ATTENDING to chart a course for the first school of social work in this country to give primary emphasis to public welfare, the leading thinker, then and now, in the United States, in the total area of the field, in 1920 wrote into the catalogue of the School of Public Welfare of the University of North Carolina the following statement:

To meet the specific needs of the State and the University and, as far as possible, the South, a four-fold service was planned. The first emphasizes instruction in Sociology and Social Problems. . . . The second emphasizes training for social work and community leadership, with special reference to town, village and rural communities, and with special application to the State of North Carolina and the South. . . . The third aspect of the work emphasizes direct and indirect community service, or social engineering through the avenues of community leaders, county superintendents of public welfare, local and district conferences, and community planning for leaders, for industrial managers, and others. The fourth aspect emphasizes social research, scientific inquiry, and publication of results estimated to be of value to the State, the University and to the general field of public welfare and social progress.¹

A little later Professor James H. Tufts, in the May, 1923, number of The Journal of Social Forces, wrote:

Two somewhat different groups of persons engaged in education approach this task from somewhat different angles but with a similar outcome. The original schools of social work were organized in close relationship to the various philanthropic agencies something as schools of nursing were connected with hospitals. This close relationship was doubtless advantageous at the beginning in the respect that when the profession was in the making it kept the instruction in the school in close relationship to the needs of the field and afforded an opportunity for emphasizing practical field work. But the limitations of schools so conceived are obvious and the tendency has been to seek better preparation on the part of candidates and a broader scientific basis of training. Another group of educators have had the problem presented to them as that of proper development of their subjects and applications of these. Just as state universities have been led to develop departments of engineering and medicine in close connection with the work in pure mathematics, physics, and biology so departments of sociology, economics, and political science have felt the need of developing the schools of social work as the field in which the social sciences would find their natural outlet. In addition to this more purely academic drive there has doubtless been an influence from the general strengthening of service to the community on the part of state universities. Institutions directly supported by the public have naturally been sensitive to direct possibilities of serving the public in manifold ways; just as they have trained physicians, dentists, engineers, agricultural advisors, teachers of domestic arts, so they have felt it appropriate to give preparation in social work. Approaching the problem from a university point of view they would naturally be governed less by the concrete needs of philanthropic agencies than by the resources in the way of staff and laboratory facilities which their institutions afford. In universities which make graduate work an important feature the tendency would be to place emphasis on research in the training for social work.²

Writing at about the same time, not precisely from the point of view of the State University, but in a journal connected with such a university—The Journal

¹ School of Public Welfare, University of North Carolina, Catalogue, 1920–1921.
of Social Forces, September, 1923—Franklin H. Giddings admonished the social worker:

Don’t deceive yourself with the notion that you can understand what your nation, or your town, or your neighborhood, or your family, does, or why it does it, until you have had the patience to learn what it is, or with the notion that you can learn what it is in any other way than by painstakingly resolving it into component units and scrutinizing them. Short cuts to a knowledge of society and to proficiency in helping it through tribulations will yield you nothing, and get you nowhere.3

Antedating all of these somewhat, Dr. Arthur James Todd, of the University of Minnesota, in The Scientific Spirit of Social Work, 1919, had written:

Science is both an attitude and a technique. The attitude...can be cultivated without teachers, books, or colleges. The technique, particularly social technique, may be had from the literature of economics, political science, and sociology in their applied aspects.4

Continuing his discussion of education for social work, in 1926, in a little volume entitled Public Welfare and Social Work, written in response to a request from county superintendents of public welfare for a suggested course of reading, Dr. Odum pointed out two trends:

There is, on one hand [he wrote] a continuing tendency to develop the specialist and the technician within the subdivisions of the whole field of social work. There is, on the other hand, a growing consensus of opinion that many of the strongest social workers of the future will be general leaders of community and society, trained in the technique of social leadership...

It will be seen, therefore, [he continues later in the discussion] “that one of the most important tasks of social work is that of utilizing the social sciences in the study and working out of its social problems


5 Howard W. Odum, Public Welfare and Social Work, p. 16.

In much the same way as the physical sciences have been utilized to develop good roads, factories, and the other varied phases of material development. Just as the great advances made in physics, chemistry, engineering, and other physical sciences have contributed to the marvelous development of economic and material welfare, so economics, sociology, history, government, anthropology, social psychology, statistics, jurisprudence, and the other social sciences must be utilized in the scientific adjustment of social relationships. Just as the loyal and devoted efforts of the physical scientists, working faithfully over long periods of time have been rewarded by great success, so the zeal and persistency of the social scientists must ultimately bring to bear upon social work great contributions of value. Social study, social research, social work—all must go hand in hand in the new era of the development of human relationships.6

In Social Forces for May, 1934, in an article entitled "Where the Sociologist and Social Worker Begin," he continues a slightly different aspect of the same thesis:

What the new ideals of public welfare have been striving for since 1920 now appear, if not of immediate attainment, at least to have ample beginning. That is, social work and public welfare are far more than mere techniques of relief and emergency adjustment; their philosophy underlies the very fundamentals of American government, and their techniques as never before involve technical ways and means "for making democracy effective in the unequal places"... The question facing both social workers and sociologists is whether they can now attain sufficient comprehensiveness and breadth of understanding of the natural culture and problems, on the one hand, and on the other hand, practical and realistic, as well as abstractly scientific methods of study and work as will enable them to supply just what is demanded by the present crisis in American life. For it must be clear that in proportion as the nation adopts more and more of the planned society there will be need of increasing ratios of sound, actual, practical technical ways of those things which the emergencies of the nation demand. National charity can be no substitute for social reconstruction.7

6 Ibid., pp. 29, 30.

And a little farther on this sentence suggestive of Giddings: "Men who did not know, could not do."

In like manner the report of the President's Research Committee on Social Trends, 1933, the chapter on Public Welfare, supports the philosophy of education for social work which involves a thorough knowledge of the social sciences:

Technically, the emerging needs appear to be:

1. A more adequate public relief, adapted in principle and methods to meet the demands of social change and emergency and economic cycles and depression; the development of a plan for social insurance which will guarantee security and eliminate more and more the strain of social hazards and fear; and

2. Social planning which will bring to bear the fullest utilization of social science and social research and their application through social work and public administration.

The demand for an effective application of the social sciences to welfare work may be likened to the emergence of social science in the 1860's and 1870's. As a result of a call by the Massachusetts Board of State Charities in 1865 the American movement for composite scientific attack upon problems of society was inaugurated with the establishment of the American Social Science Association. Thereafter there were several state associations and many local groups and subsequently the National Conference of Charities and Corrections in 1874, which became the main organization after 1879. The social sciences, however, became professionalized and departmentalized, so that, for the time being at least, the original plan to apply social science to social planning and special practical problems of social welfare did not materialize. There is much in the present trends in public welfare which offers a similar and more dynamic challenge to social science to apply its findings to government and social organization.9

These excerpts from the writings of eminent scholars and thinkers, all but one of them immediately concerned with programs of education for social workers in state universities are evidence of one of the trends pointed out by Professor Odum and of a significant and widespread point of view in state universities as to what should be the basic characteristic of education for social work. But Dr. Odum pointed out a second trend. As Professor Tufts suggested the earlier schools of philanthropy grew directly out of the private agencies. They were a sort of expansion of the apprenticeship system. This idea of learning by doing has continued to occupy a place of paramount importance in the minds of many of those concerned with education, or, as they perhaps would prefer to say, training for social work. Some of those prominent in the field of social work education, apparently, have attached no great significance to the admonition of Professor Giddings that there is no short cut to an understanding of social problems, or to the warning of Professor Odum that from the point of view of dealing with problems involving either social relationships or personal relationships, in the field of social work, especially, a little learning is a dangerous thing.10

This theory of education for social work as an adaptation of the apprenticeship system or a development from that system has been the dominant one in the American Association of Schools of Social Work. Occupied with training for the private social work agencies the majority of the schools were apparently unaware in the period from 1920 to 1932 of the impending shift in the importance of private social work as compared with public social service, or of the implications of that shift as to the type and scope of education that would be needed. Those thinkers mainly in state universities who were acutely aware of what was happening were not merely "pioneering in public welfare,"—a phrase frequently on the

---

9 Ibid., p. 466.
9 President's Research Committee on Social Trends, Recent Social Trends in the United States, II, 1271.
10 Howard W. Odum, Public Welfare and Social Work, p. 44.
lips of Dr. Odum; they were often voices crying in the wilderness.

Then 1932, 1933, 1935 came and found us fearfully unprepared to man the rapidly expanding programs of public social service. One result was to arouse the state universities to action in protest against the attitude of the old-line schools. In 1936 after observations, conferences, and correspondence with state universities throughout the nation, Dr. Odum, in a memorandum to the American Association of Schools of Social Work at its meeting in early summer in Atlantic City, summarized the position of the universities. I quote items from that memorandum bearing most directly on the general theory of education for social work.

The points on which the Association and the universities seem to agree are:

1. That professional work should be primarily for graduates;
2. That adequate field work supervision must be provided;
3. That thorough family case work taught by well trained faculty members, should be featured.

Beyond this the universities, in accordance with policies and practices involved in providing a body of knowledge, techniques, and services within a university administrative set-up, go further.

They do not see the need or desire for complete separateness of social work curricula from economics, sociology, public administration, political science, and other allied fields. They point out that this is contrary to present-day university trends toward integration.

They point out that it is not always consistent with best practices or with administrative practicability to segregate the full time of faculty members who teach in the curriculum of social work.

This separateness does not contribute to the better understanding and coordination of social work in the university curriculum.

They feel further that appointments to the faculty for social work instruction should be made on the basis of personnel with university training and experience commensurate with other members of the faculty.

In a private letter dated December 9, 1937, a distinguished sociologist, himself a recognized authority in at least two specialties within the general field of public welfare, head of the Department of Sociology in a state university with long recognized national leadership in interest in the whole field of public social services, goes farther than any of those already quoted:

How do we know that a graduate student with an M.A. or a Ph.D., with fine training in political science, sociology and economics is not able to do a good piece of work even though he may not have had the holy hands of an orthodox social worker placed upon him in heavenly benediction? I wonder if the social workers are not making a great many assumptions which have not been tested as to their truth at the present time.

Finally, from a letter dated January 7, 1938, sent to heads of Departments of Sociology in state universities throughout the country, by Dr. J. J. Rhyne of the University of Oklahoma, I summarize assumptions and declarations as follows:

He protests what he believes is a deliberate movement "to wrest control of the public welfare training program from sociologists and departments of sociology in spite of the fact that sociologists were among the founders of the whole movement," and to prevent state universities from training the personnel in the federal-state social security program. He believes that the approved program of study is not adapted to the newer field of public welfare. The curriculum is too rigid, composed too largely of technical social work courses, with too little opportunity for "content courses dealing with the
social and economic conditions in the area." Emphasis should be on "a wide range of subject matter in economics, sociology, political science and psychology." Instructors for such a curriculum should rank in scholarship with teachers in other graduate divisions of the university.

These excerpts from spokesmen for state universities covering a period of twenty years show a rather consistent and unchanging point of view. Two points of emphasis have been noted. The social work curriculum should form an integral part of the graduate curriculum and therefore conform to the same standards as other graduate work. A knowledge of the nature of the problems with which the social worker must deal is of first importance. The social sciences, therefore, should form the basis for the social work curriculum.

This does not mean the ignoring of the social work techniques. In fact, the leading thinkers in the state university group have insisted upon the importance of technical courses taught by technicians. In Education for Social Work, the first book on the subject to be published, in 1921, Dr. J. F. Steiner, then Professor of Social Technology in the University of North Carolina, wrote:

A great mistake will be made by the universities that have recently become interested in education for social work if they believe that the addition of a field work course to their traditional courses in social science will equip them for professional instruction.

Where their influence is particularly needed is in giving greater emphasis to intellectual standards. The curriculum of schools of social work has been built up almost entirely by practical workers whose emphasis has chiefly been laid on the side of experience. The courses of study have been designed to teach how particular processes should be carried on and definite situations met. Along with this emphasis upon the value of training by doing there has grown up, if not a distrust of intellectual studies, at least a failure to appreciate their proper place in a scheme of professional education. Dr. H. M. Cassidy, Director of Social Welfare, Province of British Columbia, Canada, and director-elect of the social work curriculum in the University of California, in his presidential address to the Canadian Conference of Social Work, June, 1938, stressed as "veritably the foundation stones of our social welfare edifice," research and training. Speaking specifically of the needs of Canada he said:

If our schools of social work are awake to their opportunities it is very possible that they can develop into professional training schools for social service administration in the broad sense of the term, which will give students both a general education in social problems and in the social services, along with specialization in some one branch. If this development takes place the schools will become vastly more important than they have been in the past. This point is receiving increasing recognition in the United States, where the programmes of the schools of social work at various universities are being re-organized and broadened along the lines suggested above.

There is no reason to believe that he will change his concept of what should constitute education for social work as he returns to the United States.

Odum, consistently, up to the present, has insisted upon the importance of technical courses as furnishing the media through which knowledge from the social sciences may be applied to the solution of social work problems.

The two "trends" pointed out by Dr. Odum in 1926 have continued in spite of the fact that there have been concessions on both sides. The academicians have won to the extent that it is now required by the constitution of the American Association of Schools of Social Work

15 J. F. Steiner, Education for Social Work, pp. 44, 45.
that to be eligible for membership in the Association a school must be a part of a college or university which is on the list of colleges and universities approved by the Association of American Universities. This provision, however, was given a very liberal interpretation in one of the most recent admissions to the Association. The technicians have succeeded in securing increased emphasis upon such items of the curriculum as "field work." There has been, too, a noticeable change in the type of directors of social work curricula. Within the last half dozen years, at least four nationally known scholars interested in the broader aspects of social work have retired from the active direction of the social work curricula in their respective universities. Their places have been filled, usually by technicians; in no case by a scholar of equal rank.

In spite of the trend toward the incorporation of the social work curriculum into the university there continues a tendency in opposition to the general trend in education to set up separate schools of social work within the university. These separate schools do not necessarily conform to the standards of the graduate division of the institution of which they are a part. There is a tendency, for example, to include in the student's program so large a number of courses as to appear to render impossible serious work on the graduate level. In spite, therefore, of apparent gains, the university group are, it appears, perhaps correctly disturbed not only concerning standards of work within the schools but also lest the schools of social work should repeat the experiences of some other professional groups and find themselves outside the main stream of knowledge in their own field.

Rather closely related to this danger and furnishing grounds for concern upon the part of both the social worker and the school of social work is a condition now existing. It is interesting to study the list of the names of men and women who hold the important positions in public social work, federal, state, and local, alongside the membership roll of the American Association of Social Workers. At a recent meeting of the American Association of Schools of Social Work, moreover, three new faces were conspicuous among deans and directors. Two of these new directors of social work curricula were educated for the law; became state commissioners of public welfare; and went from public welfare administration to the direction of programs of education for social work. The third is an economist who went from university teaching into public welfare administration and thence to the head of a social work curriculum in a state university.

It may be that these things are explained by the fact that modern social work is a new profession. It may be that the small proportion of "professional" social workers in important public welfare positions is chargeable to an ill informed public opinion or to the manipulations of politicians. But it may be, on the other hand, that the schools of social work need to look critically at the type of education they are offering. It may be that Rhyne, and Gillin, and Giddings, and Odum are right in their suggestions that the equipment of the social worker must include a knowledge of the nature of the problems to the solution of which he is supposed to contribute as well as of techniques and formulae for applying such knowledge, and that the curricula of schools of social work need broadening and enriching from the social sciences.