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A CRUSADE AGAINST DESTITUTION.

By Mrs. SIDNEY WEBB, D.Litt.

I want to enlist the help of every reader in a new crusade—a crusade against destitution. The existence in our midst of men, women, and children actually without the primary necessities of life is a manifestation of social disease, which is a matter of shame to us all.

The Destitution of To-day.

The Poor-law Commission has laid bare, in its two reports, a vision of chronic destitution, degradation, and misery still existing in the midst of our wealth—a vision which, for a brief moment, stung the conscience of the ordinary citizen. More than two millions of separate persons in the United Kingdom were found to be driven to accept Poor-law relief in any one year. Nor can we dismiss this vast population as "social wreckage," or ne'er-do-wells. One-third of them are children; one-third are sick; and most of the remainder are either widows bereft of the family breadwinner, or the friendless aged, or the prematurely infirm, or the merely feeble-minded. Not one-tenth are able-bodied men in health. But outside this destitution, which is ascertained by the grant of poor relief—that is, outside official pauperism—there is, as we now know, a mass of persons who are destitute of the necessities of life who do not claim, or who do not receive, poor relief—of unemployed men destitute of wages, of sick persons destitute of medical treatment, of little children needing food to enable them to benefit by teaching, of infants actually dying for lack of proper sustenance and care, of old people preferring to starve in cellars and garrets than go into the "House." For all these people, whatever may have been the cause of their sinking to that condition, no civilisation, no proper fulfilment of the duties of parentage or citizenship, no really religious or Christian life is possible so long as they are destitute.

Now, destitution is not merely a matter of individual suffering, to be relieved by personal charity, but a social disease, to be remedied by appropriate changes in

our social organism. These changes are already going on, but going on slowly and imperfectly.

It was, in fact, the growing public consciousness of the mass of destitution that led successive Parliaments—Conservative and Liberal alike—to give new authorities supplementary powers to relieve destitution—to Distress Committees to give relief work, to educational authorities to give medical treatment and food to school children, to Public Health authorities to give medical advice, and even milk, to mothers with infants. This successive grant of new powers to authorities other than those of the Poor Law has produced a costly and demoralising chaos of overlapping and duplication of services which is fully described in the Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission.

The Condemnation of the Poor Law.

What we have now to do is to make up our minds to get Parliament to deal with the matter comprehensively on new lines.

From the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 down to the present day, the paupers have been dealt with by boards of guardians on one of two principles. Some guardians, believing in "the principles of 1834," have conscientiously sought to "deter" persons from applying for relief. Other guardians, either from humane motives or out of carelessness, have tried to make the paupers comfortable, and thereby encouraged others to seek relief. The most remarkable result of the Royal Commission is the condemnation, by Majority and Minority alike, of both these schools of Poor Law opinion. The eighteen Commissioners unanimously repudiate and condemn the much-vaunted "principles of 1834," which they declare to be inapplicable to the present day. They all agree in recommending the abolition of the general mixed workhouse. The celebrated "workhouse test" is dismissed in silence. On the other hand, the Minority concurs with the Majority in condemning mere indulgent or lax relief of destitution.

The Majority Proposals.

But from this unanimity of condemnation of the existing Poor-law, the Royal Commissioners go on to divide sharply into two series of recommendations for the future, embodied in two separate reports. To use the words of Professor Bernard Bosanquet, "the antagonism" between the two reports "cannot be put too strongly." Their widely contrasted proposals for constructing the new administrative machinery are rooted in a divergence not less wide as to the nature of the problem to be dealt with. What seems to the Majority to be necessary is to set up a new Poor-law authority under a new name—a complicated series of nominated committees, under a so-called "public assistance authority," to be appointed by the county or county borough council, but not to be subject to its criticism or control. These non-elective authorities, assisted by Voluntary Aid Committees, are to do the work now done by the guardians; they are to do it, not on deterrent, but on "curative and restorative" lines. But this new public assistance authority is, like its precursor the board of guardians, to be rigidly restricted to the relief of destitute persons. It is, in fact, merely a Poor-law authority disguised under a new name.

The Futility of Any Poor Law.

To this scheme the Minority object on many grounds, the most important being *that no Poor-law authority, however designated, can ever be successful in preventing destitution, or even in curing destitution; it can only relieve it.* By the very nature of its being, a Poor Law authority is, and must always be, legally confined to dealing with a case, not at the outset of the disease when, in the incipient stage, it is still curable, but when the person has become destitute and is therefore usually incurable. Moreover, if the relief is made deterrent, few will apply; if it is made lax, many others will become destitute in order to qualify. What is now definitely proved is that a Poor Law authority can relieve destitution, but as it is precluded from touching the causes of destitution—whether these be thought to be moral, or whether they are taken to be (1) sickness; (2) neglected childhood; or (3) unemployment—it cannot prevent its occurrence. By its

methods of administration, a Poor Law authority may diminish pauperism, that is, Poor Law relief, but then it does nothing to diminish destitution. In short, a Poor Law authority, by bad administration, may increase destitution; by wise administration, it may relieve destitution without increasing it; but by no kind of administration can it prevent or even diminish the destitution that precedes pauperism.

The Minority Proposals.

What, then, is the alternative to a new Poor Law? The Minority Commissioners answer unhesitatingly, no Poor Law at all. We propose that the existing Poor Law should be simply abolished; that the whole conception of merely relieving destitution should be given up. We recommend in its stead that Parliament should cast the whole trouble and cost of maintaining each class of destitute persons—the infant and the child, the sick and the feeble-minded, the vagrant and the unemployed—on authorities *having both the power and the machinery to remove the several causes of destitution.* With one notable exception, these authorities already exist. In the Minority Report we describe how, up and down England, the local education authority, the local health authority, the local lunacy authority, and the local pension authority are actually at work, ever more overlapping the sphere of the board of guardians, and dealing with the causes of destitution. We show, for instance, how successfully the education authorities are preventing the destitution of the neglected child by their residential and day industrial schools and the supervision of the teachers and school attendance officers; and the public health authorities that of sickness due to epidemics by their "searching out" of infectious disease, so as to treat it, not when destitution sets in, but long before, at the incipient stage.

We propose to extend the responsibility of the education authority from school teaching and medical inspection to securing for each child a due amount of food and proper home conditions. This, it need hardly be said, does not entail providing either food or homes for all children. It may mean merely a systematic encouragement and, when necessary, enforcement of parental responsibility by the school attendance officer, the

school nurse, and the voluntary "Children's Care Committees." We propose to extend the responsibility of the public health authority from the provision of a main drainage system and the treatment of infectious diseases, to searching out other kinds of disease, with a view to prevention and cure. This does not entail that all diseases shall be treated free, any more than the public health supervision of sanitation entails that bad landlords shall have their house drainage provided at the public cost. All the increased activity of the public health authorities in searching out and treating sickness may coincide with a systematic enforcement of personal responsibility in respect to personal hygiene and with regard to the maintenance in health of dependents. We concur with the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Feeble-minded, and with those of our own colleagues, that the whole responsibility for the treatment of mentally defective persons, whether or not they be destitute, shall be cast on the lunacy authority. "The mental condition of these persons," it is now admitted, "and not their poverty or their crime, is the real ground of their claim for help from the State."

In one case only do we propose a new authority. For reasons which are elaborately set forth in the Minority Report, we think that the prevention of involuntary unemployment or voluntary idleness transcends the power of any local authority. Hence we recommend the repeal of the Unemployed Workmen Act, and the establishment of a new national authority responsible for ascertaining all unemployment, for so organising the labour market as to minimise it, and for adequately dealing with all classes of persons who are failing to maintain themselves and their dependents on account of want of work.

Not Relief but Prevention!

Throughout all these recommendations of the Minority *there is the fundamental conception that what is necessary is to prevent destitution by grappling with its causes.* Each authority must apply itself to preventing the occurrence of destitution; to arresting, in the initial stage, each of its several causes whenever it appears; to stopping preventable disease; to seeing that no child grows up without proper nurture; and to preventing any man from becoming chronically unem-

ployed. We of the Minority hold that this breaking up of the problem into its constituent parts will actually promote and preserve the integrity of the family; its very object is, in fact, to get at the family *before it actually reaches the state of destitution.* This plan of getting at the family before it becomes destitute entails dealing with it for some specific reason, e.g., the neglect of a child, the sickness of some member of it, the mental defect of some other member, or the unemployment of the breadwinner. Instead of the officer, or voluntary worker, concerned with the destitution of the whole family, and not coming until destitution has set in, we shall have the officer, or voluntary worker, of the education authority, the public health authority, or the unemployment authority, who will come into the home at a much earlier stage, with a specific purpose and with specific experience in respect to that purpose. We believe that such a person will be more capable of thinking out the problem of the family as a whole than a mere relieving officer, or a mere charity worker, who at present arrives at the eleventh hour, possibly well-informed as to how to relieve destitution, but usually with no specific knowledge or experience of how to grapple with the several causes of destitution; and therefore concerned, mainly, to relieve the destitution which has overtaken the family for lack of the earlier preventive measures that we advocate.

The Stopping of Overlapping.

It has been said that this scheme of breaking up the Poor Law will bring about chaos and confusion in the whole sphere of public assistance—one member of a family getting relief from the education authority, another from the public health authority, and yet another from the national authority dealing with unemployment. Our answer to this objection is that this chaos and confusion already exist; and that under the present system and under the proposals of the majority of the Commissioners it will grow steadily worse. We have realised it, and have devised machinery for putting a stop to it. We propose that there should be a register of all forms of public assistance, and that the Registrar of Public Assistance should have certain definite functions in the co-ordination of all treatment given at the public expense.

The Registrar of Public Assistance.

The need for some such office as that of the registrar will be apparent to those who realise the demoralisation caused by the present chaos. This chaos, characteristic alike of town and country, prevails not only in the overlapping activities of the various public authorities, but also in their practice of enforcing payment of the cost of their assistance. The Commissioners themselves came across cases in which various members of the same family were simultaneously being relieved or treated, at the public expense, by the education authority, the health authority, the police authority, the lunacy authority, and the Poor Law authority, or some of them—not to mention voluntary agencies of different kinds—without any one of these authorities being aware of the action of the others. The result is, at present, side by side, many families whose destitution is unrelieved, and others who are receiving, in the aggregate, more than the average labourer's income. Even more startling was the discovery, fully described in the Minority Report, that a similar chaos exists with regard to "charge and recovery," that is, the enforcement of repayment. At present it depends entirely on the policy—more often the caprice—of particular meetings of particular committees, the decision depending on which members happen to be present, and in what mood these happen to be, whether any, and, if so, what, charge is made for the assistance granted to or forced on the family, in respect of destitution, neglected childhood, lunacy, maternity, sickness or accident. We found many families in quite good circumstances getting public assistance from one or other authority without repayment of its cost, whilst other families, absolutely indigent, were being charged for assistance which they had sometimes been actually forced to accept. In one case the breadwinner of the family had been put in prison by the education authority for non-payment of its charge for an industrial school child at the very time that he and his family were so destitute as to be in receipt of outdoor relief from the board of guardians.

We of the Minority regard it of vital importance to put an end to this unfair and demoralising inequality. The setting up of any new Poor Law authority, adopting "curative and restorative treatment," would only aggravate it. The abolition of

the Poor Law authority would in itself not suffice. We see no other remedy than a common register of all forms of public assistance, in charge of a local officer to be appointed and controlled by the county or county borough council, but to be independent of the various treating committees. To this officer, for the sake of securing a uniform administration of these "special assessments," we propose to entrust also the whole work of whatever "charge and recovery" Parliament thinks fit to enforce.

The Moral Factor.

There are some critics of the Minority Report—usually, I think, those who have not troubled to read it—who complain that it ignores the "moral factor" of the problem of pauperism. I can only say that to me the "moral factor"—the question of the result on personal character—is virtually the whole of the problem. But we of the Minority came decisively to the conclusion that it is impossible even to begin to deal successfully with personal character until we dismiss the whole idea of relieving destitution, and until we go boldly for a definite policy of preventing each separate cause of destitution. Take, for instance, the destitution brought about by drink. Under the Poor Law—*under any Poor Law*—the drunkard cannot be touched until he is in a state of destitution. A man may be neglecting his children, leaving his wife without medical attendance, or maltreating a feeble-minded child, and yet no Poor Law authority can do anything to prevent the destitution which will probably ensue. It is only when the man is suffering from delirium tremens that he is taken into the workhouse, put into a clean bed, with two attendants to look after him, dosed with the costly and agreeable morphia, and then, when he has recovered from his debauch and can return to his work, let out to begin his evil courses again. We maintain that, under our system of making the education authority, the public health authority, and the asylums authority responsible for searching out the incipient destitution of the neglected child, the sick wife, and the maltreated feeble-minded child, the drinking head of the family would have been called to book long before he found himself in the comfortable quarters of the workhouse. Indeed, it seems apparent to me that, once the

public health authority was responsible for searching out diseases, one of the first diseases which would call for systematic prevention and cure would be alcoholism.

Take again the destitution brought about by unemployment. So long as this is relieved by a destitution authority, I see no chance of enforcing the responsibility of every able-bodied person to maintain himself and his family. You may, of course, deter men from getting relief out of the rates, but you will not deter them from being parasitic on other people, or from allowing their dependants to sink into a state of destitution. If, however, you had an employment authority responsible for either finding a man a job or placing him in training, you could strictly enforce on every man and woman who were, as a matter of fact, failing to maintain themselves and their dependants the obligation to make use of this organ of the State. When the visitor from the Children's Care Committee discovered an underfed child, or the health visitor discovered a woman about to be confined without proper nursing and medical attendance, it would be no excuse for the man to say he was out of work. It would be unnecessary to inquire why he was out of work, whether his unemployment was due to his own inefficiency or to the bankruptcy of his late employer. He would simply be required to be at the Labour Exchange, where he would either be provided with a job or found the means of improving his working capacity while he was waiting for a job. If it were discovered that there was a moral defect, he would have to submit himself, in a detention colony, to treatment which would be at once curative and deterrent in the old Poor Law sense. *It is, in fact, exactly because we think it impossible to grapple with the moral factor by merely relieving destitution that we have turned away from the whole conception of a Poor Law.*

We can Abolish Destitution!

Can this attractive programme of preventing destitution, instead of merely relieving it, be carried into practice? We may be unduly hopeful, but, after the most careful consideration and a great deal of consultation with practical administrators on all the different sides of the problem, we make bold to say that it can be done. We have satisfied ourselves that, even with our present imperfect human

nature, this nation, if it chooses, can now drain the morass of destitution which is a shame to us all. *It is now possible to abolish destitution*, just as we have found it possible to abolish plague and typhus, negro slavery, and the labour of little children in cotton mills. We want, in short, to set on foot a systematic and sustained crusade against destitution. To do this we must induce Parliament to set going the forces, in every district, of the local education authority and the local health authority, in a way that they have never yet been set going; and we must bring to their aid the forces of a national authority dealing with unemployment.

How to Join the Crusade.

This new crusade against destitution has been taken in hand by a young and vigorous organisation—the National Committee to Promote the Break-up of the Poor Law, of which I am acting as honorary secretary. Membership of that committee entails no subscription and no liability beyond an undertaking to do what is possible to help on its work. Subscription is entirely optional, but to members who contribute not less than half-a-crown a year we shall send valuable literature as fast as we can publish it. We are organising a band of devoted lecturers who will, next autumn, be speaking all over England, in church and chapel societies, and everywhere else that they can reach. We have able and enthusiastic writers who are giving their days to preparing our tracts and pamphlets. But we need in every town and parish a band of disciples and supporters. We have set before us the ideal of enlisting, to begin with, a hundred thousand members. This pamphlet alone ought to get us that number. We want to reach the heart of every man and woman of good will, whatever their politics, whatever their religious opinions, whatever their position, and induce them to enrol themselves in this new crusade. And I make a special appeal to all who read these words to send me their names.

BEATRICE WEBB.

National Committee to Promote the Break-up of the Poor Law, 5 and 6, Clements Inn, Strand, London.

[Mrs. Sidney Webb answers questions as to interpretation, application, propaganda, etc., of the proposals of the Minority Report, and gives useful facts and figures in "The Christian Commonwealth" every week. Of all Newsagents. Every Wednesday. One Penny.]

WHAT THE MINORITY REPORT IS.

An Inspiring Document—The Revelation of a National Disgrace—A Message of Hope—Destitution can be Abolished as Surely as Typhus Has Been—A Call to Action.

When it became apparent that the bulk of the members of the Royal Commission were going to follow the Chairman (Lord George Hamilton) in recommending the setting up of a new Poor Law authority, and in seeking to perpetuate the stigma of pauperism and all that it implies, Mrs. Sidney Webb and her three colleagues—the Rev. Prebendary Russell Wakefield, Mr. F. Chandler, and Mr. George Lansbury—set to work to prepare an alternative report to present to the King. This was no light task. It involved, not only the survey of the voluminous evidence and inquiries of the Commission itself (and these, it is said, fill forty volumes of printed Blue-book), but also the setting on foot of elaborate other investigations into matters which the Majority preferred to leave unexplored. It meant the writing of a description, at once accurate and vivid, of "How England is Governed," in all the complications of our local administration, up and down the country. It required the bringing together of thousands of facts and figures gathered from all sources, the elucidation of these by the results of personal visits to hundreds of institutions, the marshalling of such a complicated mass of material as might well have daunted a whole Government department, let alone four busy individual Commissioners, without the help of any civil servants. But in this gigantic task, Mrs. Webb and her colleagues, inspired by a burning zeal to remedy the evils that they had laid bare, spared themselves no labour to construct such a report as should *compel* the attention of every serious-minded Englishman.

This is the document which has now become celebrated all over the English-speaking world as "The Minority Report." Parliamentary papers do not usually become celebrated. Something like a quarter of a hundredweight of new Blue-books is issued every week, and they are generally very dull reading, and quickly forgotten. But the Minority Report is a new departure in such documents: it is

complete in itself. It aims at presenting in ordered sequence, page by page, a survey of what is actually going on in English workhouses and in the homes of those maintained on outdoor relief. It describes in precise detail from carefully authenticated evidence what is happening to the infants, to the children of school age, to the sick, to the mentally defective, to the widows with children struggling on their pittance of outdoor relief, to the aged and infirm inside the workhouse and outside. It sets forth the overlapping of the Poor Law with the newer work of the education and public health authorities, and the consequent waste and confusion. Unlike most Blue-books it has style. It is an addition not only to political science, but also to English literature. For the first time it puts within the range of the plain man a vivid bird's-eye view of the working of the whole Poor Law machinery in all parts of the United Kingdom, which is costing the nation nearly twenty millions sterling per annum.

Then it turns to the problem of the unemployed—the tragic riddle of the Sphinx—to our modern industrialism, and deals with it in a manner which, it is believed, is at once comprehensive and complete. The whole of the experience of the Poor Law authorities, and their "bankruptcy"—as regards the destitute able-bodied, is surveyed in detail. There is a brief account of the work of voluntary agencies, in which justice is done to the remarkable efforts of the Salvation Army. A description is then given, with much new information, of the movement started by Mr. Chamberlain in 1886, which culminated in the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905. The story is told of the various experiments and devices that have been tried during the past twenty years, the relief works and the farm colonies, etc. This leads up to a wonderful description of the unemployed of to-day, who they actually are, and what they really need. No such searching analysis, no such illu-

minating vision, no such brilliant account of the problem has ever been laid before the public.

But the special interest for us in the Minority Report lies not in its presentation of the problem, graphic and impressive as this is, but in the remarkable plan which it works out for grappling with it—a plan in which, we make bold to say, there is embodied something like real administrative genius, and one which, as will be seen from the articles we print below, has already secured the confidence and support of some of the most capable and experienced of our administrators. The first part of the Minority Report concludes, in fact, with a definite scheme of reform, which is elaborately worked out in detail, involving the abolition of the workhouse, the complete disappearance of the

Poor Law, and the transfer of the care of the children, the sick, the mentally defective, and the aged to the several committees of the county borough councils and county councils already administering analogous services. Similarly, the second part of the report gives, in elaborate detail, the Minority's plan for solving the whole problem of unemployment—not by any vague and chimerical panacea, but by a series of administratively practicable reforms, based on the actual experience of this and other countries, which are within the compass of the Cabinet, and could, it is believed, be carried in a single session of Parliament. The two together constitute, in the judgment of some of those able to give an opinion, the most important scheme of social reform ever laid before the nation.

What The Minority Report Proposes.

The break-up of the existing Poor Law—the main feature of the Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission—is not a measure of mere destruction. It means in fact, just the opposite—a large scheme of social reconstruction based on a complete change in our way of looking at destitution. Here are the eight points of this New Charter of the Poor.

The National Committee to Promote the Break-up of the Poor Law seeks

I.—To abolish the Boards of Guardians; to get rid of pauperism, both the name and the thing; and to substitute for the parochial relief of the Poor Law an entirely different method of provision for those needing public aid.

The verdict of all the members of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law, 1905-9, was, in effect, that the Poor Law had failed either to prevent destitution or to cure it; that the administration, taken as a whole, was wasteful and demoralising; that the Boards of Guardians, through no fault of their own, did not provide adequately or wisely either for the children or the sick, for the aged or the able-bodied; and that neither the areas nor the methods, neither the aims nor the traditions of Poor Law administration were such as to be suitable in the twentieth century. This condemnation went beyond mere criticism of administrative machinery. The Royal Commis-

sioners of 1905-9 were unanimous in their conclusion that the "principles of 1834"—notably the principle that the condition of the pauper should be made less eligible than that of the lowest grade of independent labourer, in order that as few as possible should be led to apply for relief—could no longer be adopted by a civilised community.

II.—To set on foot a systematic Crusade against Destitution in all its ramifications: against the destitution caused by Unemployment, the destitution caused by Old Age, the destitution caused by Feeble-mindedness and Lunacy, the destitution caused by Ill-Health and Disease, and the destitution caused by Neglected Infancy and Neglected Childhood.

The evidence and investigations of the Poor Law Commission revealed the existence, amid all our wealth, of a terrible morass of destitution, which the Poor Law only very imperfectly relieves, and which it does practically nothing to prevent or cure. Into this morass of destitution there sink annually tens of thousands of our fellow-citizens—of men thrown out of work and unable to get back into regular employment, of persons smitten with phthisis or chronic rheumatism, of widows bereft of the family breadwinner, of boys and girls growing up without proper nurture or

technical training, of wastrels refusing to work, or men and women of weak will succumbing to drink. No Poor Law authority—no authority restricted to the relief of destitution—can ever arrest these causes of eventual destitution at the only time at which prevention is really practicable—namely, at the very beginning of the evil, long before destitution has set in. We want to throw the responsibility of maintaining each class of persons becoming destitute upon those authorities which ought to have prevented the destitution—that is to say, upon the authorities having both the power and the machinery to arrest the several causes of destitution in their early stages.

III.—To empower and require the Local Education Authority to search out all children within its district who are destitute of proper nurture, and to apply to them the appropriate treatment.

The investigations of the Poor Law Commission, like the inquiries into the physical condition of the children in the elementary schools and those of the Departmental Committee on Physical Degeneration, have proved beyond dispute that a large proportion of our children are growing up underfed, improperly cared for, and suffering from minor ailments which, because they are neglected, become lifelong causes of impoverishment and disease. Neglected childhood is thus the cause not only of a vast amount of eventual destitution and personal suffering, but also of serious damage to our national prosperity. Parliament has already made the local education authority responsible for school feeding and medical inspection. "The least costly and most practical solution," says Dr. Kerr, of the London County Council Medical Service, "appears to be that any public provision for protecting and aiding growth and development of children during the years of school life—three to sixteen years of age—should be entirely committed to the education authority. This would allow such matters as the feeding, teaching, cleansing, medical treatment, or social protection of school children, *when these duties become a public care*, to be administered by the one authority, and by bringing all the various problems into a correct relationship and perspective would also effect considerable financial economy."

IV.—To empower and require the Local Health Authority to search out all sick persons within its district who are destitute of medical attendance, and to supply to them, either in their homes or in suitable institutions, whatever may be deemed the most appropriate treatment.

This is already the policy of the Public Health Acts, which are as yet applied (and that only imperfectly) to some of the diseases deemed most dangerous to the community. By this policy of "searching out" disease we have practically exterminated typhus and cholera, reduced smallpox to a vanishing point, and greatly diminished enteric fever. The same policy should now be applied to all cases of disease which are not being treated or attended to. Every such case is a loss to the community, and a potential cause of future destitution. We know now that a large proportion of the diseases from which we suffer can be obviated or arrested, if only the appropriate treatment and the appropriate regimen are applied *at the very beginning of the complaint*. At present, as the Minority Report aptly says, "the young artisan, with the seeds of tuberculosis in him, goes on, for lack of medical inspection and advice, in habits of life which presently bring him, too late to be cured—after perhaps he has infected a whole family—to the sick ward of the workhouse." In all diseases prevention is both more effective and less costly than cure. To the local health authority must fall also whatever public provision is made for maternity, the supervision of infants under school age, and the care of the infirm, the physically defective, and the aged needing institutional provision.

V.—To empower and require the Local Lunacy Authority to search out all feeble-minded or mentally defective persons destitute of proper care and control within its district, and to make appropriate provision for them.

As to the mentally defective of all kinds there is practically universal agreement. The Poor Law Commission unananimously concurred with the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-minded that it is "the mental condition of these persons, and neither their poverty nor their crime, that is the real ground of their claim for help from the State. . . ."

There should be one authority in the county or county borough," which should be responsible for securing appropriate treatment for all sections of those certified as mentally defective.

VI.—To empower and require the Local Pension Authority to search out all persons who are destitute from old age in its district, and to provide Old Age Pensions for such of them as are able and willing to live decently thereon.

This is the policy with regard to the aged which the Local Government Board (through Mr. Chaplin's Circular of 1896) has for the last thirteen years officially promulgated to boards of guardians, though hardly any of these bodies have granted these allowances either sufficiently freely or of adequate amount. Such local old-age pensions should, in order to prevent overlapping, clearly be administered by the same authority as dispenses to persons over seventy the national old-age pensions. They "would be given and continued, not as of right, but at the discretion of the local authority, only to such persons settled in the locality as the Pension Committee find could and would live decently by its aid."

VII.—To empower and require a new National Authority to search out all able-bodied persons destitute of employment, and to take the necessary steps both to diminish, as far as practicable, the social disease of Unemployment and to supply proper maintenance and training for those who are unemployed and unprovided for.

To this, perhaps the gravest cause of eventual destitution and demoralisation, the Minority Report devotes a whole volume, and the complexity of the subject prevents any intelligible summary in a few lines. The problem, whether we approach it from the side of the unemployed or from that of vagrancy, clearly transcends the powers of any local authority. There must be a department of the national Government to organise a system of labour exchanges, to promote trade union insurance, to regularise the national demand for labour, and suppress both excessive hours of work and the illegitimate use of boy and girl labour, to "decasualise" the casual labourer and regularise the employment of those engaged in seasonal trades, by "dovetail-

ing" different occupations, to open up new sources of livelihood by afforestation, small holdings, and land development generally, to provide appropriate training, with maintenance, for those for whom the labour exchange cannot find work, and to commit to reformatory detention colonies the "won't works" and the wastrels.

VIII.—To empower and require all preventive Authorities to enforce, by counsel and advice, by the sustained pressure of public opinion, and where needed by process of law, the obligation of all able-bodied persons to maintain themselves and their families in due health and efficiency.

Does not all this mean a great increase in maintenance at the public expense and a serious diminution of personal responsibility? In no wise. At present, amid the chaos of authorities and powers, and with the impossibility of demonstrating to the justices that a man could provide for his family if he would, it is practically impossible to enforce even parental responsibility. The fathers of the hundred thousand children now fed at school are not, as a matter of fact, compelled to fulfil their responsibilities as parents. Infants and children are (at least up to the point of actual cruelty) neglected with impunity by careless or drunken parents. The Poor Law Authorities at present neither see that the wives and children are properly provided for nor prosecute the men for failing to do their duty. But once it was known that a man could, by applying to the Labour Exchange, either find employment or ensure the proper maintenance of his family and (under training) also of himself, it would rest only with the local education authorities and the local health authorities, acting through their Children's Care Committees and health visitors, their sanitary inspectors and teachers, to stop at once, by friendly counsel, by grave warning, and where necessary by criminal prosecution, every case in which a man was even beginning to fail in fulfilling his personal obligations. Nor need the services always be gratuitous. Where Parliament decides that a charge should be made (as now for maintenance in asylums, industrial schools, etc), this should be assessed on the individual responsible, after careful inquiry as to his ability to contribute

without encroaching on the subsistence of his household; and the contribution so fixed should be enforced with no less exactitude and with no more stigma of pauperism than the collection of income-tax. Nobody would wish to see any weakening

of parental responsibility, but this, with other personal obligations, can be universally enforced without hardship and without cruelty, only when the community sees to it that every man and woman has the opportunity of fulfilling them.

What the Minority Report will do for the Poor.

By GEORGE LANSBURY.

Readers of this pamphlet will now have had a very good idea of the proposals of the Minority for the Break-up of the Poor Law and the Public Organisation of the Labour Market. However clear these are, there will be some people who will repeat the question which is so often put to me—viz. : "How will all these proposals really affect the poor?" I think that the case which happened only the other day in Shoreditch will show very clearly the essential differences between what is now proposed to be done and what is now being done. The case concerned a child, and so far as I understand it, the facts are not in dispute. The relieving officer, when called in, considered that it was not a case of destitution, as there was a suspicion that the father was at work. Consequently no out-relief was given, and the child died of starvation. It will be noticed that the victim in this case was a child who was acknowledged by all parties to be very ill and in need of treatment. This treatment was denied to it because of some supposed defect in the father. Had the scheme of the Minority been in operation no questions would have been asked as to the character or means or position of the father. It would be enough for the Public Health Authority that the child was sick and in need of care and nourishment. This would have been provided straight away, in whatever form was deemed most appropriate, and all questions connected with the father's ability or inability to pay would have been settled afterwards. The question of his destitution would not enter into the matter. Simply the need of the child would have been considered. It is said that this would result in neglect of children on the part of parents. I am not concerned to argue very much about this, as I think the facts of life are all against it. But I would repeat that in the case above mentioned a little child has been

starved to death, and that up to the present nobody has been brought to book. This could not possibly happen under our scheme. If the father neglected his duty he would be prosecuted; but meanwhile his child would not be starved. That is most of the difference between the two systems. In my opinion our scheme would, for the first time, make real and effective the responsibility of the parent as well as of the State. If this man were out of work there would be a Labour Exchange for him to apply to, which would test his willingness to work by sending him to a situation, or in some other way putting him in a position to get his maintenance and the maintenance of those dependent upon him. He could then really be punished if he neglected his duty to feed his children. To-day there is no machinery for doing this, and the machinery proposed by the Majority of the Commission is quite hopeless for dealing with such cases.

There is much more that I would have liked to say on these lines, but at the moment I am not able to give the necessary time. I should like to put it on record that the more I reconsider our Minority Report the more I believe that it does contain within it the means for really organising destitution out of existence. It is the children and the sick who make up the great bulk of the Poor Law problem of to-day. Let that problem be tackled in a scientific manner and much of the inefficiency and pauperism which we see around will disappear.

Unemployment still stalks abroad, and, so far, the Minority scheme holds the field. What readers have to do is to join our National Committee and get everyone else to do so, and to create such a public opinion as will compel Parliament not merely to discuss the proposals, but to get them—or a better scheme, if a better scheme can be got up—embodied in an Act of Parliament without delay.

THE URGENT NEED FOR REFORM.

HOW WE WASTE OUR MONEY AND DEMORALISE THE POOR BY THE PRESENT CHAOS OF AUTHORITIES.

By SIDNEY WEBB, LL.B., L.C.C.

In 1834, when the old Poor Law was costing the United Kingdom about seven millions a year, its evil influence was thought to be bringing the nation to the brink of ruin. To-day, as the Minority Report brings out with impressive detail, the position is in many respects as serious as it was in 1834, though not exactly in the same way.

Overlap and Confusion.

Few persons realise that in the present year, and annually, a sum of nearly *seventy millions sterling* is being spent out of the rates and taxes of the United Kingdom in providing maintenance, education, and medical treatment for the various sections of the poorer classes. This huge amount is being expended by all sorts of local governing bodies, competing with each other, overlapping each other's operations, and duplicating each other's services. Their work is more or less supervised by half a dozen different departments of the national Government, acting on the most diverse principles, without consultation with each other, and often diametrically at variance with each other. The Poor Law authorities of the kingdom are spending nearly twenty millions a year out of the total of seventy millions, and are usually quite without knowledge of what the other local authorities are doing in the same field. In London, for instance, the Board of Guardians are maintaining at this moment about 25,000 children of

school age, three-fifths indoor and two-fifths outdoor. Meanwhile the London County Council was feeding last winter over 55,000 children of school age, or twice as many as were being maintained under the Poor Law. What is worse, in several thousand cases the two authorities are simultaneously providing, out of the rates, for the same children, without the one knowing of the other's proceedings. The Poor Law authorities throughout the kingdom have about a hundred boarding-schools for poor children. It is not generally known that the local education authorities are themselves maintaining already fifty other boarding schools for equally poor children. Moreover, the Home Office is simultaneously maintaining out of the taxes, through philanthropic committees, a hundred and fifty more of these boarding-schools for other poor boys and girls. All these residential schools deal with much the same class, and it is often a mere chance whether a child is under one authority or the other; indeed, quite frequently brothers and sisters from the same household are in different institutions, under different authorities, and subject to entirely different conditions, without one of the authorities knowing of the other's action. In some cases the same institution is inspected by the officers of the Board of Education, the Home Office, and the Local Government Board without the inspectors from the several departments knowing anything of each other's visits, or criticisms, or requirements, and without their subsequently conferring together as to their reports. Some institutions get payments simultaneously in respect of the same children from different public authorities. With regard to the sick, the

local health authorities throughout the kingdom are now maintaining out of the rates more than seven hundred municipal hospitals, originally established for small-pox and fever, but now often taking in patients with other diseases, many surgical cases and accidents, and apparently now about to include in their sphere the vast range of tuberculosis. Meanwhile the Poor Law authorities have in every district their own institutions for the sick, frequently only a ward in the general mixed workhouse, but in London and other great towns a highly organised and elaborately equipped infirmary, serving as a public hospital. Competing with both these rate-supported hospitals is the crowd of endowed and voluntary hospitals—existing, however, only in fewer than a hundred towns—which are gratuitously receiving, in many cases, patients of exactly the same class as the rate-supported hospitals of the Poor Law or the public health authorities. It often depends on which doctor gets hold of the case first whether the sick person becomes a pauper, a municipal patient, or the recipient of private charity. In many a district there are now half-a-dozen different doctors receiving money from the rates and taxes, getting their instructions from half-a-dozen different public offices or departments, often doing exactly the same work, for the same class of persons, and not in the least consulting with each other. Notwithstanding this huge expenditure, this ignorant multiplication of official inspections, this unintelligent duplication of services, and this wasteful overlapping of work, a large part of the provision now made by the community for the infants, the children, the sick, the mentally defective, the infirm, and the aged—and for these sections under any system of society some collective provision has to be made—is scandalously deficient and inhumane. The Minority Report makes the terrible and quite unexpected revelation that there are, at the same time, more than 10,000 healthy, able-bodied men rotting in the general mixed workhouses of London and Liverpool, Dublin and Glasgow, and some other towns; whilst literally hundreds of thousands more rise up in the morning not knowing from what work or on what casual jobs they will that day be able to earn their own and their children's meals.

What answer can we make to the criticism that such an absurd chaos, a chaos of our own creating, is unworthy of reasoning beings?

How the Duplication of Services Comes to Exist.

We have got into this chaos by three-quarters of a century of drifting in Local Government, no Cabinet since 1834 ever plucking up courage to deal with the question as a whole.

In 1834 the Poor Law Commissioners were faced with the difficulty that there existed, up and down the kingdom, no public authority to which they could entrust the administration of the public provision for any of the classes of persons whom they had to deal with. There was in 1834 no sanitary authority in existence charged with the prevention of all disease and with the cure of such diseases as are infectious, and having its own hospitals and medical staff. There was no service of sanitary inspectors required to discover every disease that becomes a public nuisance. There was in 1834 no education authority charged with the schooling of all the children, and having its own elaborate network of schools and staff of teachers. There was no service of school attendance officers, visiting systematically every home to discover whether the children are receiving efficient education. There was in 1834 (outside the metropolis) no force of salaried police, whose duty it was to prevent the public nuisance of vagrancy. There was in 1834 even no systematic prison organisation, such gaols as existed being mere dungeons dispersed among entirely autonomous lords of manors, close corporations, and county justices. There was, of course, no idea of curative or reformatory treatment of the persons compulsorily detained. There was in 1834 no general public provision for lunatics, outside one or two progressive counties. There was no public provision at all for idiots, defectives, or epileptics. There was in 1834 no public authority dealing, as the Distress Committee of the borough or urban district council now assumes to do, with distress from unemployment or with the curative treatment of unemployed workmen. There was in 1834 no idea of a national service of pensions, providing superannuation for all who need it, com-

pletely divorced from the Poor Law. The Poor Law Commissioners of 1834 were therefore compelled to recommend that a single local authority should be established, to deal with all the classes for which public provision had then been made, and this provision, however diverse in character it needed to be, was governed by the only factor then common to all the classes—namely, that of being in need of public aid. This was called destitution.

The Upgrowth of New Authorities.

The problem before us to-day is very different. It is no longer possible to unite, under one authority elected for the purpose of relieving destitution, all the provision made by the State for those in need of public aid. Quite apart from the question of relieving destitution, there have grown up in the course of the seventy-five years extensive systems of public provision, out of the rates and taxes, for particular classes of persons, amounting in the aggregate to two or three times the whole Poor Law expenditure. For the children of the whole country, irrespective of the affluence of their parents, the State now provides—usually gratuitously and in the other cases far under cost price—the whole service of education, from the kindergarten to the university college. For various sections of these young people—more extensively than is commonly realised—the State provision of education is accompanied by partial or complete maintenance. This is quite irrespective of the tens of thousands of children in endowed and publicly aided secondary boarding-schools. Leaving these out of account, it is interesting to note that the State provision of maintenance with education now extends to something like a hundred thousand children, some of them because they are the best (scholarships which cover maintenance), some of them because they are the worst (reformatory schools), and some for indiscriminate reasons, including the undesirable character of the parents, the children's truancy, or the children's physical or mental shortcomings (industrial schools, residential schools for the blind, crippled, etc.) In over fifty cases the local authorities actually run their own boarding-schools for particular sections of poor children—at a lower cost per head, be it

noted, than the new "cottage homes" of boards of guardians. All this public aid to the children is without the stigma of pauperism, whether the parents are bad, good, or indifferent.

With regard to the sick, there has grown up a public health service, ubiquitous in scope and becoming ever larger in volume, for the prevention of all diseases, irrespective of the wealth or conduct of the persons concerned, and for the cure (including maintenance in hospital and domiciliary treatment) of those deemed most injurious to the community. Every year this notion of the protection of the community is advancing on the idea of merely relieving the individual. In 1907 it was made the duty of the education authority to provide repeated medical examination of all the seven millions of children, with permission actually to supply medical treatment if it chose. All this is without the stigma of pauperism, and the question which of the services should be rendered gratuitously, and which of them should be made the subject of a nominal and quite inadequate fee, has ceased to be a matter of principle, and is now one of mere administrative expediency in each case.

With regard to the able-bodied in need of assistance, there has grown up the network of Distress Committees under the Unemployed Workmen Act. But this did not begin with Mr. Gerald Balfour's Act or Mr. Long's Joint Committees. We see it initiated by the Local Government Board itself in 1886, in the celebrated circular calling on the municipal authorities to take the treatment of the unemployed out of the Poor Law. The whole purpose and intention of this municipal organisation has been to provide something other than the Poor Law for the whole class of workmen unemployed through no fault of their own, irrespective of whether or not they were technically destitute. At the other end of the able-bodied class we have the strong recommendations that the vagrant should be dealt with, not by the Poor Law Authority but by the police, and the incorrigible wastrel by a Detention Colony—in both cases irrespective of whether or not they apply for relief or are technically destitute. Such alternative provision for the able-bodied person homeless through his own fault has been made possible by the growth of an admirable and complete

system of preventive police, by a national prison organisation, and by the experimental development in reformatories of a system of treatment combining compulsory detention with educational stimulus—all being new since 1834. It is significant that the reformatories, like the prisons, are free from the stigma of pauperism.

With regard to the aged, the foundation has been laid by Mr. Asquith's bold measure of complete national provision free from any stigma of pauperism, and quite unconnected with the Poor Law.

Thus it is that the provision made by the Poor Law Authorities for the children, the sick, the able-bodied, and the aged respectively has come to form only a fractional part of the public provision made from the rates and taxes for each of those very classes; and a part that cannot be marked off from the rest by any significant characteristic—not even by the 1834 attribute of "being in a state of destitution."

How to Stop the Waste.

It is obvious that it is out of the question to reverse the whole current of legislation for the past three-quarters of a century and put all these classes back into the Poor Law. No Minister will dare even to propose to the House of Commons that the child found hungry at school or the unemployed workman shall henceforth be relieved by the Poor Law Authority, though this is what the Majority Report wants the Government to do. On the contrary, it is clear that the tendency will go on. The sick will plainly have to be still further separated from the board of guardians, as the Vice-regal Commission on Poor Law Reform has advised for Ireland. The Royal Commission on the Feeble-Minded has authoritatively recommended that all lunatics and feeble-minded shall cease to be paupers and be wholly handed over to a committee of the county or county borough council. It is plain that, if we want to stop the present overlapping and duplication and waste, as we cannot abolish all the separate services that have grown up, we must abolish the boards of guardians and wind up the whole business of the Poor Law, which has become, in its very essence, obsolete.

It would, in fact, be of no use going to the trouble of abolishing the boards of guardians merely in order to set up, as the Majority Report proposes, any new Poor Law body in their place. A poor relief committee of the county or county borough council would be very little better than the board of guardians, and would have new drawbacks of its own. What we have to do, as the Minority Report convincingly explains, is to get rid of the very notion of relief, as relief. The relief of the poor is not a category by itself at all for which any separate body is required. There are no poor who are not either children, or mentally defective, or sick or able-bodied, or aged and infirm. The Poor Law Authority could not compete in knowledge of education, or in its staff of educational advisers, with the local Education Authority. Its treatment of the sick could hardly be up to the standard set by the hospitals maintained by the Public Health Committee. Even the Distress Committee may be expected gradually to accumulate experience about the causes and effects of unemployment, and to obtain an expert staff, which will leave in this highly complicated subject the ordinary Poor Law guardian or relieving officer far behind.

The whole trend of English local government during the last half-century points to the expediency, for the sake of economy as well as for the sake of efficiency, of concentrating the whole of the public provision for each service in any locality in the hands of its own specialised Local Authority—for instance, all the public provision for the sick under the Health Authority, and all the public provision for children under the Education Authority. Hence, the only practicable scheme of reform is based on the idea of transferring the several specialised services now artificially aggregated under a single board of guardians to the several committees of the county or county borough council which are already dealing with those very services for the community at large.

The Unemployed a National Problem.

For the able-bodied and the unemployed something more is required. Here the problem, by its very nature, transcends the powers and resources of any local body. There must be a department of the

National Government undertaking the sole and entire charge of the able-bodied man in distress, whether he be vagrant or houseless "sleeper out" or unemployed. The Government has already made a beginning towards such a department. There is now to be a National Labour Exchange, at which all vacancies should be notified and all situations filled. Such a National Labour Exchange could "decasualise" casual labour and greatly mitigate seasonal fluctuations by "dovetailing" jobs. The cyclical fluctuations could be greatly remedied, if not wholly smoothed out, if the Government would arrange about 5 per cent. of its normal purchases (whether warships or army stores, new buildings or repairs) on a Ten Years' Programme, to be made, not annually, but out of temporary loans, wholly in the lean years of the decennium, when the unemployment index number rose about 4 per cent. All this should be done in the ordinary way of business, merely to give a fillip to trade just when capital as well as labour was unemployed. Whatever the Government may do with its own proposed insurance scheme, it is clear trade union insurance should be facilitated by Government subventions. For the odds and ends of men for whom, after all these remedial measures, no situations could be found, and who were reduced to distress, there must be no question of relief works, which are invariably costly, wasteful, and fatally demoralising. The men left idle after the twelve millions of wage-earners had found work must be regarded as in one way or another "out of condition." They should be provided with maintenance, freely, liberally, and honourably, on condition that they submitted themselves, until places could be found for them, to deliberately arranged courses of physical and technical training, filling up their whole day from morning till night. The proposals of the Minority Report are calculated to prevent most of the present unemployment; and to provide for the residuum of men in distress, which is a constant phenomenon, not work but maintenance under training. This can best be done by a Government Department under a Minister for Labour, and this, it is to be hoped, is what Mr. Winston Churchill means his outline to develop into.

OUR IDEAL.

By the Very Rev. the Dean
of Norwich (H. Russell Wakefield)

(Chairman Central London Unemployed Body).

The ideal of the Minority Report is the removal of the causes of the existing pauperism, thereby laying the foundation of a self-respecting and self-supporting citizenship. To relieve people temporarily is no remedy for the disease which makes them needy. But to treat scientifically the malady is the only possible way to effect a cure. It is in the belief that our recommendations will go a long way towards this end that we have launched them upon the ocean of public opinion.

One great feature of the proposals of the Minority Report is the enlarged and beneficent sphere which they assign to voluntary charitable agency. We have suffered too long from the wasteful and demoralising influences of irresponsible private charity. On the other hand, without the zeal and personal effort of the volunteer, the most perfect official system has the hardness and the blindness of machinery. We think the Minority Report avoids the dilemma. We do not abandon even the most deserving cases to the tender mercies of the good, for the Health Authority, the Education Authority, and the Unemployment Authority must maintain their official responsibility for the entire community. On the other hand, we do not deprive even the worst cases of the humanising influences of the philanthropic volunteer. The Public Authority and the volunteer worker must co-operate in every case. Each department of the County or County Borough Council will have its own extensive fringe of volunteer workers, such as Health Visitors, School Managers, Children's Care Committees, and Country Holiday Fund Associations, to serve as its eyes and ears and hands, working in the closest association with the Council's own staff. And alongside the public institutions we count on the aid of all the voluntary ones that private subscriptions and charitable endowment will provide.

Why I Support the Minority Report.

By G. P. GOOCH, M.P.

Though the Majority Report, as a whole, falls short of the needs of the occasion, we none the less owe it a double debt of gratitude. It is a painstaking and valuable, though somewhat discursive, review of large tracts of our national life, and it sets the seal of conservative and moderate opinion on many of the proposals for which reformers have long been pressing. The far-reaching schemes of the Minority would have little chance of acceptance in our cautious and slow-moving country unless the tottering edifice of our Poor Law system had been assailed by men and women whom their worst enemies cannot describe as revolutionaries.

The nation will not go far wrong if it carries out the numerous and important recommendations in which Majority and Minority concur; but when that is done the problem is still far from solution, and the responsibility of choice between the rival schemes cannot be indefinitely avoided. That of the Majority will attract some people by its apparent simplicity, its emphasis on the value of organised philanthropy, its loyalty to the tradition of deterrence, in however modified a form. Others will retort that its single authority reproduces precisely the vice of unspecialised administration which it is essential to remove, that overlapping will continue, and that the unemployed are retained within the sphere of influence of the Poor Law authority. If these grave objections are well founded, as I believe them to be, we must employ the services of other architects for our great work of reconstruction.

The scheme of the Minority may be expressed in two words—specialised treatment. They maintain that the best

people to look after any particular section—the children, the sick, the mentally defective, the aged, the unemployed—are those who do nothing else. Only thus can the infinite variety of need—physical, moral, intellectual—be met; only thus can the wasteful rivalry of competing authorities be terminated. The ideal is one of competent bodies and competent agents dealing with what they thoroughly understand, and dealing with nothing else. Any other unity is meaningless and impossible.

If the machinery is that of specialised treatment, the principle of the Minority Report is that of prevention and cure. To confine relief to the period of destitution is to reduce the apparent and increase the real burden that the community has to bear. To wait for destitution is often to wait till it is too late to help; the human and social conception of need must be substituted for the purely economic standard of destitution.

Is this Socialism? If free education, the feeding of school children, municipal hospitals, old-age pensions are Socialism, we must answer in the affirmative. But these and many other measures are in reality only steps towards the realisation of a national minimum of health, education, and efficiency. Collective supervision of the conditions of life is one thing, collective ownership of land and capital is another; the Minority Report does not pre-judge the question of Socialism. Its appeal is to men and women of all schools. It demands changes in organisation which are necessary for a healthy national life, changes which in no way differ in principle from many laws already on our Statute Book, changes which are equally necessary, whether our social structure rests on a basis of private property or of social ownership.

What I Think of the Minority Report.

By G. BERNARD SHAW.

The Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission is a much more important document than most of us have yet realised. It may make as great a difference in sociology and political science as Darwin's "Origin of Species" did in philosophy and natural history. Let me recall some of the circumstances which suggest the parallel. In the last ten years of the eighteenth century the conception of evolution was formed. It agitated the scientific world for about forty years, when the naturalists, tired of being able to get no further with it, dropped it so completely that when Charles Darwin revived it a generation later he was regarded as its discoverer. And, in fact, though one of the leading evolutionists of the eighteenth century *fin-de-sièclists* was his own grandfather, he seems to have arrived at his contribution—the theory of natural selection—by ignoring the older evolutionists and simply working at the facts with prodigious industry for years. Now for the parallel. In 1848 Karl Marx and Engels founded what they called "scientific Socialism" by their conception of modern capitalistic society as a phase of economic evolution, ephemeral like all phases, and destined to evolve into a higher social organisation which they called Communism. The historical part of this theory has now become classic, even at our most conservative universities. Marx and Buckle were as successful with their evolutionary economics as Erasmus Darwin and Lamarck had been with their evolutionary biology. But nothing came of it except that a good many Socialists got their heads turned and their hands paralysed by the notion that Socialism was "scientific," which in the nineteenth century meant infallible, inevitable, and autocratic. The Sidney Webbs (man and

wife) were the first Socialists who did what Charles Darwin did: that is, ignore the generalisations of Marx and Buckle, and investigate the facts with unremitting industry for many years. Their first great book, "The History of Trade Unionism," established the fact that the instinct of the working classes had justified itself scientifically by choosing the living wage as the point to aim at, and that both the professors who reasoned deductively on behalf of competition wages, and the Socialists who refused to organise the workers to obtain anything short of "the full product of their labour," were on the wrong tack. "Industrial Democracy," a monumental record of investigation and induction, elaborated the theory of the minimum wage, and showed that its enforcement is beyond the power of trade unionism, and must be a function of government. This rendered it necessary to make a scientific investigation of local government, which is the real point of contact between unorganised poor labour and the State. The investigation was undertaken with the same thoroughness as before; and though the results are not yet completely published, they were in the minds of the authors when Mrs. Webb was placed on the Poor Law Commission. No Commissioner had ever sat before with such an equipment for the work in hand. The machinery of the Commission, handled by an expert, yielded unprecedented information, and the Minority Report was the result.

In the Minority Report the conclusion that was implicit in "The History of Trade Unionism" and in "Industrial Democracy" becomes explicit. That conclusion is that it is not enough to secure to every man a minimum wage for the work he finds to do. You must provide the wage anyhow, and enable him to find all the work that exists, and if there is no work available you must still spend the wage on him in keeping him fit for work when it does come. His right to live, and the right of the community to his maintenance in health and efficiency, are seen to be quite independent of his

making commercial profit for any private employer. He is not merely a means to the personal ends of our men of business; he is a cell of the social organism, and must be kept in health if the organism is to be kept in health. There is much more in the Minority Report than this; but this is the point at which it breaks away from the commercial, unsocialist tradition of the nineteenth century, and from the notions of the Charity Organisation Society.

But it is the boldness, thoroughness, and directness of the Minority Report in its practical recommendation to break up the Poor-law that is most terrifying to the people who still have only two ideas for dealing with the destitute:—(1) Punish them for being too lazy to work; (2) be kind to them because they suffer; as between which there is only one question—namely, which is the more mischievous in practice. To turn a man into the street and then reproach him for being unemployed may be unreasonable and cruel, but to treat him as mere material for indulging the sympathetic emotions is the extremity of inconsiderateness; it reminds one of George Sand's description of the Empress Marie Thérèse, who had such a pretty talent for improving the minds of fallen women that they were always sure of a welcome at her court. The Minority Report gives no countenance to either of these follies. It goes straight to the point of the public welfare and public duty without the slightest regard for private ill-temper or private sentimentality.

The break-up of the Poor Law will involve social reconstruction enough to keep the most energetic reformers busy for several years to come. The formation of the National Committee will prove the most momentous political event of our time if our young men rise to it. It is a far bigger opportunity for them than the foundation of the Fabian Society was to their fathers in 1884. It resembles neither the theorising, romancing socialism which is big without being real, nor the careful, practicable socialism which is real without being big, and which ends in a string of expedient small jobs which need not be called socialism at all. It is big and revolutionary and sensible and practicable at the same time, which is just what is wanted to inspire and attract the new generation.

HOW TO STUDY THE MINORITY REPORT.

We can imagine no subject more useful, and none more appropriate, for deliberate study by adult schools and reading circles during the ensuing autumn than the Minority Report. Those who go through it with attention, and discuss each of its chapters among themselves, will gain a greater knowledge not only of English local government, but also of economic and social problems, and a clearer vision of what is happening to the English people to day, than would be afforded by any book that we know.

Various methods of class study may be suggested. One way is to assign a week to each of the seventeen chapters of the Report; to expect the class members to read that chapter in the course of the week; to have it expounded by the class leader and extracts read; and then for the subject to be discussed, questions asked, and difficulties cleared up.

Or, if so much individual reading cannot be obtained, two or three class meetings might be devoted to each chapter, most of it being read aloud; the class leader could explain it or comment on it paragraph by paragraph; questions could be asked and difficulties cleared up; and special days could be devoted to general discussions on the proposals relating to the unemployed, the children, the aged, etc.

Another way suitable for students of better education and greater opportunities would be to allot at the outset each of the seventeen chapters to a particular member of the society or class (or two chapters to each member); to expect him to master, during the summer, the chapter or chapters assigned to him; to arrange for papers to be read in turn, week after week, by the members to whom the several chapters had been assigned, in which the special subject matter of each could be expounded, analysed, and criticised; and to have these papers discussed by the class or society.

The Minority Report is, chapter by chapter, so complete in itself that other books are not really required for its study. But "The Poor Law," by Rev. T. W. Fowle (Macmillan, 2s. 6d.) may be recommended as a convenient sketch of past history.

The National Committee to Promote the Break-Up of the Poor Law would gladly (a) supply societies or groups of any kind with copies of the Minority Report, in its own two volume edition, at the specially low price of 8s. per dozen volumes; (b) send a lecturer to open the course; (c) for a subscription of 5s. a year supply the secretary or other nominee of the society or group with all the literature issued by the committee; (d) promptly and gratuitously answer

any questions and clear up any difficulties met with in the course of the work; (e) supply any further information as to Poor Law or local government that may be desired; and (f) enrol all the members of the society or group as members of the National Committee without subscription

[Mrs. Sidney Webb answers questions as to interpretation, application, propaganda, etc., of the proposals of the Minority Report, and gives useful facts and figures in "The Christian Commonwealth" every week. Of all Newsagents. Every Wednesday. One Penny.]

THE NEED FOR PROPAGANDA.

By the Right Hon. Sir JOHN GORST, K.C.

Mr. Disraeli used to say that Royal Commissions were an elaborate and expensive method of finding out something that everybody already knew. They have been profusely used in recent years by the Governments of both political parties, not for the investigation of social problems and the discovery of new truths, but for the purpose of hanging up political questions with which the Government of the day did not feel itself competent to deal. The Royal Commission on the Poor Law was an example of the convenient use of this expedient. When the Unionist Party was demolishing the Home Rule Government of 1892-5 the reform of the Poor Law was one of its most effective cries. In the general election of 1895 every country village was placarded with posters, supplied by the Central Conservative office, calling upon the electors to vote for Mr. Blank, the Tory candidate, "and reform of the Poor Law." The rural voter, who thought this meant abolition of the workhouse, the institution of his country that he most hated, responded in his thousands and put a Unionist Ministry into office. Once in power, they promptly shelved Poor Law reform and devoted their energies, first, to quarrelling with Krüger, next, to waging a South African war, and, at last, to preaching the advantages of protection and the taxation of food. Towards the close of their career they remembered their pledges of 1895 and attempted to extricate themselves from the charge of breach of faith by appointing a Royal Commission to discover and recommend the reforms which they had ten years before professed themselves ready to accomplish.

With regard to the Poor Law, the Commission has discovered little that is new. The sufferings of the non-able-bodied poor

under the present Poor Law administration, the children, the widows, the sick, the aged, and the infirm have been well known for scores of years, have formed the topic of writings and speeches by politicians, by philanthropists, and by teachers of the people of every class and party. But the Commission has placed officially on record the present condition of the poor, and the Minority have drawn up a description, not differing in its statements of fact from the report of the Majority, which everyone who is interested in the social state of the people should read. The remedies have been discussed for years; the Reports of the Majority and Minority do not differ in character and principle; if the one deserves to be calumniated as "socialistic" so does the other. Both would abolish the boards of guardians and the workhouse; both would make the county council in name at least the supreme authority in Poor Law matters, although the Majority would hamper its freedom by making it appoint local boards of guardians under a new name. Even in the treatment of the able-bodied poor there is much agreement. The Minority would hand them over entirely, the Majority partially, to central government treatment. But there is little prospect of even those recommendations on which Majority and Minority are agreed being carried into effect unless the people of the country, by some organisation other than the party ones, vigorously intervene. The Reports of Royal Commissions, when they have served the political ends of the moment, are usually put on the shelf and forgotten. It is for this reason that I have joined the National Committee to Promote the Break-up of the Poor Law.

The National Committee to Promote the Break-up of the Poor Law.

Offices: 5 and 6, CLEMENTS INN, STRAND, LONDON.

President: THE REV. PREBENDARY RUSSELL WAKEFIELD,
*Rector of St. Mary's, Bryanston Square, and Chairman of the
Central (Unemployed) Body for London.*

Treasurer: MR. J. ARTHUR DAWES, L.C.C. **Hon. Secretary:** MRS. SIDNEY WEBB.

The National Committee to promote the Break-Up of the Poor Law has been formed for the purpose of drawing together all those who (without committing themselves to details) desire to see the existing Poor Law dealt with generally on the lines laid down in the Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission. That report recommended the taking out of the Poor Law of the several classes now dealt with as paupers, and the transfer of the responsibility for these classes to the authorities dealing with the causes of destitution—the children to the local education authority, the sick and infirm to the local health authority, the feeble-minded and mentally defective to the local lunacy authority, and the pensionable aged to the local pension authority. These four authorities already exist, as committees of county and county borough councils. For all varieties of the able-bodied and unemployed a new national authority is recommended.

The sole work of the National Committee is the education of public opinion on the question, irrespective of political, religious, or social differences. It includes men and women of the most diverse opinions, who are united only for this one object.

An active campaign of education and propaganda in different parts of the country has been started, and this will be extended as fast as funds and personal help permit. What is needed is:—

(a) The enrolment of as many members of the National Committee as possible, all over the United Kingdom, to enable local information to be obtained, local initiative to be utilised, and (as numbers increase) local organisations to be developed. All persons agreeing with the objects of the National Committee are therefore requested to send in their names.

(b) The preparation and dissemination of leaflets, pamphlets, articles, and letters to the Press, explaining the proposals of the Minority Report, and dealing with misconceptions, objections, and difficulties.

(c) The organising of lectures, discussions, and friendly "talks" wherever an audience can be found. For this purpose a staff of volunteer exponents is being enrolled, resident in different parts of the country, who will be prepared to speak, some at large public meetings, others in discussion societies, adult schools, or smaller gatherings. This staff needs many more recruits; and even those who cannot undertake more than one or two talks in the session are requested to send in their names.

(d) The collection of further information with regard to the existing Poor Law administration, the various forms of destitution that are at present unprevented or unrelieved, the overlap and duplication between the different public authorities, and so on. The help of members of local governing bodies is specially required in this part of the work.

Subscription is entirely optional, and members who cannot subscribe are cordially welcomed. Members contributing not less than half-a-crown a year receive all circulars and tracts as published. Any group of non-contributing members (such as a friendly society or trade union branch, a club, or a discussion society) may, for five shillings a year, receive through its nominee all circulars and tracts as published, together with a copy of the Minority Report.

If you are willing to support the National Committee, you are requested to cut out the following form, fill it up, and send it to the Hon. Secretary, 5 and 6, Clements Inn, Strand, London:—

I agree with the objects of the National Committee to Promote the Break-Up of the Poor Law, and I desire to become a member.

I can give assistance in the form of:—

- (a) Making the work known among my friends and neighbours, and thus securing other members.
- (b) Speaking at meetings or lecturing on the subject.
- (c) Writing letters on the subject.
- (d) Distributing literature.
- (e) Subscribing for the current year.

*Signature

Address

Official position (if any)

*Please give designation (Mrs. Miss, Rev., etc.)

Subscribers and the Research Department of the National Committee.

Many persons are interested in the proposals of the National Committee, but do not feel able, on account of their official position, or for other reasons, actually to enrol themselves as members. Others are willing to assist the educational work of the Committee, but do not feel sufficiently convinced of the validity of its proposals to be willing to commit themselves to their support. Some may even be hostile to the scheme of reform, and may yet desire information as to its possible application in detail. All such persons are invited to become subscribers to the funds. Subscribers are not committed to any of the objects or proposals of the Committee. Their contributions may be of any amount. Such of them as subscribe 5s. or more per annum will have sent to them, post free, a copy of the Minority Report and all circulars and tracts as published, and will be entitled to make use of the Research Department described below.

The widespread interest in the Poor Law and the problem of unemployment has already led to so many inquiries that it has been found necessary to institute a research department to deal with the numerous applications for information on points of law or practice, or of economic theory. Applications are received, for instance, for information as to foreign experiments in providing for invalidity and unemployment, as to the working of labour exchanges and insurance schemes, and as to municipal hospitals and the placing out of children. Inquiries are made as to the bearing of these experiments on the proposals of the Majority Report, on those of the Minority Report, and on those outlined by his Majesty's Government. Questions are asked as to the exact powers of the Local Government Board auditors to control policy, or as to the practice of the Home Office in assessing, according to its own customary scale, how much each parent should contribute for a child in an industrial school. The provision of authentic information of this kind, often to persons in humble circumstances in remote corners of the kingdom, is already becoming one of the most useful services of the National Committee. Replies can often be sent off on the same day; but in many cases special research is required, and the reply has to take the form of a memorandum. Contributing members and subscribers are entitled to make full use of this research department.

HOW TO GET THE MINORITY REPORT.

The Reports of the Poor Law Commission are buried in a gigantic Blue-book weighing, even with thin paper, over 7 lbs., and extending to over 1,200 folio pages of print. This ponderous tome may be bought of Wyman and Sons for 5s. 6d., which is half the usual charge. A more convenient form of the official edition is that in three volumes octavo, Vols. I. and II. being the Majority Report, price 2s. 3d., and Vol. III. the Minority Report, price 1s. 9d. The Stationery Office, which does not include it in its lists, apparently desires to conceal from the public the fact that it has published this convenient octavo edition, which has, unfortunately, small type and thin paper. Both these official editions are burdened by innumerable footnotes and references, which are irritating to the reader. There are two handy pocket editions of the Minority Report alone, in large type, without footnotes or references, both published in two volumes, at 1s. each. One of these editions is published by the Fabian Society (3, Clements Inn, Strand, London). The other is published by the National Committee to Promote the Break-up of the Poor Law (5 and 6, Clements Inn, Strand, London).

What may be called an *édition de luxe*, on good paper, two volumes, bound in blue cloth, and furnished with two long introductions by Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb, is published by Longmans, Green, and Co. ("The Break Up of the Poor Law," price 7s. 6d., and "The Public Organisation of the Labour Market," price 5s.).

The best propaganda matter is, undoubtedly, this penny pamphlet, "The Charter of the Poor," published by the Christian Commonwealth Co., Ltd., 133, Salisbury Square, E.C. Copies may be had post free at the following rates:—12 for 1s. 2d.; 50 for 4s.; 100 for 7s. 6d.

The most practical way of getting the Minority Report is to send a subscription to the National Committee to Promote the Break-up of the Poor Law, 5 and 6, Clements Inn, Strand, London. For 5s. you may get not only the Minority Report but also all other literature as issued.

Any of the above publications, and other current literature, may be obtained at the published price (postage extra) from THE CHRISTIAN COMMONWEALTH Office, 133, Salisbury Square, London E.C.

The Progressive League's Call to Arms.

By Dr. F. W. G. FOAT, M.A.

I have been requested to explain in outline the share which the League of Progressive Thought and Social Service is expected to take in the campaign against destitution.

If the unanimous and urgent recommendations of the Social Inquiry and Service Subcommittee are approved by the Executive, the League as a whole will give itself for the next few months to the service of the Minority Report, undertaking in the first place to sustain in all its circles of influence the public interest already created, and to carry on active propagandist and educational work among the people.

In devoting our energies to this fight we are putting our small army into the field at an early stage of its organisation, but no Leaguer who has caught the spirit of social reform will shrink from active service. I believe there will be a general and eager response to the "call to arms."

Now what are we to do to equip ourselves at short notice? Can we put in a sufficient number of "drills" to make ourselves effective instruments of our leaders in the attack? The Bastille was taken in 1789 by a mob without discipline. But in the twentieth century discipline is indispensable. Our Bastille is pauperism, and its guards are ignorance and the new official bumbledom. We have to meet knowledge—of a sort—and must meet it with a larger and better knowledge; we have to attack an entrenched official position, and nothing less than a "Territorial" army well trained to use the latest information will have the least effect.

Fortunately we have good leaders of acknowledged eminence in the marshalling of indisputable facts, and the League has a staff of general officers who have seen some service. All we need is the training of the rank and file. The one question of the moment in the League is this: Will the branches submit themselves to be well drilled?

If they will, I can show them how to do it. Happily, we have been lately thinking seriously of such work as this, and in some memorable gatherings have had encouraging field-days. My "Circular"—which I commend once more to the attention of the branches—sketches the general outline of our training scheme. It is delightful to be permitted so soon to apply it to an issue immediately practical.

Next, then. Branch secretaries must see that the study circles are fully formed under definite and acknowledged leadership. The leader should be, if available, one of the accredited speakers of the League; in other cases the leader will rank with the speakers. The branches will probably consent to lay aside for the present their general programmes of lectures, and to concentrate their energies on the mastery of the points of the

New Charter of the Poor

(which is explained on another page of this issue). Thorough facility in the handling of this weapon is absolutely necessary for the rank and file. Deeper study of the whole question will follow in some cases (for which I

commend the advice given on page 683 above, "How to Study the Minority Report"). But it is hopeless to expect that every Leaguer will manipulate the big guns. First, for each and all, the points of the new Charter.

Now, where do the League study circles in particular come in? The general meeting of the branch will do good work only when it contains a number of members who have *previously* prepared for it. The study circles must lead off. Let them meet earlier in the week and do the following things:—

(1) Learn by Heart

the eight points of the new charter, devoting one week to each; (2) thoroughly understand what they mean, by the help of the best expert instructors they can obtain, and the private reading of this week's symposium (to be reprinted by THE CHRISTIAN COMMONWEALTH, together with the new charter, in pamphlet form).

But this is only preparation for the more public meeting of the branch. The people must be taught, in detail, for, as Sir John Gorst says in his article, "The Need for Propaganda": "There is little prospect of the recommendations being carried into effect, unless the people of the country, by some organisation other than the party ones, vigorously intervene."

We come, then, to the weekly branch meeting. The first "point" of the new charter will be the subject of the first week's discussion; in the second week, points I. and II. will be taken; in the third, I., II., and III., and so on, by accumulative addition. I particularly commend the following procedure:—The special addition for the week should be recited and expounded for not more than half-an-hour by the best speaker available—the best informed provided he be interesting. At the end of the half-hour the meeting goes into discussion, and for that I urge with all my might the use of the social-socratic method of question and answer, which I have already demonstrated as a kind of mental cricket at the recent great London "rally" at the Holborn Town Hall.

Other forms of discussion are, of course, at the option of the branches, but I would earnestly remind leaders and speakers that the "game" does create and stimulate and maintain intellectual life. If the branches hope to have full meetings week after week for the study of a dry report they MUST use the "game." If they think otherwise let them try, of course, but it will be a pity to waste time. Besides, here is a first test of discipline. I am asked to take charge of this department for self-education. Well, those are my "orders," my "prescription," advice, or what you will. (The rules of this "mental cricket" are being printed.) A series of inter-branch competitions or matches as tests of the knowledge so far acquired are being arranged.

Now then! Is it to be drill for active service or not? Issues larger than at first appear depend upon the answer.

[The League of Progressive Thought and Social Service, 27, Chancery Lane, E.C.]