

Relating To College Youth—Discussion*

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I SHALL describe briefly the process Los Angeles went through in working with college-age youth and some of the results, and the development of a program structure somewhat different from that in Boston.

In October, 1969, the Jewish Federation Council reorganized its Committee on College Age Youth & Faculty because of concern for the accelerated loss of Jewish commitment on the campuses. The committee was asked to explore ways of strengthening existing programs and initiating new ones, to improve services, and to involve students and faculty. Shortly after this reorganization, a "confrontation" took place at the annual meeting of the J.F.C. in which a group of Jewish students protested the proposed purchase of a building to house a Jewish student center at U.C.L.A. An interested and vocal group of students felt the money could be better spent on more meaningful Jewish programs. This public protest probably served to speed and enhance the dialogue between leaders of student groups, some faculty and the Federation.

The committee invited representation and presentations from a variety of campus groups—from the Jewish radical community to Yavneh and shades in-between. The Committee met more intensively than many Federation Committees.

It developed an inventory of existing Jewish campus programs and obtained the opinions of student leaders of needs

for new programs, to be undertaken either by their organizations or by the community at large. Two of the students who met with the committee prepared at their own expense a 90-page, excellent monograph on "Plans, Projects, and Programs for Jewish Youth at U.C.L.A."

A simple but most important result of the committee process was that youth and adults got to know each other. We started with thinly disguised hostilities—adults toward students, students toward adults, young people from the different groups toward each other. We ended up, at least, with a better understanding of each other and even with respect for one another and our different points of view. Every adult on the committee spoke of the "great performance" by the students, given a chance by the adults to be heard.

What became evident is that the young people are willing to work through existing processes if they feel they are being given a real opportunity to affect those processes.

Following the end of the study phase, six students were appointed by the president of Federation as members of the committee, representing a cross-section of interested campus attitude.

The study process developed a proposal for a series of new programs and urged that the building in question not be purchased. The new programs were given an allocation by Federation of \$62,000 for the first year. In general these programs include:

- a. An *organizing project* employing several part-time student organizers responsible for

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- seeking out unaffiliated youth, to reach them in a variety of creative ways.
- b. An *on-campus Rabbi* working closely with and carrying out functions similar to the organizers. He is to have no office or administrative responsibilities.
 - c. An *ombudsman*, to stimulate Jewish youth activity, to help bridge the gap between the Jewish youth community and the organized Jewish adult community and to be the continuing liaison person between the two.
 - d. Part-time *program coordinators*, to work with the ombudsman and on specific projects, (draft-counseling, social action, Soviet Jewry, etc.)
 - e. A Jewish student newsletter.

As part of the development of this program, there was agreement that responsibility for the projects be housed with two existing agencies: Hillel and Jewish Youth and Young Adult Council, both with relationships to the college community. There was little discussion from the young people about establishment of new agencies, and they were not generally active Hillel members. Possi-

bly the personality of a young, involved "shirtsleeve" Hillel rabbi had something to do with that attitude, as did the understanding attitude of the chairman of the committee who made clear her acceptance of the students and her respect for their thinking.

At this point we are still talking and meeting about the implementation of these programs—and about other things. However, we have the feeling that the students are willing to work *with* the Federation when they feel there is flexibility on its part, and to work through existing processes and structures when they show an indication of responsiveness. We expect to have problems which with flexibility and creativity we hope to handle.

The big unknown in this relationship is the destructive effect which government action and policy will have on the best approaches which we—or anyone—may develop.