

of one short article to do more than briefly outline some of the more important suggestions, leaving the consideration of their details for a future occasion.

The members of the Royal Commission numbered 18, all of whom were experts in one or more branches of Poor Law and Social work and knowledge. Fourteen members signed the "Majority Report," whilst the remaining four Commissioners drew up a separate "Minority Report," in which they differ very considerably from the conclusions arrived at by their colleagues, although both Reports are the outcome of deliberations on precisely the same evidence heard by the Commissioners sitting together.

The suggestions contained in the Majority Report may be said to bring into greater prominence the methods of the Charity Organisation Society, whilst those of the Minority Report appear to have a more Socialistic tendency.

The Report consists of nine sections, each complete in itself, a most important memorandum by Dr. Downes, other memoranda by various other Commissioners, and the Separate Report of the Minority, composed of the Rev. Prebendary Russell Wakefield, Mr. Francis Chandler, Mr. Lansbury, and Mrs. Sidney Webb.

In this brief summary it will be impossible to do more than indicate the more important and far-reaching of the changes recommended, the first to which we draw attention being No. 4, which provides that "the division of the Local Government Board which has hitherto dealt with the 'Relief of the Poor' should be in future known as the Public Assistance Division."

This paragraph may be said to provide the very note of the Report, an earnest desire to substitute "a system of help" for the unfortunate in the place of the "relief" given under the old Poor Law which "has gathered about it associations of harshness and still more of hopelessness."

The abolition of Boards of Guardians as at present constituted, and the appointment of new bodies in their place are perhaps recommendations which, although expected, will cause the greatest discussion and difference of opinion amongst laymen and experts. The Commissioners propose to create in the place of the Boards of Guardians two bodies to carry out different sets of functions:—

(a) A new local authority to be known as the Public Assistance Authority for central administration, its area to be co-terminous with that of the county or county borough.

(b) Local Committees for inquiring into the circumstances of persons applying for assistance, and undertaking such other duties as may be delegated by the Local Authority.

In London it is proposed that this Public Assistance Authority be a Statutory Committee of the County Council, and composed as follows:—Half to be nominated by the County Council either from their own number or outside. One fourth to be also nominated by the County Council, but from outside their number, and to consist of experts in "the administration of Public Assistance or other

cognate work." One fourth to be nominated by the Local Government Board, and to consist of representatives of the medical and legal professions, employers, working men, hospital and charity experts. Many injustices will be remedied if the very important suggestion "that Poor Law expenditure in London be a uniform charge over the whole area according to rateable value" be carried out.

The abolition of the General Workhouses is a great feature in the Report; in their place it is suggested to substitute classified Institutions for the following groups of inmates:—

1. Children.
2. Aged and infirm.
3. Sick.
4. Able-bodied men.
5. Able-bodied women.
6. Vagrants.
7. Feeble-minded and epileptics.

The giving of Out-Relief or rather "*Home Assistance*" is to be very closely watched, and carried out very much on "Charity Organisation" lines, when given it is "to be adequate," the *case paper system* is to be adopted, and supervision exercised over the recipients, power being conferred to refuse this form of relief to persons in areas where the "conditions of living are bad."

Widows are to be specially considered, but *deserted wives* are not to have any assistance "during the first 12 months after desertion."

Other very important suggestions are—

That no *disfranchisement* should be attached to any form of *medical assistance*.

That *Labour Exchanges* be established and worked by the Board of Trade to assist "the mobility of Labour" whilst *Labour Colonies* under the control of the Local Government Board should also be organised, every effort being made "to disassociate the respectable unemployed from the habitual in and out." "That in the area of each Public Assistance Authority there be formed also a *Voluntary Aid Council* and Committee composed largely of the governors of the local hospitals and charities and friendly societies, of clergy and ministers, etc., and that these committees, working with the public assistance bodies, will aid them in assisting deserving persons according to their peculiar need and circumstance, and avoid the present wasteful method of the over-lapping of charities.

Although the above is a very short summary of the principal recommendations of the Commissioners, it is sufficient to show how far-reaching is the contemplated change—one that will affect not only the social conditions of the vast population of pauperdom but also, it is hoped, do much to mitigate the lot of those on the border-line of extreme poverty. The proposals, will, if carried out, work very considerable alterations in the management of both voluntary charities and Poor Law institutions, and it is therefore proposed to go into the matter more fully, and review at some length this momentous Blue Book.

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