RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL*

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THIS paper is actually part of a series which was initiated by Bertram Gold at the 1953 Conference. He analyzed "The Role of the Professional in the Jewish Community."[1] In 1955, Dr. Nathan Cohen discussed "The Status and Security of the Jewish Communal Worker."[2]

My discussion will of necessity relate to the total field of social work without special reference to the Jewish segment. The only special aspect of Jewish social work with which I am familiar is the knowledge that it has generally established standards of professional performance and social responsibility which are an inspiration to the rest of us.

Recruitment for Schools of Social Work

Let me review briefly what has happened to our schools of social work during the period since 1950, which was the peak year of enrollment for both full time and part time students. This history can be most easily summarized in the following table:

TABLE I

UNITED STATES SCHOOLS[1]

Year	*No. of Schools*	*Full Time*	*% Change*	*Part Time*	*% Change*	*Total*	*% Change by Years*
1950 (peak)	49	4336	—	2030	—	6366	—
1951	51	4195	—3.2	1758	—13.4	5953	—6.6
1952	53	4006	—4.5	1913	+8.8	5919	—0.5
1953	52	3694	—7.8	1872	—2.1	5566	—5.8
1954	51	3512	—4.9	1597	—14.6	5109	—8.1
1955	52	3644	+3.6	1741	+8.2	5385	+5.1

[1] *Statistics on Social Work Education,* Nov. 1, 1955, and Academic Year 1954–55 (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1956), p. 3.

It is perhaps worth noting that prior to quite recent years there was little effort made in any continuous or organized way to attract persons into our profession. We were generally content with the number of persons who were finding their way to our schools of social work because ever since the depression

* Presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Conference of Jewish Communal Service, May 29, 1956, St. Louis, Missouri.

[1] See *Jewish Social Service Quarterly,* XXX, 1 pp. 100 ff.

[2] *Ibid,* XXXII, 2 pp. 125 ff.

of the 1930's there were many more applicants than the schools could accept. We were satisfied as to numbers and rather comfortable in the belief that our choice of applicants was sufficiently large to insure the good quality of our students. Now our history in this respect is not unlike colleges of medicine, osteopathy, dentistry, veterinary medicine and law. They had their peak of applications (and with the exception of medicine) their peak enrollments in 1949. But in all of these fields there has been a sharp and steady decline in the number of applications to the number of students admitted. In medicine, for example, there were in 1948, 15 applications for every student admitted. This ratio dropped in 1952 (the last year for which figures have been published) to 8.7 applications to each student accepted. Comparable figures were collected for schools of social work in 1952, and we already had two years of declining enrollment by that time. These figures showed that the ratio of applications completed to the number of students accepted in accredited schools of social work were 2 to 1. Law schools in that same year had a ratio of 1.8 to 1; pharmacy schools 1.6 to 1; veterinary medicine 2.9 to 1; dental schools 4.8 to 1; osteopathy schools 3.3 to 1; and medical schools 8.7 to 1.[3]

I mention these comparative ratios for two primary reasons although they are interesting in a number of other respects: (1) to provide some perspective for the present situation in which we find ourselves; and (2) to counteract a rather fatalistic notion one sometimes senses among one's colleagues that the situation in our field is so different from others that there isn't really very much we can do about it.

The Council on Social Work Education came into being in July 1952 and by the next year it had become painfully obvious that the number one problem confronting the field was the continuing decline in the number of persons choosing social work as a career. The Council gave this problem the highest priority in its program and has carried on a national recruitment program beyond that which its meager resources justify. It has had the help of other groups and, of course, many of the national organizations have also been very active in this regard. Our efforts were, in the initial stages, somewhat fumbling, which is due in part to the fact that we had not, as a field, had much experience in large scale recruiting and, in greater part, to inadequate financing of an overall recruitment effort. It is a sad fact that to date we have been content to view with alarm and to tilt verbally with the issue but not to close ranks, pool our resources, and tackle the fundamental problem as a field. We have not yet learned that it may be better to recruit together than to recruit separately.

Recruitment is one of those deceptive problems which it appears that anyone can do and that the way to do it is to make a louder noise near a possible candidate than your competitors in other fields are making. This presumably is bound to increase the number who will be interested in your field. The truth is that we do not actually know to what extent this may be true. There are many things we do not know about what

[3] William S. Guthrie, *Applications to the Professional Schools and Colleges* (Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University Press, 1952). This is the final issue of this publication.

Information provided at a conference held in August 1956 in Daytona Beach, Florida, by the Southern Regional Education Board, to deal with the shortage of psychiatrists, indicates that the ratio of applications to students accepted in medical schools for the academic year 1955–56 had dropped to 2 to 1. In some instances medical schools actually did not have sufficient qualified applicants from which to select the number of students desired.

goes into the choice of a career. For example, when do the majority of young people decide upon a career? What are the factors that most influence that choice and what are their relative weights? What, if anything, can an outside group do to modify or influence choice?

In a study of occupational choice made by Eli Ginzberg and Associates, some light is thrown on these questions. This study points out, for example, that:

> The process of occupational decision-making can be divided into three distinct periods: the period during which the individual makes what can be described as a "fantasy" choice; the period during which he is making a tentative choice; and the period when he makes a realistic choice. The first coincides in general with the latency period, between six and eleven, although residual elements of fantasy choices frequently carry over into the preadolescent years. The second coincides by and large with early and late adolescence; with few exceptions, realistic choices are made in early adulthood. To some degree, the way in which a young person deals with his occupational choice is indicative of his general maturity and, conversely, in assessing the latter, consideration must be given to the way in which he is handling his occupational choice problem.[4]

In the period which Ginzberg has designated as that of "tentative choices" the factors which seem to influence the child are primarily of a subjective nature, namely: (1) his interests and likes (which draw to an end around the age of 10 or 11), (2) his capacity (which covers the ages of 13 and 14 while in the 8th and 9th grades), and (3) his values (which cover the ages of 15 and 16 while in the 10th and 11th grades). The end of the "period of tentative choices" is called the "transition stage" during which ". . . the individual is beginning to shift the focus of his approach from the predominantly subjective factors . . . to the reality conditions which will play such a large part in determining the final choice he is about to make."[5]

Finally, Ginzberg designates[6] a "period of realistic choices" in which there are also three stages, namely: (1) exploration—(college freshman) in which consideration is given to a limited range of possible vocations; (2) crystallization, in which the individual has reached a degree of intellectual and emotional maturity which permits him "to recognize a possible conflict betwen his capacities, interests, and values, and the objective conditions presented by the real world";[7] and (3) specifications (senior year).

I have given you a rather telescoped report of certain aspects of this study of occupational choice even though its implications for social work seem rather fundamental. For example, I have omitted mentioning the special considerations given to the choice of occupations by women or the effect of family income upon career choices. The summary I have given makes it possible for me to quote meaningfully a major conclusion of this study and to suggest its utility for us. I quote:

> The outstanding conclusion from our findings is that occupational choice is a developmental process; it is not a single decision, but a series of decisions made over a period of years. Each step in the process has a meaningful relation to those which precede and follow it.
>
> From this primary finding, there follows a second important generalization: the process is largely irreversible. This is a result of the fact that each decision made during the process is dependent on the chronological age and development of the individual. Time cannot be relived; basic education and other exposures can only be experienced once. Of course, the individual can shift even after he has tentatively committed himself to a particular choice. But the entire process of decision-making cannot be repeated and later decisions are limited by previous decisions.[8]

[4] *Occupational Choice,* An Approach to a General Theory (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), p. 60.

[5] *Op. cit.,* p. 88.

[6] *Ibid,* pp. 95 ff.

[7] *Ibid,* p. 106.

[8] *Op. cit.,* p. 185.

The basic elements in our theory of occupational choice, then, are three: *it is a process; the process is largely irreversible; compromise is an essential aspect of every choice.*[9]

It seems to me that there are such important implications in this study that we must reexamine the whole recruitment program in social work. This examination must include the peculiar or special circumstances that surround the choice of our profession as a career so that we can make those adaptations in our efforts which will be realistic and meaningful in providing young people, at the right time and way, with what they need to know to consider social work during the several stages they seem to go through in making a career choice. It now seems clear, barring a major economic recession, that social work, if it is to staff its services with professionally equipped personnel, must be prepared to carry on a vigorous and intelligent recruitment campaign indefinitely. Such recruitment must be concerned not alone with numbers but with quality. I shall comment on this again.

Let me inject here a brief description of the Council's recruitment activities as background information. We first established a representative committee to lay out a recruitment program. It was rather slow in getting under way for reasons I have already mentioned. Its initial effort was the publication of a pamphlet on social work as a career aimed at college juniors and seniors. As it became evident that students were considering career choices at earlier stages additional pamphlets have been developed to appeal especially to high school students. Later it became evident that counselors and teachers to whom students turned for advice needed more information on social work and we developed career charts and kits for them. Our National Committee on Careers in Social Work, representing all aspects of social work practice and education, has continuously found it necessary to broaden its appeal and to develop new aids to recruitment. It has encouraged local communities (which it recognizes as the focal point for recruitment) to establish community-wide coordinated recruitment programs on a continuous basis and has developed manuals to help communities in these efforts. A wide range of recruitment publications has been provided and is being constantly added to, our latest being one directed to parents and published for us by the Public Affairs Committee.[10] Exhibits for use on a loan basis have been provided. These are also exhibited and distributed by the Council at national conferences such as the Vocational Guidance and Personnel Association, Association of Deans of Women, and the like. A recruitment film strip has been produced for wide showing. Local communities have been urged to sponsor career conferences, to participate in college career days, to arrange for visits to agencies by students, to provide summer employment for college students, etc., etc. We have established agreements with seven local communities as experimental centers to try out new recruitment ideas, and we have worked hard to get additional scholarships established. There is much more to be done. For example, we have not had the funds to utilize the radio and television on any national sustained basis although they are used effectively for related purposes by others. The Council also acts as the clearing house for information on social work and we answer some 150 to 500 inquiries on social work every week, the number depending upon the time of year. Our Committee has

[9] *Ibid*, p. 186.

[10] *Better Human Relations*, The Challenge of Social Work (available from the Council on Social Work Education).

the responsibility also for getting the national agencies to work together more effectively in their recruiting activities in order that their efforts might be beneficial to the total field as well as in meeting their own particular needs.

Some Factors Affecting Enrollment

In our efforts to enroll more students in graduate schools (and I want to make clear that the Council's efforts have been much broader) it became obvious that there are a number of factors which in varying degree affect the supply of potential students for all occupations. Among these are the following four:

1. Low Birth Rate During Depression Years

The low birth rate during the depression years which caused a marked decline in the number of college age youth with a consequent decline in university enrollment in recent years. The trend at the undergraduate level was reversed in 1953 but has not yet affected enrollment in the graduate programs.

Let us look at total college and university enrollment figures for the same period for which I have given you the enrollment in graduate schools of social work. (Table II).

Thus, during the period when the number of undergraduate students being graduated by universities and colleges had dropped approximately 30 per cent, enrollment in schools of social work had dropped approximately 20 per cent. This is a better record than was maintained in a number of other professions but not as good as some.

Perhaps this is an appropriate place to comment briefly upon our prospects for future increases in the number of social work students. According to reliable estimates the number of college age youth in the United States will increase by 70 per cent between 1953 and 1970.[11] The question immediately is raised as to whether this will not automatically solve our dilemma. Our problem does not appear to lend itself to such an easy solution. Another study forecasts that the number of college graduates will rise from 270,000 in 1955 to 325,000 in 1960, an increase of 20 per cent.[12] Thus, as

[11] Ronald B. Thompson, Ohio State University, as quoted in *Social Work Education*, III, 3 (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1955), p. 42.

[12] *America's Resources of Specialized Talent:* The Report of the Commission on Human Resources and Advanced Training. Dael Walfle, Director (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), p. 97. It should be noted that the estimate is considerably below the actual number of graduates which in 1954 was more than 290,000.

TABLE II

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY ENROLLMENT FOR YEARS SPECIFIED

Year	*Number of Students Enrolled* [1]	*Percentage Increase or Decrease*	*Number Graduating* [2]	*% of Total*
1950	2,659,000	—	432,058	16.29%
1951	—	—	382,546	—
1952	2,302,000	—13.42%	329,986	14.33
1953	—	—	303,049	—
1954	2,478,000	+7.64	290,825	11.73
	Net Decrease	6.80		30%

[1] *Teachers for Tomorrow*, Bulletin # 2 (New York: The Fund for the Advancement of Education, November 1955), p. 50.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 56.

Mr. Fauri pointed out:

> If social work were to get its proportionate share of this rise in college graduates, it would mean an increase of only 20 per cent in enrollment in the schools of social work. Such an increase would leave the schools with fewer students enrolled in 1960 than were enrolled in 1950.[13]

David French has projected the numbers of *social work graduates* based upon both conservative and liberal estimates of the number of *college graduates.* Let me cite a few of his figures which you should compare with the number of graduates of schools of social work in the peak year 1951–52 when we had some 1946 students completing their M.S.W. degrees:[14]

TABLE III

ESTIMATES OF NUMBER OF SOCIAL WORK GRADUATES [1]

Year	Based on Conservative Estimate of College Graduates			Based on Liberal Estimate of College Graduates		
	Low Estimate	*Medium Estimate*	*High Estimate*	*Low Estimate*	*Medium Estimate*	*High Estimate*
'58–59	1,382	1,498	1,613	1,521	1,647	1,774
60–61	1,474	1,596	1,719	1,621	1,756	1,891
62–63	1,579	1,711	1,842	1,737	1,882	2,027
64–65	1,814	1,966	2,117	1,996	2,162	2,328

[1] *Social Work Education,* III, 3 (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1955), pp. 46, 47.

It should be apparent that even assuming we attract to social work the same proportion of students from among the increasing number of college graduates as we have in the past we will still have far too few graduates to meet the current needs, to make any advancement among those holding social work positions without benefit of professional education or to meet the increasing needs of the future.

Personnel Needed in Social Work

One needs to offer little evidence that there is a very real shortage of personnel in our field. The questions that really concern me in this connection are: How many actual social work positions are there currently unfilled? How many recruits do we need annually to maintain a full complement of personnel? Can we project the number of additional workers needed from year to year to staff new areas of practice?

These are all essential questions, the answers to which we need in order to plan intelligently to meet the staff needs in our field. We do not have complete answers nor, at present, the means of getting them.

We do know that:

> On the basis of estimates supplied the Council on Social Work Education in 1954 by Merit System Councils, there appeared to be at that time some 3,000 vacancies in the public child welfare and public assistance programs for which funds had been appropriated to pay salaries. This situation has not changed.
>
> There were 2,300 unfilled positions in medical and psychiatric social work in 1953 and an estimated 1,800 to 2,000 additional medical and psychiatric social workers needed annually to make up losses due to attrition, to fill vacancies and to provide for anticipated increases in the number of positions.[15]
>
> Four thousand additional group workers are needed annually according to estimates made by the Institute for Research.[16]
>
> In a study of local agencies in the New York City area just being completed for the Social Work Recruiting Committee of New York City, it is reported that there are some 489 social casework positions currently vacant in the nine public agencies reporting. The percentage of vacancies to the number of social work positions in these agencies ranged from 4 per cent to 66 per cent.[17]
>
> One hundred ninety voluntary social casework agencies reported 165 current vacancies in their professional positions or some 13.4 per cent vacancies to total staff in these agencies.[18]
>
> A large majority of group work agencies reporting stated that they do not have fully qualified workers on staff and hence are having to make do as best they can, programwise. No estimate of the professional staff needs of these agencies was attempted.

These reports are known to be incomplete. My experience indicates that New York agencies probably have a higher percentage of positions filled than is normal in most areas of the nation.

In 1952 the Council on Social Work Education, on the basis of the information it then had, estimated that the field would need to recruit 50,000 additional social workers by 1960. This is an average of 12,500 per year and in the light of current information is probably too conservative an estimate. In 1955, there were 1,655 students in the United States who completed the professional curriculum in social work.[19] This provides a basis for comparing how nearly our schools of social work are providing personnel qualified by professional education to meet the annual requirements for staffing our field. It is doubtful that the number of graduates are sufficient to replace those retiring during the year.

We are told by population experts that welfare agencies will need to expand their programs as much as 50 per cent between now and 1975 just to keep up with population increases.

It may be worthy of note that there were some 1,196 position vacancies registered at the National Conference of Social Work (1956) and only 273 workers to register an interest in them.

2. Increased Demand for Personnel in Many Fields

A second factor that has been universal in its impact is the continued high level of economic activity. This has meant a continuing and increasing demand for personnel in all areas of industrial and business circles. The resulting sharp competition for university graduates has led to the development of vigorous recruitment programs, in offers of attractive scholarship aid, and in improved wages and fringe benefits, all of which compete for those who might otherwise have considered a career in social work.

3. Early Marriage Age of Women

A third factor with common significance is the early age at which women now marry and rear a family. This is an especially important development for our field because, despite the gradual rise in the proportion of men, the number of women still constitute 65 per cent

[13] *Education for Social Work 1955,* Proceedings of the Third Annual Program Meeting (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1955), p. 35.

[14] *Statistics on Social Work Education,* Nov. 1955 and Academic Year 1954–1955 (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1956), p. 3.

[15] *Mobilization and Health Manpower* (Washington, D. C.: Office of Defense Mobilization, Jan. 1956), pp. 28 and 29.

[16] See "Professional Careers in Youth Organization Work," *Careers* Research No. 240 (Chicago, Ill.: The Institute for Research, 1956).

[17] *Personnel Shortages in Social Work in Greater New York.* (New York: Social Work Recruiting Committee of Greater New York, Inc., 1956.) Mimeographed, pp. 2, 3.

[18] *Ibid,* p. 2 and Table II.

[19] *Statistics on Social Work Education, Op. cit.,* p. 10.

or better of the total social work personnel.

4. Termination of the Veterans Educational Program

A fourth and final common factor which I wish to mention is the ending of the veterans educational program. This program, which has had a significance beyond the hopes of its sponsors, has given the country an experience on which to build a constructive educational program of more general application in the future. The contribution which this program has made toward increasing the number of social workers is not generally known. During the period from June 22, 1944, to November 30, 1952, some 4,200 World War II veterans took social work training with their educational benefits. An additional 2,000 disabled veterans studied social work under Public Law 16 during the period March 1943 to November 1952.[20] These totals would be increased somewhat if the most recent figures were available. I shall want to refer to the implications of this program again later.

I should like now to turn to a number of other factors which seem to relate more peculiarly to recruitment for the field of social work. Among these are:

1. Student Aid

During this current academic year (1955–56) some 2,552 of the 3,644 full time students enrolled in schools of social work in the United States, or some 70 per cent are receiving some form of financial aid.[21] In the main, judging from a quick review of information contained in *Social Work Fellowships and Scholarships in the United States and Canada* for the academic year 1955–56,[22] *need* was one of the conditions of these awards. It appears from the information available that the proportion of social work students receiving financial help is among the highest in any field.

There are varying reactions to this scholarship aid. There are those who think that it has a depressing effect upon wages. Others believe that it reflects an unhealthy state of mind among those entering social work. To these persons it seems that students preparing for social work believe they are entitled to be paid for preparing themselves for a career and that this is a manifestation of a dependency attitude which is bad.

Fortunately we now have more adequate knowledge about the situation from a doctoral study which Milton Wittman has under way.[23] His sample of students included 22 per cent of the total student body in 1954 in 51 (of the 52) accredited schools of social work. Here are a few of his findings:

59 per cent of the students were single
34 per cent of the students were married
7 per cent of the students were separated, divorced or widowed

The fathers of over half the students were either professional persons or proprietors, managers and officials, which perhaps gives us a clue as to our middle class orientation. Parents' salaries were not in the upper range, however, because the professional group in which they were employed, such as teaching, is not well paid. Forty-four per cent of the parents had incomes under $5,000. Only 10 per cent had incomes of $10,000 or more.

The median monthly student income was $150.26 ($1,386 for the school year),

[20] *Social Work Education,* II, 1 (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1954), p. 8.

[21] *Statistics on Social Work Education, Op. cit.,* p. 12.

[22] Published by the Council on Social Work Education.

[23] See *Social Work Education, Ibid,* June 1955, p. 48, and minutes of the Committee on Personnel, National Social Welfare Assembly for February 21, 1956. Mr. Wittman has now completed his doctoral study at the New York School of Social Work. Portions of his dissertation will be published by the Council.

whereas the median monthly expense was $169.38 ($1,530 for the school year). Three hundred twenty-six students of the 820 in the sample had loans or had arranged for credit because of financial stress.

Forty-six per cent of the students had scholarship aid as their primary source of income, with 11 per cent having employment. A slightly smaller per cent depended upon income from their spouse, savings or insurance.

Approximately 33 per cent of the students reported moderate or serious financial difficulty sufficient to influence their morale.

The amount of the grants to students showed marked variations. Twenty per cent received under $500 for the academic year; twenty-one per cent received between $500 and $1,000; twenty per cent between $1,000 and $1,500; twenty-four per cent between $1,500 and $2,000; fifteen per cent over $2,000. The median grant was $1,215. (It should be noted that schools estimate conservatively that $1,600 to $2,000 is the minimum needed by a student for a full academic year.)

Fifty per cent of the students answering the questionnaire said they would have been unable to enter school without the financial help received. An additional 30 per cent stated they would have been in extreme financial difficulty without such help. Mr. Wittman concludes that scholarship aid is of crucial importance to social work education. That this is not an overstatement is perhaps best understood when we note that 80 per cent of the students in the sample could hardly have undertaken their professional study without aid and that 70 per cent of all students in schools of social work are receiving financial help.

There are four concluding observations I should like to make with respect to student aid although there are many other important implications in these data to which we will need to give careful consideration.

First, it is obvious that the students we are currently attracting to schools of social work come from families who cannot afford a heavy investment in education beyond the bachelor's degree for their children. Furthermore, social work salaries are not sufficient to justify these same students incurring heavy debts to be repaid after they have finished their professional preparation. Thus, student aid has an importance for our field beyond that which may exist in others.

Second, it should be noted that of 13 professional fields requiring 5 years or more of university preparation as reported by the Office of Education,[24] only two—medicine and theology—require a longer period of preparation, and five other fields require the same period of 6 years as does social work. Five other fields require a year less for their educational preparation. Social work is one of the five fields out of the 13 reported which begins professional education only after the bachelor's degree has been completed. Thus, the cost of social work education is high which, of course, has a direct bearing upon the financial needs of students.

My third point relates to the not infrequent statements one hears that there are social work scholarships available for which there are no applicants. I do not know the extent to which this may be true. I do know that this is sometimes true for stipends which require a commitment to return to work for a given period in a given agency. It may be interesting to note in passing that 49 per cent of the students in Mr. Wittman's sample had made a work commitment as a condition of their stipend.)

[24] *Education for the Professions* (Washingington, D. C.: United States Printing Office, 1955), p. 14.

I know also that some stipends may not be sufficiently well known to possible applicants. It seems to me, however, that the overwhelming evidence is that the number of adequate stipends without handicapping conditions attached to them are always too few to meet the needs of applicants who are eligible for admission to schools of social work. Last year, for example, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation first year stipends were all used and some schools reported that they could have used five times as many.

My fourth observation is more in the nature of a question. Are we stressing the *need* factor in making these awards to the detriment of a greater recognition of superior ability, in contrast, perhaps with other fields? If so, what effect does this have upon the possibility for social work to attract a larger proportion of the intellectually superior students?

In this connection, I was interested to learn that of the 60,000 high school graduates who were drawn from the top 5 per cent of their classes to compete for the National Merit Scholarships for next year, 5,078 have become semi-finalists. Of this number:[25]

56 per cent of the boys, 16 per cent of the girls want to become engineers and scientists

33 per cent of the girls plan to become teachers

10 per cent of the boys and girls want to prepare for a career in the field of health

12 per cent of the girls, 4 per cent of the boys want a career in arts and letters

4 per cent of the girls, 3 per cent of the boys want to specialize in religion or social service

It is interesting to recall also that in the face of the growing shortage of university graduates, 40 per cent of the boys and girls who graduate from high school in the top quarter of their class do not go to college at all. The reasons are many, but the two most important are financial inability and just plain lack of interest

[25] Taken from advertisement of The Catholic Information Center, Pelham *Sun*, May 17, 1956.

2. Salaries and Working Conditions

The second factor having a special relationship to our problem of recruitment is the matter of the salaries and working conditions for professional personnel. There is no disagreement that salaries have significance but only as to the degree. There are those who maintain that inadequate compensation is the *only* problem of significance standing in the way of our recruiting all the individuals required. As one man expressed it, "there is nothing standing in the way of recruiting young men and women for professional preparation in social work that a universal increase of $1,000 in all social work salaries would not cure."

I do not subscribe to this simple explanation of our problem. I do believe salaries are a very important element, however, and that our salaries for beginners are of particular significance.

There are a number of reasons why I tend to put somewhat less emphasis on salaries and working conditions alone as a factor in recruiting than do some others. For example:

a. In our study of 1954 salaries for the most common professional positions in public welfare agencies [26] as compared with salaries paid for the same positions in 1950 we found:

That in 1954 the median salary for the basic practitioner position was $2,760 or 35 per cent higher than the median salary four years earlier.

The maximum salary as measured by the median for the same position had risen from $2,890 in 1950 to $3,912, or 35 per cent by 1954. Let me indicate without further detail the minimum and

[26] *Social Work Education*, III, 3, *Op. cit*

maximum percentage increases for the various positions studied.

TABLE IV

PERCENTAGE CHANGES IN SALARIES FOR SPECIFIC POSITIONS BETWEEN 1950 AND 1954

Position	*% of Increase in Minimum (median) Salary*	*% of Increase in Maximum (median) Salary*
Child Welfare Worker	30%	22%
Case Work Supervisor	28%	23%
Child Welfare Supervisor	23%	26%
County Director	38%	24%
Field Representative	18%	18%

It should be noted that at the time these data were being collected a series of substantial increases for many of these positions were in process but final action (as for example in New York City) came too late for our use. A number of Merit Systems commented that the general level of local government salaries had a depressing effect upon those paid social workers for in some instances they were tied directly to the overall salary scales or it was inadvisable to create too wide a differential.

Salaries are important only in relation to what they will buy. Have the increases reported for the period 1950–54 been real ones? They were. The Consumer Price Index, which stood at 103.7 per cent in 1950, rose to 115 per cent in 1954. Thus, the actual percentage increases for the positions reported were in most instances more than double the increase in the cost of living for the same period.

It seems to me that however inadequate our salaries are, it is unrealistic to conclude that they are the only deterrents to recruitment, particularly since our major gain in real wages has come about during the very period of the decline in student enrollment.

b. We are not alone in facing a declining student enrollment. Let me cite a few examples based upon the latest figures readily available to me:[27]

Library service granted 1,740 degrees in 1948; dropped to 1,645 in 1953;

Law granted 14,366 undergraduate degrees and 469 masters degrees in 1949 against 11,329 and 460 respectively in 1953;

Accounting granted 10,766 undergraduate degrees and 492 masters degrees in 1951 which dropped to 7,371 in the case of undergraduate degrees in 1953 and an increase of masters degrees to 557 in the same year;

Architecture granted 2,644 undergraduate and 203 masters degrees in 1951. These dropped to 2,045 and 193 respectively in 1953;

Business Administration granted 433,734 degrees in 1950 which dropped to 304,857 in 1953;

Engineering degrees granted in 1949 were undergraduate 45,200, graduate 5,215, as against 24,164 and 4,335 respectively in 1953.

I could continue to cite other examples such as forestry, journalism, music, nursing, occupational therapy, public health and theology (all faiths), all of which have had earlier peak years in the number of degrees granted. I wish I had had the time to secure figures for the last two years and then to ascertain whether the proportionate drop in graduates for these professions was greater than that in college enrollment generally during the period and to compare the drop with that in social work. I do know that in many instances our decline has been greater than in some of these other fields.

The point I wanted to make is that there is too much evidence that salaries are not all important in the problem we face. Nursing, for example, which certainly has a more difficult problem than social work in many ways, including salary, has through a long, vigorous, well-planned, and well-financed recruitment program, been able to improve its position materially in very recent years.

The engineers also have an acute shortage. They have discovered that

[27] *Education for the Professions, Op. cit.*

"money alone does not talk very loud to young graduating engineers."[28] They are quoted as having discovered that there are variations in the general shortage.

> The young men want an opportunity for a creative and productive future. In their search for this, they have been drawn to the new 'glamour' industries and are neglecting the old established ones. . . . There was agreement that a man could expect to make the most money if he went into sales engineering. At the same time the young men were strongly influenced by the creative opportunities they expected in development engineering, applied research and engineering design. They did not expect these fields to pay so much, but they expected to enter them nevertheless.[29]

I should mention that medicine and dentistry have continued to increase the number of their graduates in contrast to the other professions mentioned, even in recent years. The reasons for this I shall not attempt to analyze at this time but there are several. I have already pointed out, however, that both of these professions have had a sharp decline in the number of students applying for medical school admission to the number accepted.

In her recent article on adoption Pearl Buck states:

> . . . It is a discouraging fact that far too few persons today are entering the field of social work. The reasons for this are not entirely economic. Indeed salaries for social workers, when correlated to education and experience are not below those for other white-collar workers and working conditions are rather better than average. In most agencies, for example, social workers get a month's vacation, whereas in business offices, the average is two weeks. There is also considerable leniency for social workers in regard to sick leave and regularity of hours. Moreover, social work is certainly more challenging and interesting, in human terms, than many other white-collar jobs. Yet too few people seem interested in social work.[30]

She has much more to say. I am not quoting her either as an authority or because I agree with her but because she represents a large segment of public thinking about this aspect of our subject.

One final word with respect to the relative importance of salaries in recruiting. In a meeting on recruitment at the National Conference of Social Work (1956), the results of a poll taken on the question of what people are looking for in a position were quoted and seem to have a bearing on this point. Starting pay and benefits were relatively low among the factors rated by those interviewed. Only 23 per cent gave salary as a major factor in their choice of a career. Rather high on the list were interest in helping make the world a better place in which to live and a desire for interesting work. Do we capitalize enough on these interests?

Now perhaps I have labored this point of salary unduly but I have done so only because we must not use it as a kind of alibi for inaction.

3. Status of the Profession[31]

I come now to the status of our profession. I consider this to be the single most important factor, which in the long run will have the greatest bearing upon our ability as a field to attract a more adequate supply of students to our schools of social work. Here I refer to both the quality as well as the number of these recruits. I am not unaware of the relationship between the compensation paid in our profession and its status. There is some reason to believe that an improvement in status and recognition must precede any substantial improvement in compensation although the interaction of the one upon the other may not be so well or so logically ordered. In any case, it is my thesis that the many factors affecting our supply of students are so interwoven that it almost creates a false impression to isolate them for separate analysis. Certainly we are all agreed that in our economy we tend to measure the value of things in terms of their price however much we may decry this. There is justification, then, in assuming that the salaries paid in social work reflect the community's estimate of our relative worth and likewise mirror our status. I shall not pursue this line further for I am not interested at this time in the measure of our status but rather in the factors which determine our status. Perhaps I should state here that the status to which I refer is not the competitive "rat race for status" which Mrs. Agnes Meyer decried in her address at the National Conference of Social Work.[32] The status which concerns me is that resulting from competence in performance.

Let us look briefly (however we measure it) at some of the elements by which a profession earns a respected status. The following seem important to me:

a. The extent and quality of leadership exercised by members of the profession, within their own membership, upon the issues of particular significance to the field and in the general community upon the broader questions of public social policy.

b. The degree of commitment (and dedication) to the profession and the extent to which its membership, and especially its leadership, have respect for the educational base upon which the profession must be built.

c. The extent to which the profession has developed an intellectual discipline within its educational program which is solidly based upon research as the preparation for practice.

d. The ability of members of the profession to participate on an intellectual basis of equality with colleagues from related disciplines. To put this in other words, the capacity and willingness of members of the profession to debate freely with all comers in the market place of ideas.

e. The extent to which the inquiring mind is developed and maintained among those who enter practice so that they are more than skilled technicians. The true professional records, classifies, and analyzes the phenomena coming under his observation, testing the validity of the theory he has learned against his experience in practice and thus advancing knowledge. Such a professional is willing to expose his practice to the analysis and criticism of his colleagues as a way of sharing knowledge and improving practice.

As Dr. Conant has said,

> . . . The students of the professions should early come to know the significance of dissent. They should be exposed to an intellectual atmosphere where vital differences of opinion are not merely tolerated but encouraged, where at least one battle royal of ideas has captured the attention of the community of scholars.[33]

f. The degree to which members of the profession are masters of the skills of their profession, possess a clear sense of their responsibilities and are secure in their knowledge as to their defined area of practice.

g. The extent to which practitioners exercise independent judgment in their activities.

h. The extent to which the profession interests itself in seeing that its members keep up-to-date on new knowledge and methods and in what measure mem-

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[28] The New York *Times*, February 3, 1956, p. 37.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] "We *Can* Free the Children," *Woman's Home Companion* (June 1956), p. 63.

[31] See also *Social Work*, Joseph W. Eaton "Whence and Whither Social Work," Vol. 1, No. 1 (January 1956), p. 11 ff., and Herbert Bisno "How Social Will Social Work Be?" Vol. 1, No. 2 (April 1956), p. 12 ff.

[32] St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*, May 25, 1956, p. 14a.

[33] James Bryant Conant, *The Citadel of Learning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), pp. 67, 68.

bers of the profession avail themselves of the opportunities thus afforded.

i. The degree of courage and conviction shown by members of the profession in standing up for what they believe to be the public interest.

j. The degree to which its members adhere to a code of ethics whose first consideration is the well being of those the profession serves.

It is not my purpose today to attempt an assessment of our profession with respect to these various factors, although I hope that you were attempting some mental measurements of where we stand in relation to each as it was mentioned. If you accept all or some of these as elements which help determine status you cannot but agree that we do not measure very high with respect to some of them, but in the absence of a careful evaluation, we are not warranted to make any firm conclusions.

All too often we rather complain about status as though it were something conferred upon a field rather than that it is something earned. Thus, every member of the profession is responsible in some measure for helping create the image from which our status is derived. Each one of us has a responsibility for improving that image.

There is likewise an inclination on our part to resent the failure of others to accord our field the consideration to which we feel it is entitled. Examples of this may be drawn from many areas as in the drafting of social legislation, the staffing of our missions abroad or the failure to accord us an important place in the power structure of our communities. Is this failure to be recognized due, in major part, perhaps because we have not yet produced enough practitioners of ability to warrant the respect of those whose recognition we seek or even to take effective advantage of the opportunities open to us?

As some of you know, the Council on Social Work Education now has under way a comprehensive curriculum study. Although continuous efforts are made to improve professional education for social work, this study is perhaps a recognition that there is an accumulation of major educational issues which need an integrated, comprehensive and penetrating analysis. I should like, without getting into any major discussion of the curriculum study, to call your attention to certain of these issues which relate to the criteria mentioned as determining status.

We are all concerned with the need for professional education to make its maximum contribution to the development of graduates who will provide effective leadership for the field. How can this be done? There are those who maintain that the admission policies followed by schools of social work and the recent emphasis placed upon the dynamic preadmission interview as a major tool in assessing the suitability of candidates for admission [34] tends to eliminate those students who are most likely to become leaders. Can we devise better methods for pre-determining the suitability of persons for the field or should we accept for testing the tentative conclusions reached by some psychologists that there is no known method for pre-determining the personality factors that make for success in any field? Should we perhaps rely upon intelligence and academic performance as the major determining factors in admission rather than on attitude and personality characteristics?

There seems to be a general opinion that our professional education is deficient in preparing for real professional practice and the development of social statesmen because it offers an insufficient intellectual content even though it is

[34] See *Selection of Students for Schools of Social Work* (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1955).

recognized that education for social work is professional and not graduate in character. It is said by those who make this criticism that the schools yield too readily to the pressure of agencies which want students who can step into agency positions immediately upon graduation with maximum facility. Such preparation tends to produce technicians with all this implies, rather than professionals. One is reminded of A. N. Whitehead's remark that "Some of the major disasters of mankind have been produced by the narrowness of men with good methodology." Such preparation also places emphasis upon the setting in which practice is carried on, which tends to inhibit practitioners from understanding those principles and concepts of social work which are universal and can be utilized irrespective of the setting.

Another facet of concern is the relation of professional preparation and what appears to be an increasing reluctance on the part of social workers to pioneer. This manifestation takes many forms. It appears more and more difficult, for example, to find social workers who are willing to develop new services in untried fields and who will stay by good programs which have fallen upon evil days and battle them through whatever the end. Does our insistence upon the continuous need for supervision play a part in this? Do we stress unduly the desirability of security over other values? Have we so circumscribed practice that we have put a penalty on initiative?

Another related problem is the need to teach social responsibility more effectively. Do we in our day to day activity give attention to the total needs of people in our community and not just to those served by our agency? To be most useful to our society, our sense of responsibility must reach beyond the immediate person served to those about him and to the community of which he is a part. Such responsibility will inevitably engage us in social action and reform. In discussing this subject, Helen Wright cited two examples which I think are worth repeating:

A girl seven months pregnant, with no plans for maternity care or for the baby, found her way to the office of an agency in a suburban community, in which she was not living. The worker there tried to refer her to the appropriate agency in her city, but was told that this agency could not accept her because they did not take girls after the sixth month of pregnancy; they had found that they could not do good casework with them unless they came in earlier.[35]

Is this responsible professional behavior?

A certain state had constructed a new penal institution that reflected the 19th rather than the 20th century ideas of prison construction. When it was proposed to fill this new institution with boys from the state training school, a welfare council committee on adult delinquents took note of that fact. Members of the committee did not wish to protest because they considered it important to maintain the distinction between juvenile and adult offenders. Hence they referred the problem to the committee on children. This committee was not willing to make any statement about it. Why? Because its members were all from child-placing agencies and hence (they said) were not competent to pass judgment on an institution for young delinquents.[36]

These and like questions face the curriculum planners in their attempts to educate for leadership and practice. How to give both depth and breadth to the curriculum, how to provide insight into the development of social policy and its implementation, how to give more understanding to the broad social factors in our efforts to help society deal with its problems and how to encourage the growth of original thinking about

[35] "Social Work Education and Social Responsibility," *Education for Social Work*, Proceedings of the Second Annual Program Meeting (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1954), p. 15.

[36] "Social Work Education and Social Responsibility," *Op. cit.*, p. 16.

problems old and new, are ambitious goals for any curriculum. We must first determine, however, whether these are the educational goals on which the field is agreed.

One of the circumstances which concerns us all is the high proportion of persons holding social work positions, particularly in the public social services, who have no professional preparation for their work. This fact has well known implications for our field which need not be detailed here. Under current circumstances there is little prospect that we can make any material improvement in this situation. It is, however, a challenge to our field to see whether we are sufficiently creative to find a way by which, within a limited period of time, we can alter this situation. This is one of the reasons why the curriculum study is giving special attention to the public social services.

One of the approaches to this problem is to seek to determine whether there are gradations in the difficulty of tasks which those holding different positions are called upon to perform. If so, can we perhaps devise a curriculum geared to provide different competencies in attitudes, knowledge and skills? Such a curriculum might prepare personnel for certain positions entirely at the undergraduate level, for others by one year of graduate professional preparation, and for still others by the two year and advanced program. In other words, does practice lend itself to such a continuum and can we provide a corresponding continuum in education? If so, perhaps it offers a realistic hope for the staffing of services by those who would have a common base of preparation and who would not be excluded from further study and advancement in the field, which is currently one of the real handicaps in recruitment.

Another area to be tackled by the curriculum study relates to our need for better grounding in the social sciences, the biological sciences and the humanities. What concepts from these fields do we need to know and how do we keep abreast of the new knowledge constantly being developed in these fields? These are the basic areas of knowledge on which our profession must build and we need to be more aware than most of us are as to what this knowledge is and its relationship to our own practice.

There are, of course, numerous other related problems such as the integration of the curriculum and the need to define our function more precisely, but time does not permit their discussion today.

I hope I have made clear the interrelatedness of all these aspects of our profession and its ultimate bearing upon our producing an adequate supply of competent personnel to staff our services.

I think that the implications for action are sufficiently clear throughout my discussion so that I need not take the time to recapitulate.

There are a number of immediate approaches to the problem of reducing the current shortage of professionally equipped personnel. Among these are:

(a) relieving professional personnel of time consuming tasks which can be as well or better performed by others and thus reducing the number of professionals required. One business firm found that this rearrangement of function made it possible for one engineer to perform the professional functions of what had previously required two engineers.

(b) reducing the amount of supervision provided experienced and mature staff members.

(c) utilizing on a part-time basis, professional personnel who are not available for full time employment.

(d) bringing back into the field professionally educated personnel who retired because of marriage but whose family responsibilities are now such as

to permit their employment provided they are given refresher training.

(e) finding ways to reduce turnover which causes an appalling waste within our field.

There are also some responsibilities which each of us has for assisting as a professional individual in the recruiting effort. Among those I should like to stress are:

(a) that each of us strive to think, work and act as a professional individual, for there is no substitute for performance if we are to create in others respect and confidence in us and our field.

(b) that we make known our identity as social workers and not hide behind other titles and designations which frequently fail to identify our field.

(c) that we become members of our communities and participate as full fledged citizens in promoting the welfare of the community.

(d) that each of us make opportunities to explain to young men and women, who have not yet determined upon a career, the nature of social work and the opportunities it affords.

(e) that we find our place in the organized recruitment efforts of groups in our field.

Conclusion

My discussion has been problem-focused, which is perhaps natural in view of the subject. However, our field never has had more favorable opportunities to move forward. Progress sometimes seems slow and hard come by, when viewed in the immediate, and we need that perspective which history alone affords in order to give us surer and more balanced judgment. It is always helpful to me, when struggling with current efforts to improve professional education, to recall the history of medical education which, with all its shortcomings, has produced great medical practitioners if not medical statesmen.

It is little more than 45 years ago that Dr. Flexner published his famous report on medical education. A majority of the 150 medical schools then in existence were still proprietory schools operated for profit. Most of these schools had no educational standards for admission. Education was little more than apprenticeship and, in most of these schools, not even good apprenticeship. The present pattern of medical education came about gradually as the result of several types of pressure.

The most fundamental was the emergence of biology, chemistry and physics as scientific disciplines and the belief of physicians, educators and the public that medical practice should be based on a sound scientific foundation.[37]

This metamorphosis in medical education (which is still going on) took place during a relatively short period. In fact, it took place in a period little longer than that covered by the whole history of social work education.

Without meaning in any way to gloss over our many shortcomings, I have cited the development in medical education as an encouragement to our own expectations. I have previously pointed out that our situation with respect to the shortage of personnel is not unique. My purpose in so doing is to minimize, if possible, some of that inferiority complex from which social workers suffer. It inhibits us from making our best contribution, it keeps us from mixing with others, it gives us a jaundiced and unwarranted view of ourselves and our profession. We must not, like the adolescent, try to force the process of maturing and overlook the opportunities for shaping the future which this in-between state affords. Nor must we forget the old saying which implies that to win and hold the respect of others, we must first respect ourselves.

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[37] "The Evaluation of Medical Practice," John L. Caughey, M.D., *Social Work Education*, I, 3 (August 1953), p. 1 ff.