

**THE PROPOSED STATE
CHILDREN'S
BUREAU: WHY IT
SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED**

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The Proposed State Children's Bureau: Why it Should be Established by George S. Hale

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GEORGE S. HALE

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THE PROPOSED

State Children's Bureau

Massachusetts - A

WHY IT SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED

ARGUMENT

BY

HON. GEORGE S. HALE

AND

OTHER STATEMENTS

BOSTON

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1895

From Miss F. M. Birtwell
(361)

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APPENDIX.

TABULATED STATEMENT OF THE PRESENT AND THE PROPOSED
SYSTEM,

AND A SUMMARY OF THE PRESENT SITUATION.

BY MR. JOSEPH LEE.

We believe that a reorganization of the system of caring for the children of the State is desirable, and we intend to bring before the next legislature a bill similar to the Children's Bureau Bill introduced last winter. We therefore beg to call your attention to the accompanying statement.

JOSEPH LEE, Brookline.
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CHARLES L. GARDNER, Palmer.

conditions and of the changes which are still desirable, may be of value as leading the way toward future legislation.

From Miss F. M. Birt
(361)

THE PROPOSED STATE CHILDREN'S BUREAU.

HOW SHALL THE CHILDREN OF THE STATE BE BEST CARED FOR? is a question that must appeal to all who have had experience of such work.

There are some, indeed many, among us who believe that the organization under which this work is carried on is radically defective. This is in no way to deny that much has been accomplished under the present system. Thanks to the devotion of the men and women who have been enrolled among its workers, the State Charities of Massachusetts have taken an honorable place among the enlightened movements of this century. In accomplishing this, no one individual and no one organization has the monopoly of merit. Many agencies have co-operated, and private citizens have joined hands with those in the official service of the State.

But past achievements are most valuable when they lead the way to new advances. And some of those who have been most active in the work of the State for children, now believe that the next step forward involves a radical reorganization of this department of the State Charities.

To this end an Act Relative to Children in the Care of the State (Senate, No. 47) was introduced into last winter's legislature. Chapter 428 of the Acts of 1895 was the inadequate outcome of this attempted reorganization. As this act, while it favorably modifies the old order, leaves its most serious defect untouched, an explanation of existing conditions and of the changes which are still desirable, may be of value as leading the way toward future legislation.

THE CASE STATED.

There are, in round numbers, 2,500 children in the care of the State,—children ranging in age from babies to boys and girls of twenty-one, and ranging in condition from innocents who have become dependent through misfortune, to young law-breakers committed to reform schools by the courts.

Some 1,600 of these children, mostly of the indigent and neglected classes, are in the care of the State Board of Lunacy and Charity. Practically, all of these children are placed in private families. The most of them in the past at one time or another have been inmates of the recently abolished State Primary School. The remaining 900 State children are in the care of the Trustees of the Lyman and Industrial Schools (till recently known as the Trustees of the State Primary and Reform Schools). 350 of these children are inmates of the Lyman School for Boys at Westboro or the State Industrial School for Girls at Lancaster; while some 550 others have been released on probation, but during minority are liable to recall to one or the other of those schools.

(The duties of the Trustees of the Lyman and Industrial Schools relate solely to the children in their charge. The numerous and varied duties of the State Board of Lunacy and Charity are given in the Appendix on p. 49. The bare enumeration of them suggests the unwieldiness of the present system.)

THE DEFECTS OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM ARE:—

1. That the State Board of Lunacy and Charity has so many other duties that the children in its care do not receive the attention from the members of the Board that they need. *(See p. 53, on which it is shown that the Committee of the Board which directs the care of these children dealt within one*

year with the cases of over 50,000 other persons, and held 12 meetings.)

2. That the independent inspection and criticism of a supervisory board which is provided for all the charitable institutions of the State, and which is recognized as a valuable stimulus and safeguard, is withheld from dependent and neglected children, since the board having them in charge is itself the supervisory board of the State.*

3. That whereas the Board of State Charities, the official predecessor of the State Board of Lunacy and Charity, was originally † established as the supervisory board of the State, the latter Board has become so preponderatingly executive that its value as supervisor is seriously impaired.

(Recent legislation, by closing the State Primary School,—an institution which formerly received large numbers of indigent and neglected children and of the milder cases of juvenile offenders,—has thrown upon the Board of Lunacy and Charity the care of the children heretofore received there, thus heavily increasing its responsibilities. Many signs indicate that the Board desires still further to increase its responsibilities by seeking to establish an institution under its own direct control. Already without specific authority of the legislature it has opened a Temporary Home at Arlington in which a small number of children are cared for while being fitted into places.)

* Inspectors of bridges would not be allowed to be the builders of the bridges they were appointed to inspect. Any person owning stock in a railroad is by law forbidden to serve as railroad commissioner. There can be no independent judgment where the judge is, as in this instance, an interested party.

† "One obvious intent of the legislature in creating this Board was to bring all the charities of the State under the supervision of one body, in the hope and with the purpose of having them all administered upon some general and uniform system, which should approve itself to the legislature and the community. In attempting to accomplish this object, it was supposed that a body of men selected by the Governor and Council, whose duty it should be to have all these various establishments *under their personal observation*, would be able, from time to time, to make such suggestions as would relieve the Governor and Council from a duty heretofore resting upon them, which from its nature could never be satisfactorily performed by a body having so many other and so diverse claims upon their time and attention."—*Third Annual Report of the State Board of Charities*, 1867, p. xix.