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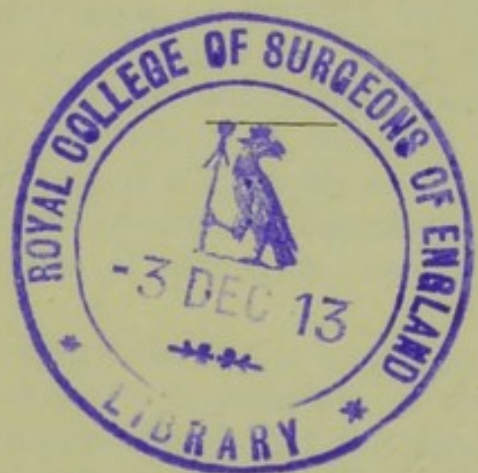


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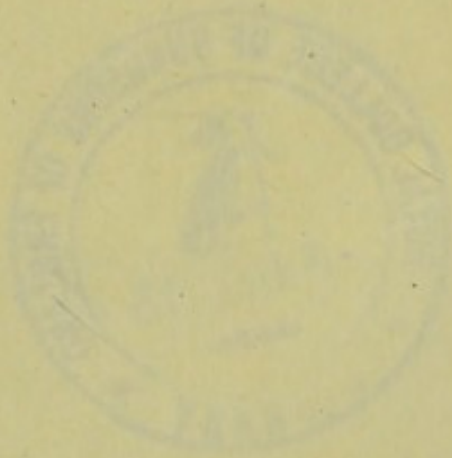
The Relation of Politics to the State Care of Crippled and Deformed



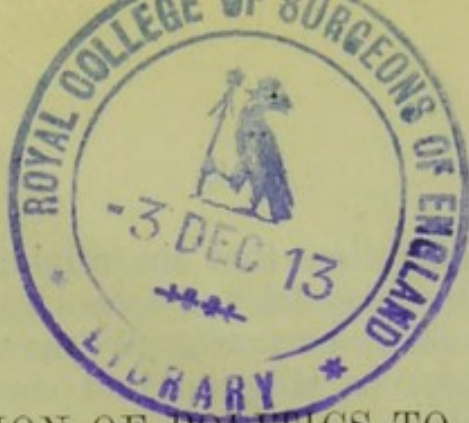
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The Relation of Politics to the State
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THE RELATION OF POLITICS TO THE STATE
CARE OF CRIPPLED AND DEFORMED *

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It affords me much pleasure to read, in Minnesota, a paper on the relation of politics to the state care of the crippled and deformed, for it was the first of the United States to provide state care for these patients. The whole modern movement, which has for its motive the prevention of dependency, finds no better expression than along the line which aims to convert deformed or crippled children into independent and self-supporting persons. Many of the physical infirmities which these patients have are not susceptible of complete cure, but a considerable majority of all persons so affected may, by suitable surgical and mechanical treatment and by especially adapted methods of education, be rendered capable of self-support.

There are many reasons why the care and education of crippled children is naturally a state function. It has long been considered that the education and training of normal persons is a profitable thing for cities and states to do, but it is certain that a much larger proportion of those who are crippled become dependent if not made the object of special care. Economically therefore the state is simply using ordinary business foresight if by suitable hospital care and education these patients are treated and trained so as to become partially or wholly independent and self-supporting.

It has long been recognized that special institutions are necessary both for the hospital care of crippled children and for the education of those who are defective either physically or mentally. To me it has

* Read in the Section on Orthopedic Surgery of the American Medical Association, at the Sixty-Fourth Annual Session, held at Minneapolis, June, 1913.

seemed for a long time that the combination into one institution of the hospital and school for crippled children is of special importance. We have found in the Nebraska Orthopedic Hospital that considerable progress educationally may be made by these patients while actually under treatment. Moreover, a continuation of their educational training and the selection of occupations for them is probably more successfully done under the supervision of those who have administered their hospital care and who have a full appreciation of the physical and mental needs and qualifications of these patients.

The question has frequently been raised in Nebraska and elsewhere as to the propriety of having the affairs of an institution of this character administered by politicians. After eight years of experience in a state institution, during which time our appropriations have been obtained directly from the state legislature, our affairs ordered by legislative committees, and administered by state officers, it may be well to give some public expression of the manner of origin and development of this important work.

In the Nebraska legislature of 1904 a few persons (not more than six or eight), including Mr. J. H. Casebeer, who was a member of the legislature at that time, prepared and had introduced a measure providing for an appropriation of \$25,000 to establish and maintain for two years an institution for the hospital care and education of the crippled and deformed. This original bill was modeled after the Minnesota law, except that the institution was placed in the custody of the board of lands and buildings instead of under the regents of the university. The Nebraska bill contemplated, however, that as in Minnesota, the matter of the appointment of officers should be in the hands of a board rather than that it should be left to the governor alone. The Orthopedic Hospital was the first institution in Nebraska for which this provision was made. Practically every member of the legislature of 1904 was duly presented with arguments in favor of inaugurating this work, and eventually the bill passed both branches of the legislature practically without opposition except that the amount of the appropriation was reduced from \$25,000 to \$10,000. On the presentation of the bill to the governor for his signature, however, the question was raised as to the actual neces-

sity for such an institution. Governor Mickey expressed the belief that the number of patients actually in need of such care in Nebraska must be very small. A comparative estimate based on the number of cripples in other localities led to the conclusion that there must be as many as twelve or fifteen hundred in Nebraska. The final argument which induced Governor Mickey to sign the bill, however, was the collection by Mr. John Davis, then secretary of the board of charities, of information regarding about seventy-five cripples who were at that time objects of public care at county poor-farms or otherwise. On this showing being made, Governor Mickey signed the bill and it became a law.

The Nebraska Orthopedic Hospital was opened for the reception of patients Oct. 1, 1905; and our first official biennium closed Nov. 30, 1906. During the fourteen months 108 patients had been received at the institution. The next legislature, before whom an accurate showing was made, not only of the work already accomplished, but of the patients then in the institution and of other candidates for admission for whom no facilities had been provided, responded at once with an emergency appropriation for immediate use and with a much larger appropriation for the succeeding biennium, the total amount being in the neighborhood of \$50,000. Of this amount about \$20,000 was spent in remodeling our building so that it became much more satisfactory for hospital purposes.

During a period comprising nearly four years, the experiment of caring for the crippled children of Nebraska was actually worked out. Adequate provision was made for hospital care and for the beginning of our educational work. Much of the credit for what was accomplished during this time must be given to Mr. H. M. Eaton, chairman of the board of public lands and buildings, who had for many years prior to his election to this office been associated with the public and normal schools of this state. Mr. Eaton was, and has always been since, very enthusiastic in his support of this work. He was ably seconded in his efforts by Mr. A. Galusha and by Mr. Geo. C. Junkin, who were successively secretaries of state, Mr. Peter Mortensen and Mr. L. G. Brian, state treasurers, and Mr. Norris Brown, since United States senator from Nebraska, who was attorney general. Except for the intelligent sympathy and the enthusiasm of these men, the initial success

and development of our institution would have been impossible even with the appropriations made for our work.

The legislature in 1909 by appropriating \$40,000 made adequate provision for the maintenance of the institution for the next two years. No provision was made at that time, however, for any extension of our buildings, so that no considerable amount of expansion was possible. Since 1909, however, when we had an average number of patients of less than fifty, our growth has been very rapid. An appropriation of \$90,000 in 1911 for the next two years and a total of \$152,000 in 1913 by the legislature which has just adjourned affords some idea of the growing appreciation on the part of the members of the legislature of the work already accomplished and of its possibilities for the future.

The chairmen of the finance committees in both the senate and the house this year gave especially careful consideration to the requirements of our institution, especially Senator W. H. Reynolds, who made several personal visits to the institution and conducted an investigation into the affairs and requirements of the institution, the results of which were chiefly responsible for the appropriation of \$45,000 for a new fire-proof building to be added to our equipment.

Mr. G. W. Potts, chairman of the finance committee in the house, was similarly disposed to make adequate provision for our needs and our improvements.

One of the principal matters before the legislature during this session was the passage of a law to establish and regulate the affairs of a new board of commissioners for state institutions. This new board was provided for by a constitutional amendment adopted by the people of the state about two years ago. In the present legislature legal provision was made for the organization, powers and duties of this new board. Gov. John H. Morehead has also carried out the intent of the law by the appointment of Ex-Gov. Silas A. Holcomb, Mr. Howard A. Kennedy and Mr. Henry Gerdes, so that a non-partisan board of commissioners is now at the head and in charge of all state institutions, including the Nebraska Orthopedic Hospital.

We now have at all times more than one hundred patients in the institution (this is the limit of our

capacity), and with our new building under way our capacity will be about one hundred and sixty. Increasing provision has also been made for our educational work, the object being to provide training particularly along industrial lines. Most of our instruction is of the individual kind and for the past three years our school has been in operation for twelve months in the year.

The epidemic of infantile paralysis in Nebraska in 1909, which gave us nearly one thousand more crippled children, has been a determining factor in the development of our work. We estimate that there are at present in our state between two and three thousand children who could be benefited or entirely cured and their education greatly facilitated by the methods employed in the Nebraska Orthopedic Hospital.

From these figures it is easy to infer something as to the situation in other states. Minnesota, through Dr. Gillette, was doing fine work along this line before Nebraska began. New York had also already established an institution for the state care of crippled children. Massachusetts since that time has built and is operating a great educational plant for its cripples. In all of the other states, however, this field is practically undeveloped. A few states like New York, Illinois, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Maine are doing magnificent work through contributions of private philanthropists, with or without state assistance. There is great need, however, for the awakening of the public conscience with regard to these patients. We have become prodigal in our expenditures for the education and training of normal children, while those most in need of special care and training are allowed by reason of neglect to drift further into a state of dependency.

The point to which I wish to call particular attention is that in some states, perhaps in many, no special effort has been made in this direction because of the fact that those who are most interested have expressed themselves as unwilling to "mix in politics," as they express it, or to resort to political methods to secure the appropriations to establish these necessary special institutions.

The lesson we have learned in Nebraska is that our members of the legislature and our state officers have been our best friends; that they have been quick to

appreciate the possibilities of this work as well as the needs of the patients and that without their sympathy and support in this, as in any other public work, success would have been absolutely impossible.

First National Bank Building.

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