

children is entitled to receive humane treatment, adequate care, and proper education, your action in calling this Conference, and your participation in its opening and closing sessions, will have, we believe, a profound effect upon the well-being of many thousands of children, and upon the nation as a whole.

Concerning the particular objects to which you called attention in the invitation to this Conference, and the additional subjects brought before us by the Executive Committee, our conclusions are as follows :—

Home Care.

1. Home life is the highest and finest product of civilisation. It is the great moulding force of mind and of character. Children should not be deprived of it except for urgent and compelling reasons. Children of parents of worthy character suffering from temporary misfortune, and children of reasonably efficient and deserving mothers who are without the support of the normal breadwinner, should, as a rule, be kept with their parents, such aid being given as may be necessary to maintain suitable homes for the rearing of the children. This aid should be given by such methods and from such sources as may be determined by the general relief policy of each community, preferably in the form of private charity rather than of public relief. Except in unusual circumstances, the home should not be broken up for reasons of poverty, but only for considerations of inefficiency or immorality.

Preventive Work.

2. The most important and valuable philanthropic work is not the curative, but the preventive : to check dependency by a thorough study of its causes, and by effectively remedying or eradicating them, should be the constant aim of society. Along these lines we urge upon all friends of children the promotion of effective measures, including legislation, to prevent blindness, to check tuberculosis and other diseases in dwellings and work-places, and injuries in hazardous occupations, to secure compensation or insurance so as to provide a family income in case of sickness, accident, death, or invalidism of the breadwinner ; to promote child-labour reforms, and generally to improve the conditions surrounding child-life. To secure these ends we urge efficient co-operation with all other agencies for social betterment.

Home-finding.

3. As to the children who for sufficient reasons must be removed from their own homes, or who have no homes, it is desirable that, if normal in mind and body and not requiring special training, they should be cared for in families whenever practicable. The carefully selected foster-home is for the normal child the best substitute for the natural home. Such homes should be selected by a most careful process of investigation, carried on by skilled agents, through personal investigation, and with due regard to the religious faith of the child. After children are placed in homes, adequate visitation, with careful consideration of the physical, mental, moral, and spiritual training and development of each child, on the part of the responsible home-finding agency, is essential.

It is recognised that for many children foster-homes without payment for board are not practicable immediately after the children become dependent, and that, for children requiring temporary care only, the free home is not available. For the temporary or more or less permanent care of such children different methods are in use, notably the plan of placing them in families ; paying for their board ; and the plan of institutional care. Contact with family life is preferable for these children as well as for other normal children. It is necessary, however, that a large number of carefully selected boarding homes be found, if these children are to be cared for in families. The extent to which such families can be found should be ascertained by careful inquiry and experiment in each locality. Unless and until such homes are found, the use of institutions is necessary.

Cottage System.

4. So far as it may be found necessary temporarily or permanently to care for certain classes of children in institutions, these institutions should be conducted on the cottage plan, in order that routine and impersonal care may not unduly suppress individuality and initiative. The cottage unit should not be larger than will permit effective personal relations between the adult caretaker or caretakers of each cottage and each child therein. Twenty-five is suggested as a desirable cottage unit, subject to revision in the light of further experience in the management of cottage institutions. The cottage plan is probably somewhat more expensive, both in construction and in maintenance, than the congregate system. It is so, however, only because it secures for the children a larger degree of association with adults and a nearer approach to the conditions of family life, which are required for the proper moulding of childhood. These results more than justify the increased outlay, and are truly economical. Child-caring agencies, whether supported by public or private funds, should by all legitimate means press for adequate financial support. Inferior methods should never be accepted by reason of lack of funds without continuing protest. Cheap care of children is ultimately enormously expensive, and is unworthy of a strong community. Existing congregate institutions should so classify their inmates and segregate them into groups as to secure as many of the benefits of the cottage system as possible, and should look forward to the adoption of the cottage type when new buildings are constructed.

The sending of children of any age or class to almshouses is an unqualified evil, and should be forbidden everywhere by law, with suitable penalty for its violation.

Incorporation.

5. To engage in the work of caring for needy children is to assume a most serious responsibility, and should therefore be permitted only to those who are definitely organized for the purpose, who are