

THE RABBI AS SOCIAL WORKER

Not all communities are fortunate enough—and sometimes unfortunate enough—to have a paid worker. I say "paid worker" purposely, because it is pretty generally thought that that kind is the only kind worth while, except the few men and women of wealth who give their services for one phase of social welfare or another. Being a rabbi, I naturally think that a diploma from a school of civics and philanthropy and a salary on the side do not necessarily stamp efficiency upon the one who has both of these qualifications. But the enmity, or rather fancied enmity, between rabbis and social workers is so ancient that the mind of man runneth not to the contrary, or something similar. I mean, of course, to apply this only to those towns and cities, and possibly organizations, where there is not enough room for two great men at the same time. I think that sometimes it is very difficult to determine which city is better off, one that has a paid worker and no rabbi to butt in, or one which has a rabbi and no social worker to butt in. And here again an explanation is necessary. I mean "better off" as applied only to the social side of the community; and I use the term "butt in" only as it would be used either by a worker or a rabbi, under different combinations of circumstances. Ask any rabbi who has been crossed by a social worker, or any social worker who has been crossed by a rabbi, and you will get a more lucid explanation of what I mean. But I really believe that matters are adjusting themselves and that a better and more helpful feeling is springing up. Anyway, we hope so.

I shall speak here of what can be done in a community, far out in the Southwest, which has no paid worker, but where the rabbi and the secretary of the relief organization have to assume the burdens, responsibilities, and sometimes pleasures, of a real blood and flesh worker. In our city we have had to deal with the immigrants sent us from Galveston. And this has been done efficiently by the secretary, whose work in the past certainly merits that his name be here mentioned. Mr. Israel N. Mehl has spent a good deal of time,

money and often seemingly unrewarded patience with the newcomers. Many of them have been started upward on a pretty substantial basis, and we have here at the present time not one family of these immigrants on the pensioners' list. In fact, we feel that we should like to make a demand on Galveston for a whole shipload, only just at present the principal source of employment, the packing industries, are plentifully supplied.

But we felt, if you will pardon the rabbinical habit of quoting texts, that "man cannot live by bread alone," and we proceeded to organize a night school. I think that we have been extremely successful. For now we have three paid teachers—expect to put on another—and are looking forward to an ever-increasing attendance. The classes meet in the Sabbath School rooms of the temple; in order not to humiliate the pupils each pays twenty-five cents a week. The Council of Jewish Women has, with the assistance of a few wealthy patrons, furnished all school necessities, such as books, pencils and other supplies, and we have even gotten the enthusiastic support of the *Arbeitering*, of which there is a branch here. We have a species of medical inspection, and already four pupils are being treated free by different doctors. We are planning to do a few other things, but if they are ever done we will speak of them. We have tried them before, but with little success. Maybe we can do better this time.

You will readily see that we could do a great deal more if we had an institute, and I suppose you have been asking why we haven't any. Here is the rub. A Hebrew institute is being planned, but it is the same old trouble. Instead of having it located near the Jewish settlement, it is to be located next to the *Shul*, and its principal object is to afford a place for the teaching of Hebrew to the children of Orthodox parents. It is, you see, to be a Talmud Torah, instead of a social center, or institute. The result of the decision to do this has been the weaning away of the wealthier and Reform element from aiding the proposition, and we will be even more handicapped in the future than in the past.

The reason for this is plain. The Orthodox element has decreed that no "liberals" of any sort be welcomed in their Talmud Torah. I mean by "liberals," immigrants such as Socialists, Bundists, Social Democrats and, of course, those who have no religion. This is how the *Arbeiter Ring* came to us. Its representatives were told by a committee that when the Talmud Torah is finished and its library installed, *the literature in it will be censored*. I did not, and could not believe it at first. But I was assured by the committee of the *Arbeiter* organization. Sounds rather queer that a sensible Orthodox community would do a thing of this sort in a free land, and to a body of its own young men; but it is so. I have wondered what some of the members of my own congregation would say if they knew that among the pupils studying in their Sabbath School rooms were young men who refused to join a Jewish organization because they did not believe in the God of their fathers. Something of which I had never thought just occurs to me. If the Orthodox congregation has a right to censor the literature even of Jewish authors which is to come into its library, why hasn't the Reform congregation a right to cross-examine any Jewish boy or girl who desires to get any benefits it might be able to bestow. I hope that I am not putting any funny ideas into anybody's head. But the moral is easily drawn. In a large number of the smaller cities, the Orthodox communities outnumber the Reform. An inestimable amount of good could be done if only a more liberal attitude were adopted by their leaders. Perhaps the time is not yet ripe to apply the same democratic principles to the religious organizations that we do to the political. Any man may have any advantage offered by any public institution, no matter what he believes and thinks, yet here is the institution of religion, which ought to be the best of all, deliberately throwing away a great opportunity. While the education of the foreigner belongs to the city or, where there are no means of such education, to the religious organizations of which the foreigners are units, it seems that sentiment as well as practice would influence the foreign element to open

hospitably the doors of its institutions to fellow-countrymen. And, indeed, this ought to be done, if a lot of this false dignity and false patronage on the part of natives is to be avoided. But there ought to be no conditions and limitations. It seems to me that here lies to a large extent the reason for the success of the social worker. He is not often religious enough to care whether those with whom he comes in contact are Orthodox, Reformed, infidels, atheists or anarchists. He is there for their mental and physical as well as moral uplift, and he treats them on the plane of human kinship. He neither has a slushy sentimental pity for them, nor a religious abhorrence for them; and this seems to me is the proper attitude—an attitude which is as necessary to successful social work in a small place as in a large. So far as our work here is concerned, I neither know what our pupils believe, nor whether they go to *Shul*. I do care, but I'll have to shelve my religious paternalism until a later time. I know that most of them are more likely to remain loyal and enlightened Jews if they become honorable, independent and law-abiding, than if I frighten them away by my religious concern for them at the present time, and scare them with my Reform, of which they probably have as much idea as I have of Chasidic Orthodoxy, and thereby lose an opportunity of doing some good work with them and for them. And let me say in passing here, that during the last Holy days some of our former pupils were indignant because there was no room for them in the temple, and they afterwards complained about it.

It is too bad that every community of any size cannot have the services of a paid worker. Too often the social work of the community falls upon the rabbi's shoulders and takes away from him the time he should give to his religious duties and functions. You may laugh if you choose, but the fountain-head of all social work is the influence of the synagogue, and if that is neglected the Jewish social workers may prepare to go out of business. But the rabbi may do a great deal if he understands social work. Every community may have its detailed problems, but in the

generality of things the relief organizations often need intelligent guidance; the immigrant problem is often pressing; the need for the unification of the different charitable organizations is often present, and some cities, like mine, have the additional problem of Jewish prostitution. We are making some strong attempts to clean it out, but the work is hard, tedious and often disagreeable. Yet it has to be done and, nilly-willy, it is the business of the rabbi to take the foremost part. If the paid workers would appreciate the efforts, trials and toils of the minister, and if the minister would appreciate the sincerity and the tribulations of the social worker, a sympathetic bond between the two would be created, which occasional jealousies and bickerings could not easily break down. There is a story that a little brother of a bride had painted and nailed upon the carriage bearing the couple to the train the following inscription: "I am his, he is mine, and each is each's." After all, isn't the work of the minister that of the Jewish social worker? And isn't the work of the worker that of the minister's, and in the end, isn't the work of each, each's?

NEW BOOKS

CHILDREN'S PLAY AND ITS PLACE IN EDUCATION. By Walter Wood. New York: Duffield & Co.

Mr. Wood reviews the various theories regarding the play spirit, but finally confesses himself unable to analyze and define it satisfactorily. He has the hope that "some great philosopher, examining the problem in the light of the kindred sciences of psychology, sociology and heredity, * * * will come forward to tell us the meaning and purpose of play. Then we may picture some educational reforms * * *." The remainder of the book contains chapters on "Juvenile Literature," "The Playground Movement in America" and "Play and Civilization."

The book presents an Englishman's observations of the present-day development of systematized play, particularly in this country.

C. S. B.

LABOR AND ADMINISTRATION. A new book of interest to all students of public affairs by John R. Commons, Professor of Political Economy in the University of Wisconsin, formerly director of the Milwaukee Bureau of Economy and Efficiency and member of the Industrial Commission of Wisconsin. Macmillan.

Professor Commons is also the author of *Races and Immigrants in America*, a very widely quoted work.

The table of contents of Professor Commons' book reads as follows: Utilitarian Idealism, Constructive Research, Standardizing the Home, An Idealistic Interpretation of History, Economists and Class Partnership, Class Conflict, The Union Shop, Unions of Public Employes, Restrictions by Trade Unions, Unions and Efficiency, European and American Unions, Labor and Municipal Politics, Milwaukee Bureau of Economy and Efficiency, American Shoemakers, 1648 to 1895, The Longshoremens of the Great Lakes, The Musicians of St. Louis and New York, Wage-earners of Pittsburgh, Tariff and Labor, A State System of Employment Offices, Industrial Education in Wisconsin, The Industrial Commission of Wisconsin and Investigation and Administration.

QUESTIONS OF PUBLIC POLICY. (Page Lectures.) 12mo., cloth binding, gilt top. 150 pages, index. Price, \$1.25 net; postage 10 cents extra. Yale University Press.

Four topics, about which public interest is at present peculiarly awakened, are discussed in this volume. The contents include: "The Character and Influence of Recent Immigration," by Prof. J. W. Jenks, Ph.D., LL.D.; "The Essential and Unessential in Currency Legislation," by Mr. A. Piatt Andrew, formerly professor of economics in Harvard University; "The Value of the Panama Canal to this Country," by Prof. Emory R. Johnson, Ph.D. of the University of Pennsylvania, and "Benefits and Evils of the Stock Exchange," by Mr. Willard V. King of New York City.

WORK OF UNITED HEBREW CHARITIES

The annual report of the trustees of the United Hebrew Charities contains many interesting features. Among the important topics reported on are those given below. Mr. Morris D. Waldman is superintendent of the association.

In part, the report is as follows:

"Reference was made in our last year's report to the plans proposed by the Society for the abolition of pushcart peddling in the streets of this city, and the erection of suitable shelters in the congested quarters of the city for pushcart vendors. The late Mayor Gaynor, whose untimely taking away we mourn, in conjunction with the great body of citizens of New York, keenly realized that proper provision ought to be made for pushcart peddlers and was deeply impressed with the general plan submitted to him by our organization. He appointed a committee of citizens to investigate the matter thoroughly, whose final recommendations were in accord with the plans proposed by us. These recommendations, calling specifically for the erection of suitable shelters in various parts of the city, to cost approximately \$625,000, were submitted to the Board of Estimate and Apportionment by the late mayor a few days prior to his death and are now before that body. It is expected that the investment of the above amount will yield the city a substantial revenue, without involving the vendors in larger expense than they are put to at the present time for the rental of their pushcarts. It is hoped that the plans thus submitted will be approved before the end of the present administration. When this is accomplished, not only will the condition of the streets in the crowded sections of our city be freed from dirt and obstruction, but new opportunities will be afforded to handicapped persons to become self-supporting.

REMOVAL OF FAMILIES TO OUTLYING BOROUGHS

"Whenever our funds have permitted, we have removed families from insanitary quarters to more habitable apartments. In addition to these sporadic cases, we determined last year to move thirty families from the lower East Side to the Bronx, in

order to afford them better homes in less congested quarters. The housing conditions of these families have perceptibly improved. The buildings in which they live are fire-proof, windows open to the free light, and they have the luxury of a bath and hot water. The neighborhoods are not congested, and the better environment has a marked influence for good. A few, with gregarious instinct, still long for the crowded East Side and their 'landsleute.' Ninety-five per cent., however, are happy because of the change, and they feel that their removal was a blessing in many ways. This has entailed an increased expenditure for relief of \$154 a month, or an average of \$2.66 per family.

DIFFICULTY OF INFORMING PUBLIC

"Because our relations with the poor are of a semi-confidential character, we cannot publish in graphic form or with specific details the conditions under which they live and the stories of the misfortunes with which they are afflicted. Other institutions, like the hospitals, child-caring institutions and educational institutions, harbor their charges in buildings open to inspection and the good work they do is patent to all. Our labors are chiefly performed behind the closed doors of the tenement home. Indeed, we discourage our beneficiaries from coming to our offices to avoid subjecting them to the humiliating gaze of the public. The conditions under which they live frequently beggar description, and we therefore can only hope that the mass of our comfortably situated people will accept our statements as accurate and respond to our appeals for additional support.

COST OF ADMINISTRATION

"When attempting to enroll members, your trustees meet with various excuses from those unwilling to contribute. Occasionally it is argued that private giving is preferable to giving through organized charities because every dollar goes to the poor, whereas, it is alleged, a large part of the funds secured by organizations is expended in salaries of employes and for other administrative needs. Sometimes even absurd exaggerations are indulged in in respect to them. We have always been