

along and often to branch out into new experiments and schemes. Brief examples are the successful establishment of a care committee at the new Kidbrooke school, and the gradual extension of the service to grammar schools.

Day-to-day co-operation with the teachers and with the parents are the two bases upon which care committee work has always stood and it is usual for a member of the care committee to have a set day a week for consultation at the school. Some heads encourage care committee members to have direct contact with the class teachers, some invite them to meet parents when new entrants are being received. Whatever the method heads welcome the help which the care committee can give them and refer the most varied difficulties to them for solution.

School Meals.

The care committee service was first instituted to carry out the responsibilities of the 1906 Provision of Meals Act. The year 1955 has seen care committees as occupied as ever with arranging for needy children to have free meals or meals at reduced prices. There has been no great change this year in the numbers of children being helped in this way. Full employment has meant a higher standard of living but rehousing has meant higher rents for a great number of families and distance from home has meant more children staying for school meals in secondary schools. Assessments therefore continue to be sympathetically made in spite of more adequate family earnings. Discussions at care committee meetings reveal a great knowledge and understanding of individual families and their needs. There is probably no perfect way of making assessments but all over London the well-being of the children themselves is the first criterion.

School Health.

The work of following up medical inspections is an important part of the care committee worker's duties. Since health visitors came into the Council's service in 1948 much has been done to secure friendly co-operation between them and the care committees. Reports this year comment on the good health of the children and the decreased need for medical treatment. Good co-operation with the parents is reported though some care committees still lament the number of missed appointments at treatment centres.

"Problem" Children.

A great deal of valuable work is done by care committees for "problem" children and "problem" families. Children are in school for at least ten years of their lives and throughout these years both teachers and care committee workers have to persevere and be patient however difficult the child or unsatisfactory the home. Consequently the work is often slow and unspectacular and there is little to report in any one particular year. The greatest reward a teacher and care committee worker can have is when a "problem scholar" returns as an adult to his school to thank them for helping him to make a success of his life. The care committees make use of any source available for help. Child guidance clinics are freely used and many care committee workers keep in touch with the home and help to secure the parents' co-operation if a child is maladjusted and in need of boarding education. Their primary wish is to keep the child in his own home. If discussion with and help to the parents, or reference to family service units, or co-operation with the N.S.P.C.C. or any other method will avail, they try to use it. During the year there has been an increased use of "case conferences," that is, discussion of a particular family's problems between the different social workers involved in order that, if more than one visitor has to be in contact with the family, for statutory reasons, there is a plan made as to the help and

advice to be given. Much is being done to reduce the number of visitors and to bring co-ordinated and concentrated help to each family.

Even more difficult to assess is the value of the care committee worker to the average child in the average home. Yet it appears from the many parents who come to the teachers, to the care committee workers and to the care committee offices for advice and who welcome the care committee visitor, than at increasing number are glad to be able to discuss with a sympathetic listener the minor difficulties of their children.

Clothing.

During the last ten years the work of care committees in connection with children's clothing has been greatly increased and they now deal with the statutory provision authorised by the Council in 1948 and also with applications for voluntary funds to supplement uniform grants. This year's reports show that this work has gone on steadily. Requests for "dry and warm" clothing naturally are heaviest in the winter but the summer months show great activity in preparation for transfer to secondary schools. Several care committees during the year have established "secondhand" stores which have been of great help to mothers. Parents are increasingly keen to see that their children are properly equipped for school.

Training.

People who volunteer for care committee work are always reassured that they will not be left to sink or swim but will receive expert advice from an organiser. On account of the great variety of experience which men and women bring to the work and also because few people can give more than two days a week of their time, it is obvious that such "training" must be largely individual and will depend a great deal on the skill of the individual organiser. Every attempt has been made to put technical information into pamphlet form so that those who take easily to the printed page may have what they need ready to hand. It has been found valuable for the new care committee worker to have an early opportunity to meet the divisional treatment organiser and her assistant organisers in order to understand the link with the school medical service. There is a constant demand both from new and established workers for lectures, discussions and "day conferences" which will enable them to help children and their families.

During 1955 the central council arranged a conference on credit trading and guidance was given to care committee visitors should they come across a family in difficulty. The district councils have also arranged for a great variety of speakers to give talks to care committee workers. Some of the subjects discussed at day conferences during 1955: "The care committee and the teachers," "How to visit," "Problems of the adolescent in an urban society," and "Problems of the modern secondary school."

Moral Welfare.

Even a cursory glance at the last ten years would not be complete without a reference to what, for lack of a better name, is called "children's moral welfare work." The Education Committee were the first authority to provide help for children who were the victims of sexual molestation and assault, or who had character difficulties of a sexual nature. The Council's district organisers of children's care have always been and still are the officers responsible to the Education Committee for seeing that these children are helped. In 1945 there were voluntary committees working with the L.C.C.'s district organisers, and covering the whole of the county of London. They raised money and paid trained workers. In 1950 the South London Committee collapsed for lack of funds and the Education Committee appointed additional organisers for this particular work.

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