

Report of the Displaced Persons Committee

November 1949

At the annual Conference of the Welfare Council in 1948, the serious lack of coordinated planning for the settlement of displaced persons in New Jersey communities was raised. Discussion resulted in a resolution at the Town meeting asking the Council to make this problem one of its concerns during this year. Accordingly, a Displaced Persons Committee was set up, the first meeting of which was held in March 1949.

The following goals were adopted:

- (1) To urge the formation of a New Jersey State Commission on Displaced Persons.
- (2) To ascertain facts regarding various phases of the Displaced Persons program. These to include number of persons admitted, number expected, need for these persons, organizations working on their behalf nationally and locally, the plans developed or developing to help in their adjustment.
- (3) To educate and involve local communities so that they may assume responsibility for helping in the adjustment of newcomers.

Immediate action was taken in the matter of urging the setting up of a State Commission. The Board of the Council had already communicated with the Governor in regard to it. Another letter was sent including recommendations agreed upon by the Committee and referring to what has been done by other states to establish such commissions. Letters were sent to social agencies throughout the state suggesting that they take similar action, communicating with the Governor. Representatives of the Committee conferred with a member of the New York State Commission on Displaced Persons to learn in detail about the plan in New York. When Governor Driscoll appointed a State Commission in May we were gratified to learn that Mrs. Waterbury had been named a member. The point of view of the Committee was presented at the first meeting of the State Commission in June.

Activity of the Committee during the Fall was centered upon support of the first state Conference on Displaced Persons October 21 at the State House when more than 100 persons representing some 26 organizations met to discuss the needs of displaced persons in the state and the function of a State Commission. New Jersey became one of the first two states in the country to seek state-wide opinion on this important matter. The Committee was ably represented by Mrs. Waterbury who led one of the three panel discussions and by Mrs. Anne Darling who assisted Mr. Abeles, chairman of the Conference Committee.

To explore and develop Objectives 2 and 3, sub-committees were set up, one on fact finding, and one on education.

The Committee has kept closely in touch with the National Citizens Committee on Displaced Persons, cooperating with its requests for pressure on the national level to liberalize the Displaced Persons Act. A resolution supporting the principles of legislation embodied in the McGrath-Neely and Cellar Bills was passed by the Board of the Welfare Council upon the Committee's recommendation, and copies were sent to Congressmen concerned. Their replied were forwarded to the National Committee.

The manner in which the Committee can best cooperate with the efforts of the State Commission as they develop and the way in which it may stimulate the Commission to needed activity are major concerns at the present time. We are deeply impressed with the necessity for greater public awareness of the problems of the displaced person, with the need for organization on the community level particularly in sections of the state where the resources of social agencies are not easily available, with the necessity for clearer definition of the degree to which the displaced person is entitled to public assistance without becoming deportable.

The State Commission is new. This Committee is only a few months older. Displaced Persons arrive already predisposed to become useful American Citizens. Our Committee is feeling its way into a big job in an effort to help them become just that, and to make them feel that New Jersey is a good place in which to become a good American citizen.

Respectfully submitted,

Geneva Garner
Chairman

Displaced Persons Committee

(Mrs L. Hamilton Garner)