NEW PATTERNS OF JEWISH COMMUNAL SERVICE*

by WILLIAM AVRUNIN

Executive Director, Jewish Welfare Federation, Detroit, Michigan

PROPOSE to approach consideration of new patterns, first, by taking note of some of the major social developments which now affect Jewish community service and are likely to affect it in the next five-year period and, secondly, by trying to understand the implications of these developments. Understanding them, we may be able to help determine the direction in which they press us.

Among others, there are these social and political changes which have an impact on our profession and its practice.

I. The civil rights movement has a tremendous impact on our life in general and in shaping attitudes toward the work in which we are engaged. The civil rights legislation clearly recognizes the existence of sectarian services. Title VI of the 1964 Act, which is used as a guide post in the granting of governmental funds to private agencies forbids such agencies to discriminate against clients on the basis of race. color, or national origin. As differentiated from Title VII, which deals with employment, it omits reference to religion, recognizing specifically that confining services to a particular religious group or cultural group does not bar it from securing government financing.

It is under this provision that our Jewish homes for aged are eligible for Medicaid, for example. Beyond this, the sweep of the Negro revolution and the civil rights movement has affected the thinking and feeling of both laymen and professionals. More of them now challenge the propriety of programs under Jewish auspices confining themselves to serving a Jewish clientele. Some of these individuals never did like the idea of Jewish sectarian services; others find it contrary to their understanding of liberalism-or even, Americanism-in the 1960's. This attitude has its impact on all of the fields of community service making it more difficult to face objectively the question of sectarianism. The civil rights movement in part has emphasized the rights of individuals and has emphasized less group life and cultural group survival, or at least it has given this latter a secondary position even, especially, in the portfolio of liberals.

II. The expansion of government services has extended over a long span of time—since 1933—and at an accelerated pace in the last few years. It has taken some giant steps in spite of the inhibiting consequence of military expenditures. There is no question but that the momentum will carry forward government programs in the welfare field.

There is sufficient need for commu-

^{*} Presented at the Regional Conference of the National Conference of Jewish Communal Service, Chicago, Illinois, February 23, 1967.

nity services in our society to challenge the full resources of government and of voluntary efforts, both non-sectarian and sectarian. Nevertheless, fundamental services of ever increasing scope are offered to us under government auspices. At the same time there is increased government financing of community services under private agency auspices. But the main sweep of the development is that the government is shouldering responsibility for larger and larger areas of service. Services under government auspices have grown at an accelerated rate even though they do not necessarily replace services under private auspices. This has a number of meanings for us in the Jewish field. Just as we gave up the function of financial assistance, it is inevitable that we shall continue to transfer other functions as these are better provided and better financed from tax sources than we could possibly finance them ourselves. The companion government program of financing services under Jewish auspices can have only a minor countering influence.

III. A third major development of importance to us in this context is the changes in the character of the Jewish population, and, I should add, the changes in the character of Jewish community service personnel as well. I shall resist cataloguing these changes in terms of educational level, affluence, Americanization, longevity and so forth. For the present purpose, I refer only to the sharpening of differences of opinion on the question of Jewish identity. There are those who are moving strongly toward increased emphasis on the Jewish "identity services": Jewish education. Jewish cultural programs, and the like. And there are those who are moving in the opposite direction toward non-sectarian services either under nonsectarian or Jewish auspices. Some have referred to this difference as the health

and welfare group versus the Jewish survivalist group. This, of course, is a gross overstatement, so overstated it becomes a misstatement.

Nevertheless, it is inevitable that the polarization on this issue will have an impact on Jewish community services and on the kind of people that Jewish community services will continue to attract as contributors, clients, staff and board members.

IV. And lastly there is the great impact of the increased importance of the annual fund-raising campaign including its overseas component whether in a single or several drives. The emphasis on raising larger and larger sums of money gives this kind of achievement a higher status than the demonstration of sound services, well-planned and executed. A "good community" is one which raises large sums in its campaign, larger every year. The campaign's dollar result becomes the primary measure of a federation's success.

These social developments and related ones have important implications for Jewish community services, some of which follow:

(a) We have often spoken of the overall network of health and welfare services or the "family of services" under Jewish auspices. Very often we created the impression that the Jewish community was a world unto itself in terms of community service. Of course this was never really true. There is a core of traditional areas of service which every large size Jewish community provides. There is also a group of services which some Jewish communities provide and others do not. Everywhere Jews must depend in substantial measure on non-sectarian private services. and, of course, on public services. It is easy to make a list of essential services which are not uniformly provided even by large Jewish communities: financial maintenance assistance; services to the psychotic, the mentally retarded, the parolee; probation service; visiting nurse services—to enumerate only the obvious.

The non-Jewish world somehow has an image of Jews taking care of their own and we've allowed this image to convince us despite the contrary reality. Our distinctiveness does not rest and cannot rest on the full portfolio of services. This is even less likely in the future than it has been in the past. I remember hearing Dr. Samuel Goldsmith † say at a conference not too long ago that "It is not our responsibility to mine the mountain but to refine the ore." To put it more specifically, once we recognize that we need no longer pretend to provide all the communal services our people need, we should feel freer to address ourselves to those services which are peculiar to Jewish needs and interests and to continuing our tradition of doing them unusually well.

In the area of welfare services it appears inevitable that sectarian groups, Jews among them, under their own sectarian auspices, will increasingly provide services to a non-sectarian client group. To put it another way, fewer agencies under Jewish auspices will confine their services to Jewish clients. This is obviously already true in the vocational service field; it is true in some areas of the family and children's service and it is likely to become increasingly so in this and other fields, possibly even in the services to the aged, as the aged Jewish population becomes less and less traditional and foreignborn. I should pause to point out that what I say about the Jewish sectarian group may not be fully true for the other larger sectarian groups. In the American tradition, or rather on the glibness of its articulation, we have come to think of America as being Protestant, Catholic and Jewish, but the parallel apposition is misleading. mere difference in size of each group makes for a difference in substance. The Catholic Youth Organization can easily be non-sectarian in the stance of its services and yet maintain itself as 80 to 90 percent Catholic in clientele. A Protestant boy's club or YMCA can easily open its doors to everyone in a neighborhood or community and maintain itself with an even higher percentage of Christians. It may serve the purpose of both of these groups to include some Jews and others. A Jewish agency in the group work or Center field or in the casework field can easily find itself facing a situation in which the vast majority of its clients is non-Jews if it attempts to conduct a program open to the general public.

(b) While it will continue to be our responsibility, shared with others, to see that the full complex of services is available to our people under some auspices—Jewish, non-sectarian or public -we must recognize that the Jewish community cannot and should not undertake to provide them all. The primary responsibility for seeing that the full complex of services is available is shifting to government. Nationally, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare is addressing itself seriously to this question. From where I sit this appears more logical than for a local council of social agencies to try to coordinate the major services of government under its smaller private umbrella. It would be like a suburb trying to coordinate the transit system of a metropolitan area. The council of social agencies can take its appropriate place in this larger planning process.

Nevertheless, while central planning for an entire complex of services may be beyond us, maintaining and strength-

[†] Former Executive Vice-President of the Jewish Federation and the Jewish Welfare Fund of Metropolitan Chicago.

ening the opportunities for linking one service to another in the interest of our clients continues. Such "linkage" of Jewish hospital and home for aged, family agency and Center or camp becomes a greater responsibility than ever.

(c) What services should continue under Jewish auspices and which of these services should be for Jews exclusively? One clear generality is that there will be no orderly pattern. What develops in one city may not apply to another.

The hospital field is one kind of illustration. Increasingly, the justification for a hospital under Jewish auspices is that this is a major way in which health services are provided in every major community of America—under the auspices of different sectarian groups. In Detroit we had no Jewish hospital until 15 years ago.

The time appears to be gone when family and children's agencies under Jewish auspices need to parallel similar agencies under Catholic, Protestant and non-sectarian auspices. There is bound to be an increasing number of Jews, even if not a majority, who will be choosing to go elsewhere—possibly to non-sectarian agencies-for these kinds of services. Along with more freedom of choice there is likely to be greater disposition to exercise it. The field is broad and calls for specialization. It is our job to select the area in which we can make a particular contribution. Some will want to have a more highly developed service for marital counseling, some for teen-agers, some for educational under-achievers, but in each case the guidelines will be the selection of a field which meets the needs of Jews and which can make a contribution to that field of service for the entire community. One large group of services which naturally comes to mind is that for the growing middle class, an area in which Jewish agencies have experience as well as special incentive to develop know-how.

- (d) This has some implication for our manpower problems. It takes the emphasis off numbers and puts the emphasis on specialization, the development of higher level skills. It shakes up our present adjustment from "prevailing or standard salary scales" and puts us in the market for the specialized few rather than the larger number of qualified men and women. Of course we now share this problem with the entire field of social work and it is likely that we will continue to do so. The curriculum review in the schools of social work may be helpful, but I suspect that social agencies including those under Jewish auspices will be employing more and more professionals from the fields of psychology, sociology, education, public relations, and others with skills adapted by increased in-service training. Agency administrators will be harder pressed to use the available skills where they are most productive. The manpower shortage is being alleviated somewhat by fellowships and other peripheral approaches but it will not be corrected short of the basic step of significant salary upgrading. Shaken down to its essentials, society will have to decide how much services are worth, when these services depend on skilled manpower. In many areas such as casework, the service offered by less than fully skilled personnel is not only a relatively less valuable service. It may be a service entirely different in character, sometimes taking on the form but not the substance of helping. By the same token not all teaching results in learning; and, certainly, not all fundraising can be called community organization.
- (e) We should deal with the Jewish "identity services" separately. Here we obviously have in mind services to Jews under Jewish auspices. I include

in this category not only the Jewish schools but also the Centers and camps. We do not have to obliterate their health and welfare function. Our job rather is to integrate it along with the educational and cultural function. Educational services, well-programmed, obviously have personality development as well as therapeutic value. Centers and camps, in general, have shifted emphasis and are increasing their cultural focus. Of course, this has many variations around the country. In Detroit, there are more adults enrolled in Hebrew conversation groups at the Center than in Hebrew classes at our community school.

In the Jewish "identity field" we must recognize as well that we cannot provide the full umbrella of services. The organized community must make choices-and make them with some sense of logic. A recent example of this is the Committee on Jewish Education of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds which was confronted with the problem of federation participation in the field of Jewish education. It recognized that the needs in this field were vast, in fact overwhelming, and at the same time recognized that federation could not meet them all. It selected as a primary communal responsibility two specific areas: the training of teachers (the providing of manpower) and higher education at the high school and college level.

This gives respectful recognition to the fact that others are already in this field, giving large support to areas of education, and that these synagogues and fraternal organizations have a responsibility that should continue.

The same kind of rational approach should be used in the field of camps and Centers. The health and welfare aspects of these programs must be integrated with the cultural emphases. We must be concerned with adjustment as well as education and we must recognize that social adjustment and informal education can be intimately related.

Even the most primitively programmed Centers and camps under Jewish auspices are institutions of Jewish association. A primary service which they provide is an opportunity for the association of Jews or Jewish children from families of a variety of Jewish backgrounds. In this instance the common bond overshadows the separateness which so often characterizes Jewish adult life, and especially Jewish organizational life.

I recognize that in the health and welfare field it is inevitable that services under Jewish auspices will increasingly be available to a multi-sectarian client group. I do not feel that the same future is in store for the Jewish "identity services." There is no gainsaying that Jews as individuals should be free to participate in the nonsectarian services as contributors, as board members, and even as clients if this is their choice, but it is our primary group obligation to provide an opportunity for Jewish children and adults to choose Center programs and camp programs whose members and campers are Jewish. This is endangered by the misinterpretation of the civil rights push as a movement in the direction of inter-sectarianism. In our effort to provide an opportunity for Jews to live in the larger world which includes others of all races, colors and creeds, we must be cautious not to deny them an opportunity, as well, to develop their own group life under the most creative conditions available to them in a Center or camp under Jewish auspices.

(f) When I made reference to the manpower problem I neglected to include laymen. Jewish communal services in most communities of America have been most fortunate to attract large numbers of the select of the American Jewish population—the best educated, the most successful businessmen, the most sophisticated, the most generous in time, energy and resources. In most Jewish communities there is no higher social class than agency and federation board members and leaders. This has been an invaluable asset in our work which we have taken for granted. My exposure to non-sectarian and other sectarian community services always stirs my appreciation of our good fortune in the Jewish field.

I want to touch on only two questions relating to lay leadership. I made a previous reference to a push in two directions by the Jewish population: one emphasizing health and welfare services integrated into the non-sectarian scene; the other placing increased, almost exclusive importance, on the Jewish identification programs. We have a great stake in retaining the continued participation of both of these groups. We can do so if we understand that they are not necessarily in basic conflict. Both, in fact, present their positions as being in the best Jewish traditions and defend it as being "good for the Jews."

A second leadership problem relates to the great importance of fund-raising. We should be cautious about the danger of developing two camps of leaders, the sophisticated planners and the dedicated fund-raisers. The first group "can't stand fund-raising." (Some unfortunately don't like giving either.) second has made a way of life out of fund-raising, moving from federation maintenance campaigns, to capital fund solicitation, to competing independent appeals almost as if achievement lies in reaching the campaign goal rather than providing services. In short, we, as professionals, have a responsibility to them both—in the interest of our programs. Our objective is to expose the "planning and budgeting" leader to the basic necessity both of generosity and of

fund-raising; and to expose the fund-raiser to and involve him in the processes of providing services. Our community rests on the base provided by the well-balanced, fully developed community leader who relates generosity, fund-raising and social planning first within himself.

We should recognize that basically the federation is an instrument to enable the agencies to function at the highest possible level, to concentrate on giving service and improving the quality of that service. I am afraid that this has not always been the case in practice. At the other extreme, there is deterioration to the point which resembles a tug-of-war between the groups who want to spend money and those who want to conserve it.

I made reference previously to the pretensions regarding an overall community plan under the umbrella of the Jewish federation and I have indicated that I think this is even less possible today than it ever was. It is inevitable that federation and our agencies will have to develop more productive working relationships with other groups in their own and related fields. With the pressure off providing total community services, federation can concentrate on developing a better working relationship among its agencies, and between them and those under other auspices in the general community.

Based on the developments enumerated above, federations are likely to be pushed in a number of directions:

The pressure will continue for raising ever more money especially for overseas. This is a very real pressure and while it has many positive implications it has a major negative meaning by taking an undue proportion of resources, both professional and volunteer, into fund-raising rather than making them available for the planning of services;

Journal of Jewish Communal Service

Federation will feel the responsibility for financing more and more of the Jewish identity services once agreement is reached on what these are. At the same time more and more of the services like our present hospitals under Jewish auspices will serve the general community. This will be encouraged by the availability of financing from both government and United Funds:

As more and more of the agency funds come from other sources than federation it may be more difficult to keep the federation family together. Dependency is apparently a stronger tie than independence;

It is obvious too, that as the American Jewish community becomes older and those in the second, the third and fourth generation of affluence become more numerous the entire endowment

fund program resource dealing with bequests and trusts will grow increasingly important to federations which are ready to take advantage of this opportunity;

This resource should make it possible for federations to encourage their agencies to dream, to create, to initiate new programs, to overcome the natural conservatism of both the service agency and the central body.

Jewish federations and sectarian and non-sectarian services under Jewish auspices are here to stay. But like the Jewish people itself, the communal workers must learn to do more than just survive. We must learn to live—and, in our case, to serve imaginatively and creatively under the new conditions which are in the making.

The International Conference of Jewish Communal Service

Jerusalem, August 19–23, 1967