

# THE JEWISH CASEWORK AGENCY: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS IN A TIME OF PARADOX \*

by DAVID ZEFF

*Senior Regional Consultant, Council of Jewish Federation and Welfare Funds, New York*

AND

IRVING GREENBERG

*Executive Director, Jewish Counseling and Service Agency, Newark, New Jersey*

## Contemporary Social Setting

IN recent years literature on Jewish institutions has dealt with Jewish education as a regenerating force; with the challenge to the synagogue; with the community center program as an instrument of Jewish identification; with the relationship of Jewish community relations to Jewish survival. But rarely does one find Jewish casework services examined in this perspective. This is not surprising and it is consistent with what appears to be a growing estrangement in both time and space between the casework agency and the organized Jewish community. As the agency has become more and more preoccupied with counseling, the areas for meaningful lay interpretation have narrowed. The agency's organic connection with the Jewish community has grown thinner as fewer and fewer of the Jewish community's leadership have found the patience or interest to pierce the wall of what has sometimes appeared to them a kind of mystique. Equally thin has been the agency's consciousness of being part of a historic continuum. It will be the purpose of this paper to make some clear judgments about the Judaic quality and direction of

Jewish casework agencies and to develop a point of view and a point of departure.

The swift and often melancholy impact of a permissive American society on the Jewish community has been commented upon frequently in recent years by Jewish sociologists, educators, communal leaders, rabbis and others among our scholars.

There is general agreement on what are the principal changes that have taken place in the sociology of the Jewish community and they need only be restated in this capsule form:

1. For the first time in our American Jewish history the majority of us is native-born, and generally comfortable and at ease in our American setting.

2. We have reached the highest educational achievement of any other religious or ethnic sub-group, with the possible exceptions of the Episcopalians and Presbyterians.

3. We have moved into positions of importance in the business, industrial, public, academic, and artistic worlds to a degree altogether disproportionate to our tiny population of slightly more than 5 million.

4. This intensive process of change within a larger society undergoing dislocations has made us much more mobile geographically and socially. A consequence of this mobility has been to weaken our basic family ties.

\* Presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Conference of Jewish Communal Service, Philadelphia, May 31, 1965.

5. Overwhelmingly we have moved into the suburbs, and in so doing we have abandoned old patterns of institutional relationships and established new ones.

6. The numbers and influence of Orthodoxy have declined.

7. Although more children than ever before receive some kind of Jewish education, over 90 percent drop out upon reaching their thirteenth birthday. In consequence the gap between their Jewish and their general educational quotient continues to widen.

8. While studies on intermarriage have not been conclusive, here is demonstrable evidence that the intermarriage rate among the young is appreciably higher than it was among the generation of their parents.

This, in the broadest and sketchiest of terms is the milieu in which we find ourselves as we move into the last third of this century. Any comparisons of Jewish casework services with the recent past, any assessment of the current problems which the agencies face and any speculations about the future must be considered in the light of these realities.

It is one of the ironies of contemporary Jewish life that the casework agency is not better known and esteemed. In its competition with other agencies it has usually been least successful in attracting prestigious lay leadership and has lagged behind the other agencies in securing increased central financing. In part, at least, the professional methods of casework and counseling seem to have inhibited more visible and warmly identified support of the largest contributors from the Jewish communal elite. A further irony lies in the fact that the Jewish casework agency is the major inheritor of those institutional expressions of the central Jewish impulse of *chesed*—of humanity, of the act of loving kindness. The Jewish casework agency is the lineal descendant of organizations that in other eras and in other places were free loan

societies, orphan asylums, *Moas Chitim* (Passover relief), *Ochnosis Orchim* (aid to the traveler), dowries for poor brides, free burial for the poor, and so forth. All in all, an amazingly broad range of communal services, especially when viewed against the social indifference of the general communities in which they functioned.

#### History of Casework Agency

Before we examine more closely the present contradictory direction of the Jewish casework agency, it might be well to look at its evolution within this century. It is accepted that the quality and skills of most practitioners have increased, their insights about the individual have grown a hundred-fold as has their knowledge of interaction within the family. But this achievement has not won the necessary support. In his annual report on Jewish communal services, S. P. Goldberg provides a ten-year comparative statistical analysis which shows less increase in financial support to the family and children's agencies than to those agencies in group work, services to the aged, employment and guidance. It is also of interest to point out that in spite of the improved quality of casework services and the considerable effort that has been made to stimulate adequate fee payments, fees represent less than five percent of the average agency's total income. On the other hand, internal income of community centers and homes for the aged (not including public funds) represented over 60 percent of total income in 1963.

The early 20th century pattern of concrete services in casework agencies was congenial to both Jewish tradition and the prevailing Protestant ethic. The countless Talmudic imperatives about responsibility toward the poor found expression in the tasks of relief which were undertaken. And most of the expression was consonant with the prevailing

Protestant notion about the responsibility of religious or ethnic groups voluntarily to meet the needs of their own. Under this system the services of the agency were visible, and the influential members of the Jewish community who were drawn into active board membership felt a valued role in providing sympathetic support for the poor and those otherwise handicapped.

With the professionalization of the field, with the assumption of relief responsibility by governmental sources, with the growing economic well-being of the Jewish community and with the shifting emphasis to counseling, some basic changes took place which diminished the role of the board member and enhanced that of the casework executive. We believe this has damaged the essential connection with the Jewish community and our Judaic past.

In the past, the board member had been able to relate policy to program in a personalized way and, on occasion, would even offer his own resources or personal efforts in facilitating concrete services, for example by finding jobs for clients or extending financial loans. But with the agency shift to counseling and psychotherapy, the board member himself became a potential user of services. The diminishing opportunity for the board member to be directly touched emotionally was one of the factors responsible for its exodus.

Jewish casework agency executives, often unable and sometimes unwilling to seek out the sources of Jewish leadership strength, have tended to bring into board membership those who have tested insights into the modern casework agency's objectives—physicians, psychologists, psychiatrically-oriented housewives, and frequently, the highly acculturated Jew who finds that being a trustee with the Jewish family agency is more comfortable because of its lack of accent on Jewish culture and tradition. With rare excep-

tions, the major contributors to local welfare funds are less frequently found on the boards of Jewish family and children's agencies than on other communal services boards. As a result, the family's agency's capacity to influence the communal scene is, at best, marginal.

Again, it is paradoxical that the family agency, which outwardly seems so much more remote from the heart of the Jewish community, is the only local service that was significantly affected by the massive Jewish tragedy in Europe, the only one (with exception of the employment and guidance agencies) that was called on to deal directly with those who came to our shores as a consequence of an international development—the immigration of refugees. The family agency, in the same process, was the only local agency to be directly affected by a national Jewish program, resettlement quotas set by national Jewish agencies.

The demands for financing refugee programs were clear and compelling and the community responded generously to the needs of the victims of Nazism. It is doubtful whether most Jewish welfare fund leaders saw in this program a throw-back to an earlier pattern of concrete services from which the family agencies had been moving away. The subsequent waning of the refugee programs proved an embarrassment to many agencies, who had claimed counseling as their core service, when it was revealed that their basic activity had actually been built around refugees. Their vulnerability was underscored when the question was persistently put, "At what point do refugee relief needs become a governmental responsibility?" With the passage of time there has been increased clarity about most agency policies albeit narrowly defined in professional terms.

If the agency is to meet the challenges of the contemporary Jewish human condition, it must somehow change the course

of its relationships—it must become less professionally eclectic and more identified with the Jewish community's objectives. This is not to suggest that it give up the refinements of its service but rather that it move more vigorously into a position in the center of the changing Jewish community if it is to understand it better and make more effective its claims for adequate financing. The Jewish family agency is not merely serving the needs of human beings who happen to have been born Jewish. It is serving the members of a time-honored and distinctive community and in so doing helps perpetuate it creatively through one of the most important instruments of survival, the viability of the family and the integrity of the individual. Moreover, it would appear to us that what casework has profoundly to say must be said beyond the confines of one-to-one therapy. Casework is a core service with potentialities for freeing so many of us from emotional enthrallment that it must find a considerably wider platform.

While this paper deals with some of the major problems that beset the Jewish casework agency today, and with its future prospects, none of this can properly be assessed or postulated without a closer look at history. It is therefore important for us to relate the Jewish casework agency to our Jewish past which we find to be of undiminished relevance. We would further venture to say that there is an obligation for all Jewish agencies to examine themselves within this same perspective. Jewish social workers have generally been reluctant to think in these terms, possibly out of a sense of discomfort in intellectually exploring unfamiliar regions or under the assumption that since much of our inheritance is religious in character it lacks direct consonance with social work as a profession.

There is a long and respectable history

in Judaism for the non-rabbinic interpretation of our Sages. We find it particularly fruitful for social workers to examine the implications, for instance, of the core Jewish concept of upholding the dignity of the individual. This happens to be our underlying purpose as caseworkers and on this Judaism speaks with eloquence. From this perspective, there needs to be much less of a dichotomy between the two groups whom Manheim Shapiro has recently defined as those who view themselves primarily as Jewish social workers concerned with the "perpetuation of the Jewish heritage . . . and those who see themselves primarily as social workers who happen to be working in Jewish agencies and . . . question the viability or relevance of the Jewish heritage in contemporary society,"<sup>1</sup> or are indifferent to the problem. There may be those among us, learned in Judaism, who regard our Jewish past as outmoded in this nuclear age. This is a regrettable but an ever-present hazard in a free and democratic society. Much more painful for us are those who have rejected the Judaistic tradition primarily out of ignorance of it.

From time to time, efforts have been made to find a satisfactory rationale for the Jewish family agency. Some have contended that the existence of a sectarian Jewish agency is justified because Jews feel more comfortable being served by an agency under the aegis of the Jewish community. Others have found it sufficient that the Jewish community wants such an agency and therefore has a right to have it. It seems to us that a rationale which is not linked to our historic past can only be found wanting.

To see the Jewish family agency as a

<sup>1</sup> Manheim S. Shapiro, "The Dilemmas of Jewish Agencies—Real and Unreal," this issue, p. 18.

symbol of Jewish identification requires an understanding of specific Jewish symbols. The family agency with its rootedness in Judaism and concern with each human being, the sacredness of life, the value of earthly existence, the inexplicable reasons for misery, the claims that we have, each upon the other, are imbedded in our historic Judaic foundation.

While in traditional Jewish literature the terms of *Zedakah* and *Chesed* are used interchangeably, some of the more sophisticated scholars observe two main-streams of the Jewish philanthropic impulse—*Zedakah* as referring to the quality and kind of aid which is given and *Chesed* which Professor Ephraim Frisch<sup>2</sup> referred to as “the voluntary surplus of benefaction, the margin of generosity which transcends that which is given out of a sense of duty—that which springs from a sense of compassion and human kinship”—translated into English as “loving kindness.” This helps us to understand why Maimonides, amidst the barbarities of the twelfth century, could say in the Mishneh Torah that the highest form of giving was to help a man to help himself—a completely contemporary social work concept.<sup>3</sup>

The difference between previous and contemporary Judaic expression, lies within the change in the role of the direct “benefactor.” Previously any individual could give of himself directly to the receiver of the beneficence through money, clothing, food, etc. Because of the realities and complexities of modern society, the direct donor now becomes the professionally trained “helper” and the “benefactor” becomes an anonymous contributor, one who only indirectly

makes help possible through the giving of money.

In Jewish social work, as in all social work enterprises, the benefactor, because he is now separated from a direct helping role, must have an increased amount of confidence and trust in the helper. Nevertheless, *we must try* to reconcile our contemporary sophisticated and scientific approach to “giving and receiving” with the more elemental concept of connection between the “source of beneficence” and “the receiver.” This, if one wills, is a basic element in Title II of the Anti-Poverty Act.

#### **Tfila, Torah, Zedakah**

In Jewish tradition the three basic pillars on which Judaism rests are considered to be *Tfila, Torah* and *Zedakah*. It is important to point out that these are not given priority over one another, but have the same level of importance. Yet in contemporary American Jewish life, probably because of the American insistence on dividing the population according to religious lines, the Jew has tended to relate himself more to the concept of prayer than to the other two parts of the triad. Today, as in the past, the aspect of prayer has tended to find concrete symbolic forms which make it so much better understood and visible—the synagogue itself, the holy scrolls, the festivals and the numerous other symbols which perpetuate each of the holidays and observances. Learning too has continued to be visibly perpetuated, and its visibility has been enhanced by its association with the synagogue. Unfortunately there have been few clear manifestations in current Jewish life that sharpen one’s awareness of *Chesed*. The principal communal agency for the perpetuation of this part of the triad, as we observed earlier, is largely the Jewish family and children’s services. There are, of course, massive campaigns for purposes of relief and welfare for Jews

<sup>2</sup> Ephraim Frisch, *An Historical Survey of Jewish Philanthropy*, The MacMillan Co., New York, 1924.

<sup>3</sup> Mishneh Torah (1180 C.E.).

overseas through central fund-raising, but in the sense that we described it above, that of personally helping an individual to realize his capacity, this must remain largely the responsibility of the family agency. Most of the agencies that have been visible in the past as instruments for the concept of *Zedakah* and *Chesed* have very little relevance today. But in the complex demands that are made on the Jew to adjust simultaneously to the broad society in which he lives and yet maintain his identification with Jewish life, the problems that must be dealt with still remain the imperfections of married life, the hazards of birth, the adaptation to a highly mechanized society. The fact that the Jewish family agency is basically secular, does not make it any less important in terms of Jewish continuity.

Although we express our responsibility in modern, scientific terms, we must remember that our essential goal is to relieve individual human misery and to help the individual towards a more worthwhile life and integrity. Whether we utilize modern mental health concepts and understanding or simpler forms of help, the underlying goal remains the same.

Jewish concern with personal or financial assistance began 3000 years ago with the development of urban life and, with it, problems of poverty and sickness that had been in a more primitive society the responsibility of the family or clan. It was at the point when cities (albeit small ones) began to develop and, with them, varieties of social pathology, that the prophets (Amos at Beth El and Isaiah at Jerusalem) began to express their concern for the ills of human beings. Just as a prophetic concern with individual needs was an expression of the growth of the first city in Jewish life, so, we believe are the Jewish family agencies with their considerably greater

complexity an expression of Jewish survival and adjustment needs in the 20th century. Just as the synagogue continues to embody responsibility for prayer and learning, so does the tradition of *Chesed* reside with the Jewish family agency. It is less important to identify what is or what is not Jewish in the individual's demand for service, as he applies to a Jewish family agency, than to perceive the needs and problems of an individual who is a Jew. While the answer to an individual's problems may be contained in modern psychological, psychiatric and sociological solutions, and would be similar to those found in agencies under general auspices, this does not mitigate against the Jewishness intrinsic in the Jewish family agency.

We have, in recent years, only begun to tap the reservoirs of our Jewish tradition as it speaks to us about our individual and communal responsibilities to our fellows. As scholars commit themselves to this task they help deepen and enrich that which many of us perceive hazily and impressionistically. A scholar who is addressing himself to this field of inquiry is Professor Isadore Twersky of Harvard University. He develops the concept that *Chesed* (the act of loving kindness) is "that distinctive function which legitimizes our worldly existence and adds a new dimension of purposiveness to life . . . indeed man was created only on the assumption that he would passionately pursue *Chesed* and this in turn saves him from damnation and perdition." The Torah, he points out, begins and ends with loving kindness as a divine act.<sup>4</sup>

In contemporary literature much emphasis is placed on the loneliness of the individual, his sense of alienation, his

<sup>4</sup> Isadore Twersky, "Some Aspects of the Jewish Attitude Toward the Welfare State," paper presented at the Annual Conference, Commission on Synagogue Relations, Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, New York, 1962.

lack of connection with society, both in time and space. We have tried to suggest that for the Jew there is a universalist connection to his past that bears meaningfully on his present and has particular meaning for the social worker in a Jewish agency. It is also worth reiterating that our distinctiveness as a religio-ethnic entity and our efforts to endure as such are not inconsistent with the goals of a democratic society. On the contrary, a democratic society is best served when our creative distinctiveness is preserved. Dr. Milton R. Konvitz deals with this perceptively in his article, "The Jewish Intellectual, the University and the Jewish Community."<sup>5</sup> He provides us with two particularly pertinent ideas from non-Jewish sources. John Stuart Mill, he reminds us, recognized this over a hundred years ago when he wrote about culture and individuality in a democratic society. He asserted that levelling forces were unhappily at work and that "great as are the differences of position which remain they are nothing to those which have ceased. And the assimilation is still proceeding . . . If the claims of individuality are ever to be asserted, the time is now while much is wanting to complete the enforced assimilation." Dostoyevsky in *Crime and Punishment* observed, "Talk nonsense, but talk your own nonsense . . . To go wrong in one's own way is better than to go right in someone else's."

Let us now consider "our own nonsense;" how can we maintain Jewish continuity. We will ask and attempt to answer three basic questions. (1) *What makes a Jewish casework agency Jewish?* Is it the policy of serving only Jews in a Jewish setting? Is it the nature of the problems that are brought

or the particular solutions that are offered? (2) *How can a Jewish casework agency strengthen Jews as individuals and Judaism as a historic continuance?* Is it through the emphasis on "Jewish goals and Jewish values?" (3) *How can lay and professional leadership in casework agencies revive and strengthen the emphasis on Jewish components?* Should we have training courses for developing lay leadership in every community? Should we deepen the understanding of the staffs to the meaning of *Halacha* (Jewish Laws) as well as holidays, heroes, and history? And speaking of *Halacha*, whose shall we adopt—the rabbis' or the social workers'? Or which rabbi's or which social worker's? Can both be integrated? How can *Chesed* be introduced into social work practice without abandoning contemporary psychotherapy?

#### What is Jewish in Jewish Agency?

What of the first question, namely *What makes a Jewish casework agency Jewish?* A familiar answer has been that such an agency is one that has a Jewish board and Jewish clients, and is supported in part or in whole by Jewish contributions. Were we content to leave the matter this way, our focus today would be very different. We find these answers by themselves no longer acceptable if the concept of *Chesed* is to be part of the fabric of the Jewish family agency. We believe that *Chesed* is interwoven with our religion, our Torah, our history and our belief in the meaning of the *Brith* (covenant), and must become part of the framework if not the essence of social service to Jewish people. The Jewish thrust towards benevolence has always been a collective and individual way of becoming one with God. Very early in our development as a people, our concern for the poor flowed from the belief that "man was made in the image of God." Therefore, in all mat-

<sup>5</sup> From a brochure by the same title issued by B'Nai Brith Hillel Foundation, New York, 1964.

ters pertaining to man's duty to his fellows, the focal interest is not only in human welfare per se but in the "character of God." Likewise, the attitude of traditional Judaism towards the poor was derived less from an interest in the poor, themselves, than from what was believed to be God's interest in the poor. We are suggesting the need for Jewish casework agencies to re-examine their almost total preoccupation with psychological, mechanistic, and scientific thinking and to begin relating themselves to a spiritual, Judaic consideration. Our current concentration upon psychoanalysis may have pulled us away from basic Jewish identification.

The distinctive quality about the Jewish casework agency cannot be its concern solely with modern scientific, psychotherapeutic methods, but rather the application of these methods within the concept of *Chesed*.

#### Strengthening Judaism

The second question is, *How does a Jewish casework agency strengthen Jews and Judaism?* Let us consider the usual problems which are brought to Jewish family agencies, those of the disordered family, representing husband and wife insufficiency, incapacity in relating to each other and in coping with the world around them. They are usually over 30 years old with serious limitations in their capacity to develop and maintain effective child-rearing roles. They are not unlike their non-Jewish suburban counterparts in this respect. Often these problems stem from internal disorganization within themselves and in their families. Another significant category is the increasing number of children's and adolescents' problems with underlying severe pathological characteristics. These embody an emptiness, perplexity and dysfunctioning reflecting the dehumanizing influences of our changing society.

Increasingly, Jewish family agencies are confronted with problems stemming from the relationship of the father to his children and especially to his sons. The role of the Jewish father has undergone important changes that carry potential dangers for the continuity of Jewish values. We believe that the diminished role of the father has crucial child-parent consequences. Because growing affluence has made it much easier for the father to purchase services for his family, this has often become a substitute for providing protection, continuity and substance in his relationship to his children.

We do not believe the discovery and the application of the Covenant was an accident of history. The Covenant is the basic idea through which the father passes onto his children the essential meaning of life. Although the emphasis has been upon the Jewish father passing this heritage onto his Jewish sons, it includes his Jewish daughters as well.

Rabbi Leo Baeck, a great man who bore witness during the darkest hour of Judaism, and who was able to see the Jewish spirit in all its paradoxical complexity, referred to the word Covenant as having a consistent emphasis within the sacred scriptures of Israel. "In the Bible the word Covenant is elemental, alive, filled with a germinating and unfolding meaning."<sup>6</sup> It is within this context that we suggest serious thought be given to the significance of Abraham and Isaac and their relationship, instead of the Greek Oedipus myth which deals with the mother-son, rather than the father-son relationship. To many of us dealing with basic Jewish family ties depend for our professional sustenance on sources predominantly humanistic, possibly scientific, but certainly not Judaic.

It is significant that it is the mother

<sup>6</sup> Leo Baeck, *This People Israel*, 1965, p. 11.

rather than the father who in moments of family crises seeks out the casework agency. Often this is a result of the abdication of the father's essential role. The role of the woman in traditional life has never been understated, as witness the biblical account of Sarah, Rebecca, Ruth and others. The abdication by the father of his essential role and the lopsided responsibility that is carried by the contemporary mother (with due respect to her high educational and cultural exposure) leaves her with too much responsibility for the rearing of the children. Therefore, if the purpose of Jewish casework agencies is to strengthen Jewish family life, we have to find the means by which we can reach the father and reach him appropriately and effectively in his parental function as an essential link in the continuity of Judaism.

We have touched upon a number of paradoxes which confront the contemporary Jewish casework agency. We have dealt with the agency in its historical-traditional perspective, and in the context of its American development. We have dwelt upon the direction which in our opinion has been away from a worthwhile Judaic core. Having said all of this, it is incumbent upon us to project a point of view which has relevance for the future. Stated simply, we propose a *Jewish Family Life Center*, which will be the result of the joint efforts put forth by the lay and professional leaders committed to the continuity of Jewish casework agencies. What do we mean by this?

In its simplest terms it would be:

1) An *expression* of the essential idea in Jewish life that the individual is sacred and that his sanctity must be maintained and preserved by the community.

2) A *demonstration* of the central position maintained by the Jewish fam-

ily as a viable force in the continuity of Judaism.

3) A *framework* and a method through which a *total* approach to family needs and problems can be developed and maintained.

4) A *means* of dealing with family dysfunction and improved family function.

5) A *structure* for providing:

- a) Family education services as
  - 1) Pre-marital counseling.
  - 2) Family life education.Both of which would include fundamental Jewish concepts.
- b) Family check-up or diagnostic services on a regular basis.
- c) Family counseling and individual counseling.
- d) Day care and treatment facilities for dysfunctioning children  
adults  
elderly
- e) Nursery school facilities for upgrading and observing young children.
- f) Supportive services such as
  - 1) Homemakers and housekeepers
  - 2) Friendly visitors and companions
  - 3) Big brothers and sisters
  - 4) Special tutors
  - 5) Adequate income maintenance

It will be noted that in this schematic outline we have not included services to individuals who are living in places other than their own homes, such as those in foster homes, in special institutions for children and adults, in homes for the aged. This omission is deliberate. These are highly specialized services which, in our opinion, will have to continue within their own respective frameworks, although substantially related to the Jewish family life center.

What we have projected is not altogether new. Similar suggestions for the integration of social services on this basis have been proposed before. What is new, we believe, is the way in which it can become a central force in the Jewish community based upon a clear social plan and within the Jewish context.

#### Lay and Professional Leadership

We have already touched upon the answer to the third question, namely, *how can lay and professional leadership in Jewish family and children's agencies revive and strengthen the emphasis on Jewish components?* In order to assure substantial exposure to the Jewish components of the services suggested above, we suggest adding another dimension which, with very rare exception, is missing from most ongoing in-service training programs. We now provide staff with psychiatric consultation, psychological testing, home economic consultation, seminars, and workshops, but we rarely include provision for the transmission of appropriate Jewish cultural, religious and historic ideas. A notable exception to this, of course, has been, the planful program of the New York Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, in which social workers in Jewish agencies are given the opportunity to learn from outstanding Jewish scholars the unique nature of our history, traditions, and acceptable ways of Jewish life. This type of staff development helps, in our opinion, to fuse *Chesed* with the other two aspects of the Jewish triad, which we described earlier as that of learning and prayer.

During the past 25 years, sporadic efforts have been made nationally to provide in academic settings the kind of knowledge in depth about the Jewish community and about Judaism which would strengthen and deepen the understanding of the special community in which the practitioner functions. These,

we are sorry to say, have all been relatively short-lived. Our social work training is confined almost exclusively to the technical aspects of service. The gap today, that makes us very concerned, is the absence of any preparation for the social worker to develop clarity about the changing, emerging Jewish community. We also believe that the lay leadership must also be exposed to and come from those segments of Jewish community life that are deeply identified with the continuity of Judaism.

The storehouse of Jewish ideas possesses the power to illuminate our case-work practice through scholarly interpretation and analysis. Much of this power we as social workers have as yet not been able to harness. Part of our task is to encourage the kind of research and demonstration that will add to this area of knowledge. There already exist sources that can shed light on our respective professional and lay responsibilities. It is possible for agencies, planning individually or together, to utilize scholars who can impart this learning meaningfully to us. Their numbers unfortunately are few. But we can use the successful example set by the New York Federation or we can draw upon established sources such as the departments of Judaic Studies in the various universities or intellectual leadership for this purpose can possibly be developed at the Wurzweiler or other schools of social work who are committed to Jewish purposes.

We are, happily, in a period when our Federal government has belatedly embarked on a comprehensive plan to eliminate great pockets of poverty. We shall be called upon and we shall respond with genuine affirmation because Judaism has always held poverty to be ignoble and degrading. However before we can determine what shall be our agency's special contribution to this or any other massive program of general social wel-

fare, we must have clarity for ourselves as to who we are and what is our essential purpose. Any polarized solution which rejects the Jewish agency's commitment to this struggle for general welfare, or on the other hand, which

propels us into it prematurely will serve equally to dissipate our effectiveness. To preserve the integrity and Jewish continuity of our agencies we must now, without delay, define and reaffirm our own ideals and our own identity.