ORIENTING WORKERS TO JEWISH SOCIAL WORK

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EWISH social workers work in agencies sponsored, directed and financed by Jews. Agency boards are (or should be) representative of the Jewish communities in which the agencies operate. There is no general agreement on the nature of the Jewish community in the United States, but we know that it is composed of many elements, that it is subject to influences of diverse ideologies, and that structurally it expresses itself thru a variety of organizational forms. In many ways the pattern of Jewish community life differs from that of the general community. Social workers need to be familiar with that pattern. Their work with individuals and groups will be more effective and more productive if it is based on a knowledge of the historical and contemporary factors that enter into the organization of the Jewish community, and on an appreciation of the interplay of group forces and 1. Religious Organization ideologies.

The following material, slightly modified, represents a section from the manual on "Scope and Content of Field Work Training in the Jewish Social Service Bureau of Detroit," which was developed by the supervisory staff of the Bureau¹ as a guide in the training of students placed in the agency by the two social work schools in Detroit. This particular

¹ In addition to the writer, the following participated in the development of the manual: Goldie Goldstein, Rose Kaplan, Ruth She-

section, it is believed, has value not only for field work students but for social workers generally.

A. Organization of the Jewish Community

Jewish community organization is of a voluntary character. Whatever activities are engaged in are carried on by groups and associations whose members have voluntarily banded themselves together for the achievement of specific aims or satisfaction of particular needs. The nature of these activities and the forms of organization are determined by the history of the Jewish people, their experiences in the Old World, the fact of minority status, need for adjustment to the American scene, and the pattern of voluntary group organization in the United States.

There are four well defined groupings. Orthodox or traditional Judaism, the kind adhered to by Jews all over the world up to the 19th century, is based on the acceptance in full of the Bible as divinely revealed and of subsequent rabbinical interpretations, the performance of mitzvos (commandments), prescribed by the Shulhan Arukh (code of laws compiled in 1565), and of the rites and practices developed in central and eastern Europe. In practice Orthodox Jews do not always follow the prescrip-

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tions, and to many, membership in an Orthodox synagogue is largely an expression of emotional identification with the ways of their fathers. Orthodox groups are all supporters of Zionism.

Reform Judaism in the U.S. dates its origin to 1824. It regards the enactments of rabbinical Judaism (e. g. on diet, dress, ritual) as no longer binding in our day, and stresses the moral and ethical precepts of the Bible. In recent years, it has abandoned its previous opposition to Zionism. While originally a product of German Jews, nowadays members and even rabbis of Reform temples are composed largely of eastern European immigrants and their descendants. In many cases a Jew may be Reform, rather than Orthodox, depending on the distance from date of immigration and his socioeconomic position in the community.

A position midway between Reform and Orthodoxy is occupied by Conservative Judaism. It recognizes the necessity of change, but avoids radicalism. It accepts the doctrines of traditional Judaism ("conserves" them) but believes in a more scientific interpretation of the Bible and has introduced a number of changes in liturgy and synagogue practices. Conservative Judaism places more stress, than does Reform, on religious education, support of Zionism, and the observance of traditional customs at home and synagogue.

Reconstructionism, founded by Mordecai M. Kaplan in 1934, conceives of Judaism as a civilization with its own language, land, history, traditions, laws, religion and art. It maintains that adherence to Judaism should no longer be judged by the acceptance of a creed but by participation in the total life of the Jewish people. The principle of evolution should be applied to Judaism as to everything else, and each generation

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must re-examine its cultural and religious heritage.

2. Educational Organization

The purpose of Jewish education is to transmit to the young generation the spirit, values, customs and ideals of the Jewish people and to teach Jews how to live a significantly Jewish life in a predominantly non-Jewish environment. Since there are many interpretations as to what Jewishness is and different emphases on the content of Jewish education, there are several types of educational systems. They differ according to organizational auspices and according to the curriculum emphasis on religion, Hebrew language and Zionism.

Orthodox schools stress knowledge of Bible and Talmud and the practice of the mitzvos, or ritual commandments. They retain the curriculum of the Old World cheder and some of them use Yiddish as the language of instruction.

The Hebrew school, or Talmud Torah, places an equal stress on religion and nationalism. The Torah as well as the Hebrew language and modern Hebrew literature are studied. Zionism is an integral part of the curriculum.

The Yiddish school stresses Yiddish language and literature, and uses Yiddish as the medium of instruction. It is secular in its philosophy; religion as such is not taught, but holidays and religious literature are treated in their historical and nationalist aspects. Some schools also teach Hebrew and emphasize Zionism.

Most of the schools connected with congregations are of the Sunday school variety, i.e. the children attend only half a day a week. The others are weekday schools with 2 to 5 sessions per week. Nearly all of the schools are of the "supplementary" type, i.e. classes are

fer, Ernestine Stern.

conducted after public school hours. Some are "parochial," i.e. they combine the standard public school program with religious instruction under their own auspices.

According to an estimate of the American Association for Jewish Education, the number of students enrolled in all Jewish schools (Sunday and weekday) in 1946 was over 231,000.² Various local studies indicate that only from a fourth to a third of all Jewish children of school age receive a Jewish education of one kind or another at any given time. A very small proportion complete the full curriculum.

3. Social Service Organization

Philanthropy is deeply imbedded in Jewish religion, traditions and experience. In Biblical times charity (Zedakah) was equated with justice which may be said to be a cardinal principle in Judaism. In Palestine and for the first 18 centuries in the Diaspora when the Jewish community was a self-contained social unit in the midst of the Gentile world, the Jews developed a variegated system of charitable agencies to meet the needs of the widows, orphans, strangers, aged, sick, the distressed and impoverished. The principles and even the organizational forms of some of these were transplanted to the United States. The immigrant character of the Jewish population necessitated the formation and development of others. This tendency was further strengthened by the sectarian pattern of charity organization which prevailed in the United States before 1930. The dire need of European Jewry since 1914 and the program of upbuilding the Jewish National Homeland were responsible for the creation and enormous expansion of agencies thru which funds, support and leadership were made available for rehabilitation, rescue and immigration projects.

Philanthropy and social service played a major role in unifying and integrating Jewish community life. Religious practices which had performed this function for many ages were no longer able to do so under the impact of economic conditions in American urban centers, the exposure to Christian influences, and the inroads made by secular education and Reform Judaism. The conditions of political freedom and equality of rights prevailing in this country made unnecessary Jewish cohesion as a measure of self-protection. In consequence, the only program on which all Jews are able to get together, without injury to their creedal, social or ideological differences, was that of philanthropy. The concepts, content and methods of philanthropy have undergone a development which broadened the area of services and strengthened its position in the Jewish community.

The coming of the Federation (with its offspring, the Welfare Fund) was most instrumental in organizing and unifying the Jewish community. Originally designed as a central fund raising device (incidentally one of the Jewish contributions to American social work), the Federation in time assumed coordinating and regulating functions in Jewish social work on the local level, and because it had no competition or even pretenders to that role, from other organizations, it became the spokesman and representative of the Jewish community in the only area in which there could be said to be any substantial unity among Jews. That area expanded and in time came to include, in addition to the standard social services, also Jewish education, service to Jews in the armed

² Am. Jewish Year Book, 1946-7, U. Z. Engleman, p. 137.

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forces and—with the rise of anti-Semitism—civic-protective and public relations activities.

The last named activity became the function of a new type of agency-the Iewish Community Council. In contradistinction to the orthodox type of social agency, the organizational form adopted by the Council was one based on delegate representation from all types of Jewish organizations, since its program was one of interest and concern to all Jews. Partly as the result of this structure, and partly due to the urge of several groups to secure a larger share of participation in Jewish communal life, the Council movement has challenged Federation's position as the central agency, altho thus far this challenge remains theoretical.

The Federation movement dates back to 1896 but has achieved its greatest development in the last fifteen years. The Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds reports 369 central Jewish community organizations, of which 255 are affiliated with the Council.³ The bulk of these are fund raising agencies but many also have community planning functions. In 1945 these organizations are estimated to have raised between 115 and 125 million dollars in philanthropic funds for local, national and overseas purposes.⁴ A very much larger sum was raised in 1946.

The 1946-7 directory compiled by the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds³ lists over 1300 organizations in 329 communities, which together with 266 smaller towns forming part of metropolitan or regional organizations, comprise 95% of the Jewish population of the United States.

These organizations consist of fund

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raising, planning, health, social service, civic-protective and educational agencies. Three hundred sixty-nine are central community agencies, 656 are affiliated with the central agencies, and 281 are independent. Two hundred seventy-four of the agencies are participants in local community chests.

In 1945 approximately 25 million dollars was raised by Federations for local purposes directly thru their own campaign efforts or from the community chests.⁴

4. Group Expressions and Activities

Congregational and philanthropic organizations are the oldest and most deeply rooted in Jewish life. But they are not the only ones on the scene.

The Zionist movement occupies a strong and important place in most communities. According to a public opinion poll conducted by Elmo Roper in September 1945, out of every ten American Jews, eight favored a Jewish state in Palestine, one was opposed, and one was undecided.

The three major Zionist groups are: General Zionists, Mizrachi, and Labor Zionists, each with its own women's and youth divisions. While they differ in their ultimate programmatic aims and in some of their methods of work, there is a good deal of unity among them, expressed organizationally thru their common participation in the World Zionist Congress and in the American Zionist Emergency Council.

The landsmanshaften are a product of the American scene. They are societies of first-generation immigrants who banded together for purposes of mutual aid (sick funds, cemeteries, life insurance) and enhancement of a feeling of security in a new and strange environment. Originally they were composed of

³ Ibid, pp. 527 ff. ⁴ Ibid, H. L. Lurie, p. 163.

people who came from the same town or district in Europe, but in time others were admitted, altho the organizations continue to bear the name of the European community from which the founders hailed.

With the exception of a few Ladinospeaking groups and a few composed of recent German-speaking immigrants, the landsmanshaften consist of members born in eastern Europe, and their meetings are conducted in Yiddish or Yiddish and English. The process of Americanization has had an arresting effect on the growth of landsmanshaften; native born children of members seldom join them.

The family clubs are of a very recent growth. Their members are related to each other by blood or marriage. As an organizational form they might perhaps be considered as successors to the *lands-manshaften*.

Fraternal organizations are also associations with mutual aid and insurance features, altho the B'nai B'rith, the largest of them, has given up the insurance program, and is now engaged in social welfare and civic-protective activities (Hillel Foundation, Anti-Defamation League). The Workmen's Circle (Arbeiter Ring), the Jewish National Workers' Alliance (Farband), and the Jewish People's Fraternal Order (I.W.O.), like the landsmanshaften, represent immigrant attempts at adjustment to the American scene, coupled with the promotion of special ideologies-socialism, labor Zionism, and communism.

With the decline of the number and proportion of Jewish workers in the needle trades, trade union locals composed exclusively of Jewish members have all but disappeared except in two or three of the largest cities. Some "Jewish" locals are to be found in the

clothing industry, the building trades, and in retail baking and meat shops.

A large group of organizations belong to the "social" category. This includes fraternities, sororities, some business and professional groups, as well as a considerable number of so-called "ladies societies." The last named frequently carry on philanthropic activities of a limited scope and on a non-professional basis. Social workers come in contact with them and in many communities have succeeded in harnessing their funds and energies in the interests of a planned and integrated program.

B. Rationale of Jewish Social Work

1. Historical Factors

The organization of special Jewish social agencies is to be explained in terms of three factors.

a. Charity is a deeply imbedded concept in the Jewish religion and tradition, going beyond mere almsgiving and concerned with justice (as indicated above the Hebrew for charity is Zedakah, whose root meaning is "justice" or "righteousness") to the recipient and spiritual implications for the giver. The Prophets never ceased to thunder against those who observed all the rites of worship but who ground down the faces of the poor, failed to protect the widow and orphan, oppressed the stranger, and neglected to be eyes for the blind and feet for the lame. The earliest Biblical legislation on charity prescribed that the corners of the field may not be harvested, and sheaves of grain left during harvest may not be retrieved, but left for the poor.

During the period of political independence in Palestine and before the Emancipation in the Diaspora beginning in 1789, the Jews led an autonomous, self-contained life and provided their own religious and social institutions, including charitable organizations. Typical institutions of the ghetto were the Hekdesh which corresponds to the mixed almshouse of American history, Gmilus Hesed or free loan society, Chevra Kadisha or burial society, Hachnosas Orchim (transient lodge), Hachnosas, Kala (dowry society). The larger communities also had their hospitals, homes for aged and orphanages. There were also funds for "Pidyon Sh'vuim" (ransoming of captives) and for the support of Yeshivas and charitable institutions in Palestine. (The charity box of Rabbi Meir the Worker of Miracles-Meir Baal Ha'ness pushke-was a commonplace in every Jewish home in Russia.)

It was therefore natural that upon their arrival in the United States Jews should have brought with them both their concepts of charity as well as some of the organizational forms prevalent in the countries of emigration.

b. Until the 1880's Jewish communities in the United States were small in size and fairly homogeneous in composition. The waves of immigration from eastern Europe beginning in 1881 and continuing uninterruptedly until 1914 enormously increased the Jewish population and compelled an increase in the numbers, and the expansion of programs, of social agencies. Americanization, employment, trade education, immigration, resettlement, were the new areas of activity called into being by the needs of the thousands of immigrants coming to our shores. The requirements of family relief, child care, health provisions likewise increased far beyond the limited proportions of the previous era.

c. The dominant pattern of social work in the United States was on a private basis and along sectarian lines; governmental provisions were limited largely to institutional care and pauper relief. This pattern therefore strengthened the Jewish traditional mode of philanthropic activity. Organizing to help "their own" was not only in accordance with Jewish mind habits and practices centuries old but also conformed to the prevailing tendencies in America.

2. Community Factors

The tremendous enlargement of public responsibility in social work which came in the 1930's called for a rethinking and reformulation of the place of private social work. Generally speaking, Jewish agencies, along with others in the private field, have accepted the primacy of public social work in the field of family welfare and have trimmed their programs accordingly.

To the extent that the provisions of the Social Security Act have affected the potential clientele of child care and medical agencies, these agencies too have accommodated themselves to the new situation.

Thus, whatever changes have taken place occurred in the relation between the public and private fields. The position of Jewish social work vis-a-vis the private field has remained unchanged. Nevertheless questions have been raised about the validity of sectarian agencies, particularly in the case work field. Two developments are probably largely responsible for this. The experience with public assistance has demonstrated that there was little lost in handling problems of family life revolving around income, on a non-sectarian basis. Secondly, the progress of professional training and skills in case work has been along identical lines in both Jewish and non-sectarian agencies, and Jewish practitioners with experience in one are eligible for employment in the other.

Despite this, there has been no at-

tempt, nor even a serious proposal, to merge Jewish case work services into non-sectarian agencies, except occasionally in a community too small to support a separate Jewish agency. The historical factors which operated to develop Jewish social work programs are still potent and effective. Jewish community organization has never been as widespread as it is today. More than ever before American Jews are conscious of their responsibilities for Jewish group life both here and abroad. Jewish communities are probably more cohesive and substantially united on more subjects than in any previous period. As long as some form of Jewish community organization obtains, it is safe to say that case work agencies will form a part of it.

The problem Jewish case work agencies will have to face in the future is not whether they should go out of business, but, how can they contribute to strengthening Jewish community life and help their clients to adjust to their Jewishness and to lead a more meaningful Jewish life.

To a great extent Jewish case work agencies have always performed the function of strengthening Jewish group life. Their very existence operated in that direction. But generally this was more evident at the level of policy making than at the level of client-worker relations. Judging by the paucity-sometimes even complete absence-of references in the case records to items of Jewish significance, the client as well as the case worker are not even conscious of the implications of the policies. That is a healthy phenomenon where the unawareness stems from a natural complete acceptance of the Jewish environment with its standards, values and handicaps. But where it is the result of ignorance, rejection or escapism the situation may be

pathological. The latter condition is more likely to prevail for a minority group like the Jews. In other words, more often than not the Jewish client has problems as a Jew and feelings about his Jewishness which interfere with a satisfactory, normal adjustment. Jewish case work agencies, therefore, have an additional, specifically Jewish, responsibility to their clients. It is the same responsibility as in the case of all Jewish communal activities, namely to make membership in the Jewish group a pleasant and meaningful experience and free it to the maximum possible extent from the handicaps and inferiorities sometimes accompanying it.

C. Jewish Elements in the Case Work Job

How can case workers carry out this responsibility? First by an understanding and appreciation of the Jewish background, psychology, home life, vocational and educational patterns. Second, by the use of case work skills and community resources in helping clients to an acceptance of membership in a minority group and thru achieving satisfying contacts and pleasant experiences within the group.

1. Understanding of Background

Jews are an immigrant group. Not only are many of them or their parents themselves immigrants, but they have close ties with many Jews abroad whom they plan or hope to bring over. Hence protection of the recent immigrant is a vital part of our community service.

Culture conflict in the family is a frequent result of the immigrant character of our population. An understanding of Jewish mores and traditions and how they relate to or conflict with the realities and values of American life, there-

fore, becomes an important element of the case worker's equipment. Also, knowledge of the philosophies and practices developed for a reconciliation and integration of the two cultures is valuable in treatment.

Thruout their history Jews have exhibited a strong predisposition to intellectual activities. Prior to the Emancipation both outer pressures and inner developments directed this predisposition toward religious learning. Subsequently these energies became channeled in secular studies including professional education. The educational drive among Jews is proverbially strong and often is carried out at the cost of real sacrifices. An understanding of this force on the part of the case worker is clearly an important desideratum.

Similarly it is necessary to appreciate the special vocational preferences and habits of the Jew. Prohibition of access to the land in pre-Emancipation days, exclusion from the medieval artisan guilds, restrictions in the educational field have combined to develop occupational patterns which differ markedly from those of the general population. Recent trends in the United States show a diminution of Jewish participation as workers even in those industries, like the needle trades, into which the Jews had flocked in the early period of immigration. A large proportion of Jews have engaged in retail trades and professional and white collar occupations.

2. Anti-Semitism

The pressures of anti-Semitism—whether in concrete expressions of discrimination or thru more subtle poisoning of the self-regarding aspects of personality—are bound to have an adverse effect on a person's adjustment to society, himself, and the Jewish group. These pressures

have become much stronger in the Hitler era and show no signs of disappearance even after the Nazi downfall. This is an area where case work resources and case work skills are likely to play an increasingly helpful role. It goes without saying that a case worker can be helpful only to the extent that he himself is integrated as a Jew, and possesses at least a moderate degree of familiarity with and acceptance of Jewish values and patterns of behavior.

3. Membership in a Minority Group

Defense against anti-Semitic manifestations and working thru a client's feelings about his Jewishness constitute only a partial—and a negative—approach. The case worker also has a responsibility to provide positive solutions to these problems where they are recognized as a focus for treatment. The client may need help and direction in learning more about Jewish religion, culture and folk values, and about ways of identifying himself with the Jewish group and participating in Jewish group life.

In the final analysis one can make a healthy adjustment to Jewishness only by a meaningful and pleasant association with the group. Under present conditions it is the rare individual who can "pass" completely and without injury to his personality. To remain in a minority group without feelings of frustration and self-hate one needs to have built up the qualities of that group so that the individual might derive pride and satisfaction from his membership in it. Jewish achievements in Palestine since 1920, for example, evoking as they did the finest creative energies of a people, have had a tremendous psychological influence on Jews thruout the Diaspora. Knowledge of such achievements-historical and contemporary-help to anchor a person's at-

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tachment to a group. But it is participation in group activities—whether ideological, religious, cultural, social—that gives one the sense of rootedness and personal identification.

Summary

The alert and effective social worker will want to become as familiar as possible with the character of his community, the main spiritual and intellectual currents influencing it and the chief organizational groupings operating within it

The Jewish community is organized along various levels, the religious and philanthropic levels being the oldest and most deeply rooted.

Jewish educational efforts are conducted thru a variety of structural forms and curricula. All of them together reach only a fraction of the Jewish children of school age.

Philanthropic fund raising and social services have enormously expanded in response to needs created by immigration to the United States, destruction of Jewish life abroad, upbuilding of Palestine, and the spread of anti-Semitism. Because in these areas Jews could agree to work together without violence to their creedal, social and ideological differences, Federations have become pivotal agencies in

organizing and unifying the Jewish communities.

In addition to religious, educational and social service organizations, Jewish communities have a large number of other media of group expression and activity, including Zionist associations, landsmanshaften, fraternal, benevolent and social clubs.

Jewish social work originated in centuries-old traditions and practices; was encouraged by the prevailing American pattern of sectarian organization of social work; and expanded as a result of a continued flow of immigration.

Along with other private agencies, Jewish social case work has made its adjustment to the expansion of the public welfare programs, but its position visavis the private field has remained unchanged and unchallenged. The growth and intensification of Jewish community organization has in fact strengthened the position of Jewish case work agencies.

Jewish case workers have a specifically Jewish responsibility to their clients. This consists first, in an understanding of the Jewish background, and second, in the use of case work skills and community resources toward helping clients to an acceptance of membership in a minority group and toward achieving satisfying and pleasant experiences within it.

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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF JEWISH DISPLACED PERSONS

By RALPH SEGALMAN¹

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POR almost two years, the remaining Jews of Europe have been liberated from German concentration camps, forced labor and underground hiding places. During these two years, they have begun to pick up their lives where they had left off when the Nazis had forcibly interrupted them.

American Jewry today has little or no understanding of the Jewish Displaced Person. By and large, our ideas of the Jewish "D.P." are built up entirely on descriptions of horror and hunger portrayed by fund raising appeals or on the contrasting stories of "black marketeering," "continual demanding," and "unwillingness to work" in blanket generalizations by newspapermen who often have interviewed some official who himself has little understanding of the Jewish Displaced Person or of what makes him act as he does.

It is easy to understand the point of view of the American, British or French army or UNRRA official who condemns the Jewish Displaced Person. Usually that official is an ordinary citizen who is part of the stream of thought and philosophy of his country, and he measures those he meets by the standards of this background. In general, such an official has not, before arriving in Germany, Austria, Italy, etc., determined which

group has suffered or is suffering more than any other. He tends to forget the fact that some people were more discriminated against than others, and being more deprived, may exhibit the results of the more difficult lives they have experienced, in behavior which will not make for peaceful living, quiet, and cleanliness. It is difficult for such an official to understand (and emotionally accept the idea) that those who exhibit such negative behavior are those who need the most patience and help. More often, instead, the Jewish Displaced Person is characterized as ungrateful, unclean, lazy or unambitious.

Actually, what kind of a person is the Jewish "D.P."? The Jewish Displaced Person should be understood in the light of:

- (a) his experience during the Nazi years.
- (b) his experience and environment since liberation.

Experience during Nazi years may have been any one of the following types:

- 1. In concentration camp (either under very harsh treatment such as Auschwitz or Buchenwald or under the "milder" handling, such as at Theresienstadt, where inmates were allowed to retain some forms of family and group life).
- 2. In hiding (where persons concealed their identity and lived and often worked under assumed names).3. In Ghettos (such as in Poland).
- 4. In Partisan groups, actively fighting the Nazis.

¹ Mr. Segalman was formerly Director of the Vienna Area of the Joint Distribution Committee. His article is based upon his experiences in this capacity.