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SOCIAL WORK AND THE JONESES

Y RUTH LERRIGO and BRADLEY BUELL



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SOCIAL WORK AND THE JONESES

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Joe's Good Day

LET'S take a good day in the life of Joe Jones. Besides Joe, the family consists of Mary, his wife; Joe Junior, an eleven-year-old son; Anne, a thirteen-year-old daughter; and Joe's elderly father. Joe is head of the shipping department of the Brown Paper Box Company, a locally owned corporation in this prosperous little city of Centerville of about 150,000 population. He lives in his own home, for which he is making payments through the Building and Loan Association. He owns a small car and earns about

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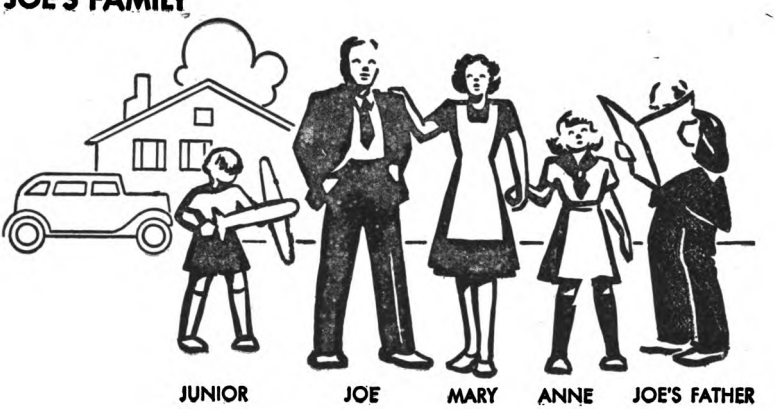

$2,800 a year. The war has brought prosperity to Centerville, but otherwise it has not touched him greatly. His life is a busy and a normal one.

Joe rises promptly at 6:30, shaves, dresses, and sits down to his orange juice, a steaming cup of coffee, a plate of griddle cakes with crisp bacon on the side, and plenty of good bread and butter, all of which Mary has ready and waiting for him. His breakfast finished, he has time to snatch a goodbye kiss and catch the bus for work.

Meanwhile the rest of the house is stirring. The children are up, getting their faces washed, putting on their clothes, enjoying their griddle cakes and milk. Soon they leave for the fifteen-minute walk that brings them to the public school. The old gentleman has his breakfast and sinks into his favorite chair to read about the happenings of the world as reported in the pages of the *News-Dispatch*.

Mary, after launching the family upon its way, turns her attention to clearing up and making ready for the rest of a busy day. She must go down to the corner store and stock up with fresh vegetables and lamb for a tasty stew for the evening's dinner. The old gentleman seemed pretty short of breath yesterday when he came back from his customary stroll. Perhaps the doctor ought to test his heart again.

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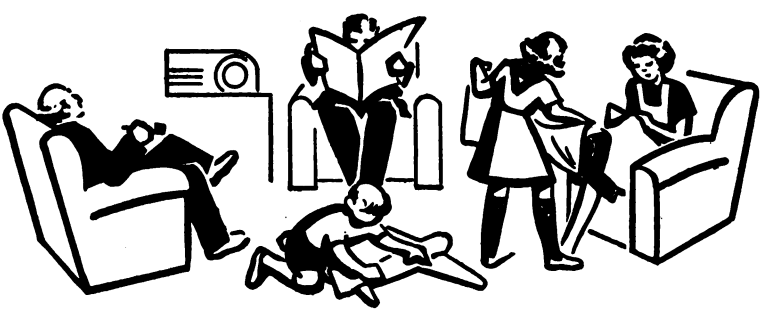
Services for All

The people of Centerville could not get along without these services. In that same year in which Joe had his bad day, about two-thirds of the families of the community used these agencies to meet some need, to bolster their family life at some weak point, or to achieve greater happiness and satisfaction. These activities are as much a part of Centerville's daily life as its transportation services and other public utilities, or its stores.

When times are very bad indeed, when Joe has but a slim chance of getting even such work as helping on a delivery truck, he must have some help to keep him in his house, to assume part of the burden of paying for food and clothes and fuel. Neither his retail merchants nor his neighbors—no matter how good their will—can carry these burdens indefinitely.

In good times as well as bad, the vast knowledge of medical science and the skill of physicians who put that knowledge to work must be available to Joe's family. This is necessary if the grandfather is to live to a comfortable old age, if Mary's new baby and its arrival are to receive proper attention, and if Joe himself and little Joe and Anne are to keep healthy enough to play their part in their community. Equally, the family needs the skills of social workers and psychiatrists to offset the influences of bad companions, of frustration, of personal conflicts, so that little Joe and Anne may grow into able useful citizens and the strength of the family be maintained.



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Syracuse is a busy, industrial city, with total weekly payrolls of nearly $900,000 in twenty-two of its larger industries. It is a modern, war-busy city, making steel, typewriters, machine tools, chemicals, radios, and clothing, among other things. Like most American industrial cities, it scrambled from depression to frenzied war production; it saw the danger of breadlines and



7 OUT OF 10 FAMILIES IN SYRACUSE USED SOME ONE OR MORE OF THE TOWN'S 114 HEALTH AND WELFARE SERVICES

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demoralization on relief change to overcrowding and over-employment, with family life disrupted by overtime work, military service, swing shifts, and the feverish excitements of war; and it has faced the critical problem of reconversion and readjustment to normal peacetime life.

Among the 60,000 families living in Syracuse in busy 1942 (220,000 persons), more than 70 per cent used an average of two units of service apiece from the 114 welfare, health, and recreation agencies in Syracuse, services which cost roughly $9,000,000 that year. This is a conservative figure, not including persons who were admitted to hospitals, beneficiaries of social insurance programs, users of public parks and playgrounds, nor services given by some agencies which did not provide information. It should be noted that at this time nearly everyone in Syracuse who could work had a job. Yet note that 70 per cent of the families received services from social agencies. This gives a fair sample of the scope of social work.

Who Pays the Bill?

The next basic question usually is: Who pays for social work? Social services are paid for by you and me, by the rich family on the Hill and the poor folk in the Hollow. Nearly everybody

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That way was assistance from the Department of Welfare. The Whites are one of a fairly long list of Centerville families and individuals who, even in wartime, must be listed as "unemployable" and carried by public funds. Their needs are known to welfare department case workers who keep in touch with them, giving advice and supervision where necessary, as well as seeing that basic living requirements are met.



THE BROWNS

Down at the other end of the block from Mrs. Green, another home narrowly missed a wartime breakdown. During the open-window intimacy of a stifling summer evening, Mel and Dorothy Brown scandalized the neighborhood with a quarrel which ended in a violent scene. It was a case of nerves resulting from the struggle to meet increased living costs from Mel's frozen wages as a bank clerk—complicated by the expected arrival of a fourth little Brown. Dorothy, hurt and humiliated, packed her bag and took the next bus out to her sister's house on Route 7, leaving Mel to face the music. Mel took his troubles, next morning, to the personnel counselor at the bank, who offered to take up again the matter of a raise for Mel and sent him over to the marriage counseling bureau at the Family Service for advice.

There, he was helped to understand his own problems. Together he and the caseworker made a plan to get at the real source of the trouble. It was easy to bring Dorothy into a conference with the Family Service expert homemaker who suggested practical ways to stretch the tiny income, showed Dorothy how to keep a household budget, and helped them to work out low-cost arrangements for the baby's arrival at the local hospital. Dorothy enrolled promptly when she learned of a class for expectant mothers, given by the Visiting Nurse Association, which gave her information and instructions about getting ready for the baby and keeping herself comfortable and happy till the baby came. If only she had known about all this before, Dorothy says, the trouble never would have happened.

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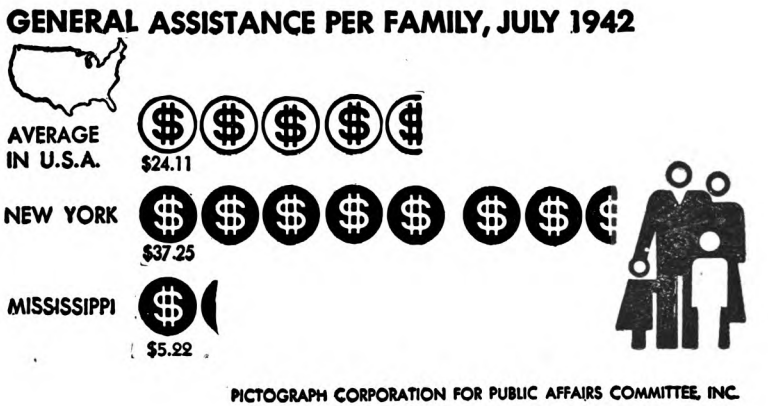
emergency unemployment relief, and later "work relief" projects were developed for the unemployed. In addition, cities, counties, and three-quarters of the states have assumed varying degrees of responsibility for giving "general relief" to "unemployable" persons who are in need.



It is now generally agreed that so far as possible economic security should be provided by a system of insurance. Public assistance should then be available to fill in the gaps that are not, or cannot, be covered by insurance. In line with this principle, the Social Security Act, first passed in 1935, provides two forms of insurance. These are unemployment compensation and old-age and survivors' insurance—the latter a combination of retirement pensions and life insurance—for persons who have made regular contributions through payroll deductions. The act also provides for other welfare needs of the country through a system of federal and state allowances to the aged, the blind, to dependent children of widowed mothers. Also important to the public's welfare are the federal employment offices, and the expansion of public health programs, especially in rural areas.

Besides the provisions of the federal Social Security Act, state and local governments help to relieve need by giving general assistance, popularly known as "relief," for people not eligible for social security under any of its provisions. This form of help

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Perhaps the largest group of privately supported health services is the great number of private hospitals, serving people at all economic levels. Many hospitals give a large proportion of their services to patients at less than cost. A part of this is paid by those private patients who take higher-priced rooms. The contributions to community chests, and hospital campaigns account for a substantial share.

For Behavior Problems

Through what is generally called case work, a method of helping with social problems through advice, planning, and assistance, case by case, private social work gives some of its most important service. Case work has become a highly skilled profession, requiring special training and providing, for social ills, a service paralleling the medical profession's diagnosis and treatment. Family service agencies, nonsectarian, Catholic and Jewish, give this type of help. Specifically, it includes personal counseling, budgeting, marriage counseling, advice to parents and children, and special help to "problem" boys and girls, to unmarried mothers, to families in difficulties because of broken homes, separations, or moving from place to place.



In giving such help, the case worker has at her disposal certain technical services. Among these are visiting housekeeper and homemaker service, legal aid, claims and adjustments for men in the armed forces, vocational guidance, counsel and help to people who are traveling, or who have no permanent homes, and to persons who are ill or undergoing medical treatment and must make changes in their lives to meet their health problems.

Special services to dependent children, when no arrangements can be made to keep them in homes of their own, often are provided by family and children's service agencies. For instance, when no one is available at home to care for a child, when the home is for some reason unsuitable, or is broken by

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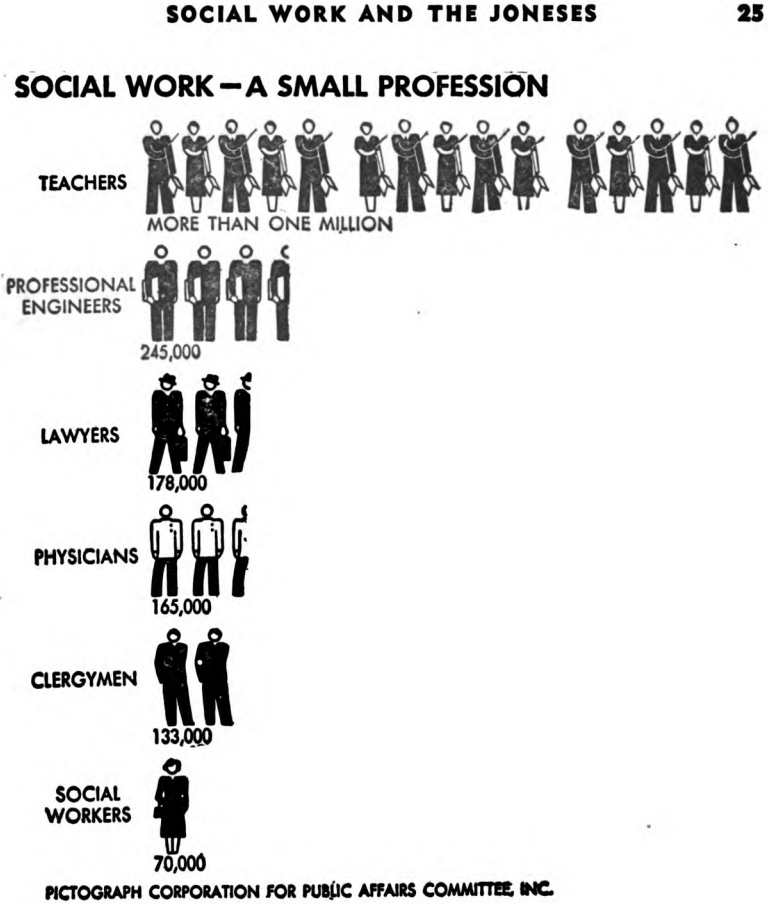

Counting the Social Workers

Just as there are many kinds of social work, there are many kinds of social workers. In 1940 the U. S. census classified social and welfare workers under 108 different titles. The number of persons engaged in social work up to the 1930 census was only guessed at. Previous censuses had lumped religious workers, so-called "charity" workers, and social welfare workers together. In 1930, under the grouping "social and welfare workers," the census counted 31,241, not including public health nurses, many social workers in religious organizations such as

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