

CENTRALIZED EFFORT OF JEWISH CHARITIES IN BOSTON

In 1907 the nine largest and most important Jewish societies of the City of Boston united to form what is today known as the Federated Jewish Charities. This union brought together the different elements—German, Russian and others, that were at variance for years—into one great organization and created harmony and faith in the charity work of this city.

The formation of this Federation has given Boston a central office from which emanates all Jewish charitable and philanthropic endeavors. This office is situated in the heart of the city, within easy reach of the poor, and in a building where all other charities, sectarian and non-sectarian, are housed.

Sickness being the greatest cause of distress, the Mt. Sinai Hospital is the main cooperative agent of the Federation. With its newly established Social Service Department, immediate and thorough examinations and prompt reports as to the cause, nature and possible cure of the diseases are made. In special cases, and particularly is this true in cases of tuberculosis and nervous diseases, the Mt. Sinai Hospital cooperates with the Boston Consumptives' and Psychopathic Hospitals. Both these city institutions render valuable assistance; tubercular patients are sent to the Day Camp through the former, and finally to the State Sanatorium if conditions of home and patient warrant. The latter, with its splendidly equipped out-patient and hospital departments, receives all cases of special mental and nervous diseases referred to it by the Mt. Sinai Hospital. Patients are there often kept from one week to a month for observation and treatment. So, too, do the other hospitals of the city cooperate with our central office or its agent, the Mt. Sinai Hospital, in caring for the medical needs of our sick poor.

The family problem, with all its complexities, is handled directly through the central office with the aid of a corps of trained visitors. Thorough investigations are made of all cases and careful records kept. The United Hebrew Benevolent Association and Hebrew Women's Sewing Society supply the funds and needs as they are determined, while the Free Employment

Bureau of the Baron de Hirsch Fund Committee, located in the same office, does its full share in the work of rehabilitation and effort to help the many to help themselves.

The Home for Jewish Children, since its amalgamation with the Leopold Morse Home in 1912, submits for investigation all applications for the admission of its children. This form of procedure has done much to prevent the shirking of responsibility on the part of parents and guardians, and the breaking up of families for reasons of poverty only.

Our cooperation with the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, the Hebrew Industrial School and the Free Burial Association is equally as effective, and monthly reports of the doings, incomes and expenses of each constituent society is submitted to the office and in turn approved by the Trustees of the Federation, who meet once a month.

To further insure concerted action and greater cooperation, a bi-weekly conference was inaugurated last winter, consisting of all paid Jewish social workers, representatives of small women's relief societies not affiliated with the Federation, and volunteers interested in specific cases. These conferences did much to create a better understanding among the workers and to eliminate a great deal of duplication and pauperization.

Boston is also fortunate in having a model Confidential Exchange, conducted by the Associated Charities of the city, and through its medium the Federated Jewish Charities is advised of all inquiries made by agencies interested in Jewish families. All cases of our central office are reported to this Exchange, that other agencies may know of our interest. Thus little is done for Jewish families or individuals without our knowledge and cooperation.

Boston, therefore, may well be proud of its Federated Jewish Charities. What it needs, however, is a more generous response from the community that the Jewish poor may get the fullest measure of efficiency and service. In dollars and cents Boston needs at least \$100,000, whereas from \$50,000 to \$60,000 is now available.

Martha M. Silverman.

WHAT IS ADEQUATE RELIEF?

The perplexing question which is worrying Mr. Oscar Leonard is undoubtedly shared by many earnest relief agents whose task it is to extend relief in a manner calculated to the up-building of the poor families in their charge, to prepare them, or at least their offspring, for a self-supporting future. I realize, as he does, the need of working out standards of relief, if they were possible to maintain. But what good would it do if our resources are so limited that we cannot raise the standard of living of our beneficiaries? "Increasing knowledge—increasing pain" would be a true maxim in this respect. Shall we work out standards for the sake of disregarding them? Or shall we do so in order to convince the Jewish community that it is not doing its duty to the poor? We all know that adequate relief to the poor is in line of preventive and constructive work, and that no progressive work is possible without it. But we also know that every Jewish community is already tottering under the heavy burden of its charitable institutions and could not, with all good intentions, stand the stupendous tax of furnishing adequate relief to its poor. The setting of standards would not materially add to the revenues of relief societies, but would only cause more pain to the agents. "What is adequate relief?" The answer is simple enough to every relief agent if he can draw sufficiently on the society's treasury. It means the safeguarding the health of a dependent family by enabling it to live in sanitary quarters, with enough breathing space; in decent surroundings, where it may enjoy sufficient light and pure air. It means that the relief society must make up its mind to allow such family a much larger monthly stipend for the rent, if the family is to maintain a decent home. Furthermore, it means that in families where there is little or no income, the relief society must furnish enough clothing and sufficient money for substantial, nourishing food for the children, so that the coming generation will not fill our hospitals and T. B. sanatoriums. It further means that relief shall be given sufficiently to permit the mothers to devote their entire time to rearing their children, and not to be com-

pelled to supplement their husband's earnings at the expense of the health and welfare of their children; to give the mothers enough time and money to feed the children properly, to see that they attend school regularly, to watch their conduct, to keep them clean in body and mind, and to give them a thorough religious education, which will strengthen their moral conduct.

The working out of standards is as simple as answering the above question. We can easily figure out the amount of rent in a decent home; we can approximate the cost of clothing for a family; we know the price of bread, meat, milk, eggs, etc. But when the family budget is worked out and the standard is set, what then? Show me the relief society having sufficient means to be guided by the standard!

S. B.

Standard of Relief

In the July number of JEWISH CHARITIES relief agents were requested to give, from their practice or experience, the treatment they would accord the following case:

"Family consists of father, 45; mother, 42, and three children—girl, 14, going to school, weak physique; boy, 12, and girl, 10. Father an incompetent capmaker earning \$9 a week; mother capable and active, the two younger children normal. They apply for assistance on the ground of insufficient earnings. Investigation shows no relatives able to assist. The oldest girl appears under-nourished. What assistance, in funds or service, if any, should be extended? How many rooms should the family occupy, and what rent should be paid?"

But one reply has been so far received, and it is as follows:

"As to the question, *What is the actual practice* in relieving a family of five persons with an income of \$9 a week and no help from relatives, I wish to state that in such a case we assist with rent only; about \$7 a month for three rooms."

Should any further replies be received they will be published in later issues. They are intended to give a concrete and practical answer to the question: "Do our charities give adequate relief?"