

Mr. Sullivan's Report to Mr. Gompers

APRIL 21, 1920.

MR. SAMUEL GOMPERS,
President, American Federation of Labor,
American Federation of Labor Building,
Washington, D. C.

DEAR SIR:

77).

It is gratifying to me to report, as its trade representative, authorized so to act by yourself and the Executive Committee of the A. F. of L.,* that the Committee on Foreign Inquiry has agreed upon a report, the general findings having the unanimous approval of the members, while any particular study of the question bears the signature of the member by whom it was conducted.

The Committee, after investigating the present development of both voluntary and compulsory sickness insurance in this country and Europe, has endeavored to bring to a foreground view the salient features and results in the operation of either as affecting the welfare and liberties of the wage-workers.

The report of the Committee, it is understood, will shortly be published by The National Civic Federation.

Yours fraternally,

(Signed) J. W. SULLIVAN.

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*For action taken by American Federation of Labor to date see pp. 71-83, inclusive.

SECOND REPORT

Committee on Foreign Inquiry

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APPENDIX A.

STATEMENT BY THE COMMITTEE ON CONSTRUCTIVE PLAN, SOCIAL INSURANCE DEPARTMENT, THE NATIONAL CIVIC FEDERATION.

To the Legislature of the State of New York:

The undersigned, the Committee on Constructive Plan of the Social Insurance Department of The National Civic Federation, has given careful consideration to the bills introduced in the New York Legislature in the years 1916-1919, commonly known as the Mills, Nicoll, and Davenport-Donohue bills. Our views upon the arguments advanced by the proponents of this type of legislation have been expressed in a pamphlet recently issued by the Committee entitled "A Refutation of False Statements in Propaganda for Compulsory Health Insurance." For this reason we believe it inadvisable at this time to enter into any further discussion of this phase of our subject.

We desire, however, to call the attention of the Legislature to a lecture* before The New York Academy of Medicine on October 2, 1919, by Sir Arthur Newsholme, formerly Chief Medical Officer of the Local Government Board for England. Commenting upon the British Health Insurance Act, he says: "The act in its present form is now generally condemned; and it is significant that the need for its radical re-organization appears to be universally accepted. Two medical benefits (medical and sanatorium) and a maternity benefit were conferred under the act; but, as they have been administered, it cannot be affirmed that any marked public benefit has accrued; and it is certain that if the same amount of money had been placed in the hands of the public health authori-

* Published in "The Survey," January 3, 1920.

ties to provide adequate medical aid to those needing it, of the kind most lacking and which they could least afford to obtain, great benefit to the public health would have been secured.”

Rather than continue the discussion of legislation for compulsory health insurance, we have attempted to evolve a Constructive Plan to be dealt with by the Legislature. It is our unanimous opinion that the immediate problem for consideration is not that of insurance against sickness, but the larger and more important problem of the extent of illness and the methods for its prevention. We have set ourselves to this task and desire to submit the following facts:

At present, there is no exact information as to the extent of illness. It is clear, from studies which have been made, that a considerable proportion of the population does not receive any medical care whatever; that others are unable to obtain adequate medical treatment and that a very large percentage of existing sickness could be eliminated if proper preventive measures were employed. Large sums are being paid annually by the different states for the maintenance of institutions for the treatment of disabilities and their consequences, due largely to neglect. A large number of communities are engaged in no active health work and have grossly insufficient appropriations for health activities.

Statistics of other sickness surveys in the hands of this Committee prove beyond doubt that a large percentage of disabling illness is caused by communicable diseases. There is competent medical authority for the belief that many of the diseases of later life are the sequelæ of infectious diseases contracted in childhood.

The subject of sickness needs to be considered from the following aspects, in the order of their importance, namely:

1. Prevention.
2. Treatment and Care.
3. Replacement of Wage Loss from Sickness.

1. *Prevention.* This is largely a problem of the education of the public concerning the preservation of health and the prevention of disease. The care and treatment of communicable diseases are essentially functions of the public health authorities, since one individual may transmit infection to another and thereby become a menace to the public health. Already police powers are given to Health Officers to remove, even forcibly if necessary in the interest of the public health, and to treat individuals suffering from these diseases. These powers affect all the people alike, regardless of their ability to pay for treatment. The time has come, in our opinion, when the State should display greater activity in the treatment and care of all communicable affections—particularly tuberculosis and venereal diseases—similarly from the standpoint of public health protection, rather than from the standpoint of poor relief. More, also, ought to be done to educate the people relative to public and personal hygiene. Insurance, on the other hand, is not to be considered in connection with this branch of the problem. The prevention of illness is not a function of insurance.

2. *Treatment and Care.* The critical fact, in our opinion, is that a large proportion of the people do not receive adequate medical care and treatment. How to remedy that condition is a problem that should be given exhaustive study, particularly by the medical profession, which profession should be called upon to devise a system whereby proper medical aid may be brought within the reach of every individual in the State. Only by thorough investigation can there be obtained the information necessary to enable the Legislature to take such action upon this subject as will result in the greatest benefit to the public.

3. *Replacement of Wage Loss from Sickness.* This is an economic loss; and, consequently, it is a subject appropriate for insurance. But we are convinced that the information at the disposal of the Legislature and the People is as yet insufficient for the successful solution of

this problem; and that the precipitate adoption by the Legislature of any academic plan of insurance would, among other unfortunate consequences, defer such determination for years. We believe, therefore, that employers and wage workers should be called on to confer and determine how best to meet this loss.

In any event, we are satisfied that sickness prevention, treatment and care constitute by far the most important factors upon which efforts and attention should be concentrated for the time being, and that only after we have learned more about the extent of sickness, its causes, and the means of prevention, will it be appropriate to take up the question of how to relieve its economic consequences.

INVESTIGATION COMMISSION.

Therefore, we respectfully recommend that the Legislature consider the appointment of a Special Commission, competent and duly empowered, to make a careful and exhaustive investigation and study of the extent, prevention and treatment of sickness, and that such commission be instructed specifically to study and report upon the following questions:

1. Methods and means for the prevention of disease.
2. Methods and means for the education of the people in the fundamental principles of health.
3. Methods and means for bringing adequate medical care within reach of all.
4. The establishment of diagnostic clinics throughout the State.
5. The establishment of clinics or other facilities throughout the State for the periodic physical examination of persons *applying* therefor.
6. The further development of public health nursing throughout the State.

7. Methods and means for the adequate care of maternity cases.
8. Co-ordination of public and private health-promoting agencies.
9. The determination of the extent of dependency upon public or charitable relief in the State and of the extent to which such dependency is due to illness.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

DR. ALVAH H. DOTY, *Chairman*,
Medical Director, Western Union Telegraph
Co., New York.

MRS. F. LOTHROP AMES,
Chairman Industrial Committee, New Eng-
land Section, Woman's Department, The
National Civic Federation, Boston, Mass.

MRS. SARA A. CONBOY,
International Secretary-Treasurer, United
Textile Workers of America, New York.

MARK A. DALY,
Secretary, Associated Manufacturers and
Merchants of New York State, Buffalo,
N. Y.

GERTRUDE BEEKS EASLEY,
Director, Welfare Department, The Na-
tional Civic Federation, New York.

DR. LEE K. FRANKEL,
Third Vice-President, Metropolitan Life In-
surance Company, New York.

HUGH FRAYNE,
General Organizer, American Federation of
Labor, New York.

F. L. HOFFMAN, LL.D.,
Third Vice-President and Statistician, Pru-
dential Insurance Company, Newark, N. J.

DR. HARRIS A. HOUGHTON,
Vice-President, Associated Physicians of
Long Island, New York.

DR. J. RICHARD KEVIN,
Chairman, Legislative Committee, New York
State Medical Society, Brooklyn.

HILL MONTAGUE,
President International Fraternal Congress
of America, Richmond, Va.

P. TECUMSEH SHERMAN,
Attorney-at-Law, New York.

J. W. SULLIVAN,
Of the American Federation of Labor, Mem-
ber International Typographical Union,
Brooklyn.

MRS. COFFIN VAN RENSSELAER,
Executive Secretary, Woman's Department,
The National Civic Federation, New York.

**COMMITTEE ON CONSTRUCTIVE PLAN,
SOCIAL INSURANCE DEPARTMENT,
THE NATIONAL CIVIC FEDERATION.**

New York, January 27, 1920.

