

SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN AN AMERICAN CITY

A SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS OF THE
SPRINGFIELD SURVEY

BY

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RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION



THE SPRINGFIELD SURVEY

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THE SPRINGFIELD SURVEY

SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

CONDUCTED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE
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RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION

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PREFACE

It has often been remarked that Americans take business and family life seriously but not so politics and government. If that is an accurate observation, there is comfort in the signs of a change going on—in the indications of increasing popular interest in public affairs. One such sign has been the rapid spread of surveys aimed toward the improvement of community conditions, surveys having the backing of responsible groups of citizens in the different communities. There has been at the same time, and possibly as part of the same process, an increase in the demand for printed matter on survey methods and procedure.

Although the number of social surveys has increased by leaps and bounds, the survey can hardly be said to have gone very far beyond its experimental stage. Much remains to be learned as to the best methods to be employed in using it and as to the place it should take among the many kinds of effort to be called into play in working for better conditions of living. It is possible from an office desk to construct answers on the many points about which we still need instruction, but when done we would still have only theoretical answers. The discoveries of greater value will come through what each survey can add to the practical experience already accumulated.

The Springfield survey was one of these ventures, and brought in its quota of practical experience. It had the good fortune to be carried on under very favorable circumstances, particularly with reference to the co-operation given within and without the city. There seemed therefore to be special reason for writing out the record of it as fully as possible.

In addition to the number furnished for circulation in Springfield, several thousand copies of each of the nine separate reports were printed. These have been taken by study groups in social, civic, and religious organizations, college libraries for reference use in teaching, and by others interested in standards in work for

PREFACE

community welfare. For the convenience of those who might find a briefer statement of the survey findings more suited to their purposes, and particularly now since the supply of the full pamphlet reports is nearly exhausted, the present summary has been prepared. It has seemed worth while in doing this to include a short statement of the purpose, sequence, and methods of the survey and a description of the Exhibition, which also was a part of the survey method. These are in addition to references to methods made throughout the chapters which contain the findings.

On the other hand it hardly needs to be said that in cutting the reports to a fifth or a fourth of their original size, it has been impossible to include a great deal of detail concerning either facts found or measures recommended. All the important findings are presented, but often the minor qualifications applying to the facts and conclusions, and also the numerous items in procedures recommended, such, for example, as the fourteen rules laid down in the report on the correctional system for the conduct of juvenile probation work, had to be omitted. Readers interested in the precise details will find it desirable to consult the full reports.

SHELBY M. HARRISON.

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I

GENERAL PURPOSE, SEQUENCE, AND METHODS OF THE SURVEY

The survey of Springfield had its more immediate beginning in a group of Springfield citizens who had given thought to social conditions in their city, had become dissatisfied, and had decided that the time had arrived to get out of their maze of conflicting opinions and beliefs and, if possible, on to a basis of certitude in working for community advance.

There were some citizens, for example, who believed Springfield's public schools the equal of any in the state; others believed they needed to be readjusted to the changed conditions under which the oncoming generation must live and work. Some boasted of the city as the "healthiest place in Illinois"; others believed the number of deaths from preventable causes was too high, and public health appropriations too meager. Some believed that local strikes were due to union agitators who merely wanted to kick up a disturbance; others, that they indicated something wrong with wages, employment opportunities, and general working conditions.

Again, there were those who believed law breakers got what they deserved, but others were of opinion that ill treatment of offenders provoked crime. Some believed the welfare of the insane to be relatively unimportant as a public matter; others that there must be a better way than to treat them like criminals. A few thought that playgrounds, sports, and other recreation activities were among the frivolities; but others that they could be constructive and reconstructive social forces. Some thought the material relief being given out to persons asking for aid was meeting the situation sufficiently; others that something more thoroughly helpful could be done. And so on; the opinions and beliefs were as conflicting and various as they are in every live,

growing, American city. This group of interested citizens thought the best method of making headway was to give them the test of fact.

INFLUENCE OF A PREVIOUS SURVEY

A number of considerations entered into the decision to apply scientific method to these and other local problems. Important among them was the very evident usefulness of a survey of certain phases of housing and sanitary conditions conducted several years before by Dr. George Thomas Palmer. In connection with his duties as health officer of the city, a house-to-house canvass was made and a large map was prepared representing in different colors the various conditions found. The map with the other publicity which accompanied it was the first statement of ascertained fact regarding general sanitary conditions prevailing throughout the city that had ever been put before the citizens.

The immediate result was a sufficient awakening of public interest to enable an ordinance to be passed setting certain higher standards for the regulation of sanitary and housing conditions. A further result, and one which had a special bearing upon the later movement for the general survey, was the disturbing of a certain feeling of complacency about local matters and a raising of doubts as to whether conditions generally in the community were all that, in the absence of recent and significant information, they were assumed to be.

The activities of a survey committee of the Illinois State Conference of Charities and Correction also furthered the growing feeling that an essential first aid to progress was real knowledge of the affairs of the town and gave this Springfield group a sense that more than the improvement of local conditions might hang on their enterprise.

THE SURVEY COMMITTEE AND GENERAL PLANNING

Following a preliminary study and report of conditions in the city made by the Department of Surveys and Exhibits of the Russell Sage Foundation at the request of a few especially interested Springfield citizens, the decision was reached to go ahead; and a survey committee of twenty-four was organized.

The chairman was Logan Hay, a state senator and a leading lawyer of the city, and among the other members were a former lieutenant-governor of Illinois, a state commissioner, the city superintendent of schools, other public officials, business men, labor leaders, clergymen, doctors, women's club leaders, editors, teachers, and social workers.¹ The secretary of the committee was A. L. Bowen, head of one of the state departments; the treasurer, J. H. Holbrook, a prominent business man.

Planning and direction were put into the hands of the Department of Surveys and Exhibits of the Russell Sage Foundation; and, using its preliminary report as a basis, nine main lines of inquiry were determined upon as follows:

PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

CARE OF MENTAL DEFECTIVES, THE INSANE, AND ALCOHOLICS.

RECREATION.

HOUSING.

CHARITIES.

INDUSTRIAL CONDITIONS.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

THE CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM.

CITY AND COUNTY ADMINISTRATION.

Had time and funds permitted, other subjects would have been added, such as city planning; taxation, in greater detail; the religious forces of the city, etc. All of these, however, were dealt with in some degree as parts of the nine main divisions; in the case of city planning, moreover, there already was a movement on foot which promised to handle the question reasonably soon.

INVESTIGATING THE FACTS

Building on the experience of previous surveys, four main steps beyond the organizing of the survey staff and of the local forces in Springfield were planned: first, investigating the facts of the local problems; second, the analysis and interpretation of the facts gathered; third, the formulating of constructive recommen-

¹ The full personnel of the general survey committee will be found on page v.

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dations; and fourth, the educational use of the facts and recommendations.

Fact gathering is the ABC of surveys. This is merely another way of saying that the survey is an attempt in the field of civic and social reform to do what the civil engineer does before he starts to lay out a railroad; what the sanitarian does before he starts a campaign against malaria; what the scientific physician does before he treats a case; what the modern financier does before he develops a mine. It is, in short, an attempt to substitute tested information for supposition, belief or conjecture.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The next step was analysis and interpretation. Once facts are in hand, what do they mean? Do they show satisfactory conditions or conditions calling for change? If it is found, for example, that 25 per cent of the elementary school pupils of a city are over age, that is, two or more years behind the grade in which children of their ages would ordinarily be found, does it mean that they are badly taught, or that the city has a defective educational system? Or should other facts be related to this one before any conclusion can be drawn with safety? Unfavorable home and family conditions, ill health, ill adapted courses of study, foreign birth and recent immigration, or badly enforced school attendance enter into the backwardness of this over-age group.

Obviously, the facts gathered, if they are to be of real use, must be organized and basic principles and general truths drawn from them.

CONSTRUCTIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

Third came the working out of recommendations for improvement. The survey aims at results. It is diagnosis to the end that prescription may be written. Where conditions are notoriously bad, results may follow by merely turning the light on them. But in general the process is not so simple. Conclusions as to what the facts mean should be accompanied by recommendations as to first and later steps to be taken.

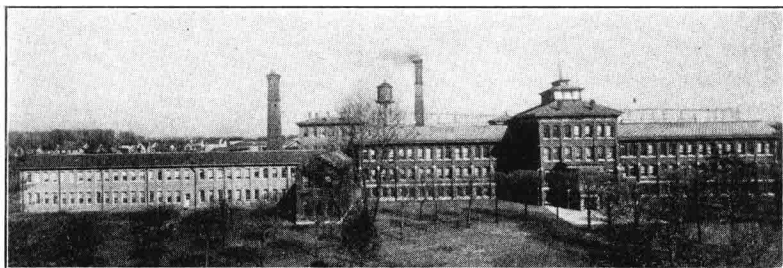
The survey having gone deeply into the city's problems, the community will expect and want its best judgment as to their

solution, but the community will also, and should, reserve the right to accept or reject the measures suggested, according as the majority of its people are impressed and convinced of their necessity and effectiveness.

EDUCATIONAL USE OF SURVEY CONCLUSIONS

Fourth came the work of presenting the facts and recommendations to the public. Above all, the survey is an educational measure, spreading its information in the untechnical phrases of everyday speech. It is a means to better democracy by informing the community upon community matters and thereby providing a basis for intelligent public opinion.

To this end the various publicity media—daily press, graphic exhibit, illustrated periodical, public address, and entertainment, as well as printed pamphlet and book report—should be utilized; and the plans of the survey as they were developed placed much emphasis upon this part of the project.



SPRINGFIELD AS MANUFACTURING CENTER

The city's manufactures are near the average for places of Springfield's size and are diverse, ranging from agricultural implements to watches, building brick to shoes, grist mill products to asphalt paving, and on through a long list.

The picture shows the plant of the Illinois Watch Factory, the largest Springfield factory, which was employing nearly 1,000 workers at the time of the survey.

CO-OPERATING ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS

To carry forward the investigations in all nine fields effectively, the Department of Surveys and Exhibits succeeded in enlisting six other departments of the Russell Sage Foundation and five

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other national organizations to co-operate with the five Illinois state organizations, the local social agencies and the thousand volunteer workers who took part in the nine main divisions of the field investigations or the exhibit which followed.

The six departments of the Foundation enlisted were:

CHARITY ORGANIZATION DEPARTMENT.
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.
DEPARTMENT OF CHILD-HELPING.
DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL STUDIES.
DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION.
DIVISION OF STATISTICS.

The five other national organizations which co-operated were:

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR ORGANIZING FAMILY SOCIAL WORK
(at that time the American Association of Societies for Organizing Charity).

NATIONAL TUBERCULOSIS ASSOCIATION (at that time the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis).

NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR MENTAL HYGIENE.

NATIONAL HOUSING ASSOCIATION.

UNITED STATES PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE.

Five state organizations also co-operated, as follows:

ILLINOIS CONFERENCE OF CHARITIES AND CORRECTION.

ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF HEALTH.

ILLINOIS STATE DEPARTMENT OF FACTORY INSPECTION.

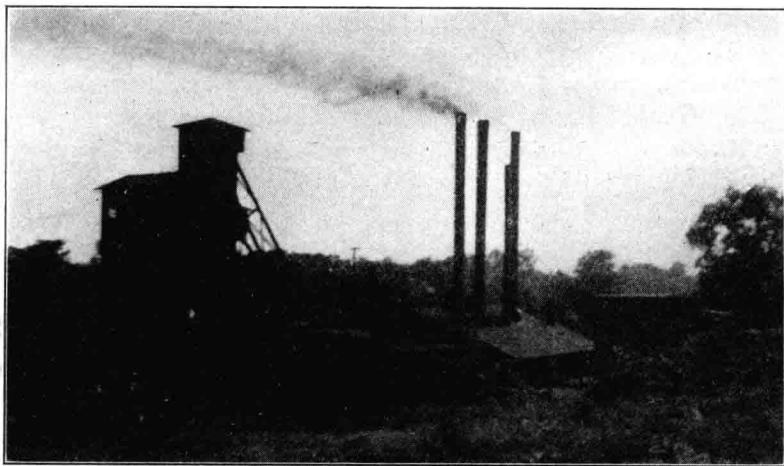
ILLINOIS STATE FOOD COMMISSION.

ILLINOIS STATE WATER SURVEY.

This large outside co-operation—particularly that of the national organizations—was contributed, in part, because of the representative character of the city, and the consequent belief that what was done here might prove useful elsewhere. It will be recalled that in 1910 there were 200 cities of the United States ranging from 25,000 to 150,000 in population. Springfield, with roughly 58,000, falls sufficiently within these limits to be fairly typical of the others. It is located in the heart of a rich agricultural region, is the center of important mining, manufacturing, and trade enterprises, and is one of 48 state capitals. These basic

PURPOSE, SEQUENCE, AND METHODS

activities increase the ties of common interest between it and other American communities, whether built on four or three or two or one of these major enterprises of the Springfield district. It also shares with other cities many kindred problems relating to social and living conditions and to questions of public policy in dealing with them.



SPRINGFIELD AS MINING CENTER

A bed of soft coal averaging over five feet thick and furnishing power for the factories above, underlies the city and a wide surrounding territory. Numerous mine tipples stand near the city, and 2,500 or more Springfield residents are employed in the industry.

SURVEY STAFF

Each of the main lines of investigation was carried on under the direction of one or more persons of extended investigating experience in the subjects of their particular survey division and of practical administrative experience in the same fields. Thus the school survey was directed by Dr. Leonard P. Ayres, and associated with him were R. R. Lutz, A. H. Richardson, and Edna C. Bryner, all of the regular staff of the Department of Education, Russell Sage Foundation.

Through the courtesy of Surgeon General Rupert Blue of the United States Public Health Service, it was possible for the Na-

tional Committee for Mental Hygiene to secure the services of Dr. Walter L. Treadway, a commissioned medical officer of the corps, to make the study of the care of mental defectives, the insane, and alcoholics. Dr. Treadway brought to his task a personal familiarity with local conditions, as before entering government service he had been a member of the medical staff of the Jacksonville State Hospital for the Insane, which receives patients from Springfield. Dr. Thomas D. Salmon, Director of Special Studies, National Committee for Mental Hygiene, acted in an advisory capacity.

The study of recreation conditions and needs was made by Lee F. Hanmer, Director, and Clarence Arthur Perry, Associate Director of the Department of Recreation of the Russell Sage Foundation.

Through the co-operation of the National Housing Association, the study of housing was made by John Ihlder, the field secretary of that association.

The charities division of the survey was made under the direction of Francis H. McLean, General Secretary of the American Association for Organizing Family Social Work. Assisting him were Florence L. Lattimore, Associate Director of the Department of Child Helping, Russell Sage Foundation, who made the study of the children's institutions of the city; Caroline Bedford, assistant to the director of the Charity Organization Department, Russell Sage Foundation; and Margaret Bergen, Associate Secretary of the American Association of Societies for Organizing Family Social Work.

The survey of industrial conditions was made by Zenas L. Potter, of the Department of Surveys and Exhibits, and Louise C. Odencrantz, of the Department of Industrial Studies, Russell Sage Foundation, with Mary Van Kleeck, director of the latter department acting in an advisory capacity throughout.

The public health survey was made under the direction of Franz Schneider, Jr., sanitarian on the staff of the Department of Surveys and Exhibits. Assisting him were Dixon Van Blarcom, field investigator of the National Tuberculosis Association, who made the study of the tuberculosis situation in Springfield,