

PUBLIC HEALTH

# Welfare of American Youth Motive of Conference

## Committees Including 1200 Members Report How Science Can Aid In Child Care and Protection

**H**ERBERT HOOVER first became known to most of his fellow citizens as the man who fed the starving children of war-torn Belgium. Ever since the close of the war, he has been working for the children of his and our own country who are also starving, some of them for food, some for knowledge and some for wise and tender guidance along the thorny paths of childhood and adolescence. When he became President, one of his early acts was the calling of a nation-wide conference to consider the status of the child and what could be done for him.

As a result the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection met in Washington this week. For over a year the committee and sub-committees, numbering some 1,200 men and women devoted to child interests, had been gathering material, working on their reports. All the advances of modern science were scrutinized to find what use they are to children. Is the average American child any healthier

because we have toxin-antitoxin for diphtheria protection; because we have tuberculin tested herds of cows giving milk that is free from tuberculosis germs? Is he any happier or better educated because we can grade the intelligence of adults and children by standard tests; because we have nursery schools and pre-kindergartens springing up in most of our cities?

The President and the White House Conference wanted to know which scientific and economic developments of recent years can help each child in America. They wanted to know how the great mass of knowledge about children and child care can be put into use in every school and home in the land.

"The ideal to which we should drive," said President Hoover speaking at an earlier meeting on child health, "is that there should be no child in America that has not been born under proper conditions, that does not live in hygienic surroundings, that ever suffers from under-nutrition, that does not have

prompt and efficient medical attention and inspection, that does not receive primary instruction in the elements of hygiene and good health."

How to make the most of the long summer vacation in the American school system was one of the many problems affecting child welfare reported on.

The conference committee on the school child recommended that every school provide opportunities for healthful and creative activities during the long vacation which children have each summer. At present it is felt that there is too much contrast or opposition between school and vacation. The former is too "formal," the latter too "empty." Because less value is at present placed on vacation than on school, it is possible to experiment more with the vacation period. Various kinds of activities may be tried and the successful results may be applied to the school.

"A progressive educational policy should provide an educational and recreational program for the child throughout the year," the committee concluded. The committee on the school child is headed by Dr. Thomas B. Wood, professor of health education in Teachers' College, Columbia University.

### Week Vacations

In some parts of the country a school term of 10 or 12 weeks, with a week of vacation between terms, has been adopted. This is based on the opinion that the working efficiency of adults declines after 12 weeks of work without vacation. The proposed 13-month calendar would help in the arrangement of such a plan of school sessions.

Six hours of work is the maximum that should be expected of a child. Consequently if the school day is longer than six hours, periods of supervised play should be included. Children should not be expected to work longer than three hours without food.

Recess periods of 15 minutes during each half-day session are considered advantageous, but they should be made periods of genuine rest, not play, with as complete relaxation as possible and with real quiet.

Throughout its report and suggestions, the committee emphasized the importance of considering the child as a whole. Mind, body and emotional life should all be taken into account when planning an educational system or program.

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### MUSK OXEN ARE NOW IN ALASKA

*for the first time in more than 70 years. The experimental herd of 34 young animals imported from Greenland via New York and Seattle has arrived in excellent condition at the Reindeer Experiment Station of the U. S. Biological Survey near Fairbanks. It is expected through this herd to establish musk oxen in Alaska in large numbers as they were before killed out by Eskimos when Alaska was owned by Russia. The flesh of the animals is considered excellent food.*