

CHAPTER VI.RESEARCH, STATISTICS AND PROPAGANDA.

The last of the activities of the Social Welfare Department of educational importance are Research, Statistics and Propaganda. We shall only refer to them very briefly.

In order that social work may function smoothly in a community it is essential that the public be kept informed of the latest activities and developments. Public opinion must often be shaped and directed in order to have the way for new developments, as any measures too far in advance of public opinion are likely to be met with suspicion if not with open opposition.

Here research, statistics and propaganda play an important part. They may be considered as of educational importance in that they discover the facts, treat them statistically and so make them readily understandable and presentable, and then present them to the public.

The Research Branch has prepared various draft reports and prepared evidence for select committees, has drafted constitutions and commented upon proposed social legislation, besides having prepared miscellaneous reports for departmental information.

Research work, in the form of surveys, has been made into the economic and social disabilities of the coloured community in Johannesburg; the running of pin tables, and the employment of paid collectors by wel-

fare and other funds; the effects of dog racing; the adequacy of accommodation for the elderly poor, the need for sheltered employment for psychopaths or persons not certifiable under the Mental Disorders Act, but yet sufficiently unstable as not to be able to earn a regular livelihood; the recreational needs of the welfare institutions of Johannesburg; and most recently, into conditions and extent of hoboism in Johannesburg.

In short, general research work is undertaken into the best methods of conducting welfare work.

Besides treating the information gathered by the Research Branch, the Statistics Branch has collected statistics, financial and miscellaneous, relating to welfare work and social problems in the City.

The Propaganda Branch issues The News Letter, which contains much useful information for both Welfare staff and others interested, and prepares articles for periodicals. It also gives and arranges for the giving of lectures and conducts tours. It convenes conferences and attends to general inquiries.

An important activity of these branches is the maintaining of detailed records of welfare agencies in the City, besides collecting reports, pamphlets, and books on legislation and activities of welfare organisations in all parts of the world. An up-to-date technical library is also maintained.

In short, Research, Statistics and Propaganda play an important role in educating people and awakening in them a social consciousness.