

DISPLACED PERSONS COMMITTEE OF THE N. J. WELFARE COUNCIL

Meeting ---- May 13, 1949

The Displaced Persons Committee of the New Jersey Welfare Council met at 2:30 p.m. on Friday, May 13, 1949 at the offices of the Council. In the absence of the Chairman, Mrs. Garner and Mrs. Darling presided. Those present were Mrs. Matzinger, Miss Cohen, Miss Cook, Mrs. Kimberland, Mrs. Gibson, The Reverend Mr. Kusiv, Mrs. Arbury and Miss Studley. Mr. Curt Silberman, Chairman of the Emigré Committee of the Jewish Family Service Association of Essex County, a new member of the Committee, was also present.

Mrs. Waterbury, President of the Council was present and informed the committee of the sudden death of Mrs. Iversen, Executive Secretary on May 1. Mrs. Darling asked Mrs. Garner whether it would be appropriate for this committee to write a letter expressing our regret. Mrs. Waterbury replied that other committees have written letters to her, and that the New Jersey Welfare Council has drawn up a resolution of appreciation of Mrs. Iversen to be sent to her husband, the letters to be put into a booklet to accompany the resolution. The members of the Displaced Persons Committee expressed the wish to have Mrs. Garner write such a letter to Mrs. Waterbury telling her of our regret at Mrs. Iversen's death and our appreciation of her contribution to the work of the D.P. Committee, both before the convening of the Committee and through her support at our meetings.

Mrs. Waterbury reported on the letter written by the New Jersey Welfare Council to Governor Driscoll embodying the recommendations of the D.P. Committee, and referring to what has been done by other states to establish Commissions for Displaced Persons. She told us of a communication received as a result of that letter from Mr. J. Lyman Brown, Deputy Commissioner of Labor and Industry. Mr. Brown has been making a survey of the question of a State Commission on Displaced Persons, has studied the commissions of other states and interviewed national and state agency heads who have been involved with D.Ps. He informed Mrs. Waterbury that Mr. John B. Sholl, Secretary of the Migrant Labor Board, is assisting him in this survey, but that the study of D.Ps will be kept entirely separate from the work with migrants.

This letter was followed by a telephone call to Mrs. Waterbury from Mr. Sholl, to whom the Governor has given the responsibility for planning for a State Displaced Persons Commission asking Mrs. Waterbury to be a member of the Commission, representing the Welfare Council. Mr. Sholl told Mrs. Waterbury that Mrs. Garner, Chairman of her D.P. Committee, could accompany her to all meetings and represent her at any meetings which she might be unable to attend. (Mrs. Matzinger remarked that Pastor Fuhs of the National Lutheran Council has also been asked to serve on the Commission.)

Mrs. Darling then read to the committee Mrs. Garner's report on the meeting of the Board of the New Jersey Welfare Council which she attended, to interpret to the Board our request for action. Mrs. Darling also reported to the committee on the answers received from members of Congress to whom letters were written concerning

D. P. Legislation. A number of favorable replies were received, also a letter from Representative Auchincloss of the 3rd district, New Jersey, expressing his belief in the need for caution in increasing the number of D.Ps admitted. Congressman Ed Gossett of Texas wrote telling of his opposition to Displaced Persons and enclosing a copy of his very inflammatory speech against them.

The Committee then discussed what steps it should take in preparation for the formation of the Governor's Commission. Mr. Silberman suggested a conference with the Governor or his representative to find out whether recommendations from this committee will be acceptable. Mrs. Waterbury stated that the Governor has not yet set a date for the first meeting of the Displaced Persons Commission but that he will probably do so very shortly. Mrs. Darling reported that Mr. Sholl is meeting soon with the Newark Council of Social Agencies.

Miss Cook stated that she believed that this committee should make very definite recommendations to the Governor's Commission for action. She was of the opinion that the Governor's Commission could stimulate action by various State Departments, defining in clear terms the responsibility of the various agencies. Mrs. Darling suggested that to think this through should be the responsibility of the sub-committee headed by Dean Nilson. Mrs. Waterbury stated that she wishes for very definite recommendations from our committee spelling out the details of what action we expect the Governor's Commission to take. It was decided that Dean Nilson's Committee should draw up a statement of what the needs of the State are in the field of work with Displaced Persons and what needs to be interpreted to the people of New Jersey, so that we can go before the Governor's Commission with some concrete ideas. Mrs. Kimberland recommended that Miss Cook be added to Dean Nilson's Committee to aid in formulating plans to offer to the Governor's Commission. Mr. Silberman suggested that our report to the Governor's Commission should include:

1. Recommendations for action.
2. As much material as possible to support those recommendations.

He also remarked that there is a need for really creative work on the part of State Commissions, and that some of them are doing this. He reported that the New York City Displaced Persons Committee Welfare Council has worked out very complete recommendations.

Mr. Silberman outlined the following areas which should be covered in our recommendations to the Governor's Commission.

1. Education of the community to welcome D.Ps.
2. Recommendation for community action.
3. Publicity
4. Employment
5. Housing
6. Public Assistance (how to avoid)

In referring to the factual material which should accompany our recommendations to the Governor's Commission, Mr. Silberman spoke of the necessity for giving very definite figures on the number of DPs arriving, and the number expected in order to make a stronger impression on the Commission. These figures should include:-

1. Those who have already arrived in New Jersey since the DP Act was passed.
2. Community pledges in New Jersey.
3. D.Ps expected within the near future upon assignment abroad.
4. Any statistics of any kind that are available as to the natural flow of DPs which come to New Jersey (Natural flow refers to persons who come in under individual affidavits in contrast to cooperative affidavits from organizations).

Mrs. Darling stated that Mrs. Matzinger's Committee has been formed to supply factual information and referred to the report of this sub-committee sent out to all members of the DP Committee. Mrs. Matzinger pointed out that information on arrivals which her committee has been able to secure was not obtained directly from Government authorities or from the national agencies working directly with government authorities but from newspaper articles. She also reported that the national agencies working with DPs have had word that 205,000 job-housing assurances are expected to be in by the end of August. She stated that job assurances far in advance from individuals break down faster than those from agencies.

The committee then went on to discuss how to secure more information on number of persons arriving. The following facts were brought out.

1. Immigration authorities may be a source of some information.
2. We may be able to get from communities where DP Committees have already been established some idea of the number of pledges from that community. (Often when persons come in under private affidavits sponsors cannot live up to their responsibility)
3. Some of the national agencies working with DPs particularly the church agencies are reaching the smaller communities and rural communities through pastors or committees of church people. Church agencies will be able to give us names of these communities in New Jersey.
4. Information at the county level can be obtained from Councils of Jewish Women which are organized on a county basis, according to Mrs. Darling.
5. Communities furnishing affidavits for DPs are responsible for them for five years and for their not becoming public charges. If they move out of the community which has assumed responsibility they may become public charges and so become eligible for deportation.
6. Councils of Social Agencies throughout the State are sources of information, but the make-up of the councils varies greatly, according to Mrs. Waterbury. Some have no professional staff, some no professional members, some have a very informal organization. There is no formal relationship (organizational) between local councils of social agencies and the New Jersey Council of Social Agencies).

Mrs. Waterbury stated that the New Jersey Welfare Council has county representatives in several New Jersey counties. It is very difficult for the representatives from southern counties to come to Newark for meetings. Mrs. Waterbury said a letter might be sent out to councils of social agencies in New Jersey and to county representatives of the N. J. Welfare Council based on the suggestion of Dean Nilson's sub committee.

The Committee recommended that such a letter include the following questions:

1. Whether DPs have arrived in their communities, and how many.
2. Whether Committees have been formed, and by whom, by the local council of social agencies, by the community as a whole or groups within the community.
3. How many pledges have gone out from the community.
4. Whether the community has already experienced any problems because of the arrival of DPs.
5. How the local communities have become aware of the arrival of DPs.

There was some general discussion on the part of the Committee on the problems that may be expected in communities because of the arrival of D.Ps. Mrs. Matzinger and Miss Cook reported that on the whole absorption has occurred very rapidly. The problem of medical care appears to be uppermost. Mrs. Matzinger stated that psychiatric care will be a serious need. Miss Cook reported that mental breakdown, cardiac cases, venereal diseases and tuberculosis are likely to occur, and that prompt treatment by local health agencies will prevent further development of serious health breakdowns. The New Jersey State Health Department is willing to work with D.Ps to keep them from breaking in health and becoming public charges. Miss Cook referred again to the difficulty of aiding and protecting these people when they move from one community or state to another, and to the ensuing danger of their becoming public charges.

The need to educate the natives of New Jersey Communities on their responsibility toward DPs was discussed. Mr. Silberman mentioned the need to overcome resistance to DPs on the part of the communities. Miss Cook suggested that educating the community can be accomplished through schools, chambers of commerce, churches, local officials. She told in detail of what has been done by public health nurses and churches working together in South Jersey in preparation for the arrival of DPs for employment on large scale farms such as Seabrooks. She also referred to a talk she gave to a large group of local health inspectors in North Jersey on the possible health needs of DPs and the danger of threatened deportation if they became public charges. Mrs. Waterbury spoke of the use of occasional news releases drawn up by the New Jersey Welfare Council and sent out to County Representatives for use in their local papers.

The last few minutes of the meeting were devoted to a discussion with Mrs. Waterbury of plans for the Fall Conference of the N. J. Welfare Council. This will be held in Asbury Park on November 16, 17 and 18. A program committee will plan the agenda of the conference and the general sessions which will mainly take place at luncheons and dinners. These general sessions will be built around three themes.

1. Constructive health.
2. Welfare and government.
3. Human rights.

The report of our committee will fall into the session on human rights. Annual reports of all committees of the Welfare Council are turned in to the Council office about a month before the conference and in past years have been given to the Conference in condensed form by a panel. This year they will probably be distributed among the three general sessions. Mrs. Garner will meet with the Program Committee to help plan our part in the conference.

Respectfully submitted,  
Miriam V. Studley  
Secretary, Pro-Tem