Social Workers

If there is a story I don't know how true it is, that about 175 years ago, the President of Harvard University suggested to the Dean of Harvard Medical School that written examination be required for all medical students. The Dean replied that it was a good idea but unfortunately it was not practical because some of the students could not write.

There have been many advances in the medical profession since then. There is general agreement regarding the education, training, qualifications and licensing of medical doctors. To some extent the same is true of lawyers. However, we still have some professions that are relatively in a relatively early stage of development. One of these is social work.

Who is a social worker? As far as the public is concerned, a social worker is anyone who is doing...
some sort of welfare work. This presents some real problems and I will mention one of them. The legislators of this nation are drawn from all walks of life. They can be looked upon as members of the general public who have been selected by their fellow citizens to represent them at state capitals and in Washington. They have pretty much the same attitudes and ideas as the public at large. Briefly this means that the laws of this country are written by men and women who have little or no knowledge of what a social worker is.

This is worth thinking about because the appropriations for welfare purposes are large. Much of the administration of these funds is largely in the hands of social workers. Frankly there is a great gap between the legislators and the administrators because there is a
lack of understanding.

Some of us are aware of the

efforts of the National Association
of Social Work and the schools of
social work. It is very pleasing
to know about these things because
they mean that there are well-
qualified people of professional
caliber in the welfare field. It
means that we can have confidence
that the money appropriated for
social welfare will be spent
effectively.

But there exist other

problems because it is
not easy to identify a well trained
social worker as one would for
example in the case of lawyers or
other professional people. I have
wondered if the social workers with

and good professional training should

not adopt a more dignified and
meaningful name. For example
a pediatrician is a doctor who is
interested in children - the term
identifies him immediately. In
contrast to this, the person who
collects old clothes for her church
guild may state that she is a
social worker — and she has
some claim to the term because
of its usage for many years.

One of my friends says that
he would like to see the social workers
call themselves sociologists
because they draw much of their
basic knowledge from the fields
of sociology, social psychology and
economics. Someone may ask

@ Shakespeare asked: "What's in a name?
A rose by any other name would
smell as sweet." His question
was interesting but if he had
asked it at one of our Madison Ave
public relations firms the answer
would have been different. A
suitable name is important.

Now I am interested in all
of this because I believe that
social workers are important.
As our society becomes more
complicated we have to have
adequate means of aiding
people in distress. A great
Deal of this work must be done by social workers. They must be trained, capable people. People in whom the legislators and the public will have confidence.

Social workers have been developing a great fund of knowledge regarding how people can be helped—how many of them can be made independent, self-supporting economic units again. Their efforts to preserve the human dignity in the face of adversity have won for us a truly great contribution to our civilization.

For my part it has been a pleasure to be associated with them—to get to know them and to develop respect and admiration for their work. I would like to express my very sincere interest in their humanitarian efforts and in their future.