

CHAPTER III

SOCIAL ECONOMY

A New Department — Progress Since the Columbian Exposition — Problems of Mankind — Industrial Organization — Charities and Correction — The Public Health — A Model Street — The Playground — Settlement Work.

PERHAPS the advancement most marked by the exhibits at St. Louis, as compared with the co-ordinate displays of 1893, was in the evidences of attention now being paid by the government and the American people, as well as other nations of the world, to economic questions, conditions of industry and labor, civic improvement, public health and kindred subjects. Possibly no branch of social investigation or activity merits or is receiving more general and careful attention throughout the world than these inquiries into the welfare and progress of mankind, especially including the relationship and habitations of members of society, that are assembled and co-ordinated under the head of Social Economy. This subject was considered of so much importance by the exposition management that the recommendation it be made the topic of one of the principal departments of the Exposition was readily approved and its institution as a department promptly authorized and provided for.

The exhibits assembled under this heading were of a character of no less direct value and significant interest than those of the department of Education, in the same palace with which they were installed, and were set forth with such effect as to be the subject of universal comment and to draw the attention and elicit the commendation of visiting specialists and students from all parts of the world. In addition to the exhibits presented in the palace of Education special important features of the subject of Social Economy were illustrated in an elaborate auxiliary outdoor exhibit in the form of a model street built upon the exposition grounds with model paving, model fountains, model lighting, model buildings.

Principal cities and states of the United States contributed to the general display which was participated in also by the following foreign countries: Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Cuba, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Netherlands, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Nicaragua and Russia.

In the organization of the exhibit the advice of the leading authorities of the country was sought and cordially and fully given—notably that of Carroll D. Wright, F. W. Willoughby, treasurer of Porto Rico, formerly an expert in the bureau of labor; Edward T. Devine, of New York, and Dr. Samuel Abbott, of Boston.

The scope of the department of Social Economy as announced in the official classification of the Exposition, outlined with the aid of these gentlemen, embraced thirteen groups according to which exhibits were to be selected and installed as follows: Study and investigation of social and economic conditions; economic resources and organization; state regulation of industry and labor; organization of industrial workers; methods of industrial remuneration; co-operative institutions; provident institutions; housing of the working classes; the liquor question; general betterment movement; charities and correction; public health; and municipal improvement.

These individual groups were assembled into four natural and principal sections: social economy proper; charities and correction; hygiene and public health; and municipal improvements; each of these sections was placed under the direction of an expert.

Department Organization:

Howard J. Rogers, chief of the departments of Education and Social Economy, controlled the general operations of the department and also later assumed direction of the section of social economy, originally entrusted to Carroll D. Wright who was obliged to give up his active association with the department on account of pressure of other duties. The section of charities and correction was placed under the direction of A. E. Pope, of Omaha; that of hygiene and public health under the direction of Dr. J. N. Hurty, of Indianapolis; and that of municipal improvement under Albert Kelsey, of Philadelphia.

To the active interest, industry and discrimination of these gentlemen the distinguished success of the exhibit of the department is due. The following review of the principal features is condensed from the report of Chief Rogers:

The theory of the classification of the department of Social Economy indicated procedure from the general to the particular or special.

Its initial group—study and investigation of social and economic conditions—was an introduction to the whole exhibit and offered the opportunity of showing what was being done by each country through official bureaus, great reform associations, international congresses, expositions, to make known and promote rational reforms.

The second subject group—economic resources and organization—provided for exhibits of industrial organization and resources. In this group especial reliance was placed upon exhibits from the different governments, chambers of commerce, together with charts showing important general facts like production of different products, per capita consumption, national wealth.

The third group—state regulation of industry and labor—included what is done by governments for the regulation of industry and labor. In it were shown the exhibits of factory inspection and mine inspection services, labor legislation in all its branches, devices and means for preventing accidents.

The next group—organization of industrial workers—related to industrial organizations of all kinds. In particular, efforts were made to show the work of employers' associations which had never been done before. Under this group was included everything pertaining to strikes, arbitration and the relation between employers and employes.

The following group—methods of industrial remuneration—comprised exhibits showing all the various ways or systems for sharing the products of industry, different forms of wage systems, profit-sharing, co-operation.