Increasing professional awareness is evidenced on the part of Social Workers in India in their recent efforts to establish a professional organization of their own. Drawing attention to this fact in the following article, Mr. Nanavatty emphasizes that all Social Workers should maintain high standards of practice and devote themselves to self-discipline and acquisition of greater scientific knowledge.

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The recent move to establish a professional organisation for social workers indicates a growing professional awareness. Such a move is only a first step towards the development of the occupation of Social Work into a full-fledged profession. The success of this effort will mainly depend on how constructive forces are generated to harness the energy of the practising social workers towards the crystallisation of their professional consciousness.

Birth of a Profession.—The need to develop an occupation into a profession depends on the readiness of the society to recognise the practitioners as professionals. In other words, the growth of an occupation into a profession is a social phenomenon. This growth is to be related to the prevailing social and economic conditions in a given country. In India, as in other countries, the urge for social service found its expression in the establishment of social and religious institutions. The stronger force of religion directed this urge into an expression of religious obligation. With the increase in human need and the complexities of social life, there arose a need to develop the occupation of social service. Only during the last century the need to develop the occupation of social service on scientific basis has been realised. With this realisation came the importance of sharing the experiences of other nations in the field of social welfare. As Alfred Whitehead has pointed out, "The culmination of science completely inverted the roles of custom and intelligence in the older professions. By this inversion, professional institutions have acquired an international life. Each such institution practices within its own nation, but its sources of life are world wide." Social Work Profession in India, likewise, will have to draw its inspiration and even its body of knowledge and skill from similar professional organisations of other countries.

Characteristics of a Profession.—To qualify an occupation for a profession, certain requirements need to be fulfilled. Carr Sanders in the Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences has enumerated the following four major characteristics peculiar to all professions:

(i) The development of the body of knowledge upon which the skill rests.

(ii) The reservation of functions to the qualified by means of licensing or the restrictions of the professional bodies.

(iii) The development of the professional consciousness amongst the practitioners.

(iv) The contribution of the specialised skill and viewpoint to appropriate problems in the surrounding society.

It was in 1936 that the first step was taken to provide professional training in the
field of social service by the establishment of Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work in Bombay. Since then a slow but continuous trend is perceived in the development of the social work profession. The importance of professional training is being increasingly recognised by Government and private organisations throughout the country. The Universities of Delhi and Baroda have recognised the profession by establishing professional schools of social work in recent years. To be systematic, let us consider the growth of the Social Work profession in India in terms of the characteristics mentioned above.

I. Towards a Tested Body of Knowledge.—The basic requirement of a profession is the development of a tested body of related knowledge upon which the skill of its practitioners rests. By the establishment of the Bureau of Research and Publications, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, tried to encourage the development of the body of knowledge required in the field. Various Universities, through their Schools of Economics and Sociology, have also contributed to this body of knowledge by encouraging writing of theses and memoirs on various subjects of applied social sciences. However, it must be pointed out that in view of the increasing social and economic needs of the rising population of India, such a collection is inadequate in establishing the tested body of knowledge which the profession of social work calls for. At present, we are utilising mostly the body of knowledge developed in western countries. We have still to develop suitable methods of utilising this body of knowledge in Indian conditions. Although human nature remains basically the same throughout the world, the ethnic and cultural differences call for adaptations of the basic processes into suitable practices. The very fact that we have not succeeded in bringing about a detailed memoir on the fields of social work in Indian conditions even after fifteen years of our efforts, indicates a very early stage of our professional development. Our Schools of Social Work still vacillate between processes and programmes in developing training courses and field work practices. The eagerness with which some of us try to adopt wholesale the technique and programme followed in other western countries is a pointer in a similar direction. We need to undertake an objective study of the prevailing social and economic conditions in India and determine how best we can adapt the various processes of social work, like Social Case Work, Social Group Work, Community Organization and Social Research to the prevailing needs of the Indian population. This will naturally call for the determination of priority in the use of methods and programmes.

To meet these requirements, the professional organisation should work at two levels: (1) It should encourage the formation of a Central Research Organization under the joint auspices of Universities and the Government, to collect data concerning major social problems, to analyse these data in the light of recent techniques of social research and to study the various methods of utilising the processes of social work to meet the expectations and needs of people grouped on the basis of regional communities. The most suitable method of adjustment should be utilised to bring about the new changes in the lives of the people so as to cause the minimum disturbance in the prevailing social equilibrium. (2) The second source of knowledge should come from practitioners in the various fields of social work. Various study groups composed of practitioners in the fields of Child Welfare, Family Welfare, Community Welfare, Labour
Welfare, Public Welfare, Tribal Welfare, etc. should be set up to collect the necessary data suitable for training and practices in respective fields. The body of knowledge thus collected need to be analysed in the light of social research and verified through experimental projects. This body of knowledge collected in a given field will also contribute towards the analysis of the field itself and in determining the most suitable methods for improving the nature of services on scientific lines. The faculties of the Schools of Social Work could contribute to this body of knowledge and skill by establishing a joint committee for the development of curriculum and by exchanging experiences in the teaching of the various subjects in the class-room and the application thereof in the fields of practice.

II. Reservation of Functions.—The second important characteristic of a profession is "the reservation of the function to the qualified". It calls for setting up of the standards of service, analysing various types of jobs, securing of the recognition from the public and from the governing agencies of the profession in general and various fields of services in particular. Thanks to the efforts of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, other Schools of Social Work, the Indian Conference of Social Work and the workers in the field, the profession is being increasingly recognised by the government and private organizations. The public at large, however, still seem to believe that any citizen without any specific training of the basic structure of society, of the development of human personality and of the methods of meeting the emotional and economic needs of the people could perform social work. The practitioners in the field of social work have to work systematically to help the public to realise the importance of professional training in social work. This could only be realised if the standard of our services is kept high. The recognition of the profession and the raising of the standard of service must go hand in hand. Unless a high standard of service is maintained, the public will hesitate to recognise the profession. Unless the public recognises the profession, new avenues of service cannot be created. Every year the three Schools of Social Work will bring forth one hundred trained practitioners. If new avenues of employment are not created very shortly, the profession will have to face the problem of unemployment of the trained workers. The best element in society will not be encouraged to take professional training in the field of social work. It is, therefore, the joint responsibilities of the practitioners in the field of social work, and the Schools of Social Work to explore the possibility of opening new avenues of service and convince the government and the public to co-operate in creating fresh opportunities for organised social services.

Free India to-day calls for hundreds and thousands of trained practitioners in the field of social welfare. What we lack is a concentrated effort to determine the needs of the public and to set up suitable organisations to meet these needs by placing the right personnel on the right job, and by providing the necessary facilities and equipment to meet the situation.

The professional organisation will do well to concentrate its efforts on raising the standard of services among the practitioners and to secure thereby the recognition of the public and the government for the profession. The following four steps will facilitate our effort in that direction:

(i) The analysis of the functions and classification of jobs.

(ii) Laying down qualifications for each type of job.
(iii) Determining the professional education for such jobs.

(iv) Determining the minimum fees and salaries appropriate to the jobs.

The question of securing legislative support in reserving the function to the qualified through the passing of laws, should be postponed for future consideration till the public are educated in favour of the profession.

III. A Professional Consciousness.—One of the factors in the development of the profession is the growth of professional consciousness, a sense of belonging to the profession. Until recently, very little was done to inculcate in the new-comers to the profession a sense of belonging arising from the philosophy of service to humanity. The practitioners in the field of social work seem to care little for developing a brotherhood around their profession. Some of us are too narrowly occupied with our specific work as to care little for the larger aspect of the profession. Others seem to seek isolation as a matter of defence, well-organised professional body may help to overcome the fear of competition that seems to prevail among some of the practitioners.

An introduction of the method of supervision in the professional training at the Schools of Social Work and in the agencies during the early stage of employment may prove helpful in developing the professional consciousness in the new-comers to the field. Supervision should be understood as a helping process in understanding one's relation to oneself, to one's work and to one's profession. Those who supervise should have the professional discipline to begin with and the necessary understanding in the working of various processes implied in the work of supervision.

Professional consciousness also implies loyalty to one's own profession. It implies willingness to carry out one's responsibilities with a high standard of service. The profession fails to be worthy of its name and dignity when it turns into a monopolistic concern for the exclusive benefit of its practitioners. The professional organisation, therefore, will have to create a machinery of constantly checking up the efficiency of the practitioners and raising the same with the passage of time, and gathering of experience. The maintenance of high standards of service will also depend on our willingness to abide by the professional ethics; "Ethics which could grow out of our own philosophy of work and a sense of direction and of values."

IV. Social Work and Social Action.—The Social Work profession has to fulfill its responsibility towards social action and social education. Social education implies the collection and the presentation of necessary data to develop public opinion on the prevailing social needs, and suggesting ways and means of tacking necessary action to meet these needs. A professional worker can act at three levels in the society as a member of the professional organisation, as a practitioner in the field and as a common citizen. He needs to be aware of his responsibilities at these three levels and be able to weave his activities accordingly. As a citizen he enjoys all the rights, privileges and duties towards the society; as a practitioner he has to keep the interests of his agency and its clientele; and as a member of the professional organisation he has to fulfill the responsibilities of the profession. In all these three levels of work, service to humanity is the common factor. He needs to voice his opinion according to Coyle, Grace; "Group Experience And Democratio Values; The Woman's Press, New York."
the condition of work that he is in, according to the situation that he is called to handle and according to the philosophy of work that he has learnt to abide by. The professional organisation has, therefore, to develop with the passage of time a philosophy and method of work for its members in the service of the humanity. It has to be a torch-bearer of progress and service.

Contribution of Other Allied Organisations.—Schools of Social Work: As has already been indicated, the Schools of Social Work have a specific contribution to make in developing the profession of Social Work. In fact, they are the nurseries of professional awareness. They have the responsibilities of selecting the right type of students for the profession, of creating the atmosphere for the professional training, and of supplying the field experience under professional supervision. They are in fact, the givers of professional values. They have the added responsibility of guiding the trained workers to available sources of employment. Thus, indirectly, they have responsibilities in creating and maintaining new avenues of employment. In a laissez faire society like ours, the demand for admission to the Schools of Social Work would depend in direct proportion to the openings for employment of trained personnel. It must be mentioned in fairness to the Schools of Social Work that the professionally trained practitioners have in turn their responsibilities towards the maintenance and development of their alma-mater. In the western countries, the alumni of the Schools of Social Work give considerable help in securing the financial assistance and in developing good relations between the alma-mater and the public.

A Professional Magazine.—For the development of the profession, a suitable professional magazine is of vital importance. Through a journal, the experiences in the field of work and the development of new theories in social sciences could be discussed. It is a sign of professional awareness not only to subscribe to professional magazines but to contribute through its medium towards better understanding among the professional workers.

Conference of Social Work.—A Conference of Social Work, as Mr. Shelly Harrison stated in the Foreword to "Trends in Social Work" by Frank Bruno, "is a national clearing house of ideas and experiences, a national medium for the exchange of opinions, a national forum in which to debate and appraise differing theories and practices, a platform from which could be presented fresh information on social problems and methods of dealing with them as the frontiers of knowledge are moved forward." Thus, a Conference of Social Work should remain an open forum, for professional as well as non-professional social workers, at the same time giving an opportunity to the professional workers to help the public to know new theories in social work and new experiences in the field; and thereby develop a harmonious relationship with the public at large. The Conference of Social Work works at present through the establishment of local branches in various states and cities. The various branches of the professional organisation could work through these branches in carrying the message of the profession to the public.

The development of the professional organisation, thus, calls for leadership, energy and work from many quarters. It would require full co-operation of the Schools of Social Work and the practitioners in the field. It would require support of the public and the government at local, State and Federal levels. It would require the recogni-
tion and blessings of other professions in the field. As Dr. Coyle stated in her memorable paper, "On Becoming Professionals" (A. A. S. G. W. Buffalo, May 1946) "Obviously no group becomes professional by making claims; true professional status must be achieved. It can only be achieved by solid intellectual effort related to the body of knowledge, by self-discipline among practitioners and devotion to high standards of practice, and by competent and responsible organizations."

(For Further study Read: Brown, Ester: Social Work As a Profession: Russell Sage Foundation; Social Work Year Book, 1949: Russell Sage Foundation.)