

THE LISTENING POST

1950 White House Conference Plans

PRELIMINARY PLANS are being laid for a Midcentury White House Conference on Children. A Conference in 1950, serving as a clarion call to the Nation and arousing general public as well as professional attention to children, might well be one of the most significant events of the century. The influence of a 1950 Conference will lie in its rootedness in the fundamental needs of children.

Today our American way of life seems less distinct and less well defined than it has been in previous years. Recent developments in the fields of the physical sciences, and in mechanics in particular, have been so overwhelming in their effect upon living that changes have taken place with a rapidity confusing to most people. During the war and postwar years the mere struggle for meeting the demands of living precluded a comprehensive nation-wide analysis of children's basic needs in a changing society. Now the general public is somewhat aware of the crucial condition in which nations find themselves so that attention to children may warrant more discernment and critical analysis. A 1950 White House Conference has the possibility of becoming almost a climactic occasion for this country's evaluation and determination to invest its resources more appropriately in the welfare of those who will be responsible for the future course of the Nation. The midcentury point, therefore, offers both a critical and a promising moment for serious reflection and for future action.

There have been previous White House Conferences and each has made its peculiar contribution to the Nation's investment in its children. In 1909 the Conference devoted itself to the care of dependent children. In 1919 minimum child welfare standards were recommended. In 1929 President Hoover called a White House Conference on Child Health and Protection. It was this 1929-1930 Confer-

ence which perhaps has been the best known because from it there evolved a report of professional content and information which has stimulated wide study and investigation in the field of child development. In fact, it is held that the American Pediatric Society was the direct result of the 1930 Conference.

The 1940 White House Conference was held prior to the involvement of this country in World War II and had for its theme, a Conference on Children in a Democracy. An eighty-five-page report of the recommendations concerning the needs of every child in a democracy was the final outgrowth of the 1940 Committee's efforts. World War II had a diverting influence upon the Nation's attention to children. Mobilization of communities for their own protection became imperative. But in spite of the fact that more normal activities of communities were changed by the war, many communities experienced a kind of self-investigatory fact finding which seems to have pertinence for a 1950 Conference.

At the instigation of the National Commission on Children and Youth the Children's Bureau as in earlier years is again spear-heading the planning for a proposed Midcentury Conference on Children. Already a joint Interim Committee composed of representatives of national organizations and Departments of Government whose programs embrace children and youth are at work with the Children's Bureau on the framework for a 1950 Conference. Congress has appropriated to the Children's Bureau a \$75,000 budget request for the year ahead.

Tentatively the theme, *The Child in His Home and His Community*, has been selected for 1950. States and communities already are active in viewing conditions within their own states which relate directly to the welfare of children. It has been agreed that the most effective way

to survey conditions which pertain to the specific well-being of children will be carried forward through local and state attention. Therefore, planning groups have been encouraged to organize for the purpose of reviewing children's legislation in their respective states. Through the participation of citizens in general it is hoped that many more individuals will become acquainted with the exact conditions which prevail.

It is planned that research in child development will be considered through technical professional groups so that progress made during the late years will be reviewed and incorporated into the curriculum of colleges and universities and into practice in general. States and communities will be aided in their active process of fact findings regarding practices in their own areas. Forward looking professional development will not be lost to sight. In other words, it is hoped that the

1950 Conference will both add to professional knowledge and stimulate wider lay use of professional service.

The preliminary planning for a Mid-century White House Conference, which has included to date a Conference on State Planning attended by representatives of most of the states and territories, is viewed as a Conference already in process. There has been set in motion lay and professional zeal for what should become a great tide of nation-wide interest in children and in the qualities which modern living is engendering in them. Early enthusiasm for citizen participation in all-out attention to the well-being of children and in youths' interest in their own development are encouraging signs of a popular grasp of what a Nation in active survey of its own human resources may achieve.
—Bernice Baxter, U. S. Children's Bureau, Washington, D. C., for the ASCD Legislative Committee.



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