

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

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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.

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

ought to be relieved of the task of taking care of them. I would not say in a custodial way. They are subject to training to be more cleanly and orderly, so that even they may be improved somewhat.

When we come to our imbecile group, they need considerable training. If they are trained along manual and industrial lines, they will be able to do considerable work around the institution. They will not be able to do much outside the institution or home, but many of them can go back to the family. You would be surprised how many of them can find niches somewhere in very modest families where they want some heavy work done about the place, or perhaps a companion for the aged grandmother, or a helper in the home.

The moron group is one which we are hopeful of training and making quite useful outside the institution. Dr. Davies, in his book on "Social Control of the Feeble-minded," accentuates that work outside the institution has a stabilizing influence. After all, in dealing with the feeble-minded, to a great extent many factors which modify normal humans modify them and are controlling factors.

We have sort of worried about the idiots and imbeciles piling up en masse and making a great group to handle. Newsholme, who came from England to visit us a few years since, told us that idiots die about four times as fast as normal people and the imbeciles twice as fast, and, sure enough, we find that the idiots and imbeciles do not live so long. I do not mean that we are trying to get rid of them, Nature is taking care of the situation, but we haven't got to worry about their piling up in our institutions or displacing or greatly burdening our normal population.

The morons will accumulate. Their death rate per thousand is not much larger than that of the normal individual. The mental hygiene department in Minneapolis reports that they found that the morons, under conditions in which they have had to live, die much more rapidly than normal persons, almost two to one. As we are training them better and making them better able to follow social adaptation, they seem to live longer, because they live under better sanitary conditions either inside or outside the institution following their training.

So much in general for this problem.

Now, in trying to evaluate the work from the standpoint of attempting to rehabilitate these people in the community and making them useful somewhere, I think we can best do so from the standpoint of considering our ideals as applied to this work. I think we ought to start first with the humanitarian consideration of the individual.

From the standpoint of the economic situation, should we ever consider allowing these individuals to go from the custody of the state, thus interfering with labor outside?

It seems to me we ought to give any human being a chance to live in the world as normal people live if he is capable of doing that thing, if he is not so delinquent or so burdensome that he makes so much trouble in the community that the social welfare organizations, the charity departments, or the public welfare departments, have to be burdened with them to any greater extent than they are with the working people, if you will.

Again, I think we should consider the humanitarian situation from the standpoint of the employer. Very many families need some sort of help in the family, but they are not able to pay much for it. There may be sickness in the family, there may be a paralytic child, or there may be an old grandmother who needs some care and attention and wants association with others, and there are many families with small children at home who need help and cannot pay much for it. If we can render assistance to these various families by making it possible for them

to have a worker in the home, we should do that thing from an humanitarian standpoint.

From the standpoint of the economic situation, should we allow these people to go out into the world and take the labor that some person outside might carry on? Outside labor will not consent to do the menial tasks for which the stable feeble-minded are especially well fitted. I think there are many places to which our people can go where families cannot possibly have this service in any other way. Supplying help in such homes to sort of stabilize the home, and render assistance to the housewife otherwise subject to much drudgery, and make an old lady in that home happy because she has a companion, a comrade, possibly keeping a demented out of the state hospital, is a thing worth while. I wish you could know how many times we are able to adjust a home in this way, especially where there is an old lady in it, an old grandmother or an old aunt who needs that little attention or devotion on the part of somebody to keep them satisfied, or keep them out of the poorhouse or some other institution, not because the people can not afford to house them, but because they cannot stand the strain of their discontent and maladjustment. The girl coming into the house meets that situation.

Some fifteen or eighteen years ago we arranged to put a group of colored girls under a matron in Hamilton, New York. Hamilton is a town of about four thousand people, and Colgate University, with 1,000 male students, is located there. It was impossible for the professors' families to find domestic help at such a wage as they were able to offer. By establishing a colony at Hamilton we have made it possible for the professors' families to have this service. A few other families have it also. They have learned to depend on these girls for work by the hour, the day or the week or the school year. They know they can turn to that colony at any time and find help. At first with Dr. Cutten, president of the University, there was some question as to the advisability of having a group of feeble-minded colored girls in the community. He was not sure what would happen to the students. But it has proved so successful that it is now considered an essential part of the University. It serves to make the professors' families happy and to keep them from being maladjusted because of inability to secure such domestic help as they may need.

We have a population of 3,400 inmates in Rome. Of this number 1100 are living in colonies, and another 500 are on parole status.

This work for the colonies for boys has gone on since 1906; for girls, since 1914. We now have thirty-two boys' colonies each accommodating about twenty inmates. We have some colonies which are 150 miles or more from the institution. These colonies accommodate from 700 to 750 boys. About a third of these boys will pass along each year to the status of parole. They live in the colonies about three years. About four or six of the boys are older and they form a sort of nucleus for the rest. The boys can spare about half their time in which to help the neighboring farmers plant their crops and harvest them. They also help to care for the stock and cut wood during the winter. They work by the hour or by the day or by the week. In this way they contribute towards their support, and, moreover, they learn to stand alone and they learn to meet people outside.

We rent these farms; we do not buy them. We put in charge an experienced farmer attendant whose wife acts as the house mother. About four or five of the boys help around the house. One boy helps in the kitchen; another helps in the dining room; another helps in the dormitory; there is one general helper; if there is a baby in the family one boy helps to take care of it. Of the boys who work outside, one handles the team; another takes care of the pigs; another looks after the chickens; another takes care of the cows. Eight or ten of the boys work around

the farm. They produce all the vegetables they need themselves and have plenty for the institution. They produce milk and eggs. These boys are so trained that they not only help the farmer but they also help the farmer's wife and she likes it. She says: "I like Johnny. He does not hesitate to help me do the washing or to wash the dishes or make the beds." And the farmer says: "I like Johnny. He is as helpful as any hired man, and he can even toggle up the old harness." A boy gets from ten to twenty-five dollars a month, depending upon his ability when on parole. He will help the woman of the house as well as help the farmer.

In addition to the farm work they are trained to make baskets and to cut down trees and make splints for baskets, etc. We try to make these boys useful generally about a small farm where a farmer is working without machinery, and to make him so helpful that the woman as well as the man wants him around.

Not many farmers can pay twenty-five dollars a month now, but if Johnny gets nothing for his work we are willing to let him go just the same.

The colonies for girls are about the same as the colonies for boys. We send out the girls over sixteen years of age who are ready to do housework for a very modest family. We do not allow these girls to go in families where there are other servants or in families where there are boarders or roomers. They must go into a modest home where the woman wants a girl and will live on a level with her. We have sixteen colonies for girls and they care for 450 girls. Some of the colonies are located as much as 180 miles from the institution at Rome; the colony at Gloversville and the colony at Richfield Springs are sixty miles from Rome. Four or five of the colonies are located right in Rome, where we can watch the reaction of the girls. We used to depend upon the mills to furnish employment for these girls at some of the colonies. We still have two colonies in mill towns. At another one they take in sewing, washing and ironing and that sort of thing, but they do not earn anywhere near their cost these days.

The work at Gloversville, with all this depression, has not fallen off, and we have been able to continue the number of girls there at domestic work. At first we thought these girls would work making gloves, but we were able to place them at domestic work in the families whose members are making gloves. As a result there is just as much demand for the girls there today as there was some four to eight years ago.

We have had a colony for from twelve to fifteen years in East Aurora, where the Roycroft shops are located. Local people are employed in these shops, and we thought our boys and girls might go into the shops and do the same kind of work. However, here again we found the people wanted domestic help. Formerly boys and girls from the surrounding country did this work, but, because of the low wage they were able to pay, these boys and girls from the country will no longer do that kind of work, and none of them will stop at East Aurora. They go on to Buffalo or Rochester, where they can get five dollars a day. The people living in East Aurora wanted domestic help at the time the colony was organized, and the demand for girls does not cease, although we do not get as much pay as formerly. Whereas five or six years ago the colonies were earning from \$75,000 to \$82,000 a year, we are now earning only \$37,000 a year. We find that the boys from farm colonies do not move along quite so fast as they did before. However, we are caring for 1,100 inmates in those farm colonies, and we are saving the state the cost of \$2,500 per bed for this number. This is what it costs to build these days in New York state.

I wish we were able to carry on as you do in Minnesota, where your cases are committed direct to the State Board of Control. Miss Thomson took me over

to see the Clubhouse in Minneapolis. They have a wonderfully fine home there and are apparently quite happy.

In general the question arises, Wouldn't these same boys and girls be happier in an institution? When we see them about the institution they are a happy group. The boys and girls living in the colonies live in the open; they have an opportunity to go to church, to the picture shows; they go on the street alone with their colony friends, and no one jeers at them, and they are happier; they are contented; and their being able to earn money has a decidedly stabilizing influence on them. Dr. Davies accentuates the fact that they are happier because they have the satisfaction of doing something for somebody.

We pay rentals for these girls' colonies out of the earnings. For the boys' farm colonies our rentals are paid by the state of New York. The boys turn in enough food supplies—vegetables, milk, eggs, fruits, etc.—to offset the cost. It costs about \$4,000 a year to run one of these colonies for twenty boys, including the cost of \$600 to \$800 for rental and \$1,500 for the salary of the manager and his wife. In good years they turn in enough so that we are able to play even.

It is very questionable whether a number of children whom we are getting from the social agencies are feeble-minded or not, but they are maladjusted in the family and the boy or the girl is becoming delinquent. Dr. Brown, of the State Board, said: "Why don't we take them? They will go to the reformatory if we don't. We will approach them in a psychiatric way, keep them a little while until we get over this depression, then they will go back."

We are planning to take a little place of twenty acres about four or five miles north of Rome, on which there is a fine house, barn, and a place for the cow, pigs and chickens. We are going to take twenty little girls of school age—between eight and twelve, maybe fourteen—and there will be four older girls to assist the matron do the work. We are going to send the brightest of these girls to district school. In the barn we are going to make a good gymnasium and have a manual training school. We are going to have our scout master go up there and the physical director, and we are going to invite the children in that little school to come over to our manual and physical training school. I am going to see if we cannot socialize this little group in this community. We are to pay seventy-five dollars a month for that place. There is another place of the same kind near Oneida, where we are going to take schoolboys. The children will be given a little spending money. Each colony is allowed to spend twenty-five dollars a month for little extras for diet, etc.

For the past ten years we have been running juvenile colonies in which we place these brighter children, but they have never before attended the town or district school. We have eight of these juvenile colonies in which those younger children are living, with a man and his wife to manage things. One teacher does the work of two. She teaches at one colony in the morning and at another in the afternoon. They have a scout master and a physical director, and the girls receive training in domestic arts.

There is one other point: We do not expect to rehabilitate all of the boys and girls who do not come to us until they are fifteen or twenty years old, who have intelligent quotients of sixty to seventy. Many of these are of the unstable group which we must handle, and we cannot introduce such girls into a household to do common work, nor can we put the unstable boys on farms. They won't stay there. If we use that kind of boy or girl around our institution and let them do the work, and then let the other stable ones go out, we can rehabilitate many of our cases outside, and if many get only their board and their bed at first, even if we have to furnish the clothing, we should feel well satisfied.

Dr. Vaux, who has taken charge of the institution for the feeble-minded at Newark, New York, recently reported that he was receiving money from the state of New York to pay the board of children in private homes. He has eight boys and girls living in homes in the town of Newark, who are going to public school. The state furnishes clothing and medical attention. That thing has worked out so successfully that the budget commission is going to give the State Department of Mental Hygiene \$25,000 this year to further extend this now project. He has also started another plan in Wolcott, a place of two or three hundred people. He is getting families there to board older men and women, two or three in a family, and Dr. Garvin, of the Binghamton State Hospital, has sent two chronic insane persons to board in this way in this same town to demonstrate whether or not the chronic insane can also be boarded out successfully. Dr. Parsons, director of the Department of Mental Hygiene in New York, is very anxious to have it given a trial. If these individuals can be thus boarded out successfully, Dr. Parsons feels that we will have made a big stride and will save the large overhead expenditure for construction at the rate of \$2,500 per bed or, in some instances, even larger costs where a whole new institution must be erected.

Mrs. La Du: We wish to thank you, Dr. Bernstein, for this very interesting and enlightening talk on the colonization of the feeble-minded. We have a long way to go before we can anywhere near approach your project. With us colonization is in its infancy. We haven't the same system that you have in New York, but I am sure we are always very glad to have people, especially specialists, from other states come to us and discuss some of our common problems. You always bring a new point of view, new thoughts, new ideas, in connection with our work.

Dr. Murdoch is also a specialist in this line of work. He has charge of the School for Feeble-Minded in Minnesota. Dr. Murdoch spent many years in this work in other states before coming to us, principally in the state of Pennsylvania.

We also have Dr. Frederick Kuhlmann, director of the Division of Research of the State Board of Control, who is a specialist in this work. He is known nationally for the work that he has done in this field. Dr. Kuhlmann, after receiving his degree of A.B. at college, specialized for three years in this study, making his special field abnormal psychology, including the feeble-minded. He has been instructor in the subject of psychology in a number of universities—Clark University, the University of Wisconsin, the University of Illinois, and the University of Minnesota—but during the past several years he has been connected with the state department in charge of the Research Bureau. Formerly he was stationed at the School for Feeble-Minded at Faribault, but for several years now he has been connected with the central office in St. Paul, and has a staff of workers under him to carry out his plans and his research work in this field. Dr. Kuhlmann is going to speak to us this morning on "Progress in the Care of the Feeble-minded." Dr. Kuhlmann.

A CENTURY OF PROGRESS

By F. Kuhlmann

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I visited the Chicago Fair a few days ago, and when I came back I changed the topic of my paper to "A Century of Progress." The contents, however, will be the same.

A few hundred miles from here a great and modern city is attempting to tell the story of a hundred years of change. Progress is the keynote. It is not only

in evidence; it is overwhelming. Even the most informed visitor finds himself much out of date. It is not within the power of any single mind to keep pace with progress. But this great exhibit selects its material. Not all phases of our human existence can present such a glorious record. History has long noted that in the social and political fields we move with a much more uncertain step. Here our total progress over a period of time may be revolutionary, or very little, or nothing, or even represent retrogression.

Our subject today is feeble-mindedness. What changes have a hundred years wrought in our views, and in our reactions towards the feeble-minded? We have not time to present a history. But let us try to look in on the past at approximately quarter-century periods, and briefly view the high lights of each.

Let the curtain rise on 1830. The care of the feeble-minded had already passed through some notable history. Even the ancients did not neglect them. They threw them into the river. Then for about eighteen centuries they fared variously, according to whether they were regarded as accursed of the gods, possessed of the Devil, or as special messengers from Heaven, or as just interesting fools designed for the amusement of kings. 1830 found a few gathered into asylums, together with the insane and crippled, by Christian Charities of the time, the first manifestation of the purely custodial idea that we still have with us. Thirty years before Itard had demonstrated that the idiot was teachable, and thereby laid the foundation for a truly new era. Two years before Bicetra had been organized as a school for idiots, followed by Salpetriere in 1831, and in 1837 Seguin started his private school for educating the idiot. It was the beginning of a new interest in the feeble-minded, limited for a while almost entirely to a few physicians and educators, with vision enough to have faith in the correctness and value of Itard's results: "The aim was to develop the mind of the idiot; in a word, to cure wholly or in part by a specialized method of training and education. The interest spread. Private schools arose throughout Europe. Details of procedure were elaborated. Results attracted public attention.

We may skip to 1850. News of the success met by private schools and some public institutions in Europe in educating the feeble-minded spread to America, where the idea of educating all children in public schools was universally accepted and most generally practiced. A few private schools for feeble-minded were in operation into which the European methods had been transplanted. The first state school for feeble-minded, established at South Boston, was two years old. New York followed in 1851, after one legislative failure to authorize state expenditure for such a purpose. From this point on the relative importance of the private schools rapidly fades into the background, and we will limit ourselves to public attempts to care for the feeble-minded. The problem at that time was simple, as conceived even by the savants. They had yet much to learn. It was a problem merely of special education, in special state schools, such as the regular public schools could not furnish. After a brief period of years in the state schools, the feeble-minded were to return to their homes, cured in various degrees up to complete restoration to a normal condition by special education. Let us not, however, look down on these pioneers from the magnificent heights of our 1930 perfection. Today we do not always bother to take them into state schools. We give them a little special training in the public schools, little enough related to their future needs, and then let them go on as though they were quite normal.

In 1850 the feeble-minded were not regarded as a burden to the public. No one suspected their numbers. And the variety of social problems they give rise to had not yet dawned on even the best informed. The plea for state schools was made in the interests of the feeble-minded, not for the public interest. And the