

Confronting Some Issues in Jewish Continuity: The Response of the Profession*

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The author has selected for discussion four key issues: 1. financing the meeting of Jewish needs in America; 2. serving and relating to the new immigrants (chiefly Israelis); 3. the turning inward of the American Jew; 4. the roles of the professional and the Conference.

Prologue

Watersheds in Jewish life, as in life in general, are most frequently isolated and identified after the fact. Only with the perspective of time can the fullness of import and impact of the moment be truly comprehended and distilled. A generation given to hourly newscasts, to net-alert news interruptions of news programs, to instant coverage of life and death through the minicam may well find it difficult to maintain perspective and judge change and its impact even as they occur. Media may indeed replace message and time; deadlines may skew perspectives which could be better achieved without benefit of stop watches and dog food commercials.

To distinguish the tenacity of some issued from the ephemeral nature of others I reviewed the proceedings of Annual Meetings of this Conference for the eight decades of its existence. The proceedings of the first two decades are replete with articles devoted to the amelioration of social conditions through: (1) aiding the poor; (2) settling Jews outside the cities in order to combat the high rate of tuberculosis and to negate stereotypes which said Jews could not master the land as farmers; (3) responding to Jewish delinquency and crime in Palestine and the United States.

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The high rate of desertion of families by Jewish males is reported upon in *one* study.¹ Of the 561 men located, 120 had left their wives for another woman and three for another man. The intriguing reasons for the other cases can be found in the article. I cite the finding to indicate, in passing, that some life-style changes are not as new as one might think. In 1910, one speaker, when discussing family desertions, laments that "it has become the miserable practice of many communities to get rid of their community-dependents by shipping them elsewhere, by foisting them upon other communities, upon which they had no claim, and even this was not done in a half-way decent manner because it was a little too expensive to send the applicant to the final destination that he or she wanted to reach, whether justified in going there or not. So one community would ship the family a hundred miles and put them as a burden on the third community — and so on and so on . . ." ² So much for progress on residency requirements and consistent coordinated efforts in settling people and solving social problems.

In a brilliant address to the conference seventy years ago this week, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise defined a Jewish hospital as one which

¹ *Proceedings of the Seventh National Conference of Jewish Charities*, 1908, 1912, p. 65.

² *Proceedings of the Sixth Conference of Jewish Charities*, 1910. Julian M. Mack, p. 4.

"does not chiefly offer its Jewish sympathy and generosity and . . . Jewish ideals . . . which prompt an abiding and unimpaired interest in a patient even after a surgical operation is performed, just as . . . it is not an ideal Jewish orphan society which . . . makes a home for a maximum of children within an asylum instead of an asylum for a maximum of children within homes."³ (So what does make a hospital Jewish and how long *did* we take to respond to humanizing human services?)

Moving ahead, the age of adjustment to America gives way to the period of adjustment in America. A noticeable shift in topics is discernible and discussions turn increasingly to: (1) lay-professional relations; (2) relationships to Israel; (3) who is a Jew; (4) the nature of Jewish identity in an open society.⁴

Morris Waldman, in his 1929 presidential address, captured this change when he noted that . . . "the adolescence of Jewish life in America is virtually over and with it the storm and stress that was its natural accompaniment. Israel in America has come of age."⁵

And yet, by the end of the 1920's one subject had been dealt with repeatedly. First referred to in 1908 and again eloquently in 1930, the topic was "Jewish content" and its place in practice and the field. The titles should suffice to let the reader rehearse the pros and cons. "Should the Conference, at Its

³ *Ibid.*, Stephen S. Wise, p. 95.

⁴ "The Lay Person and the Professional," *Proceedings of the National Conference of Jewish Social Service*, Cleveland, 1926. J.M. Gillman, "The Race Hypothesis of U.S. Immigration Commission," *Jewish Social Service Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (September 1927), pp. 5-9. Maurice Hexter, "The Jewish Agency and its Implications for American Jewish Life," *Proceedings of the National Conference of Jewish Social Service*, 1929, pp. 20-30.

⁵ Presidential Address, National Conference of Jewish Social Service, 1929, *Proceedings of the National Conference*, p. 15.

Biennial Sessions, Devote Itself Entirely to the Consideration of Specifically Jewish Questions?"⁶ And, "What Makes Jewish Social Work Jewish?"⁷ These titles respectively, are from the 1908 and 1930 meetings. Particularly interesting was the argument put forth in the 1930 discussion by an anonymous author. He posited the premise that there were no "Jewish" differences (in social work) stating . . . "the 'separateness' of Jewish social work is merely one of the vestigial remains of a bitter ghetto past, in which one wave of persecution followed another with automatic regularity. We are living in a new age which manifests a more tolerant and a more humane attitude toward intergroup relationships. As we adjust ourselves to the rest of the world, as we free ourselves from the artificial externals forced upon us by the handicaps of earlier ages, the less and less will there be a need or reason for a separate and distinctive phase of social work, now called 'Jewish'. In fact, are we not all striving for the day when social service will be obsolete? The new social order, by its guarantee against economic, social and industrial injustices, will make social work, no matter what its form or variety, absolutely unnecessary."⁸

The 1930's and 1940's turn our anonymous writer's dream into a nightmare. The depression, Naziism, World War II, The Holocaust, all give the lie to the end of Jewish uniqueness and concerns. By the early 1930's, full meeting proceedings are no longer printed, but the titles of papers, as evidenced in the Journal,

⁶ Dr. E.N. Calish, *National Conference of Jewish Charities Proceedings*, 1908, pp. 149-151.

⁷ Abraham Cronbach, "What Makes Jewish Social Work 'Jewish'; Historical Aspects," pp. 3-4; Harry Lurie, "The Evidence from a Social Agency," pp. 5-7; John Slawson, "Communal Aspects," pp. 8-10; Anonymous, "Facing Reality," p. 15, *Jewish Social Service Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 1, September 1930.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

demonstrates the shifts in concerns brought on by the catastrophic events of the times. At the same time, the then-abiding after-effects of the early immigrant period in Palestine are highlighted by articles dealing with tuberculosis and delinquency there.⁹

With the change in emphasis, there remains an abiding issue — The place and nature of Jewish content.¹⁰ The children of the immigrants have come of age and, with their seeming maturity, comes the striving for upward mobility. The climb from the dark and dreary ghettos of Houston Street to the smog-laden and expensively landscaped streets of Heavenly Valley, Exurbia, USA, is accomplished in one generation.

Thus, the jump from the starch-laden and cholesterolly-permeated diet of the poor immigrant to the calorie-counting of the

symplic watchers of girth is also accomplished in one generation.

The early 1950's mark yet another change with a return to the tension first referred to by the anonymous advocate of Universalism twenty years earlier. The struggle between the Universalists and those who placed more emphasis on Jewish issues threatened to divide the Conference. Social action issues were sidetracked; professional issues were further emphasized. The ever-increasing sophistication of the nature of professional concerns is readily noted and, yet, the issue of "Jewishness" and Jewish content continues to be debated and dissected in the Conference. Through the 1950's and 1960's the issue is returned to repeatedly.¹¹

The Journals of this period also reflect changes of a generation prideful of its accomplishments and yet "not quite at home" in America, as Sklare would have it, but "making it" (ala Podhoretz) to set the stage for the third generation. A generation which, also, is often mocking the "making it" of their parents, no longer adjusting to America or in America and, too often, giving up trying to adjust America, itself. For some, there is an over-emphasis in turning inward. Their search for meaning is not that of generations past. The move to introspection and individuality becomes evident in the literature.

With all of this, the events that have been the context for the Jew's human dramas have been confronted by, and through, our agencies and our professions. They have ranged from

¹¹ cf especially, Norman Linzer, Ed., *Jewish Communal Services in the U.S.*, A Selected Bibliography, A.J. Kutzik, "Jewish Values and Jewish Social Service," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Vol. 36 (Fall 1959), pp. 79-89. Ben Halpern, "Sectarianism and the Jewish Community," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Vol. 42 (1964), pp. 6-17. M.F. Verbit, "Structural Conditions of Jewish Continuity in America," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Vol. 48, (1971), pp. 10-22.

the mundane to the cataclysmic and set the stage for a discussion of issues which are present or emerging for consideration and action in our day.

The Present

The concerns I choose to concentrate upon are not encyclopedic, yet represent those which, I imagine, may well vex us in the period ahead, even as some of them have the appearance of eternity with their abiding presence.

There are a number of major issues confronting Jewish life. The most important of these are: (1) zero population growth, (2) inter-marriage, (3) the sexist attitudes of and in our professions, (4) the aged and aging, (5) family disintegration, (6) the indifference to matters Jewish by increasing numbers of young and old, (7) Soviet Jewish immigration, (8) single-parent families, (9) drugs, (10) infidelity, (11) alternative life styles, (12) inter-generational strains, (13) mobility, (14) Israel, (15) Israel-Diaspora Relations, and (16) Falasha Jewry.

I will deal with none of these directly — not because they are not important, but rather because the subjects have been and will be dealt with at this meeting and elsewhere at great length. Instead, I choose to concentrate upon issues easier to deal with, in one sense, and possibly even more profoundly complex, in another. These issues have subtle yet complex overtones. Some of them permeate the concerns listed above. All, by inference, relate to us and our concerns as professionals and as Jews. The issues follow:

1. **Financing the Meeting of Jewish Needs in America.**
2. **Serving and Relating to the New Immigrants.**
3. **The Turning Inward of the American Jew.**
4. **The Roles of the Professional and the Conference.**

Financing the Meeting of Jewish Needs

Two case examples related to finances will demonstrate the complexity of the issue we face:

1. *The Local Fight for the Jewish Dollar.*

Shiff has reminded us that, while enrollment in all Jewish educational institutions has declined from 525,000 in 1962 to 292,000 in 1977, day school enrollment in the same period has grown from 60,000 to 92,000.¹² In that same period, the cost of Jewish education has risen from 100 to 300 million dollars annually, with 200 million dollars being expended for day school education.¹³ Day schools now represent an average per capita cost of \$2,000. The Federation allocation represents 11.45 percent (22.7 million). Twenty-two percent of local allocations now are made in support of Jewish education, a marked increase from a decade ago in actual dollars, yet a proportionately small share of the dollars when measured against total expenditures.¹⁴ Careful analysis of fund-raising of the past half-decade indicates that a near-plateau has been maintained, after inflation has been factored in to measure real dollar gains.¹⁵ The real increase of allocations for Jewish education (from 17 percent of local allocations in 1966 to 22 percent in 1976)¹⁶ suggests that the reordering of local priorities and their importance in relation to Israel will be hotly debated in the period ahead.

At the same time, it would appear highly likely that some local agencies increasingly will be held accountable to produce "Jewish" results (however that term is understood) or suffer continued or new cuts in the allocation

¹² Alvin Shiff, "Jewish Day Schools in America," *Pedagogic Reporter*, Winter 1977-78, pp. 2-7.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁵ National United Jewish Appeal. Data supplied for study purposes.

¹⁶ *op. cit.* Shiff, p. 5.

⁹ The Depression and Relief Programs have special emphasis in Vol. VIII, No. 1, September, 1936 issue of the *Jewish Social Service Quarterly*. 1936 still has references to T.B.: J. Rosenblatt, "Tuberculosis as a Jewish Problem," *Jewish Social Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (December, 1936). The issue of juvenile delinquency in Palestine appears with the article, Stephen Krauss, "Children of the Old City of Jerusalem: A Study of 50 Cases of Juvenile Delinquency," *Jewish Social Service Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 2 pp. 256-9. By 1941 the shift to professionalism is particularly evident and the decade is replete with articles focused upon these concerns:

cf S.E. Penn & M.R. Gomberg, "The Family Agency in Relation to the Veteran and His Family," pp. 65-74; Milton Goldman, "The Veteran Comes Home," pp. 78-83; G. Bychowsky, "The Psychology of the Veteran," pp. 84-6; *Jewish Social Service Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 1, September 1945. cf F. Silverblatt, "The Application Form: Implications Of Its Use for Client and Agency," pp. 34-9; F.T. Levinson, "The Use of Fees in the Consultation Center," pp. 11-14; *Jewish Social Service Quarterly*, Vol. 72, No. 1, September 1945.

¹⁰ Wm. Posner, "Jewish Content in Child Placement," *Jewish Social Service Quarterly*, Vol. 24, (March 1948), pp. 268-73. Saul Hofstein, "The Jewish Heritage and the Social Agency," *Journal of Jewish Social Welfare*, Vol. 24, pp. 259-67.

process. More and more frequently the "products" of the UJA and Federation Young Leadership missions and groups will be among the decision-makers in the Jewish community. They will represent the post-1967 generation, which was raised not on guilt but the need for action as a steady diet, on Jewish identity, life style, intentions and emotions. They will be the supporters and the products of the Hebrew-speaking camps, the year in Israel programs, the weekends with "Rebbes" Greenberg, Wiesel, Hartman, Reisman, Verbit, et. al. They will be influenced by the *Shabbatot* at B'nai B'rith Leadership Encampments, the JWB Biennials, the CJF General Assemblies, Brandeis Camp Institute, the UJA missions, the Young Leadership programs: all of which or whom exhort people to think, feel, do Jewish. More and more frequently they will place their own children in day schools, if not to embrace Jewish life style then to escape busing and what, they fear, will be mediocre public education. These successful professionals and business people, who are active in the Jewish community, will not for long pay \$2,000 per year for tuition for each child in a day school as they save to pay college tuition for the decade to follow without beginning to exert pressure upon local allocation committees to help them. In short, the altruists of the past who were "doers" for others will be replaced increasingly by "users" who will need help for themselves even as they also help others. These people, with their upper-middle class incomes cannot plead poverty but they can and will plead for individual "tax" relief by urging higher allocations to the institutions they and their families use the most.

Meanwhile, the Jewish community centers in the major cities are reverting to providing increasingly high-cost social services to the single parents, Soviet immigrants and the aged. They, and the other social agencies, will bear the brunt of the dollar crunch on the local level if they do not satisfy the emerging lay leadership of the primacy of their Jewish intentions. A kind of battleground may thus emerge between a generation which will come

to power — a generation never having known real fiscal need, competing for service at the expense of the fiscal needs of the underserved in our community—the aged, the single-parent family, the Soviet immigrant and the like.

The "unthinkable" may take place. Dollars may well be diverted from Israel as it becomes apparent to increasing numbers of givers that growing dollar support from the American government will be increasingly significant in amount and import in the years ahead. In 1976 alone over 1.7 billion dollars was given in grants and loans to Israel by the American government, while UJA allocations and Israel Bonds totalled less than 600,000,000 dollars.

The fight for the Jewish dollar may be further complicated by the growing desire and possibility of new relations between Federations and synagogues. These relations could well lead to new expectations for using community dollars. Sophisticated synagogues will learn how to negotiate the Federation system and adapt to the legitimate demand for accountability as a price for gaining access to community dollars. What can, thus, be anticipated is a series of intersecting axes focused upon the central Jewish treasury for increasingly Jewish purposes. Thus, a new cadre of contending groups will most likely make their presence felt in giving and demanding more of an input into the allocation process. Undoubtedly, the need for new dollars for more subtle, yet urgent, purposes will lead to increasing priority of concern in building-up community foundation funds so as to utilize their assets in increasingly innovative ways. They may provide a way to solve some seemingly irreconcilable claims upon limited dollars.

2. *The Use of Community Foundations.*

Henry Zucker has noted that a decade ago the combined assets of all Jewish community foundations and philanthropic funds totaled \$25,000,000 and that presently these same funds now have assets in excess of \$25,000,000. He has pointed out that if *all* Jewish community foundations and philan-

thropies had assets proportionate to the top 25 percent of the existing funds, there would now be one billion dollars in assets.¹⁷ Substantial numbers of Jews have accrued liquid assets which represent a great opportunity for an exponential growth of the funds through the creative use of living trusts, sheltered giving opportunities and the like. Most importantly, the use to which these funds must be put in the future will become of greater magnitude in the decades ahead. I have referred elsewhere to the need for the Jewish community to aid in the solution of such potential catastrophes as zero population growth with radical institutional response. For the purposes of this article, the potential role of foundations in responding to these issues will be underscored. Consider: The upper middle-class young family wishes to buy a home, utilize synagogue and/or Jewish community center services, including nursery schools, camping and, possibly, day schools. They wish to plan for the higher education of their young children.¹⁸

Unless the Jewish community finds different means to fund its highly expensive and "Jewish — beneficial" programs such as nursery and day schools, camps and synagogues, young families will not be able to use them. Three financial obstacles deter or decelerate marriages, affiliations and growth in family size. They are: (1) the cost of housing, (2) Jewish education and, (3) group experiences and university education. It is incumbent upon the Jewish community foundations to develop low-cost mortgage programs and subsidies interwoven with low-cost loan programs for Jewish education and group experiences and higher education for Jewish children. The equivalent of credit unions (with partially subsidized support), matching funds for tuition purposes, mortgages and education

grants and loans must be developed through a national consortium of local federation foundations subscribing to and/or providing capital for investment, loan and grant purposes as a matter of Jewish public policy. There is every reason to believe that the assets of the foundations *can* grow to at least 1 billion dollars in the next 4 to 5 years. Without a reasoned and coherent approach, there is much to convince the Cassandras among us that Jewish marriage and birth rates will continue to plunge, that affiliation rates will continue to decrease and Jews will become even more physically dispersed as they continue their desperate search for relatively low-cost housing in the exurbs of our continent.

And — even as the Jewish community faces the possibility of further thinning of its ranks until it evolves sensible Jewish social policies, priorities and practices, it does little to relate itself to a growing source of physical replenishment and a potential source of creative Jewish input and fiscal responsibility.

Serving and Relating to the New Immigrants

When the word immigrant is mentioned, the most obvious group which comes to mind is the Soviet Jews, a group whose progress has been charted, dissected and fruitfully analyzed by Jewish communal workers. These Soviet immigrants are, at present, a small group, representing less than 15 percent of all the Jews who left Russia in the past half-dozen years. All indications point to patterns of adjustment which parallel those of the immigrants at the turn of the century. I mean them no disservice, nor do I intend to diminish the positive contribution, as Americans and Jews, they will make in the decades ahead. Rather, I choose to focus my comments upon a much larger and growing group, the Israelis, perhaps the largest group of Jews who have come to America in 40 years!

Estimates suggest that 300,000 to 400,000 Israelis now reside in the United States and Canada. No one is clear as to the permanence of their status or their actual numbers. U.S.

¹⁷ Reports to the Council of Jewish Federations Board of Directors, 1977.

¹⁸ Gerald B. Bubis, *The Contemporary Jewish Family: Implications for Jewish Community Centers*, *Jewish Welfare Board Year Book*, 1977.

Immigration officials in California indicate that less than 4,000 in the Los Angeles area have alien registration cards while less than 8,000 are registered with the Israel Consulate. Yet, the Israeli officials in Los Angeles estimate there may be as many as 80,000 in the Los Angeles area alone.¹⁹ They represent a particularly delicate problems for Jews in America for a number of reasons.

- (1) The legal status of the Israelis in America is blurred.
- (2) They are treated differently by their (former) government than most governments treat former nations.
- (3) They are ambivalent about their own status.
- (4) They are received ambivalently by American Jewry.

1. Legal Status

Many Israelis are in America "temporarily." That term may be more apt as a statement of intention rather than of physical reality. Historically, many immigrants to America returned to their countries of origin after a stay in America. In the case of Israelis their intention is much more difficult to divine. An inordinately large number of them are now, undoubtedly, illegal immigrants. This presents them, the government and the Jewish community with a number of problems, including the psychological, the legal and the sociological ones which arise from being uncertain as to rights and permanency of residency. This leads to the next point:

2. Differential treatment by Israel

Israel has an understandable ambivalence in deciding how to relate to Israelis who seem to be permanently ensconced in America. They are *Yordim* and thus have "deserted" their country in a time of need. They are, this point of view holds, often seen as betrayers and destroyers of the Zionist dream. On the other hand, they and if not they, their children,

¹⁹ Author's conversation with Israel Consulate official, Fall 1977.

present a great potential for *(re)-Aliyah*. Knowledge of the country, its language and realities present a different context for a potential "emigrant" to Israel. In many ways they seem to have the best change of *(re)-adjustment* in Israel because those Israelis who do return will do so in a context of hard reality and not of rosy and unrealistic idealism.

The Israeli government has discouraged efforts by American Jewry aimed at integrating the Israelis in America. The now psychological bifurcated Israeli will not be seen at official Israeli functions, whereas his neighbor, a former British national, will be invited, as part of the "British" colony, to take part in festivities when an English dignitary graces a city with his presence. Until recently, United Jewish Welfare Funds were discouraged from attempting to deal with Israelis as an entity. Israeli speakers would often refuse to speak at gatherings of the *Yordim*. These factors contribute to the ambivalence of the Israelis who wish to become Americans and, at the same time, to maintain relationships with Israel and with the American Jewish community.

3. The Ambivalent Israelis

The outgrowth of this marginality has led to a great deal of rationalizing, anger and uncertainty in the nature of the Israelis' pattern of relationships with the local community. The classical pattern of *landsman-shaften* has not evolved in the same manner as classic immigration groups produce. Only now is there some beginning evidence of this in some cities and only recently have Israelis begun to reach out to the organized Jewish community with other than requests for service. The Israeli enclaves abound; Hebrew remains the primary language and children may be encouraged to go to Israel for Bar and Bat Mitzvah or some other occasion of joy and discovery. Many Israelis send their children to day schools in order to maintain the language even as they reject the teachings of the day schools because of their own secular ideol-

ogies. Most Jews who preceded the Israelis to America came for historical, economic and geo-political reasons which intensified their resolve and accelerated their pattern of acculturation in and to America. The Israeli is, thus, psychically different from other Jewish immigrants.

The immigrant of old rarely could go home again, even if he so desired. The Israeli is urged, cajoled, enticed, cursed, bribed, excoriated, pleaded with, made to feel guilty — all in an attempt to be "helped" to return so as to regain the favored status of an Israeli *in* Israel rather than the *Yored* from Israel.

This process, in turn, further widens the social and psychic distance between American Jews and Israeli Jews in America. The Israelis maintain their social enclaves and cultural patterns in the classic immigrant pattern but are understandably loathe to risk the outreach to the American Jewish community. In this regard, American Jews have their own problems.

4. The Ambivalence of the American Jewish Community

The American Jewish community has long been seen as the loyal liege of Israel. Its own unresolved ambivalence growing out of *shicking* checks and not people finds it vulnerable when its relationship with new Israeli-American Jews is examined. It is a betrayal of Israel to make Israeli Jews in America "too" welcome and "too" comfortable once it is clear they are not visitors but residents? The point needs no further belaboring. The issue is thus joined. The reality is that hundreds of thousands of Jews *have* come to North America from Israel and apparently a large proportion of them intends to stay for indefinite periods of time, including a great number who will be here permanently. Canadian-American Jewry can ill afford to minimize the rich potential all new immigrants have in helping to build Jewish life in North America. Their knowledge, values and skills represent a potential infusion of spirit and treasure of the mind and pocket which must be

more affirmatively and consistently linked to organized Jewish communities. Jewish community centers, camps and Jewish schools, in particular, represent a set of institutional images which Israelis can most easily relate to. At a time of shrinking Jewish population and Jewish indifference, Israelis represent a potentially great treasure to us. We cannot squander this treasure through indifference and/or lack of outreach and opportunities uniquely appropriate to all the realities of the Israelis in America. Reaching out to Israelis in America will help nourish Jewish life here *and* in Israel. Reducing the feelings of guilt and ambivalence of American and Israeli Jews should have two results: (1) More Israelis should become involved in Jewish life in America. As a result, there would be (2) the higher likelihood of more of them being encouraged to return to Israel. Those who remain in North America would be at home as Jews in America and if they returned to Israel would do so in a more positive context.

The Inward Turning of the American Jew

I need not restate the many explanations which illuminate our present state of "inwardness." I choose, instead, to state that with the realities of the disappointments and pain with past group alliances, the shattering of the century-long Jewish emphasis on liberal humanistic messianism, and the sense of isolation and despair the Jew feels in the world today, a great many Jews have turned *too* far inward in separating themselves from the concerns and realities which can only be confronted in unity with other like-minded Americans. Our test must be to measure priorities in the context of Jewish concern *and* general concern; of proud and rigorous lobbying for our rights as people *and* our realization of the close relationship this puts us into with others in parallel situations. Comfort-laden and sated exurbanites cannot watch the rotting urban core without accepting responsibility as Jewish citizens to help to end the curse of the disintegration of our cities.

Healthy Jewish life can only exist in a

growth-inducing environment. The Jewish community must continue to maintain, as a high point of concern, its cooperative and conjoint efforts in the struggle to solve some of the great social concerns which continue to bedevil us as citizens. If we do not, we shall be hurt by our delusions. Some of us, somehow, feel things can be good for Jews as life disintegrates for many around us, and of course this cannot ever be the case. We have, as Jews, a proud history in intergroup relations and social action. Our organizational genius has given us an infrastructure which remains at the ready. I sense that Jewish mentality today is insufficiently focused on the need for outreach and re-alignment. The issue, thus, is not resolved by creating new ways to serve but to re-emphasize our concern for general social issues even as we remain alert and focused on those concerns which only we as a Jewish community can rightly deal with.

The Professional and the Professions

What, indeed, might be said about the powers and roles of the professional, as an individual, *and* the professions, acting through the Conference of Jewish Communal Service?

The paid staff of all Jewish communal agencies in the United States and Canada, excluding rabbis, may now number between 10,000 to 12,000 individuals. No one knows exactly. Never before in the history of a *voluntary* community has there been created so comprehensive a structure, staffed by so many paid people, in proportion to the number being served. If our numbers are anywhere near correct (excluding cantors and rabbis), there is a full-time paid professional for approximately every 450 to 500 Jews in North America. The figure indicates the potential force of the network within which we work. There are, however, difficulties in realizing the fullest power of this network which is dedicated to building up Jewish life and responding to Jewish concerns. A number of restraints must be understood as such and dealt with as realistically and healthfully as possible. These restraints include:

- (1) Our own middle-class values and consequent frequent identification with the status quo.
- (2) Our fear of handling the real and imagined consequences of differences of opinion *and* action by colleagues among us.
- (3) Our not being *one* profession and, thus, not necessarily acting with a shared set of professional values.

Middle-classism

We are comfortable as professionals. If the alumni of my own School of Jewish Communal Service are representative of the field, their recent response to a study we conducted indicates the overwhelming majority of communal workers are at least "satisfied" in their jobs.²⁰ We, as professionals, tend to do well economically. Further, we realize that, if we are good, and if we are male, our professional horizons seem boundless. (Women in the field, admittedly, have had their horizons more limited for them, a condition which, hopefully, will soon change — nay, must soon change.) For my purposes, this point does not change the thesis. We are all middle-class: We like this status, and we do not want to lose it. Indeed, we want more of it. To paraphrase Rabbi Edgar F. Magnin of Los Angeles, prophets do not stay in the Jennie G. Wing at Grossingers — and, for a certainty, they would not eat there. When we call ourselves "change agents" or "enablers" or "facilitators," we all know that these roles are not meant to radicalize Jewish life. Our lay people are reflections with magnified aspirations and opportunities parallel to ours. But, then, our partnership with them allows us to come to Grossingers and verbally attack the status quo. Our sermons are from the tops of the mounds of chopped chicken liver and they were sometimes good.

²⁰ Rosa F. Kaplan, "A Study of the Alumni of the HUC-JIR School of Jewish Communal Service," (mimeo) 1978.

I do not demean this. I am a part of and party to the process. That is precisely the dilemma. We are not entrepreneurs. We are in the profession of human services, but our client system is blurred and our ability to do anything to effect change is predicated upon working *within* the system. How much can any professional who is dependent upon the system berate it without being turned upon by those within? The answer lies within the professional, the artfulness of his craft (some would say the craftiness of his art), the nature of his relationships with decision-makers, his integrity, probity, his knowledge and his suggested paths of action. The role of the professional is blurred, depending upon the setting. The more technical the setting, the more he is seen as the expert. But, in the broad-gauged settings where most of us labor—national organizations, Centers, Federations and the like—the contributions of the professional are not easily etched as "professional." They, rather, are seen as those of the paid staff whose input is weighed co-valently with lay perceptions and judgments. This symbiotic relationship between board member cum tennis partner cum golf buddy cum friend is the reality which underscores the arrival of the professional and his acceptance into that middle-class which has the power to, and can, fire him.

Our Fears

Because of our positions in the community, we are often fearful of acting as is expected of professionals. There are those in our profession and in the Jewish community who no longer are invited to meetings, used as lecturers, given a platform because their ideas do not conform to ours. Revisionists among us rewrite Jewish history and often suggest there is Truth rather than truths to be distilled from our past. Yet others among us do not know enough about our history to realize that there was never a period without differences of opinion on alternative modes of thought and action. True, through time and (as a dear friend would say) through the process of "difference and disputatiousness" behavior

and beliefs would be modified. But, most importantly, differing ideas were heard and dealt with openly and, often, no agreement was reached.

We are, today, overly fearful of Jewish public criticism of an Israeli government action or official; hypersensitive to discussions of Jewish issues in the general press; myopic in seeing clearly those among us who trade upon being Jewish and betray Judaism in the process. We like to play it safe. Leonard Fein's recent accusation against the alleged lie of Leon Dulzin about HIAS²¹ received little response in the Jewish press and, to my knowledge, was not dealt with in the public deliberations of many Jewish organizations. No Jewish communal worker joined the list of intellectuals who criticized the tactics and policies of the Begin government this spring.²² I could elaborate on all of this, but I hope the point is made.

Many of us seem to become paralyzed by the thought of hearing and dealing with publicly-stated differences as if conflict, competition and open debate were ideals good only for the marketplace and the Constitution, not in the arena of opinion-making and shaping of Jewish life. The fear may be engendered, partially, by our wish not to lose whatever power and status we may have. For yet others, the search for consensus, as a basis for any action, has led them to conclude that the process leading to agreement cannot be based upon strong differences between people or groups. The fiery nature of the debates within Israel, for example, somehow become muted when exported to these shores. There exists no consensus of how we, as professionals, should deal with these responses.

The role of worker as change-agent was self-evident early in the life of this Conference. It has reappeared over the decades, always to be matched by another and, at times, conflicting vision: the worker as enabler, technocrat, administrator, facilitator—the

²¹ Leonard Fein, "Lies Our Leaders Tell Us," *Moment*, Spring 1978.

²² *Los Angeles Times*, April 17, 1978.

worker who is "objective" and does not impose values or expectations. The reality is that we all have the opportunity and must play all these roles, sometimes more at one time or another, in our practice. It cannot be the case, however, that the Constitution and the Bill of Rights are not applicable within Jewish life. Freedom and responsibility are inseparable. The role of Jewish professionals is to act as the conscience which reminds all of us that reality is difficult but necessary. If we cavil at the confronting stridence of some voices and, at the same time, give up the rigor with which minority ideas must be defended, we will be permanently damaged and limited as *Jewish* professionals and ultimately the damage and limitations will extend to the Jewish community as a whole.

In our attempt to fathom the roles of the professional, it must be underscored that there is no one profession in Jewish communal service. As a result, the values and consequent roles are not congruent for all who labor as Jewish communal professionals. Further, the institutional auspices will often circumscribe and/or color our responses. The B'nai B'rith Grand Lodge guidelines for their professionals on public utterances will probably result in a more cautious public stance. Certainly, this is much more likely than in the case of a rabbi who has freedom of the classroom and the pen. We are all, then, prisoners and products of our systems—those which produced us and those for whom we labor. It becomes difficult, if not impossible, to then prescribe the roles of the professionals because the variables delineated above will alter or inhibit, enhance and/or free the response, depending upon the occasion and circumstance.

I have no magic prescription for the individual professional. He will have to continue to find his own way and, on a case-by-case basis, decide when to speak and when to be silent; when to communicate by memo or by phone; by raised eyebrow or by voice; when to meet the press and when to avoid the TV cameras; when to make a speech and when to read a book; when to politic by lining up votes

and when to remain passive; when to advocate and when to summarize; when to talk and when to listen; when to suggest new paths of action and when to review past mistakes.

I suggest that the professionals in Jewish community organizations have often been coopted by their own rhetoric, the rhetoric of Israel, our national organizations and our local institutions. There are just too many times when the professional has insufficient information upon which to act in regard to broad Jewish social concerns. A community paper rarely prints the "minority" reports of the disaffected, the questions of the skeptic, the critiques of the social critics. We are in awe of power and fear for ourselves as Jews and professionals. This diminishes the roles of reinforcement for these minority positions we might more properly take. One example might suffice. This past winter Dr. Melvin Mogulof, a former Jewish communal worker and social work professor who made *Aliyah*, castigated the Jewish Agency for embarking upon a public housing policy in Israel which, in his opinion, would create in Israel the kind of instant slums which were the unfortunate outcome of a comparable policy in America. I saw no discussion of his assessment in any of the Jewish papers or minutes of the many Jewish organizations to which I have access. Multiply this example locally, nationally and internationally. I do not know if he was right or wrong. If there is an area, however, where some within our professions have competency, it must surely be in public housing. Should or could there have been a response by professionals to a colleague? The response could have been one of disagreement or support depending on the validity of his position. American Jewish dollars will be used to build those apartments. Do American Jewish professionals have words of guidance or caution which could be a basis for further exploration and resolution of this issue?

The concern is there. The potential of self-cooptation — of non-boat-rocking — is ever present. Ironically, it leads us, as professionals, to the one greatest hope we have

for action in response to and in anticipation of issues.

The greatest hope is this Conference. This body, as it begins its 9th decade, is a sleeping giant. Its component groups represent at least 25 percent of all who work in Jewish communal service and a far greater proportion of those who stay in Jewish communal settings for any extended period of time.

The vicissitudes of these past 80 years have changed the size and the focus of the organization. Originally a body of lay people and professionals which actually created agencies in response to unmet Jewish needs, we have metamorphosed through a number of stages. For a time we became only a conferring body. We tried and have failed (so far) to become an association of Jewish communal workers. We are now a fascinating organizational blend of associations of members, defined by professional function, associations of people defined by settings and, in one instance, an association of institutions. We may be *One*, but what the one is cannot easily be ascertained by those who pay the dues. What does bind the adherents and participants of this Conference? I hope it is the commitment to the betterment of Jewish life through the identification of concerns and the sharing of alternate solutions and paths to problem-solving and the betterment of Jewish life.

It is time to bring back to the agenda the questions of whether or not we can move to form an association of Jewish communal workers: an association that will embrace differences, not bury them — an association that will build a tool out of this synergistic combination through which professionals may speak and act upon commonly-agreed issues. We are, I would suggest, entering upon another era. Perhaps, in the next two decades, we will be able to create an instrument that will respond responsibly, criticize wisely, oppose firmly, support affirmatively those stands and actions within Jewish life to which each of the above would be appropriate. And then, if an individual professional could not act or

respond appropriately, the profession could. I do not envision a new trade union, but I do join in a vision held by one who addressed this body seven decades ago. "This Conference must not flinch," said Stephen S. Wise. "It must learn greatly to dare. It must not be over-zealous in obeying the command: Thus far shall thou go and no further."²³ I suggest, then, additions to our agenda for consideration and action here and at home:

- (1) The exploration of re-structuring the Conference into an association of Jewish communal workers.
- (2) The establishment of special task forces to deal with the issues raised in this conference in an on-going way.

The Re-structuring Process

A committee could be appointed by the incoming president to develop a process which would involve discussions in regional and local meetings focused on the advantages and disadvantages of a proposed new structure. Guidelines to protect the legitimate functions and prerogatives of existing organizations would be evolved through active involvement of interested parties. The pitfalls of an NASW would be avoided and its successes magnified. In the meantime I would suggest the establishment of an \$100,000 fund to be raised over the next 3 years through a series of dues, assessments, and approaches to Foundations. (An *average* assessment of \$10 a year for 3 years from all conference members would produce \$90,000 in that period). The money would be used to fund the task forces which would go forward with their work simultaneously with the task force exploring the feasibility and desirability of re-structuring the Conference into an Association.

The Task Forces

An overall issues task force could be established. It would be staffed by a retired expert from within the Conference family. Its

²³ *Proceedings of the Fifth National Conference of Jewish Charities*, 1908, p. 107.

job would be to identify 2 or 3 major issues in Jewish life where the inputs of a professional organization would have a maximum impact. After the issues were agreed upon 2 or 3 sub-units would be formed. It would be the task of each to then explore the issue, develop resource materials, suggested action responses, and consultative and advocacy roles as a professional body to the groups, associations, institutions, organizations or government(s) involved. The \$100,000 would be allocated by the overall task force as it saw fit to provide the fiscal wherewithal for the accomplishment of the tasks at hand.

I have suggested a number of issues. Others could develop many as more worthy of consideration. The Conference may become an association of professionals rather than a conference of associations. Whether or not it does, the task force approach could engage all of us as professionals into responding where and when appropriate as a corporate entity.

Resolutions could become more than intentions for vehicles for action and reaction would be available. If the assessment approach worked a permanent budget for the ongoing process would be part of the Conference. As more complex functions arise so will the need for fiscal support grow. The membership of the conference will find the wherewithal to respond if the need for greater funding becomes manifest.

As a Conference — we are like the Jewish people — in the process of becoming. We are doing so in a harsh and painful world. We are members of an idealistic profession serving a people whose ideals are wavering. The Eightieth birthday is known as *Gevurah* — strength. I believe this Conference has great strength. That includes the ability to return to some of its early functions as a Conference. It was a forum for great debates, but most importantly, it was a forum which led to action. The action was, at times, in reaction to the needed and, at times, surprisingly in anticipation of that which was yet to be.

We are a diverse group in our backgrounds, professional skills and our Jewish knowledge. We can, however, join together to act coordinately from the context of our own perspectives if we do not despair. Educator and case worker, community worker and Center worker, field staff and line staff: all of us have much more which binds than separates us. Shall we lament with the poet:

The world that now . . .
I go about in,
Is not the world I was born into
Or in which I grew up, It is a world
Changed like the sea in another light,
A storm light. A world
Of raging waves and sudden terror,
Anger . . . and fright.
Legends are lost here, lost and forgotten.
There is no magic here, no ardor —
The full heart, the spirit uplifted —
Its songs are harsh, the sound is deafening.
The young die quickly, without love,
Thrown to the sharks.
We were few, but there were lions among us,
And singing birds.
This is a new world, without beauty,
Without music, without rules.
And everyone is writing,
Telling it like it is, making remarks,
And their books are read by millions
In the drug stores, in the libraries, in the
schools.
But there is no pride of Lions in this world,
No exultation of larks.²⁴

I say we need not lament. There are still among us people who will be lions among us, who will *profess*, who will try to change and help change for the better the things and people about us. I echo the words of Stephen S. Wise in his challenge to this Conference when he exhorted: "Let us dare . . ." Dare we do less in our own day? I think not.

²⁴ Robert Nathan, "The World That Now," reprinted in *Los Angeles Times*, November 11, 1977.

The Jewish Community As A Force For Jewish Continuity: An Historical Perspective

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The following article was the backgrounder for discussion groups at the Jerusalem meeting of the International Conference of Jewish Communal Service, August 13-17, 1978. It is an unusual survey of Jewish community organization through the ages.

General Characteristics

Few are the institutions in the human history which could be compared to the Jewish Kehila. Rooted in notions of almost legendary antiquity, the Jewish community organization proved its vitality and endurance by its permanence, its uninterrupted existence for more than two thousand years of history and its almost fabulous flexibility and faculty of adaptation. Adaptation, however, was not an aim in itself. The aim was and remained that of safeguarding the existence of a nation, its legacy and its values, a nation scattered over continents, in ever changing surroundings and circumstances. A nation which existed for more than two thousand years without a state, and which today, after the creation of the State of Israel, exists in a particular way, when more than three-fourths of its sons and daughters live outside its boundaries, found in the Kehila a mechanism of self-preservation, an instrument to perpetuate patterns of life and ideals of behaviour, accepted or recognized as incumbent and normative.

Two thousand years of history etched in the Kehila organizational features created in a given set of circumstances and then transmitted from place to place and from generation to generation. In that process, however, it shed characteristics no longer in tune with new demands and circumstances, transforming the obsolete and adding others conditioned by the exigencies of Jewish autonomous evolution and pressures of the external world. However, the changes were far more marked in structure and outward trappings than in the basic essence of the Kehila organization. Although for the alien and for the more recent secular

historian, the Kehila was first of all an instrument of dealing with the outside world, for the Jews, on the contrary, it was the basic structure of life, regulated by the precepts of Jewish existence, the framework in which a man led his life, brought up his family and saw his children grow and prosper.

Despite the changes which off-and-on transformed the Kehila in the course of history, some features were ever present and recurrent. One has the impression that a genetic imprint of highest antiquity featured its characteristics. Historically, the Kehila is a descendant of one of the basic notions of Judaism, namely that of *Adath Adonai* (the Community of God). Whatever the original meaning of the expression, the religious ingredient of the notion transmitted to all its progenies in the ages to come a transcendental dimension which made it different from other and often similar institutions which existed in other cultures and religions. The *Kehila Kedosha* or *Kahal Kadosh* (Holy Community) carried with it the belief that the cohesion of the members was not only earthly bound and earthly aimed to fulfill specific tasks of existence, but that this particular bond was imbued with a sense of holiness, impregnated, so to say, with an everlasting presence of Providence. This perception of the transcendental created a particularity of bonds between the members of the Kehila; it added a spiritual dimension to its *raison d'être*. There was no need to take an oath of allegiance to the Kehila; one, being a Jew, was born into it, as one was born into a faith or a nation. The Kehila as a collective and corporate body, and those who served it as its leaders and officers, took on a responsibility not only to the living