

Old Age - National conference on aging,
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(A list of the delegates of this section is available in the Press Room)

CONFERENCE ON AGING

August 13-15, 1950
The Shoreham Hotel
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Russell, Ex. 6300 Ext. 4625

Digest of Proceedings
Section X
Professional Personnel
Morning session, Aug. 15

Approved by Dr. Aaron J. Brumbaugh, Chairman

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

"How can we attract more professional workers to deal with the aged?"

This question was raised again today at the final discussion meeting of the Section.

"We need to use the type of techniques such as the Nurse Cadets used so successfully during the war," suggested Dr. Edward Rogers. "There have been too many prejudices and outworn notions that dealing with the aged offers no interest."

More security in personnel jobs particularly in local public institutions was recommended by Dr. Grace Browning. If professional people are to train for or stay in this type of work, they need to be assured that their jobs will not be lost through political changes. Civil service should be applied to these jobs to assure their stability."

A humanistic rather than a material approach was urged by Monsigneur John J. McClafferty. "Throughout our efforts in encouraging personnel to deal with the aged, we should seek to teach them that dealing with human beings is one of the noblest callings to which man can devote himself."

Section chairman, Dr. A. J. Brumbaugh, presented the findings of the three sub-sections, and called for suggestions and additions. He emphasized that this conference was of an exploratory nature and he did not think that any of the findings required formal approval.

Dr. John W. McConnell, chairman of the Sub-section on Pre-Professional training, said that too much emphasis had been placed on the growth and development of the immature person and not enough given to the adult life span. A change in emphasis in existing courses rather than the launching of new courses was needed, he said. He said the group felt that preventive medicine should also be stressed in preprofessional training, with personal as well as social implications. Considerable emphasis had been placed by his group, he said, on the need for an integrated non-professional course in physical and biological sciences for general students. These courses should convey a real appreciation of the goals and methods of scientific research.

Other points which his group had brought out in their deliberations were listed, as follows:

(1.) Aging should be emphasized as an aspect of the larger fields of personal and social adjustment, of which it is a part.

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(2.) Education should emphasize adjustment to old age rather than old age as a problem in itself.

(3.) In undergraduate courses, study of aging as a personal problem is as important as in pre-professional preparation.

(4.) In studying old age, one should regard the total personality rather than separate it into compartments (political, religious, etc.)

(5.) The general college program should stimulate an interest in vocational and avocational interests that endure throughout life.

(6.) General undergraduate courses should interpret man and his relationships rather than technical preparation for a particular profession.

(7.) Teachers who instruct undergraduates in the understanding of the aging process should themselves be well-adjusted and well-oriented.

(8.) Attention should be given to real values to man, rather than synthetic hobbies added in old age as time-fillers.

(9.) In teaching about old age, blame should not be placed on the aged for their problems. Instead, they should be interpreted as an aspect of adjustment to the environment forced upon the old by our social and cultural patterns.

(10.) Research in the process of aging should be presented in a manner which will be understood and appreciated by the undergraduate.

Dr. Dublin presented the findings of The Sub-section on Professional Personnel and their training. He said that his group wished to emphasize the importance of establishing a universal attitude of optimism and humanism in dealing with problems of the aged. The group believed that existing teaching and service facilities needed to be redirected to the challenge of working with the aging. The group also emphasized the need of creating new educational and research opportunities essential to the proper training of personnel.

Dr. Dublin once more called attention to the lack of demonstration projects dealing with services for the aged. "In our discussions," he said, "none of us could identify a single broad community program demonstrating integrated services to the aged whereby personnel could obtain practical training. We need not one but many such demonstration projects."

Dr. Rogers summarized the findings of the Sub-section on In-service training. He emphasized again the need for "glamorizing" work with the aged and removing barriers or prejudices in attitudes of personnel toward the aging. He said that his group also believed that communities should be given a better understanding of the value of adequately trained personnel so that they would demand it in their agencies which deal with the aging.

The Sub-section had summarized the purposes of in-service programs, Dr. Rogers said, as 1.) to provide knowledge and teach skills not previously acquired; 2.) to make available new knowledge and current developments, and 3.) to establish an appreciation of the team approach to problems.

In order to further in-service opportunities for training in services to the aging, the group advocated, Dr. Rogers said, that national, State and local organizations, both public and private, should assume responsibility through their appreciation of the problems. It was also the responsibility of these groups, he said, to see that high professional standards were maintained.

In summarizing the work of the three sub-sections, Dr. Brumbaugh indicated that he had found five broad areas in which there was general agreement and believed that they expressed the gist of the findings of the section. He listed these, as follows:

(1.) Aging is not an isolated area of interest, requiring special personnel. It is just one segment of larger social problems.

(2.) Education of professional personnel should include adequate attention to present resources and research in dealing with the aged.

(3.) Professions dealing with the aged should work for a team approach rather than a narrow compartmental one.

(4.) Social attitudes are now hindering many professional workers from wanting to deal with the aging. The field needs to be made more attractive.

(5.) There is need for more knowledge about the aging based on research and a better integration of present knowledge.

Before the meeting adjourned, a resolution which called on the Federal Security Agency to establish and develop an administrative unit dealing with the aging was tabled. This action was taken because the group felt the Conference should confine itself to exploration rather than taking formal action.