

A PEOPLE'S INSTITUTE

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Chicago

An institution conducting 37 distinct departments, in one instance, a department covering as many as 193 separate gatherings in a given month, with a total aggregate attendance of 12,421, will give the reader at a glance an opportunity to realize the enormity and the scope of its operation. To go into every detail of the work conducted under our auspices, giving a fitting explanation as to the intent and reason for its being conducted by us, would mean to use much more space than was allowed me by the editor of this paper. I will therefore confine my remarks to a few general statements, and develop the reason and success for the Institute having adopted the plan of "nothing is given away for nothing, and all must pay, although nominally in a great many cases, for the benefits they derive."

The Institute is the only institution in the United States, in fact, to the best of my knowledge, the only one in the world of its kind, where the self-support element has reached such large proportions. The question as to whether Jewish educational institutions, of the type of the Institute, should make charges to its pupils and general attendants, for activities and privileges received, is one that in the face of our experience should no longer be a debatable question. We have reached a position of self-support to the extent of from 33 to 40 per cent, in the relation of internal revenue to the total expenditure, including maintenance, administration, salaries, etc.; and in its relation of internal revenue to expenditure of educational department, of from 57 to 75 per cent; and certain of its social activities, such as dancing class, social dance, billiard room, plays and entertainments, have not only reached the state of self-support, but in the past few years have run over and above actual expenses; and, for example, in the instance of the social dance, conducted regularly each Saturday evening, where a charge of fifteen cents is made, and where an average of from 350 to 400 young men and women gather regularly, over \$1200 was the net profit at the end of the year, in spite of

a \$30 to \$35 expense for each dance, covering orchestra music, wardrobe attendants, floor director, etc.

Every club meeting at the Institute is taxed from 25 cents to \$2.50 per session, depending upon the size of the room occupied, the nature of the work conducted and the age of the members. The junior children's clubs, by that meaning boys' and girls' clubs, with fourteen years as the maximum age, are charged 25 cents an afternoon session; clubs whose ages range from fourteen to eighteen years, 50 cents a session, and upwards of eighteen years, \$1 a session, except in special cases where a larger room is required and special janitor service needed, then the charges are made accordingly, sometimes even as high as \$5 an afternoon. The auditorium is rented out for dances, entertainments, lectures, plays, etc., to the 65 clubs meeting at the Institute, for amounts as low as \$15 and as high as \$40 an evening, depending upon the nature of the work and the amount of extra labor required. Last year the income from all rentals and charges made for club meetings amounted to \$1600, in our very limited quarters. With our additional \$125,000 gymnasium, which will contain a hall probably large enough to hold from 1500 to 1800 persons, our revenue from rentals will undoubtedly reach as high as \$2500. In our Department of English for Foreigners, where we now run a daily attendance of nearly 500, the expenditure of the department for ten months has been approximately \$2400, and the income \$1900, showing only a deficit of \$500 for ten months, conducting ten classes and benefiting hundreds of immigrants who are learning English. If space would permit, it would be interesting for me to go on with an endless list of activities and show in detail a surprisingly large revenue in contrast to the expenditure.

No one, either child, man or woman, receives something for nothing at the Chicago Hebrew Institute. Even the child in the kindergarten, the boy and girl who plays in the game room, those who come to the Story-telling Hour (sometimes there

have been as many as 400 who came to listen to stories), pay their fee for the privilege of attending the activity. Often the fee is very small, but a fee there is, in order to carry out the general scheme. In some of our departments, in the instance of our Hebrew School, the money received from one family, where two of the children take advantage of the instruction given, amounted to \$36 a year.

As I said before, there is no need for my going into details; these are given merely to make clear the general theory.

There is a wonderful amount of self-respect that is unconsciously inculcated into the many thousands of persons who come to the Institute weekly, be it for instruction in the English classes, public-speaking class, lectures, entertainments, or what not, primarily because there is the feeling that everything that is partaken of is paid for, and the charity element *per se* eliminated. The institution that charges for its activities has a further advantage; namely, on account of the greater responsibility imposed on it, does away with most all volunteer services, and every teacher in each department is a paid worker. Only those who are closely identified with institutional work can begin to realize what this means. Then, too, many of the teachers are well paid, depending upon their ability and importance. Let me just illustrate a few instances in this regard: we do not consider it an extravagance to pay \$5 an hour for the services of a story-teller; a glee club director, a teacher in effective speaking, or as high as \$50 an hour for the services of a lecturer, because we feel that there can be no such thing as too good a man to take charge of an activity, as long as those who take advantage of the activity pay for their instruction. The institution that makes no charge, or makes a ridiculously small one, is put in the position of being largely dependent upon volunteer services, because it cannot generally afford a budget large enough to defray the necessary expenses to carry on its work on the high order that the paid type of institution can. Experience in institutional work teaches that when it has to depend upon volunteer services to a large degree the activities often are bound to suffer: firstly, because in most cases the volunteer is not a trained worker,

and cannot be depended upon as a steady comer. Take, for instance, an institution of the no-charge plan: a volunteer in the sewing department, or in any other branch that may be mentioned, may absent him or herself on the slightest provocation, be it indisposition, or an appointment, or because the class is not as interesting as the volunteer anticipated it would be, etc. There is another thing we must consider, the fact that the pupils are not as steady in their attendance. Since they are not paying for what they are getting, the feeling is that nothing is lost. But where a charge is made, there is always that consciousness that an expense has been gone into without an equal return. At any rate, this has been the experience at the Institute. The attendance in all of our classes and activities is excellent; hardly a pupil misses a lesson, except for severe illness or some other equally important reason. No lesson is made up. If a charge of \$1 is made for four lessons a month in the class of effective speaking, the pupil who attends only two of the lessons loses the other two, which means a loss of 50 cents.

In such activities as concerts, dances and lectures, a high standard must be maintained. The reason for this is naturally very apparent. When institutions announce to the public a lecture, or a concert, or a dance, such an institution can expect to get an audience only once, unless the character of the concert given, the standard of those taking part, the reputation of the lecturer, his manner of approach and his understanding of his audience, the kind of music for the dance and the number of pieces used, and the general management is definitely defined. Of course, these things are expensive, and although there is an income in these specific instances, the income does not begin to approach the expenditure, but this is not only true of paid institutions like ours, but of all lecture courses given, except those under special commercial management. The concert end of it is true with almost every symphony orchestra. I understand from the last annual report issued by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, formerly the Thomas Orchestra, a well-known, well-established musical organization, bearing an enviable reputation, num-

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In the meantime, the \$50,000 contributed in what seems the prehistoric times of several months ago has reached Jaffa. Naturally, it caused unlimited joy—or, at least, joy limited only to the \$50,000.

Many of us had been thinking that when the great war should finally drag itself to an exhausted end this country would be swamped by a cloudburst of immigration. Now comes along Frederic C. Howe to contradict us. Mr. Howe, as all of us feel, is the best-equipped commissioner of immigration New York ever had, and he ought to know. Mr. Howe's reasoning is along economic lines. He argues that in these days military law is Socialist law, and that the state hence is taking over all businesses, and preventing unemployment. After the war these countries will vie with each other in being the first to recover from their economic prostration, and will hence continue their measures to prevent their human wealth from going to other lands. Furthermore, the increased activity will tend to raise wages; and in the last place, most of the young men who would have been tempted to emigrate will have been slaughtered.

And yet I am a Doubting Thomas. After this horror is over, those who have felt its grip at first hand will want to leave once for all the ground on which it was fought. People who have seen their children and their parents murdered by a governmental despotism are not going to continue living under that despotism, even if thereby they earn two dollars more a week. The torch in the Statute of Liberty will never burn so brightly as then, and America will be called the Land in which War is Not. It may seem queer that a social worker may still consider that sentiment is alive, but he may be disposed of forever by the simple expedient of calling him a "sentimentalist."

In the meantime, Ellis Island has come into the ranks of the twentieth century institutions. The medieval rules for accommodation of those detained have been altered, children detained go to school, games are played, and the whole place, in one word, has become a settlement or a

civic center. The immigration for September was 22,000—just one-fifth of the immigration for September, 1913, and most of the force of 500 is among the ranks of the idle.

There is much food for thought in the report of the fortieth annual meeting of the United Hebrew Charities of New York. In 1876, more than 2000 families were given aid in a population estimated to be 60,000. In other words, about one-sixth of the total number of Jewish persons in New York was given material assistance. In last year—an unusually hard one, by the way—only 4300 families were given assistance in a population of at least 800,000, or one person in forty. Moreover, those elements which formerly required assistance are now quite self-supporting.

A column entitled "Everybody's Business" would not merit its name were personal gossip not included. And so it might not be amiss to mention the engagement of two of the best known social workers in the whole world, who need no introduction to the column's eight or nine readers. Dr. Henry Moskowitz and Mrs. Belle Israels will be married within a very few days.

EXCHANGE BUREAU

Wanted Jewish Graduate Visiting Nurse. One speaking Yiddish and having social training preferred. Address applications, giving experience and salary expected, to Oscar Leonard, superintendent Jewish Educational and Charitable Association, 901 Carr Street, St Louis, Mo.

Wanted position, young Jewess, with twelve years' experience. Probation, parole, investigation or child placing. Address M. C.

Markowitz & Starr's "Vocabulary of Common Words in English, Italian, Russian and Yiddish" is published in conjunction with the "Practical English for New Americans," issued by the American Book Company.

BOOK REVIEWS

By Charles S. Bernheimer

FOREIGN-BORN NEIGHBORS

Under the above title a little volume has been compiled by Mr. George W. Tupper, secretary of the Immigrant Department of the State Committee of Y. M. C. A.'s of Massachusetts and Rhode Island. (The Taylor Press, Boston, Mass.)

It contains a preface by Dr. Peter Roberts, who says that of seven states in the Union where the immigration problem is most acute, Massachusetts and Rhode Island have, estimated in percentage of population, more foreign-born peoples than any state in the Union. An introduction by President-Emeritus Charles W. Eliot gives restrictionists something to think about. He speaks of two difficulties in the immigration problem, one being the state of mind of American people—of contempt for the races of Southern and Southeastern Europe—a very mistaken attitude according to his view in regard to a people who are highly intelligent, though not highly educated, who are ready for all kinds of work and for the less comfortable employments. The second difficulty, according to his view, neither generous and courageous, is the dread of competition—in spite of the fact that the labor market in this country is far from being overstocked. The material furnished by the author, Mr. Tupper, is in accord with this sympathetic view of ex-President Eliot, namely, that of helping the immigrants in education so that they may adapt themselves to conditions in this country. The volume details the activities of the Y. M. C. A.'s toward this end. It should be full of helpful suggestions to our Jewish organizations in the data it furnishes as to instruction for coming Americans.

HOUSING PROBLEMS

The proceedings of the Third Annual Conference on Housing, which was held in Cincinnati in December, 1913, are published in a volume, entitled "Housing Problems in America." The volume includes discussions on garden cities, co-operative housing, the relation of transit and public

health to housing, and many other aspects of housing and congestion as they are found throughout the United States and Canada. The reports and papers deal with many problems as they affect the several cities.

ELEMENTARY HOUSEHOLD CHEMISTRY

A chemistry text which is a departure from the ordinary publication in that field is John Ferguson Snell's "Elementary Household Chemistry." The principle which has been kept constantly in mind is to introduce the applications of chemistry to household affairs as early as is possible, and as often, and to present only such portions of the subject matter of theoretical chemistry as are essential to the comprehension of these applications. The work is similar in scope to Professor Lynde's recently issued "Physics of the Household." Like that volume, it will be found of value not only by students of chemistry, but by those who wish to have a more than surface knowledge of the things which they are daily using.

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being among its patrons and directors the leading social and financial persons in Chicago, that it barely covered its expenses, and this, too, mind you, only for the first time in its history. Therefore, no institution should ever hope that its lectures or its concerts can be anywhere near self-supporting. A charge should be made, if for no other reason than the responsibility it puts on the management, to give the best within its reach for the benefit of those who come to enjoy the activity.

I am hopeful that before long the Jewish institutions in particular throughout this country will put themselves on record, and that they follow the "pay for what you get" policy in preference to the "get all for nothing" system. Due to our policy, we have become a center of social equality, a meeting place for parent and child, for alien and citizen, radical and conservative, orthodox and reformed; a home of culture and work, idealism and practicability, thought and action; an American institution with a Jewish atmosphere, and an institution of dignity and self-respect.