Jane Addams, “Charity and Social Justice: The Presidential Address At the National Conference of Charities and Correction”, *Survey*, v. XXIV (June 11, 1910): 441-449.

In an attempt to review the recent trend in the development of charity, that which has appeared most striking is a gradual coming together of two groups of people who have too often been given to a suspicion of each other and sometimes to actual vituperation. One group who have traditionally been moved to action by "pity for the poor" we call the charitable; the other, larger or smaller in each generation but always fired by "hatred of injustice," we designate as the radicals.

These two groups, as the result of growing awareness of distress and of slowly deepening perception of its causes are at last uniting into an effective demand for juster social conditions. The [end page 441] charitable have been brought to this combination through the conviction that the poverty and crime with which they constantly deal are often the result of untoward industrial conditions, while the radicals have been slowly forced to the conclusion that if they would make an effective appeal to public opinion they must utilize carefully collected data as to the effect of existing conditions upon the poor and the criminal. It is as if the charitable had been brought through the care of the individual to a contemplation of social causes, and as if the radical had been forced to test his social doctrine by a sympathetic observation of actual people.

In addition to this, both groups when brought close to the mysterious shortcoming on the part of life itself, when oppressed by that "grief of things as they are" over and above the griefs of circumstance or wrong-doing, have come to realize that what we need in the world over against man's misadventure is a

certain power of compassion, humanity standing force of self-pity as an elementary ingredient in our social atmosphere if we are to live in it at all." Both groups have become united in sentiment as well as in conviction through sheer experience in the complexity of life.

It is perhaps not germane to this conference that we should trace the steps by which the radicals have met us half way, but is it not true that the members of this conference who have been brought close to suffering, feebleness, and wrongdoing, are but fulfilling a paramount obligation when they take up the study of social conditions? Does not the obligation to trace poverty back to its immediate or contributing sources belong foremost and professionally to those whose business it is to care for the wounded in the unequal battle of, modern industry?

After all, human progress is deeply indebted to a study of imperfections, and the counsels of despair, if not full of seasoned wisdom, are at least fertile in suggestion and a desperate spur to action. Moreover, in its unending undertaking to reduce the sum of human misery, charity has shared the changes of the passing generations, until like all of its contemporaries, it too has become less dogmatic and has assumed the evolutionary way of understanding life; with them it has grown more democratic and has attained greater flexibility of temper. Moreover, modern charity, continually discovering new obligations, has been obliged to call to its aid economics, sanitary science, statistical research, and many other agencies as the program of this conference will testify. It has therefore through dire need, been forced to recognize that charitable effort is part of the general social movement; somewhat as John Stuart Mill, when he was hard pressed by the problems of life, restored political economy to its proper place as a

branch of social philosophy, insisting that it was not a thing by itself, but was an important part of the great whole.

It would be easy from the records of this conference to trace the gradual steps by which charitable folk were irresistibly led from cure to prevention, as it would also be possible to demonstrate from contemporaneous records that we are now being led in the same gradual but unresting manner from prevention to a consideration of vital welfare. The negative policy of relieving destitution, or even the more generous one of preventing it, is giving way to the positive idea of raising life to its highest value.

If at times the moral fire seems to be dying out of the good old words, relief and charity, it has undoubtedly filled with a new warmth certain words which belong distinctively to our own times; such words as prevention, amelioration and social justice. It is also true that those for whom these words contain most of hope and warmth are those who have been long mindful of the old tasks and obligations as if the great basic emotion of human compassion had more than held its own. After all, sympathetic knowledge is the only way of approach to any human problem. The line of least resistance into the jungle of human wretchedness must always be through that region which is most thoroughly explored, not only by the information of the statistician but by the understanding of the charitable.

With the co-operation of the audience I may be able to demonstrate that mod [end page 442] ern charity is committed to this newer service of increasing the positive value of life, by recalling with you some of the many agencies designed to safeguard and enhance the life of the citizen, which have had purely philanthropic origins.

To begin with the most important: How far have the philanthropic contributed to the formation of the modern state, not because they would stifle their own personal sentiments of pity and justice, but because they realized how inadequate these were unless they could find expression as an integral branch of corporate government. Through a century, therefore, in anticipation of coming changes which does so much to bring changes about, the philanthropists have been steadily engaged in making a new state…. [end page 443]

We have here an epitome of the most advanced philanthropy, stimulation of inventions which shall relieve the poor from degrading, drudgery, co-operation with commercial enterprises, and finally protective legislation. But these obscure people whose hearts were wrung over the condition of' chimney sweeps did even better than that. They were pioneers in the establishment of the modern principle of inspection, which when taken over by the government as an extension of the function of the state, is ably defended by, the economist, but which was after all inaugurated by the philanthropist. May we not, credit to their initiative this most valuable instrument of the modern state?

During this long century as the philanthropist endeavored to transform his pity into political action, he learned the use of two other great implements, first, of popular agitation, second, of statistical information. The first came about because the politicians would only yield under the pressure of public opinion, and there is no doubt that the vehemence of the reformer is a very important factor in his chances for success. The reforms which the philanthropist advocated were legitimately open to the emotional appeal, to the higher sensibilities of the public, and be became an adept in the use of agitation

for moral propaganda, sympathy with the distressed, the philanthropists did much to strengthen the sympathy itself, to create that social sympathy which is one of the greatest of social forces. As Mrs. Fry year after yea plead for a more humane treatment o England's prisoners, she not only formulated but she constantly enhanced the scruples which already existed in the hearts of her legislative hearers.

But the philanthropists also found that when they actually appeared before parliament or, legislature they were obliged to wield the weapon of statistics if only that they might appear as men of science and not as sentimentalists. Although the philanthropist has often spoken slightingly of mere knowledge which informs the mind without resulting in action, he knows in his heart that knowledge is never "mere knowledge," and that it is indispensable to right conduct. The great problem of the would-be reformer is not so much the overcoming of actual opposition, the passing of time does that for him, as the obtaining and formulating of accurate knowledge and fitting this knowledge into the trend of his time. Lord Shaftsbury's calculation of the distance daily traveled by a child tending a machine brought to his cause those members of Parliament who had been quite untouched by his humanitarian enthusiasm and religious zeal, but the advocates of child labor legislation had before them a century of struggle with the "freedom of contract" people, before it was made clear to the British mind that to protect the children of the nation is not in "restraint of trade" but the preservation of, the most valuable asset of commerce.

The century between the first demand upon Parliament for the protection of children, made in 1803, to the carefully prepared report of the Royal Poor Law Commission in 1909, equipped the philanthropist with at least these three carefully tempered tools-invented and perfected through a hundred years: public inspection, moral propaganda, and statistical information; with these tools he laid the [end page 444]

philosophy resembling pragmatism, at least many of them came to believe that the concrete truth for them was that in which all their "experiences most profitably combined," and agreed that the final test was its "propitious reaction" upon the poor, the relief it brought to the most wretched members of the community. This may have been the basis for the social philosophy which Professor Patten declares we are now forming.

In the discussion of the current experience of the charitable who deal day by day with the wounded, constantly growing less fit because their standard of life is so lamentably low, we may well begin with these groupings which this conference indicates under the committees on families and neighborhoods and on children. Are not the widow and fatherless, the scriptural and traditional objects of charity?

If we view them in the light of our more mellow philosophy what do we see? A woman whose wages are fixed on the basis of individual subsistence, who is quite unable to earn a family wage, is still held by a legal obligation to support her children, with a desperate penalty of forfeiture if she fails. To refuse relief to the mother of dependent children in order to compel her to support them, is therefore manifestly absurd; to grant her relief not in support of her economic insecurity, but merely in aid of her destitution, is an unending process. Who cannot recall at least one of these desperate mothers, overworked and harried through a long day, prolonged by the family washing and cooking into the evening, followed by a night of foreboding and misgiving because the very children for whom her life is sacrificed are slowly slipping away from her control and affection?

I can recall a very intelligent woman who long brought her children to the Hull-House Day Nursery with this result at the end of ten years of devotion: the one little girl is almost totally deaf owing to neglect following a case of measles because her mother could not stop work in order to care for her; the youngest boy has lost a leg flipping cars; the oldest boy has twice been arrested for petty larceny; the twin boys, in spite of prolonged sojourns in the parental school, have been such habitual truants that their natural intelligence has secured little aid from education. Of the five children three are now in semi-penal institutions, not because their mother was either neglectful or unintelligent, but because she could not perform the offices of two parents.

In spite of my acquaintance with these overworked mothers, I found myself quite unprepared to believe the well-substantiated story which was recently brought to the attention of a district office of the Chicago Associated Charities. A widow with three little children lived in a furnished room on the top floor of a cheap lodging house. Every morning after she had put out the fire for fear of accident, and told the children to get into bed if they were cold, she locked the door and went to her scrubbing of a large downtown theater for which she received sixteen dollars a month. Because her fellow lodgers complained that the children cried all day, and beat, upon the door with their fists crying, "Let me out," the landlady said that the mother must move. She tried in vain to find another room equally cheap, and at last, quite crazed by worry and anxiety made up her mind that she must dispose of her children. One morning she moved the bed to the window, opened the lower sash, and told the children that if they would climb up on the bed after she bad gone and look out that they would see something very pretty on the street below. She then locked the door and went away as usual. The children, of course, climbed upon the bed and leaned out of the window, but were fortunately seen by a neighbor who motioned

them back until the door could be broken open by the landlady. Had the overworked woman taken her own life, the state would have cared for her children either by the most approved method of boarding them out or in institutions for dependent children. Would it, therefore, seem so unreasonable to board them with their own mother, requiring a standard of nutrition and school attendance?

The beginnings already made in this [end page 445] direction are all due to voluntary charitable effort. Perhaps the largest number of children boarded with their own mothers are in Chicago carefully supervised by the Jewish Charities. But with the knowledge all charitable people possess, why do we not sternly accuse the state both with the loss of the mother, and with the many results of imperfectly nourished and uneducated childhood? Have not the administrators of charity upon whom this yearly burden is thrown a right to declare that they will no longer endure this premature exploiting of the undernourished and uneducated? Have they not a right to demand both that they shall be properly fed and that public education shall bring forth better fruit, and might not their concerted action bring about industrial education and avocation bureaus?….

If we consider the work of another committee of this conference, that on health and sanitation, the argument becomes easy, for public health is a magic word which ever grows more potent as we realize that the very existence of the modern city would be an impossibility, had it not been discovered that the health of the individual is dependent upon the hygienic condition of his surroundings.

But quite as the first commission to inquire into the condition of great towns, appointed through the solicitation of the philanthropic folk of Manchester in 1844 and as sanitary science, both in knowledge

and municipal authority has leapt forward under pressure of epidemics raging through the poorer quarters of crowded cities, so the advocates of the most advanced measures in city hygiene and preventive sanitary science are those who have realized that neglected childhood and neglected disease are the most potent causes of social insufficiency. In proof of this we may instance the two new departments at present being urged upon the Congress of the United States, a department of health and the children's bureau. In the hearings before the committees in regard to both of these new departments the philanthropists have been in the majority…. [end page 446]

There is also, the pioneer care inebriates which is undertaken by several state boards of control, indicating the time when inebriety will be treated as a disease and a misfortune, and the habitual drunkard will no longer be fined and imprisoned as a criminal. The drunkard brings us quite naturally perhaps to a consideration of the problem confronting the committee on law breakers. Here we will admit at once that it is impossible for the non-professional to realize the difficulties of prison administration, that most difficult of all the tasks which society commissions, and although it may seem at moments as if the state held too firmly to the tradition of penal justice and retribution, certainly with our young offenders it has already become a question of cure and education. As we fail to connect the downfall of the boy with inadequate recreation, so we fail to make many other obvious connections-that of the wayward girl with insufficient housing, for instance. Out of the total number of 500 girls in the Illinois Industrial School committed for their first sexual immorality, forty-six had become involved with members of' their own families, nineteen with their fathers, the rest with brothers or uncles.

Certainly upon the charitable and upon no one else falls the care of the prisoner's family during his incarceration, and this in spite of the fact that Detroit is making an effort to support the prisoner's family from the earnings of the prisoner, and that Washington has done much already in the direction of securing family support from the prisoner himself. Although the present mayor of Chicago issues so many pardons that he practically does away with the work of one municipal judge each year, if these pardons were issued not for political reasons, but were based upon the popular plea that the prisoner has a wife and little children to care for, one might be almost willing to accept them in lieu of any reasonable arrangements to care for the prisoner's family, and as one of those first blind efforts to meet the popular demand for mercy, so often founded upon a subtle perception [end page 447] of justice. The Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago undertakes to investigate the family of each man committed to the City House of Correction co-operating with the warden in order to secure parole wherever practicable that the father may earn money for his dependent children.

Let us consider next the committee on occupational standards newly appointed this year, which has to do with that other function of the state by which it seeks to protect its workers from their own weakness and degradation, and insists that the livelihood of the manual laborer shall not be beaten down below the level of efficient citizenship. This undertaking of the state assumes new forms almost daily. What have the charitable people contributed to the movement for the state control over industrial diseases or the protection of machinery? What have they done in collecting data which illustrate *pro* and *con* the necessity for old age pensions, industrial insurance, employer's liability acts, the regulation of the hours of labor, the control of "the sweated trades," the prohibition of the sale of intoxicants? Perhaps the charity of the past may have claimed a share only in the last two, and yet where could

trustworthy data for the use of the state legislators be so easily collected as in the state institutions for the criminal and defective, and in the orphanages and hospitals of private philanthropy? Although the connection is so obvious, it was never made until recently, and it is only contemporaneous charity that is taking a leading part in the establishment of the various safeguards against premature disablement and dependence of the manual worker. It is perhaps significant that the most drastic survey of industrial conditions ever made in America was inaugurated and carried out by the editors of a paper called *Charities*.

Long ago the English economist was horrified over an administration of the poor law which paid "rates in aid of wages," and designated such charity as a "bounty" paid to employers; but the employer who pays starvation wages to his employees and who "sweats" them without regard to their health or endurance comes to rely absolutely upon the "bounty" with which his wages are supplemented. The long struggle to establish a living wage which is carried on by trade unionists has its charitable as well as its economic aspects. From the human standpoint there is certainly an obligation resting upon the charity and correction people to discover how much of their material comes to them as the result of social neglect, remedial incapacity, and the lack of industrial safeguards. Perhaps the most revolutionary proposition ever seriously put before a modern government, was the plan for a public organization of the labor market placed before the English Parliament in 1909, and although it was written in its final form by two economists, its material was collected by those trained in charitable administrations, and it was put forth as a report of a Poor Law Commission. This report stated that all of the unemployed the under-employed, and the unemployable were the results of three types of trades; first, the subsidized labor trades wherein women and children are paid wages insufficient to maintain them at the required

standard of health and industrial efficiency so that their wages must be supplemented by relatives or charity, second, labor deteriorating trades which have sapped the energy, the capacity, the character, of successive generations of workers, third, bare subsistence trades where the worker is forced to such a low level in his standard of life that he continually falls below self-support.

But although this brilliant formulation came from England one does not need to cross the water to find instances of the relation of industry to charity. An American white lead factory discharges every laborer at the end of three months, not through the recommendation of the foreman, but directly from the office in order to prevent the men from developing lead poisoning. This is of course cheaper than to employ examining physicians or to install safeguards. But how about discontinuous employment as a factor in the breeding of discouragement and poverty? Of this the charitable people say never a word. In a pottery factory instanced by Professor Edsoll of the University of Pennsyl- [end page 448] vania, men are chiefly engaged who are already afflicted with tuberculosis and cancer, because, knowing they have but little time to live, they do not resent the fate of lead poisoning.

Is it because our modern industrialism is so new that we have been slow to connect it with the poverty all about us? The socialists talk constantly of the relation of economic wrong to destitution, and point out the connection between industrial maladjustment and individual poverty, but the study of social conditions, the obligation to eradicate poverty, cannot belong to one political party nor to one economic school, and after all it was not a socialist but that ancient friend of the poor, St.. Augustine, who said, "Thou givest bread to the hungry, but better were it, that none hungered and thou had'st none to give to him."

Five hundred years ago John Ball, looking out over England, tells us that he saw "the great treading down the little, the strong beating down the weak, and cruel men fearing not, and kind men daring not, and wise men caring not," and then with his heart burning within him, he cries aloud, "and the saints in heaven forbearing, and yet bidding me not to forbear."

If we compare our time with his, we will admit that although the great still tread down the little, and the strong beat down the weak, that the cruel are at last becoming afraid of public opinion, that kind men are more daring in their schemes of alleviation than they used to be and wise men are more solicitous. We do not venture to say whether or not the saints in heaven forbear but we are very certain that no saint on earth could forbear in the presence of contemporaneous social and industrial conditions, and both saint and sinner know that the conditions can only be made more righteous and more human by the increasing devotion of countless generations of men.

The English economists and philanthropists have started a crusade against destitution; the most intrepid of revolutionists are those who have been stung into revolt by the poverty and degradation of Russia's peasants, the social democrats of Germany are three and a half million men vowed to the destruction of poverty**;** the part America shall take in this international crusade of the compassionate, in this standing army of humanity's self-pity suddenly mobilized for a new conquest, it lies largely with the members of this conference to determine. [end page 449]