

A School for the Unemployed in Copenhagen.

BEHIND an unimpressive frontage, in a side street of Copenhagen, lies the embodiment of the ideals and dreams of a Danish philanthropist. It is called Kofoed's School, after its founder, Hans Christian Kofoed.

In 1928, a period of great unemployment in Denmark as in other parts of the world, Mr. Kofoed conceived the idea of founding a school, where the unemployed, forced to be idle through no fault of their own, could find help and employment for their idle hours. This was to be no charity in the ordinary sense of the word, for its founder realised the loss of self-respect which comes to the man who is obliged to accept charity from the hands of those more fortunate than himself. To get what material help he needs the applicant must work for it, but not in the usual way that is implied when this method of obtaining charity is used. He works for himself.

The method is best illustrated by an example, as was explained to me by Mr. Jorgensen, one of Mr. Kofoed's able assistants, and one, I may say, imbued with the same idealism as his leader. If a young man comes to the school because he has heard that he can get some much-needed article of clothing there, he is interviewed and the procedure explained to him. Then he is issued with a "working card." This is a pale yellow slip of cardboard, at the top of which is put his name and a number and the date. Printed in two columns below are lists of such items as shoe-repairing, shoe-cleaning, trouser-pressing or cleaning, washing of various garments, and also items of great variety like bath, shaving, hair-cutting, gymnastics and many more. Opposite each item is a figure representing the "points" value of the item. On the other side of the card is listed the value of the "points" in "Kofoed coins." These coins can only be used in the school, but apart from "buying" the needed garment they can be used in the restaurant, where food and drink, including beer, can be obtained. To earn the article of clothing he requires, the man might have to go to the laundry and wash his underwear, then spend 15 to 20 minutes in the gymnasium and take a bath. In this way not only is his need supplied but with great benefit to himself.

This system, as illustrated above, is not only used for obtaining needed clothing but also many other things such as furniture and household goods.

This material help is not the only use of the school. There is a lawyer attached who can give much-needed advice and a doctor to attend to health. There is also a vitamin bar, where medicines and cod-liver oil can be obtained free of charge. By giving the people who come to the school an improved health and smarter appearance, they are fitted to take their place once more as useful members of the community. Nor is this all, for the school aims also at education in order to fit them for employment while filling in the empty hours. There are daily lectures on a variety of subjects, among which are philosophy and ethics, Danish, arithmetic, book-keeping, modern languages, drawing, and the handicrafts such as joinery, carpentry, book-binding, cookery. Talks are also given on Christianity and on life in other countries.

Although the school was founded to help the unemployed man, it has now extended its scope and caters for women and men of all ages. It gives those who have no homes and who live in emergency hostels a chance to clean their clothes, to take baths, and a place to put their belongings. An unemployed man who has a home, can, while waiting for a job, make much-needed furniture for his home, or repair his own under skilled supervision. This can also be done by a woman left husbandless. The school also caters for the inexperienced housewife. She can come to the school at

eight in the morning, bringing the children who will be cared for in the nursery provided while she washes clothes, or makes and mends under an experienced teacher. She can also learn dressmaking and cooking. There is a group of specially trained women who go to the houses if necessary to help put them straight and to teach the housewife the best ways of working. They continue to visit and help until the housewife can manage on her own. The school also encourages young people who come to learn a trade, and they have recently opened a residential school for young girls between the ages of 14 and 17 years, where they can learn, in a three months' course, housewifery. Finally, and not least, the school helps young people who are maladjusted to life. These are sent to a special residential school, where they stay from 8 to 10 months, and are afterwards placed in a position, a close watch being kept on them in case they need advice and help from 2 to 5 years afterwards.

This wonderful work is supported by private subscriptions and a State grant. As much as half-a-million Danish kroner are contributed, and five thousand are granted by the State. It is helped also by being able to use State teachers where the subjects taught are the same as those given in the folk high schools. People contribute the clothes and old furniture and household goods for distribution.—D. W.

Brussels Treaty Permanent Commission.

THE Brussels Treaty Committee of Experts on Public Health, has met in Luxembourg for its 4th Session.

The experts studied the programme of exchange visits of medical and para-medical personnel organised between the five countries for 1949. Doctors, members of the public health administration departments of the five countries, statisticians and chemists, totalling ten, will have visited the four other countries by the end of the year to study the functioning of the administrative structure and existing methods in their public health services. The programme of exchange visits for 1950 was drawn up; this will enable 35 more specialists to visit the other Brussels Treaty countries for purposes of study.

The members of the committee also studied the report of a sub-committee of experts on the Control of Anti-Venereal Medicaments. The directors of the respective national laboratories had met in Utrecht on May 31st last to discuss the control of these drugs, and they were able to draw useful comparisons between their methods and results concerning the therapeutic value of anti-venereal medicaments.

The committee also noted the reports of the three sub-committees responsible for the study of standardisation of methods of control of foodstuffs (milk, butter, wine, meat, etc.) of drinking-water and of sewage-water. Considerable progress has already been made in the standardisation of drinking-water; as regards foodstuffs, a good deal remains to be done and a scheme of work has been mapped out; the question of sewage-water is to be settled by means of bilateral agreements.

The committee considered the action taken to implement the recommendations of the sub-committee which has studied health control of sea and air traffic. Decisions on questions of principle had been taken at the previous session. At this meeting, various technical difficulties were cleared up. It was agreed to fix January 1st, 1950, as the date on which it was hoped that the necessary regulations would have been put into force to enable the five countries to be treated as a single territory from the point of view of health control of sea and air traffic.

The next session of the Public Health Committee will take place at The Hague on March 9th, 10th and 11th, 1950.

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