In the half-century or so before 1930, a feature of industrial societies such as Britain and the United States was the extension of social provision, both government and non-government. By 1930, through a combination of economic, political, and social factors, these societies contained a great number of specialised social agencies helping selected categories of people who were seen to need outside assistance. Their particular concern was with the destitute, deprived children, legal offenders, the physically and mentally handicapped, the physically and mentally ill, unmarried mothers, migrants, the poorly housed, the aged, the idle, the ignorant, the lonely. Often the provision was, by later standards, inadequate or misguided, but it was in this period that the foundations of the modern welfare society were laid, for corporate responsibility for the personal well-being of all individuals within national boundaries was increasingly recognised. This was modern mass urbanised society, subject to continuous economic and social change, establishing the specialised, institutional equipment to meet its social responsibilities.

The emergence of political democracy, closely linked with the rise of labour movements and the elimination of illiteracy, brought in its train an emphasis on democracy as a social philosophy. Equality of consideration and a sense of interdependence were stressed in the face of intolerable differences between the conditions of life of citizens and in the face of the new extreme social separation between citizens, both aspects of the huge urban agglomerations of industrial society. The social and cultural poverty, as well as the harsh economic poverty,
demanded agencies to combat it, for individuals could not fight it alone. A great many organised groups, humanitarian in purpose and mixed in motive, arose.

Many problems demanded broader, stronger, and more continuous action, and the state was the only agency with the authority and the potential resources to combat them. The Church had lost its medieval dominance. It had neither the internal strength, the material resources, nor the mass allegiance to respond to the challenges of the new industrial age, although helping people in distress was still strong in the Christian ethic. Much of its welfare work with sectarian strings attached was suspect to an essentially secular society, just as much of the welfare work of the upper classes which helped to maintain the established social order was suspected by those who wished for a basic reform of society.

The organisational demands of a changing mass society, as well as political developments, caused the downfall of the supremely optimistic *laissez-faire* doctrine; depressions and war hastened the process. The increasing national income achieved by technological change, greater division of labour, and specialisation, made its more even distribution both necessary and possible. Increased taxation, especially of personal income, strengthened the sinews of state action through an effective public service.

But without insight into the true nature and extent of the problems of the new society, neither private nor state action was likely to be effective. The Royal Commissions, and towards the end of the nineteenth century, the charity organisation societies, the social settlements, the social surveys, the growth of statistical analysis – all contributed to the diagnosis of the ills of society and the prescription of treatment for them. The application of scientific method to human affairs was seen as the key to social progress. A significant factor in the growth of social provision was the interchange of ideas between countries. The spread from Britain of the charity organisation society, the social settlements, the social survey, and certain kinds of social legislation, and from Germany of social insurance schemes, are examples of a widespread willingness to use the experience of other countries in the meeting of similar problems. It is difficult to tell, however, whether these attitudes and institutions would have emerged spontaneously. The twentieth century terms – ‘social service’, ‘social welfare’,
‘social administration’, and ‘social work’ – began to supplant the older terms – ‘charity’, ‘philanthropy’, ‘benevolence’, ‘alms-giving’, and ‘poor relief’. This change in terminology was closely connected with changed attitudes to the recipients and the altered nature of the service given them. It was now the community’s duty to ensure for all its citizens certain minimum standards of welfare, and each citizen had a right to expect this. The condescension, pity, and implied superiority of the giver to the receiver with which the older terms had become encrusted were not to be condoned in the new democratic society.

The Training Movement

With the growth of social provision came increasing numbers of men and women engaged in its administration, and its complexity in the mass industrial society forced them to realise that full-time, trained work was needed. It was wasteful not to use the accumulated experience of previous workers, and the new insights about men and society gained from scientific study. The training movement, therefore, developed with the growth of social provision, and at what point the need was felt was partly determined by the chance of personalities and the existence of overseas models, but more by the society’s degree of complexity, the size of the cities, and the extent of social provision.

What has been described as the first real school of social work in the world began in Amsterdam in 1899. By the mid-1920s there were schools in Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czechoslovakia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The experience of the training movements in the last two countries had a strong influence on the Australian training movement. As it was overwhelmingly British in heritage, Australia tended to look to British experience. On the other hand, in the United States the training movement gained root more firmly than anywhere else in the world, and this, together with the connected factors of size, wealth, and vigour, produced an increasing quantity of useful American social work literature. Moreover, though its population dwarfed Australia’s population much more than did Britain’s, its geographical size, the comparative newness
of the society, and its federal system of government, gave Australians and Americans attitudes in common as well as their broad European heritage and language.

In Britain, Octavia Hill began in the 1870s a scheme for training housing managers, who were responsible for helping tenants in addition to acting as landlords, but she recognised the need for a more systematic training and pointed to an analogy with the nursing and teaching professions. Such a training was started at the Women’s University Settlement at Southwark in the East End of London in the 1890s.¹

In 1912, the London School of Economics established a Department of Social Science and Administration and this was a direct descendant of the Southwark Settlement training scheme. Meanwhile, outside London, mainly associated with the new universities in the large industrial centres, other training schemes were started: at Liverpool, Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Manchester, Edinburgh, and Glasgow.

Until World War I, progress was slow. Many new social welfare measures, both government and non-government, were brought in during the early years of the century, but the qualifications required of those administering them remained unsettled. For the most part, student numbers were small, and were mainly women who wished to do voluntary social work, or those willing and able to risk possibly unsuitable positions.

The war strengthened the training movement. Social study departments gained government recognition, the demand for trained workers for the first time exceeded the supply, and a variety of new training schemes was established. In April 1918, a Joint University Council for Social Studies was formed to coordinate and develop the work of social study departments in the universities of Britain and Ireland. All existing university schemes were represented on the council, and it did much to publicise and increase understanding of the training movement.

¹ Elizabeth Macadam, The Equipment of the Social Worker, pp. 28–9.
In the mid-1920s, a Joint Honorary Secretary of the Council, Elizabeth Macadam, described the British training movement in these terms:

Students, generally older than the average undergraduates, fell into three classes: graduates, experienced workers with little or no previous academic training, and students who desired to train for some career for which a university degree was not necessary. Some schools granted diplomas to graduates only.

In each school, the length of the course, except for graduates, was two years. It consisted partly of attendance at lectures or tutorial classes and partly of actual participation under supervision in various activities which gave the candidate some first-hand acquaintance with working-class life, the operations of public departments and of voluntary organisations for social work.

There was variation in the names and arrangements of subjects, but such subjects as economics, economic history, social and political philosophy, psychology, and public administration were included. Generally lectures from regular university degree courses were used for at least some of the academic requirements of social study courses, but several schools were large enough to have their own staff of lecturers. The Joint University Council had stressed the importance of securing teachers who had more than mere academic knowledge of social questions. The term ‘school of social study’ had come to refer to a department of a university, in which different subjects, which could be grouped together under the comprehensive heading ‘social science’, were taught not only in close relation to each other but to actual social and economic conditions.

From the beginning, practical work had been considered an essential part of the course. It now included, where possible, training in public administration in connection with health, housing, employment and unemployment, administration of justice, adult and continuation education, juvenile organisations of all kinds, relief work, voluntary organisations for social welfare, as well as investigation into social conditions. Before a diploma or certificate was awarded, a student had to satisfy examiners in both academic and practical work.

Visits of observation were arranged to introduce students to relevant social organisations.

Research into social problems was recognised as an indispensable function of a school, but largely owing to lack of funds, little had been accomplished.
Most of the schools tried to meet the needs of officials in new forms of social service or of social workers already in the field. Glasgow and Dundee had provided systematic evening courses leading to a certificate. Other schools insisted that social training required full-time work, but provided periodically lectures for those who had received no professional training and ‘refresher’ courses for trained workers.

The courses were under the direction of a Committee or Board on which were representatives of those university departments which offered subjects included in the course, and persons of experience in practical social administration.

In a few cases, schools provided teaching for those engaged in other occupations, such as the clergy, district nurses, health visitors, domestic science and continuation school teachers. During the war, intensive courses for welfare workers in factories and relief workers were instituted as emergency measures. In addition, the leading schools opened selected classes to the general public.

Many of these features were later to appear in the Australian training movement.

As well as the schools of social study, and linked with particular areas of social work, a number of specialist training schemes were established which provided an apprenticeship training rather than a course in general social work principles. For Australia, the most significant of these was the course in medical social work run by the Institute of Hospital Almoners.

Beginning at the Royal Free Hospital in London in the mid-1890s, social work in hospitals, or almoning as it was called, spread first to other voluntary hospitals and later to municipal hospitals. With it grew an almoner training scheme which was, until 1907, under the control of a special Charity Organisation Society committee and then under the Hospital Almoners’ Council, consisting of almoners, Charity Organisation Society members, and other interested people. This council was incorporated as the Institute of Hospital Almoners in 1924.

2 Ibid., pp. 44–8.
Another of the specialised courses had some influence in Australia. The child guidance movement penetrated Britain from the United States in 1927, and a mental health course, taken after a general social studies course, was later developed at the Social Science Department of the London School of Economics.

In many respects, the first 30 years of the training movement in the United States resembled the British development – the growth in the large cities, the connection with the rise of social science, the majority of women students, the early reliance on voluntary agencies, the growth of full-time social work, and the leading position of medical social work – and the early Australian training movement demonstrated the same features. But there were important differences, arising mainly from the size and strength of the social agencies in the much larger American society, and from its more democratic temper.

In 1898, the first school of social work in the United States had its rudimentary beginnings in a six-week course for practitioners held by the New York Charity Organisation Society. By 1904, this had become a one-year course provided by the New York School of Philanthropy, primarily for students inexperienced in social work. From 1910, the curriculum covered two years; in 1919, the school’s name was changed to the New York School of Social Work.

In the meantime, other schools had been founded, at first in the east and then unevenly throughout the country. That at Chicago, like the New York school, became especially prominent. Arising from training experiments in Chicago settlements, the Chicago Institute of Social Science was opened in 1903 by the Extension Division of the University of Chicago. Five years later, it became the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy, and in 1920 it gave up its independent status to become the Graduate School of Social Service Administration in the University of Chicago.

By 1910, the American training movement was still largely confined to the five largest cities in the United States: New York, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, and St Louis. As in Britain, however, World War I stimulated social work training and encouraged formal cooperation between training bodies. Many universities combined with the American Red Cross to provide emergency home-service training schemes. These demonstrated the need for full social work courses
in new parts of the country and helped to arouse university interest. In 1919, the 17 known schools of social work met to discuss formal cooperation. From this arose the American Association of Professional Schools of Social Work, which became highly influential in setting standards of social work education in North America, and in other countries.

The older schools in the east of the United States at first remained largely independent of the universities for they wished to be free of academic regulations. At the 1915 National Conference on Charities and Correction, however, both Abraham Flexner and Felix Frankfurter asserted that training for a profession should be university based. Frankfurter urged a preparation for social work equivalent to the training for the professions of law and medicine. Soon after the Association of Schools was formed, no new non-university schools were admitted to membership. By the mid-1920s, only three of the 23 member schools were independent of universities, and other schools were moving towards membership.

Yet even among the association’s members there was wide variation, one of the main reasons being, according to Edith Abbott in 1927, the extreme specialisation that agencies had demanded of schools of social work. They had been asked to provide special training courses for family welfare workers, for child welfare workers, for psychiatric social workers, for travellers’ aid work, community chest executives, and so on, instead of being allowed to develop ‘a solid and scientific curriculum in social welfare’. Earlier in the 1920s, the executive committee of the Association of Schools had, however, managed to agree that the most satisfactory preparation was a broad professional education.

Comparing the American and British training scenes in the mid-1920s, Elizabeth Macadam noted that both continued to have a large majority of women students and both had medical social work in a well-established position, but the American schools were much more strictly professional and much more concerned with social work.

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techniques. The demand by powerful voluntary social agencies in the United States for trained ‘executives’ had stimulated student numbers, and had given courses a professional orientation which included concern for social work technique. This latter concern remained in the courses after they were fully adopted by the American universities. The course at Chicago University, for instance, had important subjects called ‘case analysis and diagnosis’ and ‘principles of casework’.

In Britain there was resistance to this type of study and attention had become increasingly focused on wide social and economic issues. The teaching in the universities had become remote from the actual practice of social agencies. On the other hand, the non-university courses were too close to agency practice and were weak in theory. The objective of university social training in Britain was to equip socially educated workers of all grades ‘with the right outlook on life and its problems’. The social studies departments were offering a university education rather more relevant to effective participation in the modern industrial society than the traditional classical or general Arts education, but the degree of its relevance could be debated.

The emphasis in the United States on ‘the profession’ and its technique was not evenly distributed among the various methods of achieving social work goals. There was a concentration on directly helping individuals, groups, and communities, and an especial concentration on the techniques of working with individuals (social casework) both in terms of the numbers engaged and as a systematic field of practice and study.

Social Work Methods

Collective action to help people in distress reappeared in nineteenth-century Britain after a period of neglect; but the new, organised humanitarianism had to find a method appropriate to changing social and economic conditions.

The origins of social casework may be traced back at least as far as Thomas Chalmer’s work and writing in a Glasgow parish in the early part of the century. His views were later developed by Octavia

6 Ibid., pp. 121, 180–1, 188–9, 191.
Hill, Denison, and Loch, and the whole Charity Organisation Society movement. Formed in London in 1869, the Charity Organisation Society had a profound influence on social service work throughout the world, including the United States. It insisted upon cooperation and organisation in charitable work, strict adherence to cases covered by the resources and aims of the agency, help to deserving cases only, and help adequate to re-establish the individual and his family and to promote independence.\(^7\)

Despite the attitude of the Charity Organisation Society leaders who accepted the need for government provision only as a last resort, by the 1890s Britain was turning increasingly to broad government action. In both Britain and the United States, caseworkers began to realise that it was social conditions rather than individuals’ weakness of character that were causing widespread distress. At the turn of the century, the findings of the so-called ‘school of environmental determinism’ seemed to confirm this.

Though both countries then passed through a social reform phase, the United States also paid attention to the development of social casework and assumed leadership in individual case study and treatment (a leadership which it still retains).

Social reform measures raised basic living conditions, but many individuals still needed outside help to understand their personal problems and to make best use of the available community services. Until World War I, social casework was mainly concerned with rehabilitating impoverished clients through the charity organisation societies, or family welfare societies as they had come to be called. Now, however, there were also agencies, dealing with delinquency, mental or physical illness, and troubled childhood, who used social casework as their method but who concentrated not on material relief but rather on education, guidance, or psychological support.

In the various agencies, casework was passing through a ‘sociological’ phase. Emphasis was on the effects of environment on the individual, and social caseworkers specialised in their knowledge of the environment and how to change it.

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In 1915, Abraham Flexner decided that social work had not become a profession mainly because it lacked a transmissible professional technique. American social work then began to define its methods, at least with respect to work with individuals. The first major definitive book on social casework, Mary Richmond’s *Social Diagnosis*, appeared in 1917, and almost immediately social casework came to be seen as the social work method, and, moreover, the recommended casework procedures were not used with discrimination. There was an almost ritualistic, excessive history-taking which often actually interfered with the understanding of the client and his problems. The sociological dimension was present, but not the psychological. The caseworker still tended to consider he knew what was best for the client even though in theory he was working with, not for, him. The client was persuaded, albeit tactfully, to accept the plans made for his good.

World War I ushered in a new phase. The Home Service Divisions of the American Red Cross brought a new clientele for casework help. This, together with a more democratic viewpoint which did not look upon the poor, and those in need of help, as outside the general community, encouraged a shift away from paternalism. The growing knowledge of psychology, and particularly psychiatry, was given considerable impetus by the war. In the following decade, the psychoanalytic theory of human behaviour was incorporated in casework theory and practice to the partial exclusion of the social sciences.

Analytic psychology offered new insight into people and their problems and emphasised the importance of the relationship between social worker and client. The client’s own ideas and feelings became the core of the diagnosis and treatment, and ‘process’ became one of the most used words in the social workers’ vocabulary.

The long-term implications of these developments were revolutionary. In Britain, social work had been largely a class activity, the upper orders helping the lower orders to maintain their stations in life in a fairly rigidly stratified society. In the United States, social work had

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become more the successful helping the unsuccessful to copy their solutions in adapting to ‘the great American way of life’. The genuinely client-centred approach brought a change in all this.

One other important development in social casework in the United States was the Milford Conference Report in 1929: ‘Social CaseWork, Generic and Specific’. This asserted that, despite the tendency to create specialised forms of social casework under different agency auspices, the problems of social casework and the equipment of the social caseworker were fundamentally the same for all fields.

Unlike modern casework agencies, social group work agencies had no direct historical antecedents. The university settlements, boys’ clubs, Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, the YMCA, the YWCA, and many other organisations were established to offer opportunities for social gathering and recreation in the new urban industrial society. This was a society characterised in the early stages by unstable social relations, weakened social controls, greatly reduced opportunities for outdoor recreation, and new temptations for antisocial behaviour. At the beginning, casework agencies tackled problems of material impoverishment, but these group work agencies tackled problems of social impoverishment. Leading group work agencies in the United States in the late 1920s claimed that satisfying group activities developed richer and better adjusted personalities, and that group life was a means of passing on society’s social patterns, customs and conventions.9

The techniques used by the group worker, as in casework, passed through an early paternalistic stage when programmes were arranged by the group worker for the members of the group. Gradually, however, direction of this kind gave way to the indirect stimulation of the initiative, the group consciousness, and the self-direction of the group.

Social group work crystallised as a professional social work field much later than social casework. Not until the 1920s did group workers discover common professional interests. Many of the organisations employing them did not consider themselves social agencies and were

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outside the influence of social work education. Much of such theory as was slowly constructed came from the writing of John Dewey and the progressive education movement, and was adapted for use in informal educational settings. When group work began to be taught in the American schools of social work in the second half of the 1920s, there existed only rudimentary theory about group processes, in contrast to the well-developed psychoanalytic theory of individual behaviour taught in the casework courses.

Community organisation for social welfare may be traced back, as a social work method, to the work of the charity organisation societies in the nineteenth century. From their attempts to promote cooperation between agencies, to avoid duplication, and to use funds as productively as possible, grew a new social work method. Later this method came to be defined as ‘establishing a progressively more effective adjustment between the social welfare needs and the community welfare resources within a geographic area’.

Councils of social agencies in the United States were separate from the charity organisation societies. In this way, responsibility for setting standards was placed upon the whole group and not upon a single agency. These councils helped agencies to work together, to coordinate and rationalise their services, and to publicise their work. Closely linked with the councils’ development was the community chest movement, strongly stimulated by World War I. Social agencies combined to appeal for funds, using expert solicitation methods and tapping new industrial sources, and the funds were carefully allocated with due regard to raising agency standards. In addition to the general coordinating councils, there emerged coordinating ‘functional’ organisations, often at a national level, which concentrated on the needs of particular sections of the community.

In Britain, various communities formed general coordinating councils of social service, but the community chest idea was not strongly supported. A National Council of Social Service was inaugurated in 1919, on which were represented central and local government bodies, national voluntary social agencies, and various local cooperative organisations, including the councils of social service.

By 1930, however, community organisation, even in the United States where techniques were being studied, was less advanced in its systematic theory than social group work. Yet five years later, the United States National Conference of Social Work, in reorganising its programme, indicated that the four major functions of social work were social casework, social group work, community organisation, and social action. This conference, in providing a national forum for the discussion of all social welfare matters, was itself an important enduring community organisation tool.11

Formal and informal conferring between the different welfare agencies became an important aspect of the welfare work of Western countries, and was not confined to national boundaries. International conferences of representatives of private and public charities began in the mid-nineteenth century. These conferences, meeting in Europe and later in the United States, were concerned with particular areas of social service work. The meeting of the International Conference of Social Work in Paris in 1928 provided for the first time a general international social welfare forum. Because of the growth of the social work training movement in more than 12 countries, it was not surprising that one of the conference’s main sections was devoted to such training, and that an outcome was the formation of an International Committee of Schools of Social Work.

Professional Association

So far, particular attention has been paid to the various ways in which, by the end of the 1920s, the social welfare field in Britain and the United States was becoming organised. Training bodies had arisen and were to some extent cooperating on a national and international level. Various methods of achieving social welfare were being examined and defined; and social agencies were sometimes cooperating both formally and informally on a local, national and international level. One other important institutional development remains to be noted: the growth of professional association between paid, trained employees of social agencies. Again, American developments need to be considered.

11 See Frank J. Bruno, Trends in Social Work, 1874–1956. Until 1917, the conference was called the National Conference of Charities and Correction; from 1956, the National Conference of Social Welfare.
Professional associations of social workers arose in the United States as training courses, social workers’ clubs, and the National Conference of Social Work encouraged a group consciousness among paid workers. In 1921, the American Association of Social Workers was formed with the *Compass* as its journal. Its purpose was to develop professional standards and organisation, and its membership was restricted to paid social workers. By 1930 it had 5,030 members. Three years later, however, it restricted entry to those with a qualification from an accredited school of social work, which meant mainly a casework qualification.\(^{12}\)

Before the conception of a general association was widely held, associations arose according to the social work setting. The first of these was, not unexpectedly, the American Association of Hospital Social Workers (later the American Association of Medical Social Workers) formed in 1918. At first it covered psychiatric social workers, but in 1926, the American Association of Psychiatric Social Workers became a separate association. By 1930, this body’s membership was 364; that of the American Association of Medical Social Workers approximately 1,700. The National Association of School Social Workers at the same time had approximately 275 members.\(^{13}\)

In Britain, some specialist associations, notably the almoners’, were in existence by 1930, but the British Federation of Social Workers, the general professional association in the United Kingdom, was not formed until 1935.

Characteristic institutions, methods, and attitudes were thus being evolved which smaller societies, such as Australia, could adopt or adapt when they too moved into a more complex phase of social provision.

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\(^{12}\) Ibid., pp. 145–51.
