

FACT AND OPINION

by SAMUEL SPIEGLER

WEDNESDAY THE RABBI WENT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SOMETHING short of complete rapport and full mutual understanding characterizes the relationship of the rabbinate and the Jewish federation in many communities. Aside from observing this and commenting on it, whether to criticize or deplore, nobody has done anything about it. Nobody had, that is, until this year, when an anonymous donor made possible the establishment of an award enabling a leading rabbi of Baltimore to attend the General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds. First winner of the award, conferred by the Associated Jewish Charities of Baltimore, was Rabbi Uri Miller, president of the Baltimore Board of Rabbis. Rabbi Miller's evaluation of his experience at the General Assembly (written by him exclusively for "Fact and Opinion") follows:

"My experience in participating in the General Assembly of the Council of Federations and Welfare Funds was most stimulating. Rubbing elbows with energetic committed lay people involved in the problems of Jewish survival and demonstrating an altruistic traditional interest in the lives and welfare of those in need, lifted my own spirits and gave me a greater sense of hope in a creative future for American and world Jewry.

I even learned many facts of present-day Jewish conditions with which I was but partly familiar.

"Moreover, contrary to a preconceived notion, the spirit that prevailed was not one emphasizing mechanics of fund-raising as an end in itself. It was "quality Judaism" and "Jewish survival." Here was no spirit of "assimilation" in the sense of losing one's identity, but rather a concerted effort to use united strength in fulfilling one's duty as Jews and Americans.

"Now that Jewish religious leaders as other religious leaders have entered into the arena of public concern, as witness the civil rights and peace movements, it is high time that there be a greater measure of integration within the Jewish communities between the Rabbinate and the laity in the many areas related to Federation and Welfare Funds. In many communities there still prevails a spirit of "anti-clericalism" among a substantial part of the Jewish community.

"The 'Rabbinic Award' technique not only gives official recognition to this cooperation but places a special obligation upon both giver and recipient to utilize the benefits obtained by this Rabbinic participation, to the fullest within the community.

"I pray it will spread. It is 'good for the Jews.'"

DIVORCE—AMERICAN JEWISH STYLE

THAT divorce is growing among American Jews is hardly news, even though it is not easy to demonstrate statistically. At any rate, a group of rabbis, social workers, psychiatrists, psychologists, sociologists and others, meeting in an unusual conference sponsored by the Synagogue Commission of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, readily agreed that it is so. They also agreed that it is deplorable, and that something needs to be done about it. Most conferences would have left it at that. This one went a step further. It agreed on at least one thing that should be done; namely, the institution of some form of what its proposer called by the catchy title of "Divorce Early Warning System," the objective of which would be to prevent marital discord from leading to family break-up.

George Rothman, executive director of the Jewish Community Services of Long Island, proposed the early warning system, pointing out it was much easier to enter a disturbed family situation at the start of its difficulties than after fifteen or twenty years of battling.

He proposed establishment of a professional group which would be alert to signs of marital problems manifested in the behavior of school children; programs of pre-marital education in schools; group counseling of courting couples; more cooperation between schools and social agencies and rabbis, social workers and psychiatrists; and creation of an inter-action inventory to help sinking marriages by religious guidance, family service, psychotherapy or some appropriate combination of all three.

The conference agreed on some other things, too; e.g., that there should be a study to determine current rates of divorce and separation and desertion

among American Jews, for a reliable comparison with such rates in the past and with the rates in the general population; that there should be licensing of marriage counselors, to eliminate incompetents and charlatans; that divorce laws should be "humanized" to eliminate fixing of guilt on either spouse; and that an ongoing program of public education should be launched into the causes and consequences of divorce, and improved mental health education and treatment.

Some data on comparative rates of divorce were provided by Dr. Nathan Goldberg, Yeshiva University sociologist, who described surveys in large Jewish population centers in the 1956-65 decade. He said that divorce, separation and desertion among American Jews were less prevalent than in the general population.

Dr. Nathan W. Ackerman, a Columbia University psychiatrist, said that acculturated middle-class American Jewish families had a different pattern than Orthodox Jews. He said "divorce comes easy" among the acculturated Jews but that legal divorce was "still rare" among Orthodox Jews. Among the latter, however, "emotional divorce" may become a severe problem, he reported.

"At one extreme, a segment of the Jewish population gets lost in the large community, and the values of Jewish life fade away," he declared. "At the other extreme, the struggle to adhere to Jewish standards and meanings leads progressively to isolation, to a regressive preoccupation with the past, and the social and mental health of such families suffers accordingly."

Dr. Menachem M. Brayer, consultant psychologist and professor at Yeshiva University, told the conference that Jewish religious law should be re-examined and new secular laws developed to strengthen marriage bonds, preserve family life and correct restrictions

on observant Jewish women who are civilly but not religiously divorced.

He warned that the problem of family break-up was developing with "devastating increment" in the Jewish community. He proposed Jewish reconciliation courts where a judge, a rabbi and marriage counselors would act on a preventive approach to prevent "hasty, groundless, impulsive action" by the "matrimonially disoriented." He proposed also that the Get, the Jewish bill of divorce, be made a "required entity" in civil divorce decrees involving observant Jewish couples. He said this would ensure the Jewish woman's future chances of remarrying within the Jewish faith "without the usual complications of securing a Get after the civil divorce" and that this procedure also would "safeguard her from possible extortion and connivance by her divorcing husband."

He also urged that the power to grant a Get be removed from individual rabbis and entrusted to Jewish religious courts. He proposed the convening of a general rabbinic conference of Orthodox authorities "to search for practical exegetic applications" of the rabbinic law of divorce, "in the light of contemporary problems."

JEWISH SUMMER CAMPS LACK JEWISH PROGRAMMING

JEWISH programming is lacking in many Jewish summer camps, including many that are supported by the local organized Jewish community, according to a preliminary draft of a report on Jewish summer camps prepared for the American Association for Jewish Education. The report is now under revision by the AAJE, according to Isaac Toubin, its Executive Director.

Emphasizing that the report is preliminary, the survey, entitled "Jewish Education and the Summer Camp," provides a series of recommendations, the

first of which states: "The organized Jewish community will have to give much more attention to developing communal Jewish camps, programmed Jewishly. Serious consideration should be given by the bureaus of Jewish education to the development of bureau-organized camps for all Jewish children in the community, regardless of denominational or linguistic ties."

The study was conducted by Daniel Isaacman, of Gratz College, Philadelphia. In the summer of 1963, questionnaires were sent to more than 100 Jewish camps, and replies were received from 61. Mr. Isaacman himself visited 70 camps, studying their activities and programs in depth.

"It should be noted," a foreword to the report states, "that the information gathered from the American Association study is very limited and, more than anything else, indicates the great need for additional data on this important element in the American Jewish educational complex."

The report notes that 80 percent of the Jewish children in the United States receive "some" Jewish schooling during the eight years of their elementary school life, but points out that 85 percent of these children terminate their Jewish schooling at the time of the bar mitzvah or bat mitzvah.

In the Jewish summer camp, however, the children in the same group live in a controlled environment and "one summer in a Jewish programmed summer camp provides more hours of Jewish living than an entire school year of formal class studies," the report points out. "It is because of the potential educational value of the Jewish summer camping experience that this phenomenon must be carefully studied and developed."

The types of summer camps vary widely, the report states. They include Federation-sponsored camps, those con-

ducted by Jewish Centers, Jewish education camps, Yiddish, Zionist-sponsored, philanthropic, denominational camps conducted by one of the three main Jewish religious groups (Orthodox, Conservative and Reform), and Hebrew-speaking or Hebrew-oriented.

"Fully 50 percent of the camps," the report shows, "were organized between 1940 and 1960, and the Center camps also were at the height of their development during this period. The end of this era saw the opening of the language-centered camps and those sponsored by the denominational groupings."

The report cautions that some of the "expressed purposes" of the camps do not, necessarily, reflect their programming fully. "In the case of those sponsored by Yiddish cultural organizations," the report declares, "one must be careful about the designation 'Yiddish camp,' since, to all intents and purposes, almost no Yiddish is to be found in their programs. In the case of some of the other camps, they could be listed in several categories. Some of the Center camps, for example, receive financial support from Federations and, in one instance, from a B'nai B'rith region."

Goals and objectives are also seen as varying widely among the camps. In the main, Federation camps are seen as philanthropic in purpose, aiming primarily to provide camping experience for those who ordinarily could not afford such an experience. Some such camps express a goal of "experience within the philosophic framework of the Jewish community centers," but others emphasize their service to different economic, ethnic or religious clientele.

The Yiddish camps, states the report, "originally organized to provide an overall linguistic, religious and cultural environment in accordance with the philosophy of the parent body—Yiddish culturalist or Zionist with Yiddish cultural concerns—have deviated considerably

from their original purposes." Examples are given of "Yiddish" camps which do not even mention Yiddish among their goals.

Most Zionist camps are reported trying to stimulate settlement in Israel. Denominational camps are categorized often as "educational language-centered or religious centered," emphasizing Jewish living but hewing chiefly to their own denomination, such as Reform or Conservative. As a rule, the philanthropic, Center and Federation camps "place major stress on the social and physical, rather than the religious growth" of the camper, while the reverse is true among the Zionist and cultural camps.

JEWIS IN CONGRESS

FIFTEEN Jews were elected to the House of Representatives in November—the same total as in the 89th Congress. Fourteen were reelected; the fifteenth is from Philadelphia's 4th District, where incumbent Democratic Rep. Herman Toll retired last year. Democrat Joshua Eilberg was elected to replace him, winning over Republican Robert B. Cohen by a narrow margin.

The Jewish incumbents reelected were Representatives Seymour Halpern, Emanuel Celler, Leonard Farbstein, Jacob H. Gilbert, Abraham J. Multer, Richard L. Ottinger, Joseph Y. Resnick, Benjamin Rosenthal, Herbert Tenzer, James H. Scheuer and Lester L. Wolff, all of New York; Sidney R. Yates, Illinois; Samuel N. Friedel, Maryland; and Charles S. Joelson, New Jersey.

All the Jews in the House are Democrats, with the lone exception of Congressman Halpern, of Queens, N. Y., who has served since 1959.

It was an off-year for all three Jewish Senators whose terms of office did not expire this year: Senator Jacob K. Javits, New York Republican; Senator Ernest Gruening, Alaska Democrat; and

Senator Abraham Ribicoff, Connecticut Democrat.

NOTES FROM ISRAEL

What Israelis Think of Social Workers

A RANDOM sample of the "public," consisting of 200 adults who could read and write Hebrew who were either passengers on a train from Jerusalem to Haifa on April 17, 1963 or traveled on April 24, 1963 from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv and back, were given schedules of 19 questions—mostly closed-end but allowing for comments—designed to obtain the extent of the respondent's knowledge about social work and social workers and his image of them.

Summary and conclusions. The public sees the social worker's function primarily as giving material help. It also sees him as an agent of immigrant absorption through giving of economic aid. (It should be noted that social services other than of an economic nature are largely underdeveloped in Israel at this time).

There is an ambivalence in the attitude toward the profession. On the one hand, there is high regard for its contribution to the process of immigrant absorption and to national integration. (91 percent thought that social work was "important" or "very important"). On the other hand, there is a negative and accusatory feeling against the individual client. A recognition of the legitimacy and importance of social work in helping people is coupled with a judgmental attitude toward the recipient of the help.

An additional factor influencing the low valuation of the profession is the public image of it as a female activity like nursing or teaching and the accompanying low salaries obtaining in these professions.

Interestingly enough, the public generally sees the social worker as having positive characteristics. When asked to

check among 18 characteristics—positive and negative—which are to be found among social workers, the 5 characteristics that were checked most frequently were: patient (112 times), concerned about people (108), kindhearted (88), practical (65), keeps a secret (61). Of the negative characteristics, those mentioned most frequently were: nosey (35), doesn't keep promises (30), shouts (19), prattles (18), indifferent (17).

Condensed from *Seker Da'at Hakhahal al Miktzoa Ha'Avoda Hasotzialit* ("An Inquiry Into Public Opinion on the Profession of Social Work"), by Tamar Efrati, Naomi Bamberger, Dafna Cohen, Ila Meir, Uri Rimon, Miriam Reich, and Shulamit Sharrit. Thesis submitted to the Paul Baerwald School, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, July 1963, 77 pp., mimeographed.

Appeals in Public Welfare Decisions

Under an act adopted by the Knesset on July 22, 1965, applicants to local welfare bureaus will have the right to appeal if they are dissatisfied with the decision of the bureau or if they do not receive an answer in writing within a reasonable time. Appeals panels named by the Minister of Social Welfare in consultation with the local authority consist of three persons: a qualified social worker and two representatives of the public. A member of a local authority or an employee of a welfare bureau may not sit on an appeal involving that bureau.

In cases involving financial aid the appeals committee may act in one of the following ways: deny the appeal; modify the bureau's decision; set aside the decision and approve a grant in accordance with the rates of assistance that the bureau is authorized to give; or order the bureau to make a reinvesti-

gation. In cases involving service only the committee may deny appeal or order the bureau to reinvestigate the matter.

Trauma of Dependency

A study of 43 Israeli families made dependent by the illness of the family heads produced findings and conclusions startlingly relevant to the United States. The families were of Yemenite, Moroccan, Kurdistani or Lybian origin. They were matched with a control group of non-dependent families similar in background, composition and other factors. What follows is a digest of portions of a 41-page brochure by Chana Weil, titled Social Integration of Dependent Families in Immigrant Moshavim, published (in Hebrew) in Jerusalem in 1964.

The dependent families are not integrated into Israeli society. They feel themselves isolated, detached from society both in their immediate environment and in the country, and leading a marginal existence. This feeling is a result of the mobility downward from their former status abroad. They "arrived" at their present status only a few short years ago and almost always as a result of an illness which led to economic dependence.

Treatment implications. Their feelings of failure would diminish if their contacts with their immediate environment were improved, both by a change of society's attitudes toward them and by a change in the social functioning of the dependents. The key solution is rehabilitation and suitable occupation for those unable to perform hard physical labor. There are no possibilities for this in the *moshavim*, and efforts should be made to move the families from the villages. A first step should be an increase in the assistance grants enabling the families to live on a minimum but adequate basis and to maintain normal social relations, visits to and by neigh-

bors, buying newspapers, borrowing from neighbors. This would bring the families out of the apathy and feelings of helplessness.

The depressed economic condition affects the young generation as well. Children who cannot buy books, participate in social activities, go out on hikes, whose clothes are tattered, etc. are not acceptable to their peers, nor can they progress in school. Perhaps most important, parents who are apathetic and alienated from society, ignorant of and disinterested in what happens around them cannot provide their children with what they need for their intellectual and emotional growth. For these reasons the children are bound to fail in their studies and become retarded in their basic skills, and hence condemned to a relatively low living standard for the rest of their lives.

Because the alienation and the marginality of these families derive from a depressed economic condition due to ill health, the emphasis in treatment should not be on personal and family adjustment. Ways must be found to arrest the downward mobility of the clients to elevate their self-esteem and their social functioning. Only when they cease to think of themselves as unwanted and declassed will they be ready to relate to ways of solving their personal and family problems.

The prevailing assumption that the client-worker relationship can of itself create a sense of acceptability in the client is much too simple. Assuming that such a feeling can be created, how can the client transfer this feeling to a society from which he is detached? Put differently, what is the significance of the professional relationship with a worker who comes from a different cultural stratum where he occupies a position of status and authority? The social worker's direction of treatment

should be to hasten or make more effective the process whereby the client would be encouraged to establish more normal relations with his own environment. However, no social treatment method will be of much value unless it is accompanied by an improvement in the economic conditions.

LETTER

TO THE EDITOR:

IN "Fact and Opinion" for September, 1966, there appears a statement on "Education for Social Work in Israel" which is incomplete.

Bar Ilan University established a School of Social Work in the Fall of 1966, following a number of discussions and planning sessions, including a feasi-

bility study which I did in the Summer of 1965.

The Acting Director of the School is Dr. Solomon Green of the Wurzweiler School of Social Work faculty, who is on leave for the 1966-67 academic year and who has been in Israel since June, 1966. Dr. Yechezkiel Hartman who formerly taught at the School of Social Work, St. Louis University, joined Dr. Green as a faculty member in the new School in September, 1966. Other appointments are in process of being worked out.

The new School is planning to concentrate on social work with groups and social work with communities.

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