

## PUBLIC AND VOLUNTARY AGENCY COOPERATION: A BELLWETHER OF DEMOCRACY \*

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**A** CONVERGENCE of forces in American life has given the cooperation of government and voluntary effort in social welfare special importance. The consideration of this subject hardly could be more timely.

Recent currents in the social welfare field have run strongly in this direction. In an address five years ago, Martha Selig<sup>1</sup> pointed to the positive government orientation to cooperation with sectarian voluntary agencies in the use of public funds. She called attention to the declaration the previous year by the former Commissioner of Social Security, Charles Schottland,<sup>2</sup> that "government never intended to deny use of funds to agencies serving the general community purpose even though they concentrated on services to a specific religious group."

There is a marked rise at present in the general expectation of public and voluntary agency collaboration in social welfare along a broad front, and there is tangible movement in this direction

by government itself. In the face of these facts, it is incumbent upon Jewish social welfare to understand this trend and to share actively in it.

This is a critical juncture in American life in which the confluence of enormous scientific progress, automation, population growth and change, and other developments has generated deep-seated social problems. The growing awareness of an urgent need for substantial action to meet these conditions is attested by the response to President Johnson's War on Poverty. The demand for joint action by all social institutions is reflected in the social welfare field, where evidence abounds of a new sense of the importance of joint effort by public and voluntary services.

In the ensuing dialogue the challenge to voluntarism inherent in this situation has been emphasized. There is wide recognition that the vitality of voluntary effort is a bellwether of the health of a democratic society. Yet the dynamism of voluntary social welfare institutions is being tested. Elizabeth Wickenden<sup>3</sup> spoke recently of two prevailing basic anxieties: "One is the question of whether voluntarism has lost faith in its ability to go its own creative free-wheel-

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<sup>1</sup> Martha K. Selig, "Implications of the Use of Public Funds in Jewish Communal Services," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Fall, 1959.

<sup>2</sup> Charles A. Schottland, "Use of Public Funds by Jewish Agencies," Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, New York, November, 1958.

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Wickenden, "What Can A Community Do About Poverty?" National Social Welfare Assembly, April, 1964.

ing way without dependence on governmental financing, and the other is how we can reconcile the need for cooperative planning of overwhelming common problems with the traditional reliance we have placed on the creative force of independent citizen undertakings." The future of voluntarism in social welfare may be affected by the creativity with which public and voluntary agency roles and relationships are considered and implemented today.

#### Trends Towards Greater Cooperation

There is abundant evidence of the rising interest in greater public-voluntary collaboration. Current reappraisals of community juvenile delinquency planning and action programs developed in the last few years with federal help indicate that inadequate involvement of existing public and voluntary social services may have been an important weakness. Greater communication with and participation by established agencies in such broad social endeavors certainly may be anticipated in the future. The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the core of the President's anti-poverty program, reflects this in the provisions for participation by private, non-profit institutions which are threaded through the bill: in the Job Corps, Work-Training, Work-Study, Urban and Rural Community Action and Volunteers for America programs. The program has a highly catalytic orientation, designed to stimulate a variety of agencies to join in the effort.

The involvement of voluntary agencies was projected also in the 1962 amendments to the Social Security Act. While focused essentially on public welfare, there was recognition of the voluntary agency cooperative role in areas such as research and demonstration. An indication of the attention being given this subject by government is the announcement on May 8, 1964 of the ap-

pointment of a special consultant in the National Welfare Administration to work with voluntary welfare agencies "—in order to further mutual understanding and cooperation in developing needed welfare services."

Implicit and explicit in these developments is the assumption of a responsiveness by voluntary agencies. Jewish social welfare agencies have an obligation to address themselves to this matter. Moreover, the practical realities of their increasing inter-relationships with public services—especially the financial dependence of some upon public funds (notably hospitals, institutions for children and the aged, and vocational services), give particular importance to this concern.

#### Clarification of Roles

The growing interest in public-voluntary agency collaboration has important implications for Jewish social welfare agencies. The broad social orientation so characteristic of our Jewish heritage mandates our agencies to take an active interest in this matter. It requires, also, that there be incisive thinking about the appropriate areas for significant Jewish agency relationships with government.

A precondition of this definition is clarity about the distinctive purposes and functions of Jewish social welfare agencies. Their cooperation with government can be most viable when defined within the framework of their unique roles as institutions of the Jewish group committed affirmatively to the enrichment of Jewish life in America. This point of view was effectively articulated by Morris Grumer<sup>4</sup> and by Charles Miller.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Morris Grumer, "Jewish Vocational Services in the American Jewish Community," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Vol. XL, No. 2 (1963).

<sup>5</sup> Charles Miller, "The Impact of the Integration Struggle Upon Jewish Communal

Failure to clarify this framework can result in a damaging miscarriage. An opportunistic grasping for public funds to relieve budget pressures, or an unconsidered plunge into joint projects without concern for the particular auspices and charge of Jewish agencies can have dire results. The consequences can be submergence or subversion of agency purposes, diversion of agency emphasis and resources to programs inappropriate to the agency's primary task, changes in the composition of agency clientele and staff to a degree causing conflict with the agency's role in the Jewish community, dilution of the effectiveness of the agency in fulfilling its Jewish functions, and confusion in the public mind as to the nature of the agency. Moreover, it can lead the agency into considerable embarrassment with government due to conflicting standards and expectations.

Constructive cooperation requires understanding of the respective roles of public and voluntary social welfare generally. Elizabeth Wickenden suggests that the basic determinants of public services are accountability for public funds, a legal or political source of sanction and a consequent obligation for equal treatment under the law, i.e., objective criteria for entitlement, and the universality of the need to which the service is addressed. Defined somewhat differently, the responsibility of government may be seen in relation to several types of services: the basic income maintenance programs, such as social insurance and public assistance, the protective services, such as child and maternal health and welfare and public health, and the broad preventive programs, such as those in public health and the rehabilitative services.

Miss Wickenden identifies the determinants of voluntary services as freedom to select their field of responsibility

—to accept or reject a program—to be non-conforming (a choice not available to government services in areas to which they are committed by law), diversity among agencies in their approaches to the same problems, and the capacity to influence social change through freedom to criticize and advocate. Voluntary agency functions defined in another way involve performing roles related to the needs of given groups (religious, union, neighborhood, or ideological); carrying on research, experimentation, and demonstration with the goal of innovation; filling qualitative or quantitative gaps in service areas not covered by government or falling between governmental programs; and social planning and action.

The definition of these roles cannot be precise, as there are blends and variations in both public and voluntary programs due to history, community circumstances and socio-economic factors. The rapidly changing American scene and the developmental nature of government responsibility necessitate flexibility in working concepts. But the construction of sound patterns of collaboration requires hypotheses regarding respective functions if there is to be forward movement. Above all, mutual acceptance and regard for the roles of each is imperative. Voluntary agencies must have an unequivocal commitment to the crucial social welfare function of government on all levels: federal, state and local. Public agencies must appreciate and accept the vital place of voluntary social welfare in a free society.

#### **Areas for Cooperation**

Jewish social welfare agencies can envisage a fertile field of cooperative enterprise with public services in the following areas:

1. *Social Planning*—There is no field which offers more fruitful possibilities

Agencies," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Vol. XLI, No. 1 (1964).

for public-voluntary cooperation than that of social planning. Voluntary agencies can make an indispensable contribution to the identification of social needs and their components as part of social planning. The Jewish agency can add a particular dimension in its understanding of the effect of cultural factors on human experience. Cooperation in planning includes the definition of programs required to meet needs and the resources necessary for adequate services (personnel, facilities, and budget), evaluation of the suitability of existing services in light of needs, formulating plans for changes in prevailing public and voluntary services and/or developing new services as required, and projecting patterns of relationships between programs.

Such planning to be effective must be social problem-focused and not institutionally oriented. The concentration must be on needs and how they can be met. Existing agency resources should be used to the maximum degree possible within the context of their unique purposes, but concern for safeguarding narrow institutional stakes must take second place in planning social programs to meet community needs. Segmentation of planning into public and voluntary, or separate approaches by health, education and social welfare to such areas as mental retardation or delinquency, are self-defeating. Sound social planning must embrace the total scope of public and voluntary agencies and be addressed to a broad social canvas.

This emphasizes the importance of effective local social planning instruments through which such planning can occur. Local health and welfare councils have a key role in this collaboration. Jewish social agencies must play an important part in the cooperative planning of such councils. They must help councils be far more than the mechanisms

for joint effort by voluntary agencies which they have been not infrequently in the past. Councils must be equally concerned with public and voluntary agencies and have the confidence and participation of centers of decision-making as well as "client" groups.

It is especially important that councils emphasize the full involvement of public agencies, whose past participation has too often been nominal—in part because they have viewed councils as voluntary agency-focused. Broad social planning cannot be done by councils without the complete identification of public agencies with the council and with their effective participation. It should be noted that social planning in special areas may be carried out by instrumentalities established by public bodies and Jewish agencies should be involved fully in these as well.

Planning within the Jewish community for meeting Jewish needs is both valid and necessary. In the spirit of cooperative relationships here discussed planning in the Jewish community must take full account of general social plans for the community,

2. *Provision of Services*—There are many patterns of public and voluntary cooperation in the rendering of social welfare services in which Jewish agencies participate. These include the purchase of services by the government from voluntary agencies, with the latter discharging part of the public agency's responsibility (medical care for the needy aged, blind or children; foster care; day care; or homemaker services; etc.). Government through the social security, public assistance or public education programs makes payments to Jewish institutions for the cost of services to individual residents of homes for the aged or children in institutions. Grants are made to Jewish agencies for programs such as day care centers or

work with pre-delinquent youth, and for milk distribution and the serving of lunch in day camps, resident camps, and nursery schools. Voluntary agencies provide services in public institutions, such as housing projects, or administer governmental programs, such as aid to refugees.

Cooperation in the rendering of services to persons or families who are common clients of public and voluntary agencies is the subject of continuing relationships.

3. *Training of Personnel*—There are many areas of cooperation in respect to personnel, including the provision of field work experience for social work students, the development of case material for use in social work education, the utilization of voluntary agency personnel as in-service trainers, and the direct provision of public grants for training of personnel (as in hospitals).

4. *Provision of Facilities*—Public-voluntary joint effort has been notable in respect to government loans and grants through the Hill-Burton program to Jewish agencies for the construction of nursing homes, rehabilitation centers, and hospitals. FHA loans have been provided for housing for the aged. Jewish social welfare agencies have collaborated in other patterns such as leasing of YM and YWHA facilities for public school use before 3 p.m., renting of school buildings for center purposes, and special arrangements for the purchase of city-owned facilities.

5. *Research and Demonstration*—Legal provisions for cooperative research and demonstration projects give authority for federal grants to Jewish agencies to advance knowledge and practice in social welfare. Jewish agencies are making growing use of this resource for contributing to the advance of public social welfare and enriching their own services. Among these are vocational

rehabilitation grants to vocational services; United States Public Health Service grants to hospitals, homes for the aged, and centers; and child welfare, maternal and child health, and social welfare and social security grants from the Children's Bureau and the Welfare Administration, to a variety of Jewish agencies.

This is a field in which Jewish agencies share in highly significant cooperative efforts with public services. It is an area which awaits further development.

6. *Interpretation and Public Understanding*—The essence of the philosophy of cooperation between public and voluntary social welfare is the concept of one field of human service—a shared endeavor with responsibility divided appropriately. Adverse public reaction to any phase of the welfare enterprise can injure all parts of it. All social welfare programs aim to meet human needs through the provision of helping services and public and voluntary agencies together must seek better understanding of the causes and characteristics of social needs, the potentials of social services for meeting them, and the importance of support of these services. Jewish social welfare must be an integral part of such cooperative public education.

7. *Mutual Support of Programs*—The oneness of the social welfare field finds expression in the support which public and voluntary agencies give to one another. The participation of civil service employees in campaigns like the United Fund parallels their support for Jewish Welfare Fund campaigns.

There is room for far greater backing of public programs by voluntary agencies. This involves support for legislative and administrative actions affecting coverage, benefit levels, policies, practices, and appropriations. Social action

in this area should be high on the priority list for Jewish social agencies—a goal which requires constant encouragement.

#### Problem of Use of Public Funds

Among the areas of cooperation listed, the provision of services and facilities and research and demonstration programs involve the use of public funds by Jewish social welfare agencies. There are undoubted advantages to this practice. From the public viewpoint, this advances the purposes of the legislative authorizations and appropriations and furthers the rendering of necessary social services to the American people. From the viewpoint of the Jewish agencies, practical fiscal help is given for initiating needed new services and facilities and expanding or intensifying those which exist. Public funds through this practice bear the portion of agency costs which are the responsibility of the polity for all citizens, thus releasing agency dollars for use in fulfilling the agency's distinctive role. In fact, this can safeguard the use of Jewish agency funds for the unique purposes of the organization. The availability of public funds influences positively the standards and practices of voluntary agencies which must qualify for their use, implements the working partnership between public and voluntary endeavor, and enables Jewish communal services to contribute to meeting broad social needs.

There are at the same time hazards in this practice. The conditions under which public funds are accepted may conflict with the primary purposes of Jewish agencies, as well as with their commitments to the Jewish group regarding program content and priority of constituency served. Subtle or overt minimizing or diminishing of the Jewish focus of the agency may result, as agency programs are shaped to fit potential available public funds. Over-

stress on public purchase of service from voluntary agencies can hamper the development of essential public agency functions—especially in the area of social services—and can become implicated in the church-state problem.

The use of public funds by voluntary social welfare agencies is built by law into the social welfare structure of the nation. This is a significant recognition of the place of voluntary services in a free society. The practice itself and its use by Jewish agencies is entirely appropriate. The important factor is that there must be crystal clarity by Jewish agencies both as to the intent of public authority in providing these funds, and as to the distinctive functions of the agency itself. The use of public funds should occur only where the two can be reconciled and harmonized. Jewish agencies should strive for maximum cooperation with public authority in such areas, but should abstain from involvement in use of public funds where both purposes cannot be served.

Apprehensions have been voiced in some quarters that increased Jewish agency public income will diminish agency dependence upon Jewish communal funds and weaken the sanction of the federation in the planning and budgeting process—in-so-far as these agencies are concerned. While this is a possibility, the weight of the federation is most significant in the long run if the source of its influence is a mutual commitment by agencies and federation to serving the Jewish community. While the police function inherent in fiscal control is indisputable, how much more significant is the federation's sanction when it is rooted in a common dedication with the agencies to human welfare in general, and to the welfare of the Jewish people in particular. In point of fact, the complete independence of Jewish social welfare agencies (the

health agencies are excepted from this generalization) from Jewish communal fiscal support seems remote.

Close collaboration of Jewish federations and functional agencies is highly important in planning for collaboration between Jewish agencies and public programs. This should cover the clarification of Jewish communal and agency purposes and joint determination of plans for major use of public funds in the light of broad Jewish communal needs and projections. Such interrelationships between federations and agencies can assure a common perspective on public agency cooperation.

#### **Mutual Understanding—Foundation for Cooperation**

There are several issues bearing upon public voluntary relationships which affect Jewish social welfare. An aggressive effort is needed to replace lay and professional misconceptions about each field if the best cooperation is to be realized. Obsolete clichés must be uprooted, like the generalizations that public agencies give relief and voluntary agencies give service, or public agencies do the mass work, voluntary agencies the work with small units, or public agencies are rigid, inflexible and slow to change while voluntary agencies are the flexible and adaptable pioneers.

These judgments have become threadbare and are unrelated to the vast changes which have occurred and are taking place in public welfare. What is required is an intelligent appreciation of the goals and directions of public service and the vast problems which must be overcome for their achievement. In common with voluntary agencies, they face herculean obstacles as a result of personnel shortages. They must contend also with high case loads, in-

adequate benefit levels, and legal limitations. But their progress has been enormous, especially with the new 1962 public welfare amendments. Jewish agencies must give strong support to government responsibility in social welfare, unhampered by ambivalence due to fear of government encroachment on a private domain. For voluntary agencies, the universe of concern in dealing with community needs must be the whole social welfare field: public and voluntary, not essentially the voluntary segment as it has tended to be. The isolationism of some established, entrenched and often well-endowed voluntary agencies must be replaced by constructive cooperation with the whole family of community services: public as well as voluntary.

On the other hand, understanding of voluntary social welfare can be strengthened in the public sector. Equally inappropriate are such attitudes as that public agencies ultimately should take over the provision of all social services and voluntary agencies are simply filling in until this happens, or that voluntary agencies are reactionary, undemocratic vestiges of the past while public services are the sole authentic expressions of democracy, or that the services rendered by voluntary agencies to the middle-class of the nation are of secondary importance. Healthy appreciation by public agencies of the positive place and the contribution of voluntary services in American life is crucial.

Wholesome public-voluntary relationships require substantial flexibility in thinking. Not only must there be a readiness for modification of relative roles with new circumstances, there must be a high degree of receptivity to programmatic change as needs require it. Moreover, while there must be constant effort to expand the areas in which co-

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operation can occur, there must be concern for the fullest use of the opportunities now available.

Collaboration with public services can be the best expression of the broad social commitment of Jewish social welfare agencies. Administered with sensitivity to purposes and roles, such cooperation

can enable the agencies to fulfill their Jewish purposes and to contribute significantly to meeting the needs of the whole community. In the finest sense, Jewish agencies thus take their place as an integral part of the total social welfare complex erected by a free people to achieve its human destiny.