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General News of the Occupational World

Women's Stake in Public Affairs

The Institute of Women's Professional Relations, in its conference on Women's Work and Their Stake in Public Affairs, held in New York on March 28-30, showed what a job conference can be like. Experts—over 200 of them, men and women who knew their fields and how to talk about them—participated in the various sessions. There was an audience eager for enlightenment—deans, counselors, teachers, students, from 150 Eastern and Southern schools and colleges. Throughout the conference the cooperative spirit was manifest.

These women evidently realized that as professional women they must have heirs. Their own achievements, and those of the long line of their predecessors, must be perpetuated and extended. Their social insight was evidenced by the general tenor of the counsel they gave the younger women, as well as by the trouble they took to participate in the conference. The lure they held out was the chance to be useful. The opportunity they offered was that these girls might influence their world a bit so that it might act a little less foolishly than it would otherwise. And there can be no doubt, judging by their sincerity of purpose and the scope of their activities, that, in spite of what has been happening to professional women in many countries, in the United States they are a permanent and integral part of its occupational life.

The opening gun was fired by Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, at a "Public Affairs Dinner." Her present position, she stated, had led her as never before to look at the country *as a whole*. This she felt was most important—that government be looked on in its entirety, that one's own particular interest be set aside. Women interested in their jobs will have to be interested in their government. They are not being forced to give up careers to meet an economic situation as are women in some countries, but they are faced with many economic problems which must be solved to insure the development of the country. And one of the most important of these was that of youth and jobs.

Mrs. Chase Going Woodhouse, the director of the Institute of Women's Professional Relations, continued on this same theme. The functioning young woman is the one who is thinking in terms of community problems. There are no women's problems as such. Only community problems. Our economic thinking must be brought up-to-date and the old "lump of labor" theory abandoned, for the work of the world is unlimited. She listed four tendencies which pointed to the greater participation of women in the working world. There was the growing realization that cooperation must take the place of competition. There was the "grand discovery of the consumer." There was the growing emphasis on

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beauty—the new messiah of business was the industrial designer. And there was the changing attitude toward government, which was opening up new fields of work for women, such as public health and social work and housing management.

Lincoln Filene, of Filene's, Boston, deplored the failure of business men to realize that social and public considerations are at the base of all business activity; that one's business is a public affair. A buyer, for instance, must know under what conditions his goods are made. Fifty per cent of the executives in Filene's store are women, for the most part college graduates.

Senator Robert F. Wagner's speech, read by Mrs. Roosevelt in his absence, discussed in this same connection the practical and immediate problem of the job in its relation to social security. There was the increasing participation of women in occupational life and the meagerness of their earnings—\$11.72 a week as the nation-wide average in 1932. The existence of this vast army of underpaid women in the labor market exercises a depressive effect on all wage rates. "Hurtful competition exists just because women have not been put on an equal footing with men, and because lower standards always tend to drag all down to their level." The essential feature of the old-age and unemployment insurance plans is the effect they will have in creating job security. Women, he felt, have not kept pace with men in organization, but there is a quickening impulse of association of women in leagues and unions.

On the following day began the round-table discussions. Some forty of them were held on the various important lines of endeavor open to women. There were meetings for deans, counselors, and

teachers, and for secondary school students and college students—each group with its own emphasis. Leaders in education, the theatre, literature, crafts, arts, sciences, business and industry participated. Since these people were outstanding authorities in their separate fields, the reports which the Institute is planning to publish on these round tables should prove interesting and valuable.

Under the direction of Rose G. Anderson of the Psychological Corporation, an aptitude and personality testing program was held as a demonstration of the techniques involved in vocational counseling. A battery of tests was given to seventeen selected students. Interest and personal history blanks had been filled out and sent to Dr. Anderson a week before the conference. These were scored, and the results, in combination with other pertinent data, were discussed by Dr. Anderson at a three-hour session—either individually with the girls or in the group. She pointed out that counseling is a highly individual and highly personal process, one which could not be carried on properly in a group demonstration of this sort. Nevertheless, some very interesting findings resulted. One girl, who had done very well in her English and scientific aptitude tests and brilliantly in her mathematical aptitude test, was found to be exceptionally low in self-sufficiency. Individual analysis very often has a mental hygiene aspect and enables a student to follow a certain course with assurance that he would not have had otherwise. Although these girls were a selected group, a wide range of interest and aptitude was disclosed, and in a number of cases plans were contradictory to the findings of the examination. And the questions asked by the girls were a significant indication of the need for vocational counseling and of the interest of

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these girls in the matter of guidance.

That the problem of educating women today is no easy task, albeit interesting, was disclosed by Dean Virginia Gildersleeve, who gave the college's answer to a discussion by Thomas J. Watson, president of the International Business Machines Corporation, on what industry expects of the colleges. Mr. Watson had listed as industry's requirements of its women employes character and integrity, good manners, loyalty, some ability perhaps, and last, but by no means least, a love for whatever business they may be engaged in. Dean Gildersleeve said that the problem the colleges had had to face in recent times had not been so much that of preparing young women for jobs as it had been preparing them for a world that had no jobs for them. Women must be educated on four fronts, for work, for recreation, for family relationships, and for citizenship. What made it interesting was that one did not know, specifically, what each girl was being educated for, whether to be a missionary's wife or a state senator. But one thing was certain, that in a world whose troubles were caused by selfishness, greed, and fear, the primary task was to inculcate qualities of courage, generosity, and honesty.

Various views on occupational information were discussed at the final luncheon, and Dean William F. Russell of Teachers College, Columbia University, felt that every one of the fundamental problems of vocational relationships is being made more difficult. As the number of occupations continues to increase and their requirements become more and more diversified, it will be increasingly difficult to get information about fitting individuals into these occupations. One of the most complicated problems of the whole situation, he felt, is concerned with

the matter of sex differences. These exist; they are mental as well as physical. Some tasks are done better by men, others by women, and many are done equally well by both. This whole problem calls for extensive research and concentrated study.

Secretary of Labor Perkins commented with appreciation on the sense of proportion exhibited by the college student who, as a previous speaker, had presented the student's view of occupational information. She emphasized the fact that experience as well as education goes to promote wisdom. Miss Perkins, in traveling over the country, had been struck and heartened by the realization that a passionate movement had been under way in this country for education for its own sake. Quoting John Dewey, she hoped to see, when we approach our life problem, an unprejudiced inquiry into all the factors relating to the problem; a statement of all these factors; a statement of all the desired objectives; and the building of a structure harmonized to the desired objectives.

Considerable comment was created in the newspapers because of a divergency of opinion at various meetings and round tables as to whether political preferment was more important than merit in obtaining a place in public service. Miss Perkins, at the luncheon session, listed many women who held high positions in the field of public administration. "Not political influence but ability to do the job has gotten these places for the women." She felt that there should be many more women in such posts. This thought was frequently echoed throughout the conference. The public service was held out as an inviting opportunity for college women, especially for those who did not have to earn their living but who wished to be useful to their communities. At one meeting, Leonard

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White, U. S. Civil Service Commissioner, revealed the fact that 460,000 government jobs were already under civil service and 200,000 were not, but that 90,000 additional New Deal government positions would soon be placed under civil service control.

A journalist speaking at one round table told her hearers that as a would-be writer she had gone to a school of journalism, not for what she could learn there about writing *per se*, but to get in touch with people who knew the literary field, knew the organizations and their practices, and the people in them. She felt that this orientation was necessary before she could even enter the writing profession. She thought that the round table in which she was participating might serve as a "two-hour school of journalism." Some such purpose it certainly did serve. We can hope that other work groups and other localities are providing similar "schools of journalism" for their young people. Federated labor, we should say, could render yeoman's service by doing so.

M. B.

EDUCATION IN PRISON

Steps in the direction of more effective ways of dealing with crime and criminals are to be taken in New York State in accordance with plans adopted by the Governor Lehman's Commission on Education in Penal Institutions. These have been made possible through a grant by the Carnegie Corporation. At Clinton Prison an experimental project in vocational education is to be initiated, while another in social education will be undertaken at the Wallkill Medium Security Prison.

A sub-committee, of which Franklin J. Keller is chairman, formulated the plans after considerable study and institution visitation. Walter M. Wallack, state di-

rector of education in penal institutions, assisted in developing the plans and will cooperate in their administration. Leo J. Palmer, warden of Wallkill Prison, and Thomas R. Murphy, warden of Clinton Prison, participated in planning the projects and have assured the commission of their cooperation.

According to N. L. Engelhardt, chairman of the commission, both these experiments in correctional education have as their basic purpose the reorientation and socialization of offenders, so that they may be able and willing to adapt themselves to the social and economic conditions which will face them when they are released. One project will concentrate on the development and organization of the various activities of the institution so that they may contribute more effectively to training the individual inmate to be economically independent. The other project will seek to develop materials and techniques which will give the entire educational program of penal institutions direction in the understanding of social and economic problems.

An important preliminary phase of these experiments will be the development of materials for training educational workers in correctional institutions as well as for producing materials for use in inmate classes. This work will be done with the cooperation of the curriculum laboratory at Teachers College, Columbia University, of which H. B. Bruner, a member of the commission, is in charge.

After materials on which to base the program have been developed and the institutional programs and inmates have been thoroughly studied, a training program will be carried on for institutional staffs. Changes in procedures will then be made where necessary and new classes and activities added, utilizing, however, much of the present program.

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SERVICE CALLINGS

It is a truism that New York City is not the whole country, and it is equally true that it is not the typical American city. Nevertheless, some of the conditions and trends in the social and economic life of the metropolis are magnifications of conditions and trends found in other urban communities. Hence there may be interest elsewhere in some of the facts which the *New York Times* has discovered about the growth of service callings in our largest city.

The *Times* writer estimates that during the last decade the number of persons engaged in servicing buildings in this city has doubled. This is due, in large part, to the increase in the number of large office buildings and apartments during the years preceding 1930. The union which presented the workers' recent demand for higher wages asserts that in the greater city there are 340,000 persons employed in building services. In round figures there are 32,000 elevators, including those in business buildings and apartment houses. The operation of the lifts requires about 65,000 workers, of which 1,000 or so are women; this figure includes starters and relief operators. In addition 15,000 mechanics are reported as employed in the buildings to maintain the condition of the elevator apparatus.

Also engaged in the service of buildings, according to the figures of the union, are approximately 50,000 porters, 20,000 scrubwomen or cleaners, 20,000 doormen, 25,000 watchmen, 10,000 maintenance mechanics, 10,000 switchboard operators, 20,000 superintendents, janitors and janitors' assistants, and 20,000 firemen and oilers.

In their estimate the union leaders include the hotel-service employes, who embrace, besides the elevator help, 5,000 captains, 10,000 pages or bellhops,

10,000 housemen or cellarmen, and 15,000 chambermaids. Also included are a service army of 30,000 serving department stores and large stores in general, and a miscellaneous legion reckoned at 15,000. The union claims to have organized about half of the employes in the five boroughs.

Outside of the building-service groups there is an even larger class in the service realm, composed of drivers of motor vehicles of all kinds. There are in the city 400,000 licensed chauffeurs, who either work for private-car owners or are piloting omnibuses, taxicabs, trucks, or other commercial vehicles.

So rapid has been the gain in the service occupations that neither the census of 1930 nor several supplemental surveys tell the entire story. Those callings which aid people in maintaining an appearance and keeping up their morale by rendering service to them reveal a significant trend. There are now 8,000 barber shops in New York City, employing on an average four barbers each. There are 2,680 beauty parlors and shops—nearly twice as many as there were in 1928—and it is estimated that the complexion specialists, hairdressers, and manicurists there employed number about 15,000.

The laundry business has gained greatly, especially in the large plants. By the same token, cleaners, dyers, and pressers of garments are widening their scope. Shoe repairers and shoeblacks number about twice as many as before the depression.

More and more New Yorkers are going out to dine, especially in the moderate-price restaurants, a fact which helps to account for an increase in cooks, waiters, and waitresses. Owners of theatres, motion picture houses, dance halls, and amusement parks also are reporting an increase in the number of their employes.

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IN AND ABOUT BOSTON

A conference on educational and vocational guidance, in which guidance workers and students of Greater Boston participated, was held in March at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education, under the chairmanship of John M. Brewer. Many points of special interest were brought out in the various papers presented.

The stigma of not being able to keep up with one's class is removed in the Brookline High School by a new plan, under which the traditional class system of freshmen, sophomores, etc., is abolished. Each entering group of pupils remains a unified whole until they have finished the required credits for graduation. This may take four, five, and even six years.

In Quincy curriculum changes have been instituted which attempt to reach the interests of all the students. Courses to the number of 30 which have for the most part been outside the traditional course of study in secondary schools have been added. Guidance along vocational lines is an integral part of the program at the Norfolk Prison Colony. This program was described, and a resolution asking that this work be continued and expanded was passed and sent to the State Commissioner of Correction.

Boys and girls leave school, not for the usually assigned economic reasons, but for the most part because of hatred of the school as represented by the present curriculum, according to the findings of the recent Harvard Growth Study. By means of exploratory and sampling courses, a definite attempt is made to guide entrants at the Rindge Technical High School in Cambridge into fields of interest. A two-year program of vestibule studies has been introduced, and the following two years are devoted to special

fields, studies which can be continued and expanded if students care to stay in school longer. The follow-up program in Boston was described.

FRESHMEN'S CHOICES

At the University of Chicago inquiry blanks concerning vocational selection were distributed to incoming freshmen during Freshman Week of three consecutive years—1932, 1933, and 1934. In 1932, a vocational choice had been made by 68.6 per cent of the group; no decision had been made by 31.4 per cent; and a desire for vocational advice was expressed by 32.6 per cent. In 1933 the percentages were: vocational decision made, 60.8 per cent; no decision made, 39.2 per cent; vocational counseling desired, 35 per cent. The corresponding percentages for 1934 were: 63.1, 36.9, and 40.1.

Robert C. Woellner, Executive Secretary, Board of Vocational Guidance and Placement, in summarizing the data, which we have given here only in part, remarks that the proportion of freshmen who had made vocational decisions shows only slight variation during the three years covered by the study. There is some evidence that the proportion of freshmen who desire vocational counseling is increasing. Proportionately fewer freshman women than freshman men have decided upon a vocation. There seems to be no direct correlation between age and vocational decision, but a correlation between a knowledge of vocations and vocational decision is indicated. Approximately 50 per cent of the freshmen of all three classes had chosen one of the three major professions—law, medicine, or education. Since 1933 the percentage of freshman women who have chosen a career in social service has shown a marked increase.