

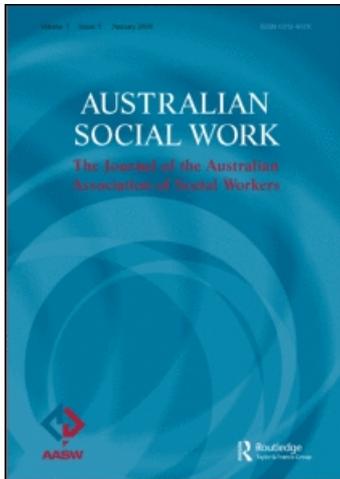
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of the Marketing Co-operative. Time must be left however to enable the "settlers" to develop their own homestead blocks and such home-crafts as they are interested in. Efforts will be made to promote the latter.

Each person in the Community is expected to be a financial shareholder in the General Co-operative with a limit to the number of shares held. In this way it is expected that the future growth of the settlement will be financed and developed.

The practical aspects of the Scheme appear to have been worked out with care, but the emphasis is placed on the importance to members of the Community of the more intangible values of such a way of life - values of co-operation, security and individual well-being.

SOCIAL SURVEYS

Malaya. Annual Report for 1948, Department of Social Welfare of Federation of Malaya.

Singapore. Social Survey of Singapore 1947. A preliminary study of some aspects of social conditions in the municipal area of Singapore, published by Department of Social Welfare, Singapore.

Ceylon. Administrative report of Director of Social Services for 1948.

These are available in the Library, Commonwealth Social Services Department.

"THE NATURE AND DEFINITION OF SOCIAL CASEWORK" Swithun Bowers
(Articles, Oct., Nov., Dec. 1949 issues Journal of Social Casework)

Review.

In a three part series of articles, Swithun Bowers has attempted to evaluate the present position of Social Case Work, and he indicates future lines of thought.

In examining the present position he found confusion in terminology and concepts, and in a sense his greatest contribution is that he brings some discipline into the use of social case work terms. His sharp logical analysis may help social workers to think more clearly about some of the problems of social case-work. It may not be too much to say that Father Swithun Bowers might be to Social Work what William McDougall was to Psychology.

Because of the importance of his article, this review might be considered as a short summary of Bower's main arguments.

Bowers states that from time to time it has been uneasily admitted that among the most urgent tasks of social work have been the definition of its area, and the relating of it to, and differentiating it from other professional fields. Some social workers have pointed out that the profession cannot be accepted on an equal basis with other professions while there is no adequate formulation of guiding principles or organization of technical skills.

Bowers quotes from the report of the Milford Conference (U.S.A. 1929) when a group of representative social workers concluded that they "were not able at the time to define social case work itself so as to distinguish it sharply from other forms of professional work, nor to separate fields of social case work so as to distinguish them sharply from each other."

In his thesis Bowers has attempted to reach certain conclusions as to "the essential nature of social case-work which would lead to an acceptable and logical definition of it." He works from two assumptions - (1) that social case workers know what they are doing and that they are convinced that what they are doing differs from the work of other professions; (2) that there is a common practice called social case work and that this has been described by social workers, if in a somewhat obscure language.

These two assumptions had to be made because Bowers urges the logical view "that it is the nature of common practice which ultimately determines definition rather than definition determining the nature of practice." Father Bowers gives considerable thought to the nature of definition, and to the specific rules applied in establishing a definition. He sees two essential qualities in a definition - (1) that a definition should encompass the entire sum of the essential qualities of that which is being defined; (2) a definition should mark off from other things, that which is being defined. Hence attempts should be made to state the definition in positive terms. By applying these and other logical rules Bowers is able to point to the inadequacies in many definitions of social work.

Father Bowers' assumption that social case workers have actually described social case work, however obscurely, leads him to an examination of social work literature. He isolates 34 definitions of social case-work, commencing with Richmond's statement, 1915, that case work is "the art of doing different things for and with different people by co-operating with them to achieve at one and the same time their own and society's betterment," and concluding with Towle's definition (1947) that "social case work is one method...by which certain special services are made available in areas of unmet need." Bowers finds that he has to reject many of these definitions, due to the lack of rigidity in that they could be applied to fields admittedly outside the scope of case work. He has to reject the functional type definition, because it contains logical inconsistencies.

The Genus of Case-Work? Art, Method or Process. This is the first question to be asked because the answer gives the essential thing in case-work whereby it may be defined. Bowers finds a tendency to interchange the terms "process" and "method." He suggests that "method" refers specifically to a plan, and "process" to the carrying out of a plan. Bowers agrees that case work is both a process and a method, but feels that the unqualified application of these terms suggests an unfortunate rigidity and uniformity. Bowers objects to the placing of social case work in the categories of applied science for similar reasons. He would like to introduce the term "art" into his definition. He states that an applied science means the application of knowledge, but "and art is more than a mere application, it is an adaptation, skill in the adaptation of knowledge to the unique creative purposes of life." And if social case-work is concerned with individual and social betterment, it may presuppose a science but must step beyond it into the realm of ethics. Bowers would like to retain the use of the term "treatment," because it helps to describe the over-all picture. He concludes the first section of his thesis:- "Social Casework, then, has a method and a process, both treatment orientated. It applies the findings of a science to which it can also contribute. To classify it as any one

of these is, however, to dismember. As an art it syncretizes all of these and something more - an adaptability in the service of the unique individual instance."

The Subject Matter of Casework. Scrutiny of the different definitions reveals that the subject matter of case work is thought to fall within one of the three following classifications. (a) any individual. Bowers is dissatisfied with this definition because of its vagueness. He points out that casework cannot be said to have begun until there is some awareness of need and an asking for help. (b) a particular kind of individual, e.g. "a socially maladjusted person." Again, such a definition lacks clarity, but the writer objects to the use of such terms because of the implication. The implication is that such persons are failures and this must be considered in relation to the emphasis in Western culture upon "rugged individualism." The need to seek assistance from others has in itself become an indictment of one's personal worth and integrity. This is of great concern to social caseworkers, since it hinders the case work service in reaching many individuals before total breakdown occurs. Therefore caseworkers must dissociate themselves from this custom of dividing people into two categories. Whilst guilty feelings exist in regard to approaching agencies, casework can not develop to a point of being generally accepted by the community.

Bowers states that, in fact, processes similar in kind take place both in the "normal" and the "abnormal." Some people are able to make relatively satisfactory adjustments; others less satisfactory adjustments. "Few, if any, are not susceptible to better adjustment" ...therefore... "if the particular skills and knowledge of casework can be used to better any of these individual situations, then that particular individual is appropriate material for case work, irrespective of the degree of deviation from some theoretical norm of adjustment." (c) Something related to the individual, but which is capable of identification and abstraction apart from him. e.g. that social relationships constitute the matter of casework. Bowers points out that this can only mean the individual in his social relationships, as it is a basic concept of social case work that the individual cannot be segmented. Case-work has a certain frame of reference in its approach to man, but the limits of this frame of reference are in the objectives sought and the skills used, not in some artificial distinction in man.

Summing up Bowers finds that the subject matter of case-work is - (1) the individual in his totality; (2) any individual, for any individual may be the subject of case-work. Because a client hinges upon an asking and accepting process whereby the individual is related to the objectives and skills of case-work.

Purpose of Social Case-work. Father Bowers stresses the fact that the purpose of social case-work is important, as the end sought determines the choice of skills and knowledge. The latter skills in turn limit the end that is sought. He finds that although the end of case-work has never been clearly formulated, two general objectives can be discerned; better adjustments in the social relationships of the individual, and the development of individual personality.

Most social-workers have recognised a community responsibility, but some have concentrated upon helping the individual exclusive of the interests of society. Bowers believes that the lack of clarity

in this regard is due to the failure to distinguish between extrinsic and intrinsic ends of social case-work. For instance, the betterment of society and the development of personality are extrinsic which may be claimed by many other professions.

The "adjustment of social relationships" is often suggested as the purpose of social case-work, but this is an extrinsic end achieved as the result of the case-work activity. The intrinsic end of case-work is seen as "a mobilization of the inner resources of the individual and the outer resources of the community." The social case-worker activates these potential resources to meet the client's need. For this reason case work might be thought of as an "enabling service."

In passing Bowers points out that the question of the ultimate extrinsic end of case-work cannot be for ever ignored. He suggests that this is a religious question and that the answer can only be expressed in terms of some meaning in human life.

The Means that case-work employs. Bowers finds that social workers have paid great attention to the skills employed but says, "Yet in no instance does a definition recognise in equivocal terms that which is clearly inherent in the literature of case-work, that social case-work employs two major instruments, a knowledge and understanding of the individual in himself and in relation to his total environment and specific skill in the use of a relationship."

Bowers emphasises the importance of the interviewing skills, as the understanding of the dynamics of human behaviour is not enough in itself. He sees a new science developing, the science of human relationships, and suggests that social case-work has a most important contribution to make to this science. The various sciences existing at the moment are all drawn upon in social case-work, but these are generally inadequate, as some ignore the individual and some the individual's environment.

In conclusion, Bowers attempts to give a comprehensive definition of the nature of social case-workers - "Social case-work is an art, in which knowledge of the science of human relationships and skill in relationship are used to mobilize capacities in the individual and resources in the community appropriate for better adjustment between the client and all or any part of his total environment."

L.T.

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