keeping up with the evil. Then it was that the vital need of stopping feeble-mindedness in its sources became manifest. Bad strains, it was concluded, must be prevented from continuing themselves.

So far the scientist and investigator went, and for this much they were sufficient. But now comes the need for telling the world what its

known about this menace to it. The very classes among whom the evil exists are perhaps most in need of the information and, in some respects, hardest to reach. Here is a task, then, of constantly dinning unpleasant subjects into the public ears—ears often closed to that which needs technical explanation. It will not do simply to convince the intelligent members of society that their feeble-minded fellows must be shut up where they can have no offspring. By that method you leave all the normal people with defectiveness in their ancestry quite free to transmit to the next generation a new body of imbeciles to be in their turn detected and closeted away. It is a problem, therefore, of putting a new law in the moral code, of saying to men and women: "Just as none of you would now marry a brother or sister, so you must come to think of it as a crime and a sin—a sin against your race—to marry into a strain that shows feeble-mindedness in its past."

In so far as this is a task of publicity and education, it will fall to the scope of the new extension department. In giving the widest possible circulation to the facts of mental degeneracy, in originating practical measures of prevention, and in securing their adoption, the department is expected to do its most distinctive work.

#### SOME PLANS FOR PRESENT ACTION

The new department has been made possible by the contributions of individuals interested in the work of the Vineland School, particularly in the problems of eugenics. It will try to cooperate effectively with all agencies now engaged in related activity, such as the eugenics department of the American Breeders' Association. It is declared that care will be taken to avoid duplication of work being done by other organizations and that in its publications and tracts credit will be given to original sources and investigations.

Those connected with the department have been slow to prophesy large things for it. Some details of the immediate work to be undertaken have been determined, however. On the educative side it will maintain a lecture bureau through which addresses on matters relating to feeble-mindedness will be given wherever local interest is sufficient to provide halls, audiences and traveling expenses. A tour throughout many southern states made this winter by Mr. Johnson in the interests of the National Conference revealed a marked demand for just this sort of service. As a further educative measure, it is expected that moving picture films will be prepared illustrating present ways of

caring for and studying the feeble-minded, such as methods of making tests, feeble-minded children at play and at work, dances, school gardens, etc. In addition to the publication of *The Training School*, a pamphlet which the Vineland institution now issues monthly, a news bureau will be conducted. This will furnish newspapers and magazines with timely copy on all the subjects included in the scope of the department. A third bureau, one of information, will be maintained and will be free to all who wish to make inquiries of it.

In order to conduct these bureaus, information will be drawn from every available and reliable source. A systematic correspondence is to be carried on with graduates of the teachers' department of the school, as well as with all other institutions for the feeble-minded, here and abroad. In this and other ways it is hoped to collect and analyze a large number of individual cases, including photographs, life histories, pedigrees, Binet tests, etc. These will be secured from the widest possible radius and will be studied with a view to the discovery of unknown facts about the nature of mental defectiveness. It is expected also to conduct tests of children in various cities, the work to be done by experts sent out from the department. These experts will also instruct school principals and others in the method of making tests.

Active propaganda will be carried on in states which now make no provision for their feeble-minded residents. Among these are Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Utah, Vermont, Wyoming, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Tennessee, and Texas.

The laws of the different states dealing with the feeble-minded, epileptic, insane and other defectives will be collected and compared. Especial attention will be paid to laws on marriage and sterilization.

One of the most interesting of the experiments which the department will make will be its attempt to demonstrate scientifically the economic value of the labor of the trained imbecile. This will be based on work now being done at Rome, New York; Templeton, Massachusetts; Fort Wayne, Indiana, and other places. It will be completely separated from the educational and custodial work for the feeble-minded and most of the labor will probably be utilized in clearing, grubbing and draining rough land, planting trees, and in growing, canning and drying fruit. It is not the intention of the department ever to employ a large number of persons in this way, but simply to demonstrate what can be done with a small group, probably seventy-five or a hundred.

### THE MAN AT THE HEAD AND WHY HE WAS CHOSEN

Mr. Johnson, who has for many years been a contributing editor of *THE SURVEY* and is one of the best known men in the field of social work today, was chosen to direct the new activity at Vineland partly because of his ability as a lecturer of great dynamic power and partly because of his successful administration of the Indiana School for Feeble-minded Youth at Fort Wayne. During the ten years of his superintendency there, which ended in 1903, he pioneered in utilizing the labor power of the able-bodied feeble-minded adults. Particularly notable was his demonstration at that time of the extent to which the higher grades of imbecile could be trained to useful work, such as building, farming, brick-making, etc., under proper supervision with such efficiency that many were able to support themselves entirely so long as they remained within the custody of the school. His experience there enabled him also to enter the lists as a champion of remedial legislation. In those days people were just waking up to the crucial importance of the feeble-minded woman of child-bearing age in any program of prevention. Many of the old school shook their heads, therefore, when Mr. Johnson drafted and aided in putting through the legislature a measure that opened the doors of his school to women not over forty-five. The previous age limit was eighteen.

It was largely at Fort Wayne that Mr. Johnson learned also the statesmanship of institution management. It was this training which the Russell Sage Foundation called on when it recently turned to him to write its book on the significance and administration of the almshouse. Mr. Johnson has many times conducted the courses in institution management at the New York and Chicago schools of philanthropy. Of the former he was associate director from 1904 to 1906.

Between 1884 and 1886 he was general secretary of the Associated Charities of Cincinnati, and for the next three years held a similar position with the Chicago Charity Organization Society. During those years he acquired that experience and acquaintance with modern philanthropic theory which fitted him to become in 1889 the first secretary of the state board of charities of Indiana. It was largely due to Mr. Johnson's conception of the relationship which a board with advisory powers should bear to the institutions under it, and to his ability to make such a body a real and sympathetic force in their administration, that Indiana became a leader in the movement to secure effective and intelligent classification and treatment of society's defective wards. There, too, Mr. John-



ALEXANDER JOHNSON

Who is to head a forward movement in the prevention of feeble-mindedness

son first saw the possibilities of systematic publicity, of that systematic co-operation with the censors of the people's information which is essential to the highest efficiency of any public business. Ernest P. Bicknell, national director of the American Red Cross, was then one of a group of newspaper reporters in the state capital who worked closely with Mr. Johnson in letting the folks throughout the state know what was going on in their own institutions.

But it is as general secretary of the National Conference, and through his lectures and writing, that Mr. Johnson has become most widely known in the social field. When he entered on the work of the conference eight years ago he took hold of a membership of 1373. He will leave it with a membership of 3500. At that time it was just beginning to widen its horizon beyond the fields of organized charity and institution management to take in the newer forces that were gradually being brought to bear on social conditions. Today it is perhaps the most virile and far reaching of the national non-propagandist humanitarian bodies. Its awakening effect on the people of state and city where its annual session is held is such that a dozen places often vie with each other in the effort to secure its next meeting.

For the past few years Mr. Johnson has lived on the shore of an Indiana lake, where he owns a small farm which he named Yggdrasil. His office was situated in Angola. His new work will require his removal to Vineland.

#### FEDERAL MONEY FOR VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

It is likely that the fate of the Page-Wilson bill, which grants federal aid to the states to promote vocational education, will be settled some time between January 20 and February 1. During the past three weeks mayors, school principals and superintendents, agricultural bodies, and national, state and local commercial and industrial associations have rallied strongly to its support, as had been previously done by most of those engaged in furthering vocational education for boys and girls over fourteen years. The bill is on the calendar of the United States Senate for early action and the hopes of its friends have risen high. It has met with the opposition of those who do not like to see a further expansion of federal activity as well as of those who are against its specific proposals.

This measure, which has the endorsement of the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education, grants such specified sums of money for successive years, beginning in 1913, that by 1921 the total annual expenditure under it will be, for the federal government, about fourteen and three-quarters millions. For every dollar which the national government thus appropriates, the states themselves or the local governments are required to spend another dollar of their own.

The bill provides both for the instruction of children and the training of teachers, as follows:

1. For training teachers to give instruction in agriculture, industries and home economics it gives \$480,000 a year to state colleges of agriculture and mechanical arts and \$1,000,000 a year to normal and other training schools. It is the intention that most of this money shall go to schools now in existence. This grant takes effect in 1913.

2. For the operation of schools which shall give instruction in agriculture, industries and the household arts the bill gives \$9,000,000 a year. These may be all day, part time or evening schools. This grant takes effect in 1916. It thus becomes available three years after the sum for training teachers, the purpose being to provide a period of grace in which to prepare teachers for the job.

3. A million dollars is granted yearly to branch stations which shall provide demonstration work in agriculture. This sum becomes available in 1916.

4. For the purpose of extension teaching the

bill grants to state colleges of agriculture and mechanical arts a half million dollars in 1913. By the provisions of the measure, this sum would increase to \$3,000,000 in 1921.

#### THE QUESTION OF THE DUAL SYSTEM

The most discussed administrative question in the establishment of vocational education today is the question whether this education ought to be carried on as a separate and distinct system of public instruction, or whether it ought to be engrafted on the present public school system and incorporated in its curriculum. This is the mooted question of the "dual system." Wisconsin stands for the dual plan but the trend among those states which have lately made provision for vocational instruction seems to be toward incorporating the work in the existing system. In a few days we shall know what attitude is taken towards this most important question by the board of managers of the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education. At the recent annual meeting of this society<sup>1</sup> a committee of manufacturers, teachers, social workers and vocational guides drew up a tentative statement of principles and policies and urged its adoption upon the board of managers. This statement declared that the work in vocational education, whether administered by regular public school authorities or a separate board of control, and whether conducted in a separate building or under the same roof as the regular school, should be carried on separately and independently from that of general education, so that it may be left free to realize the dominant aim of fitting for useful employment. This, the statement continues, requires a separate organization, under a separate head or a distinctive management, and separate equipment, courses of study, pupils and teachers who shall have had extended experience in the industries they are employed to teach.

The Page-Wilson bill allows each state to solve this problem for itself. Under its provisions each state is required to have a state board for vocational education to administer the act. But the state can decide whether a new board shall bear this name or whether the name can be given to the old board. The bill then requires this board to formulate its own plan for using the funds made available by the act. This plan is to be submitted to the secretary of the interior. It will probably be passed upon by the commissioner of education under him. If the secretary approve the plan, the state board then becomes the highest power in putting it into effect. Only if changes are later made in

<sup>1</sup>See THE SURVEY for Dec. 14, p. 321.