

**Blanche L. La Du**, Member, State Board of Control: Those of you who have the State Conference program no doubt have looked over the Thursday meetings very carefully, and noted, first, that today is State Institutions Division day at the conference, and the next thing you notice is that Mr. Swendsen, chairman of the State Board of Control, would preside this morning.

Most of you know that Mr. Swendsen has been ill for the past few weeks. I talked with him this morning, and he said he would like to send a message to you; that he would like to have me greet you all for him. He wanted to express his regret at not being able to attend this quarterly conference. He said: "You know, it is the first quarterly conference since conferences were organized that I have been unable to attend because of illness." Once or twice it has been necessary for him to be absent for other reasons, but never before on account of illness. He also wanted me to tell you that he is getting along very nicely; that he is spending the days in his garden and enjoying the rest. He expects to be back at the office next week. I knew you would all like to have a message from him.

We have with us this morning many who are not members of our official family, and because you are here I will say, what the superintendents and our agency representatives all know, that the scope of the work of the Board of Control has been very wide for a number of years, but it is constantly widening with the new responsibilities and duties that are placed upon us either by legislative action or by request of the Governor or by the needs of the times. The scope of our work, as you know, includes all phases of life and all ages of life. We are not only responsible for the custodial care of state wards, but we have educational problems, health problems, medical problems, industrial problems, economical problems, to consider.

Our greatest problem of all is the human problem, taking the handicapped wards of the state, those laboring under some difficulty, whether physical, mental or social, and trying to help them to make adjustments in order to meet life as best they can under their handicapped condition, or to help them overcome these handicaps and meet life in a normal way when they go out from the institution.

The human problem is our biggest problem. We meet it through our eighteen state-supervised institutions, where we care for the mentally ill, the insane, where we care for the mentally deficient, the feeble-minded and the epileptic, for the dependent children, the crippled children, the delinquent children, the adult delinquents and the tuberculous of the state.

Besides those groups, we have agencies connected with our central office, through which we administer the laws pertaining to said group or supervise them. The Children's Bureau constitutes the largest agency under the direction of our Board. Divisions concerned with the ex-service men, the adult blind, the paroled insane, and groups of that character that need some special attention from the state government through one of its departments, are also under direct control and supervision of our Board.

It is also true, as you know, that these handicapped groups are always the ones who first feel the stress and strain of any unusual condition. The economic depression, for instance, is first felt by the weakest in our social life, and it is because of this that our institutional load is growing heavier and heavier every month.

During our last biennial period our institutional increase in inmates was over 1700 in the two-year period. It is going to be greater during this present biennial period unless something very unusual happens during the next year, because there is a gradual increase. The greatest increase at the present time has come in the number of those committed as insane. The increase there has been greater than

the increase in population. We must always accept commitments for the insane, even though our hospitals are very much overcrowded.

Our next largest group is the feeble-minded. We have a housing capacity for a certain number. Beyond that we do not and cannot go. We have a large group in the institution and a very large group on the outside awaiting admission.

During times of great unemployment, such as we have now, there is an increase in the penal population, due for the most part to crimes against property. Men who are out of work, out of funds, will commit crimes against property which in times of plenty they would not commit. We now have the largest prison population we have ever had.

With regard to our schools for delinquents, for quite a while we felt we were holding our own or even decreasing the population in our correctional institutions, but I believe now it is gradually increasing. Children's agencies and community activities have been more alive to the needs of children during these times of unemployment, and I think have accomplished a great deal in keeping boys and girls out of correctional institutions, but in spite of their efforts our load is gradually increasing. The fact that fathers and mothers, because they are out of employment, have had more time to devote to their children, and to give them a little more supervision, has helped to keep down the increase in juvenile delinquents. The increase is very small as compared with other groups.

Of course you all know that the increase in the number of dependent children to be cared for by the state would naturally be very much greater under economic stress. The increase at the State Public School, Owatonna, has been unusually large during the past biennial period. We have many more commitments than we are able to accept. We have between two and three hundred who have been or who will be committed just as soon as we can make place for them. However, since federal emergency relief funds were granted for those counties in the state which were hardest hit by the depression, there has been a decrease in commitments of dependent and neglected children. Relief to families has made possible care of children in their own homes.

I am telling you this because I want you to know the stress under which we are constantly working, and to know that our superintendents are having a constantly increasing load to carry, whether the facilities for caring for them have been expanded or not. Our School for the Deaf, our Hospital for Crippled Children, are filled to capacity. We no longer have any spare room for the crippled or the deaf. That is always the situation at the Hospital for Crippled Children.

I want to say, especially to the superintendents and those most closely connected with our work, that sometimes you may feel that the members of our Board are not taking quite the same interest in your institutions and in your work that we did in past years; that we do not get around to see you quite so often, and do not stay quite so long when we do get there, but I am sure you will realize the added responsibilities which have been placed upon the Board of Control during the past year.

During the past ten months we have organized the Department of Relief under our Board. We have administered over three and a half million of federal relief to 29 of the political subdivisions of our state. That in itself has been a gigantic task because it came as an emergency which had to be worked out immediately. Distances in Minnesota are great. To accomplish much in the northern part of the state during the severe winter is a real task. Most of our relief outside the three large cities has been in this northern section. The organization for the administration of relief has taken a great deal of extra time on the part of those connected with our office. We will have to continue the administration of relief

during the coming year. We expect many more counties to come in for supplemental relief. The state and the local community are at the present time carrying the entire load in those counties, but supplemental aid during the next year will be necessary. We have some three or four thousand transients in the state of Minnesota who will have to be cared for from federal funds.

I am sure you realize that we are not forgetting or neglecting you, but we must ask you to carry a little more responsibility at this time. We know you are doing your very best toward keeping your institution in such condition that we need not worry about institutional problems while we are so busy attempting to relieve suffering humanity throughout the state.

Our program this morning is going to be devoted to a subject which is always with us. The subject of the care of the feeble-minded is one of our biggest problems. We come at it from many different angles. Every institution has to meet it to a certain degree, although the great problem is concentrated in two of our institutions.

This morning we have with us an expert who is going to speak on the subject, "The Effect of Economic Conditions on Colony and Parole Plans for the Feeble-Minded." Since Dr. Murdoch, superintendent of the school for the mentally deficient at Faribault, has known the guest speaker for many years, and knows of his work, I have asked him to introduce the speaker of the morning. Dr. Murdoch.

J. M. Murdoch, M. D., Superintendent, School for Feeble-Minded: Mrs. La Du, ladies and gentlemen, before I introduce the speaker, may I just say to Mrs. La Du, and through her to the other members of the Board, that we superintendents of state institutions and those in the department realize the tremendous responsibilities that are resting upon your shoulders, and we want you to understand that we are loyally back of you and desire to help you in every way possible and to relieve you of all the details that we can.

I believe you all agree with me that mental deficiency is a major problem in social welfare work, and that the present economic conditions have seriously affected the ability of the feeble-minded to obtain appropriate care and employment outside our institutions.

Our institutions are filled far beyond their normal capacity, and the waiting list for admission is long. How to meet the situation is of the greatest importance.

We are fortunate to have with us today a man known throughout the civilized world for his work in caring for the feeble-minded. Dr. Bernstein, the superintendent of the New York Rome State School, a man who has been twice president of the American Association for the Study of the Feeble-Minded, now the American Association on Mental Deficiency, has been good enough to come here to give us his advice and tell us of his experience in dealing with the problem.

Dr. Bernstein combines a human sympathetic interest with a high order of professional skill and administrative ability. It has been my good fortune to have known Dr. Bernstein for many years and to have visited his school and some of his colonies. He was one of the first to recognize that the great majority of the feeble-minded do not require institutional care, and he is perhaps best known for his work in providing industrial colonies where mental defectives can be inexpensively housed, relieving the central institution of those not requiring special care, training and treatment.

I take great pleasure in introducing Dr. Charles Bernstein, superintendent of the Rome State School.

## THE EFFECT OF ECONOMIC CONDITIONS ON COLONY AND PAROLE PLANS FOR THE FEEBLE-MINDED

Charles Bernstein, M. D.

Superintendent, Rome State School, New York

Madam President and Friends: I am glad to have an opportunity to come to Minnesota once more. I have not been here for a number of years, and when I was asked to come it did not take much urging to fetch me along. I am enjoying this beautiful city and the fine weather and, while we have weather something like this in New York state, we do not have so fine and dry a climate as you have here. We have fogs.

Regarding this problem of caring for the mental defective, for the past thirty years or more it has continued to loom larger and larger as the number to be cared for has increased. As the cost of living has increased, the demand for state care for many more of the defectives has become very pressing. As we have studied various groups we have found that each organization or association or group working with any particular class of defective and dependents has felt that feeble-mindedness was a very large underlying factor in their work, and that if they could be relieved of the care of the feeble-minded they would be relieved of anywhere from forty to sixty per cent of their problem. That was in the early days. As we have grown to understand the problem better and to study larger groups, and as we have had more expert advice, we have found that while in the past mental defect was a factor in a very large per cent of the agency's problem, it is not more than ten or twenty per cent of their problem today because the number of delinquent and dependent who are not feeble-minded has vastly increased with our redistribution of population and resulting changed social status. But even at that it is still a large problem with them, and if they could be relieved of all feeble-minded they would be greatly assisted in their work.

We have attempted to enlarge our term for feeble-mindedness. In New York state we use the broader term, mental defective. I notice you all say mentally deficient. The English group always says that. Whatever we call it, we must think in terms of the larger group. We used to think of the feeble-minded as idiots and imbeciles. Later we were told that there was a group of individuals who were neither idiots nor imbeciles and yet were not normal, so they called that group morons. Even then we found we had not covered the entire field. We found a certain percentage of maladjusted persons in schools, institutions, and so forth, who by any mental test—or psychological test, if you will—showed no mental deficiency from the standpoint of intelligence, but they did show a very marked mental deficiency from the standpoint of trying to live with them. They were peculiar in their reactions. Families might put up with them if the other children could get along with them, and agencies might put up with them for a time, but agencies soon found that these neurotic, peculiar, irritable individuals could not live in family groups very well. So they broadened the term "feeble-minded" to "mental defective" or "mentally deficient." And that is broad enough to take in this additional ten per cent which is thus included in the group.

I have observed this thing for the past twenty-five years: Whereas we formerly dealt with eighty per cent idiots and imbeciles and twenty per cent morons, we today find in New York that about twenty per cent are idiots, thirty per cent imbeciles, forty per cent morons, and about ten per cent belong to this peculiar group, which makes up the hundred per cent of the mental-defective group.

We do not worry greatly about handling idiots and imbeciles. We know that they do not live long. However, they are burdensome to care for and families