

THE TERM "SOCIAL WORK" AS USED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

PART II

Prior to the Tenth International Conference of Social Work, each National Committee of the ICSW was asked to prepare, as part of its national report, a statement of not more than 300 words explaining how the term "social work" is used in its country. Twenty-four countries submitted reports on their national experiences and views in relation to the over-all Conference theme, "Social Work in a Changing World — Its Function and Responsibilities," and most of these included the requested statement.

The report of the pre-Conference Working Party in Milan, which drew heavily on the national reports, and particularly on the statements on "social work," was published in the April issue of *INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORK*. In addition, it is believed that the statements on "social work" will be of particular interest to our readers, and we are therefore printing those from the following countries: Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Pakistan, Philippines and Switzerland. Definitions submitted by eight other countries appeared in the January issue of this journal.

Italian Report on "Social Work"

THE term *servizio sociale* — in this report generally rendered as social work — has gained general currency in Italy since the Second World War. Originally, it was mostly used to characterize the new approach which was considered an essential condition of enabling the social sector to share in the renewal and reconstruction which were taking place in so many fields of the country's life. This new approach can be described as respect for the fundamental liberties of persons in need, appreciation of the diversity of needs, and awareness of the rights of the human being — in short, the application of democratic principles in social assistance.

This ideological meaning of the words social work gradually assumed at once more precision and more amplitude. As will be explained presently, they came to encompass not only certain principles and values or the techniques by which these are given effect, but, by almost unanimous acceptance, also the programmes and structures which, by putting ideas and methods to the practical test, contribute to the reshaping of assistance policy.

If, then, we look more closely into the various senses in which the words social work are at present used in Italy, we find that they indicate (a) a specific method of work; (b) practical action programmes which make use of this method and are more or less explicitly inspired by the principles of social work; and (c) the objectives of some agencies, especially those set up during the last few years for the specific purpose of carrying out programmes of the type mentioned under (b). It is obvious that the existence of these agencies makes

it easier to launch social work programmes, and that the practical problems encountered in putting these programmes into effect help to refine the relevant techniques and to render them more and more effective. It is a process of continuous osmosis, kept alive by an ever-growing knowledge of the concrete environment in which social work operates. This explains the rapid conceptual evolution which has taken place in Italy during the last few years. Where as the methods of social work were originally limited to the analysis and treatment of social problems seen from the individual angle, with prime emphasis on emotive and psychological factors and on the social worker's influence on the client's mentality and feelings, a much wider view is now taken of the problem. Without underestimating the importance of the above elements, the wider concept of social work always encompasses the economic and sociological background of the group or community to which the individual belongs, and an attempt is made to solve the individual's problems indirectly and at the base through the study and solution of group and community problems. This point of view logically leads to an extension of the purposes of social work from "therapy" to the "prevention" of social ills, because it is precisely through group work and community organization that we can lay the groundwork for preventing the emergence of serious personal hardships and needs or for mitigating their consequences for the individual. This also explains why so much attention is now paid in the training of social workers in Italy to the study and teaching of group and community organization methods, and why we tend more and more to attach essential importance to a thorough acquaintance with social research and social administration systems. Such knowledge seems all the more important for social

workers who — as is the case with ours — are often called upon to formulate and implement new programmes or to modify from within administrative structures which are not always adapted to the new requirements.

It is, indeed, generally accepted that programming falls within the competence of social work and that the techniques and principles of social work should be applied also to the implementation of many of those large-scale social education schemes which have been undertaken in recent years, especially in our country's depressed areas. These will be discussed in more detail in the Fifth Commission report on *The New Tasks of Social Work in Italy*; briefly, prime importance is accorded, in these schemes, to civic education, by which the social worker can help large strata of the population to adapt their social progress to their economic progress. Often enough, indeed, social workers are chosen not the least for their knowledge of the operative forces characterizing the present phase of social transformation in Italy, and for their ability to define with sufficient precision both their own role in this phase and the duties which devolve upon them as professional experts and as members of society.

Institutionally speaking, the situation is still fluid. Traditional assistance agencies are changing at greatly varying paces and this creates a good deal of uncertainty in the definition of the tasks and nature of social work. (See also the Third Commission Report on *Social Work as a Primary and Secondary Function*). There are a great many intermediary shades between, at one end of the scale, the few social work agencies commonly so-called, in which the administrative structure itself is geared to the aims and methods of social work as such, through others with "social work departments" charged in essence with the practical implementation of assistance programmes but not, as yet, fully responsible for either policy formation or programme administration, and, at the other end of the scale, those agencies where social workers are attached to various existing departments with the — not always well defined — task of "humanizing" relations with users. In these latter cases social workers attend to the actual reception of the public, to getting to know the users' views on those more personal problems which usually escape bureaucratic enquiry, to making special reports when some difficult or complex situation warrants it, and to other duties of this kind; but they have neither authority to change administrative practices, nor even responsibility for the practical solutions to adopt in the treatment of specific cases. In some of these agencies there is still

a distinction between "assistance" and "social work", the latter being substantially limited to advisory services with respect to such psychological problems as may aggravate the clients' personal situation. It is hardly necessary to labour the point that such a concept of social work, where it still exists, is rather damaging. It is up to social workers to make still further efforts to define and make known their own potentialities and to assume their own responsibilities in full. This is all the more necessary in view of the fact that all the reform bills which have recently been submitted to Parliament envisage the systematic application of social work methods in the assistance field and the employment of staff technically trained in the use of methods. This fact also more than ever enhances the urgency of the problem of the relationship between professional social workers and other assistance personnel, as the need of providing also the latter, at all levels, with technical training.

How the Term "Social Work" is used in Japan

The Japanese translation of "Social Work" is *Shakai-jigyo* or literally, "Social Enterprise". By no means do we find any universally accepted definition of the term, but the term usually implies organized welfare activities and is used almost synonymously with social service as defined in an UN publication. The development of National Social Service Programs (1). The following activities are usually included within the well established field of social work: public assistance, child welfare services, welfare services for the physically handicapped, assistance to lower income families, assistance to war victims, medical social work, welfare services for the mentally retarded, correctional services, community welfare service, community chest settlement work, emergency relief, rehabilitation service for prostitutes, etc.

Some people include the following activities within the field of social work: home improvement service for agricultural communities, family planning service, public health nursing service, youth services, and Citizen's Hall (Adult education center) programs, etc.

The following fields are usually considered to be outside of social work in this country: housing programs for the general public, employment policy and service, labour welfare programs in industrial plants, most social insurance and national pension programs, etc.

After the last war, the term "*Shakai-fukushi — jigyo*" (Social Welfare Services) came into common use and it is gradually replacing "Social Work". The com-

(1) United Nations, *The Development of National Social Service Programs*, 1959, p. 6. It defines social service for the purpose of the report as an "Organized activity that aims at helping towards a mutual adjustment of individuals and their social environment".

monly accepted explanation is that there is not an essential difference between the two terms. However, "Social Welfare Services" is considered more appropriate to emphasize the new trend of social work in which the emphasis has shifted from relief to prevention. The purpose of social work as it is understood today is not only to give help to rehabilitate individuals with dependency, ill-health, and maladjustment problems but also to promote actively the welfare of the community as a whole by various measures.

In recent years, with the influence of American social work, professional education for social workers is gradually developing and such terms as casework, group work, community organization are familiar among social workers without being translated, into Japanese. Though there is some thought that a strict differentiation should be made between Shakai-jigyō (Social Work) and Shakai-fukushi-jigyō (Social Welfare services), and that the former should only refer to a professional activity based on the specific areas of knowledge and the skills for effective performance of social service, the idea has not yet been commonly adopted. The term "Senmon Shakai-jigyōka" (Professional Social Worker) is being used by many people to describe social workers with professional training.

Netherland Report by Dr. H.P.A. van Roosmalen

The primary objects of social work are as follows:

- a. To extend help to those who in their own social relationships and by their own power are unable to solve the tensions which occur in their relationships with other people and with the community.
- b. To help in reforming the social environment. (1)
- c. To bring to bear the experience gained in a, and b, upon the policy forming organs in the other sectors of welfare and well being. This is essential to ensure contact between social work and the community, and at the same time forms a stimulus towards improvement in structure and the integration of socio/psychic aspects into the complete social policy.

Social work aims at achieving this by methods such as those of case work, group work and social reconstruction. These methods, from the point of view of those who make use of social work, i.e., an individual,

a group or a community, show the following common characteristics:

- a. Each method is evolved through, and by means of relationship with, the person concerned. (2)
- b. The approach to the person concerned regarding his relationship with his social surroundings.
- c. To make the person concerned conscious of his situation or place within this environment.
- d. To teach him to act for himself and choose his own way in his situation.

The actual function, however, is the projection of ideas on community life and action; the presentation of a wider dimension of life.

"Social Work" as Used in Pakistan

What does social work mean in Pakistan? The answer to this question will present a picture of the trends which social work has today in this country.

2. A decade ago social work meant a way of helping all categories of destitute and needy people through individual alms-giving and through charitable institutions. This meaning still prevails although its significance is on the decline. Social work has, now, been incorporated into the schedule of government work. This happened in 1955 when Pakistan's First Five-Year Plan devoted a complete chapter to social welfare.

3. A number of reasons explain the lack of understanding towards social work. The British Bureaucratic Administration which was an efficient system in ruling the people through force and fear actually robbed them of initiative and community action. Fatalistic cult of Sufism which justified human suffering and the Hindu Caste System which had been assimilated into the Muslim Culture of Pakistan are some of the factors for maintaining and sustaining the charitable character of social work in Pakistan. Islamic social welfare concepts like Zakat and Sadqat (Divine Poor Taxes), Aukaf (Religious Welfare Foundations) and Baitulmal (Repository of Divine Wealth or Public Welfare Money) never functioned on scientific social work lines. New attempts are being made to relate them to modern concepts of social work.

4. It has already been stated that in 1955 the Government of Pakistan accepted social work as public welfare responsibility. The government clearly laid

(1) Social environment is understood as informal relationships.

(2) For the sake of simplicity the phrase "person concerned" is used to cover also "group" or "community".

down the role of social work in public and private efforts. Social work was no more a charity. It became a palliative, protective, rehabilitative, and preventive measure based on mobilised human and material resources for dealing with all kinds of social problems. With the emergence and acceptance of this more scientific view of social work the older views are giving way. Now people engaged in welfare activities generally understand social work to mean a modern process adopted by private or public efforts for actuating of welfare in the nation. Social work will effect particularly those who are physically and socially handicapped and those under the stresses and strains of various environmental problems. Social work is also understood to encompass various techniques of Case Work, Group Work, Community Organization, etc. The preceding chapters explain how this concept of social work has developed in Pakistan.

5. The Pakistan Conference of Social Work is the only private organisation which has undertaken the task of popularising the modern meaning of social work while the Directorate of Social Welfare and its closely associated semi-governmental organisation. The National Council of Social Welfare, are the two public welfare organisations which have contributed towards this new concept of social work.

"Social Work" Defined in the Philippines

In 1955, the Philippine Association of Social Workers defined social work as "an art in which knowledge of the science of human relations and skill in relationships are used to mobilize capacities in the individual and resources in the community appropriate for better adjustment between the individual and all or some parts of his total environment". The popular concept of social work in the Philippines is that it is a "giving" and a "helping" activity, a kind of "fix-all." The practitioner in social work in the popular concept is an encyclopedia of community resources, a skilful organizer or mobilizer of both person and things, a person who is least interested in pay but does all she does as a voluntary service out of the "ultimate goodness" of the human heart. Very often, social work is equated with civic work. That social work is an organized activity is a comparatively new concept and not yet too well understood except among social work practitioners in the agency setting. Although social work is now increasingly known as the Philippine Association of Social Workers defined it in 1955, there are still instances when the sponsor of a beauty contest or the solicitor of funds for civic affairs such as community festivals or community centers is called a social worker and such activities referred to as social work.

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