

# NEW YORK'S "WELCOME"

**N**EW YORK has been called the friendless city, but if a new association formed to welcome strangers has its way, this is going to be the friendliest city in the world. Thirty of New York's leading organizations have combined to carry out a program intended to make people like New York and want to return. They say that the trouble is not in New York's treatment of the visitor within its gates, but in misconceptions about so big a city. And little annoyances often are exaggerated into apparently serious matters.

The Hotel Association, comprising 114 of the largest hostels, took the initiative in bring these forces together and unifying them to accomplish a common end—that of representing New York as it really is to those who live in other cities. At the same time, the movement is calculated to create a better understanding of New York by New Yorkers themselves.

There are more than 120,000,000 visitors coming to New York every year, according to figures given out by the Merchants' Association, based on records of steamship, ferry and other lines. Figures for 1921 were 138,897,981, or more than the population of the United States. In other words, the whole population of the nation could have come to New York and a third of it made a second visit.

Taking the initiative in the "Welcome, Stranger" movement, the Hotel Association decided that there was much misunderstanding both of New York's facilities and of its desire to share its advantages with visitors. A collection of clippings, gathered from all over the country, indicated how this frame of mind crops out in distant sections. One clipping, from a large daily in the South, told of the "crime wave" as if any visitor to New York was in danger of his life. The Hotel Association will seek to correct that impression by sending out statistics showing that only a few of the millions of strangers in New York during the last year had anything happen to them.

The "Welcome, Stranger" forces expect to correct many evils. Taxi rates are to be further regulated if they have their way, public porters put out of business and bellboys who are caught attempting to satisfy the thirst of visitors will be discharged.

The necessity for the campaign, the committee argues, may be found in brief in a communication from Dr. Royal S. Copeland, Health Commissioner.

"Frequently I have letters from people asking if I think it is safe for them to come to New York City and bring their children," he said. "No doubt the average person thinks there are more gunmen in New York than they had on the plains when Kit Carson was alive."

Dr. Copeland's thoughts on advertising New York to the world have been summed in these queries:

"Do you realize that the infant death rate in New York is lower than it is in any other great city in the world?"

"Do you know that the death rate in

New York City is the lowest of any great city in the world?"

"Do you know that we have the purest water, the purest and best milk, the best guarded food supplies of any city in the world?"

"Do you know that every food handler in New York City is examined by the Board of Health to make sure he is free from disease?"

"Do you know that when a visitor comes here he is better guarded, as regards his health and safety, than in any other place? No matter where he comes from he is better off here than he is at home."

The "Welcome, Stranger" forces say that the misinformation of the country about the real New York is amazing. They have clippings telling of the most fanciful orgies. Other clippings tell of bad sanitary and health conditions; still others indicate that suicide waves claim a great number of lives, and opposing camps declare that New York is dying of thirst and flowing with alcohol.

As a great majority of visitors spend their time in New York hotels, this industry was charged with the responsibility of taking the initiative in bringing together civic and other forces to educate the country about the real New York.

The "Welcome, Stranger" forces expect to reach two classes of visitors, those coming for business and the others for pleasure. On the business side, the Merchants Association is represented and it already has been busy with its convention and other bureaus. The Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce and the New York Board of Trade and Transportation are co-operating.

The New York Central and Pennsylvania Railroads are represented on the committee. The New York Central is actively engaged in telling the stranger about New York. It has a publicity system which supplies every Chamber of Commerce along the system with material about New York's business conditions. The Pennsylvania is active, too. The Long Island road, for example, keeps the commuting population of its territory informed of any changes affecting commuters, even to the closing hours of Broadway theatres.

The Automobile Club of America will, of course, seek to tell the motoring world about conditions in New York. The Department of Health and Police Department, the Rotary Club, the American Bankers Association are included in the movement, and the Metropolitan Museum, the Library, Botanical Garden, Columbia University and similar institutions are preparing information for the "Welcome, Stranger" Committee to broadcast.

Steamship lines will co-operate to the extent of furnishing travelers with information, which is expected to mean that travelers will stay here longer to partake of the opportunities New York offers for business or pleasure before embarking for other points.

The large number of conventions held in New York to a great extent are known only to the interested groups.

The "Welcome, Stranger" Committee will undertake to widen the interest of visiting delegates. The National Merchandise Exposition, Aug. 7 to 25, will bring thousands of merchandise men to the city. Before the "Welcome, Stranger" Committee started its activities the convention delegates would have devoted most of their time to shopping excursions in the stores or wholesale houses. There would have been theatre parties, too, and the usual dinners. Under the new plan, the "Welcome, Stranger" Committee intends to call the attention of every delegate to all the interests of New York—art museums, music, educational facilities, health, &c., so that when a delegate leaves he will carry with him a truer picture of New York than he has obtained from reading of "crime waves," suicides, orgies and the likes.

As it would be highly improper to invite a person to be your guest without having made preparations to receive him, the "Welcome, Stranger" Committee intends to put its own house in order. The first move is to drive out the public porters, not the red caps of the railroad terminals, but the men who are licensed by the city under an old law. Investigation has disclosed that they are responsible for many of the troubles of the visitor to New York.

Arriving at the Grand Central Terminal or the Pennsylvania Station, a person on his or her first visit to New York often is misdirected to lodging houses and questionable places on the porter's statement that "there's a big convention in town, and all the hotels are crowded." The porters get a fee

from the cheaper hotels and lodging houses for each guest.

E. M. Statler, the hotel man, relates an experience which illustrates the necessity, the "Welcome, Stranger" Committee says, for its work. Mr. Statler, coming to New York recently, sought to test a Pullman conductor's knowledge of the city and its hotel facilities.

"I haven't made a reservation, and I wonder if you can tell me a good hotel where I can get a room," Mr. Statler explained to the conductor, who was in doubt; travel was heavy and the hotels were undoubtedly jammed, he said.

"While he was telling me that I might not be able to get a room at any good hotel, I had rooms vacant at the Pennsylvania," said Mr. Statler. "It is this kind of thing that we think the committee will overcome through co-operation with railroads and its employes. Of all persons, the railroad employes ought to be among the best posted on the living situation in New York."

Besides the public porters, considered an unnecessary evil, the "Welcome Stranger" Committee is going after the taxicab operators. Criticism about rates, overcharges and lack of responsibility in accidents is to be eliminated if possible. The Hotel Association just now is fighting the Allied Taxi Owners' Association, which is trying to have the new bonding bill for taxicabs declared illegal. The bill provides that motor vehicles carrying passengers for hire must give a bond of \$2,500 against judgments for injuries. The Hotel Association says that such a law will eliminate many morally and financially irresponsible chauffeurs.

In other words, New York is going to be made still safer and saner for visitors and, at the same time, the visitors are going to be told about it at every opportunity through the "Welcome, Stranger" movement.