

THE SAN FRANCISCO CONFERENCE

F. The apathy and indifference of parents to the Jewish education of their children is in the last analysis symptomatic of the poverty and emptiness of Jewish life in this country. No school, no matter how adequately staffed, or how fine its curriculum may be, can do any effective work in the face of the corrosive influence of the environment and of a poverty-stricken Jewish community life and of a Jewish home devoid of all Jewishness. The only effective answer can be the building up of a rich Jewish community life and of a rich Jewish home life. It can thus be seen that the problem cannot be divorced from the problem of Jewish community organization and Jewish community life in this country. As can be seen from the report of the Bureau in Los Angeles, the Bureau carries on a variety of Jewish educational

activities during the year designed to bring the importance of Jewish education to the attention of the parents in the community. However, in view of the present situation, it can readily be seen that these means are inadequate. Therefore, we must resort to more dynamic and more radical means for bringing to the attention of the Jewish public the problem and importance of Jewish education. The Los Angeles Association for Jewish Education organized at the initiative of the Bureau of Jewish Education is thus contemplating a weekly radio program and a tremendous rally in Hollywood Bowl as two of the means which can be used to rouse the Jewish parents to an awareness of the need for Jewish education for themselves and their children.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION ON JEWISH EDUCATION

By RALPH M. KRAMER

THE discussion was begun by an observation that considerable apathy prevails among most American parents with regard to public school education, and evidence was introduced to illustrate the belief that disinterest in education is widespread in our culture. Several innovations in public school education were mentioned, principally the so-called Springfield plan as a tool in inter-cultural education. The merits of this plan were recognized, but it was strongly felt that it was certainly no substitute for a specifically Jewish education.

In attempting to evaluate some of the reasons for the success of the Los

Angeles Bureau of Jewish Education, mention was made of its relationship to the Jewish Community Council. Morton J. Gaba, Western Regional Director of the CJFWF, felt that due principally to its sponsorship by the Jewish Community Council the Bureau was best able to get the necessary financial and moral support for its activities. Dr. Dinin concurred, although he felt that there were certain disadvantages in such an administrative relationship; nevertheless, these difficulties are inherent in any democratic structure and are not insoluble.

Some questions were raised as to the relationship between a Bureau of Edu-

cation and the Jewish Centers with the conclusions reached that each has its own area of activity, with the Bureau largely concerned with setting standards of education. It was felt that any problems that might arise between these two communal agencies were specific and peculiar to individual situations. In discussing cooperation between the Center and a Bureau of Jewish Education, Dr. Dinin maintained that one measure of the effectiveness of Jewish group work was the desire for further Jewish education on the part of its participants.

Harry J. Sapper, Executive Director of the Oakland Jewish Welfare Federation, presented a challenge to Jewish education by citing his experiences with large numbers of Jewish servicemen during the war. In view of the large sums expended for Jewish education in the past, Mr. Sapper was disappointed to find so many of these servicemen relatively ignorant of Jewish history and tradition. In view of this, Mr. Sapper asked for a definition of what was meant by Jewish education and wondered what direction community efforts should take during the next five years. In answering this, Dr. Dinin

THE SAN FRANCISCO CONFERENCE

pointed out that, in a similar sense, public school education is also a failure in that large numbers of our youth are unfamiliar with basic American history and traditions. He disagreed with the implication that Jewish education had been adequately financed and commented upon the meager support which Jewish education received from welfare funds in the past. Dr. Dinin was hopeful that a central Jewish educational agency could provide the best *modus vivendi* both to coordinate existing educational activities and to experiment in newer methods of teaching the Jewish child. Dr. Naamani, Executive Director of the Jewish Educational Society of San Francisco, underscored this latter function of a central educational bureau, and in remarking about the direction of Jewish education asserted that a bureau encourages all groups who believe in the value of Jewish survival.

The discussion was summarized by Dr. Naamani who reviewed briefly some of the specific problems confronting Jewish educators and the available ways of dealing with them during the next five years.

GROUP WORK SERVICES

By MEYER E. FICHMAN

Executive Director, Jewish Centers Association

I TRUST that you will believe me that I approach my assigned subject with considerable temerity. Not alone because the assignor gave me only ten minutes to describe a five year forecast of a generally unplanned process, but because prognosis in the as yet vaguely scientific field of group work must carry an air of prophecy, and as in one's own home town, it is foolhardy

to claim to be a prophet in the Group Work field. For example, who can foretell what the economic uncertainties will bring in the way of financial support and social attitudes; who can prophesy which way discriminatory attitudes and anti-minority movements will develop; when every moment brings with it new evidences of reaction and counter democratic activity in the setting of a world

THE SAN FRANCISCO CONFERENCE

beset by the fear, rather than the challenge of atomic energy? In post-war time (let us not yet call it peace time), we have been witnessing the emergence of the realists, the practical men who find their only securities in holding tight to concepts of division and distrust. If they succeed in disqualifying idealistic leadership and thus to gain complete controls, the hopes we have for a universal social welfare, and in our own fields, will be shattered.

Perhaps for this reason, a five year preview based on present developments and straws in the wind is a healthy exercise, and more important may be a test for measuring progress in the struggle which is occurring.

We shall select a number of propositions from among the many which present themselves.

1. *There will be a continued and accelerated growth of group work facilities and program services.*

For example, to 1940, forty millions were spent on Jewish Community Center facilities. Since 1940, over thirty million more has been raised for that purpose. Small communities, as never before, are out to secure funds, almost at the drop of a hat. The roster of cities planning for new Centers, of many types, is almost the roll of American Jewish Communities. Program services of Centers, of BBYO, of the Zionist Youth Commission, are expanding and improving materially, through the employment of more adequately trained staff.

Evidences indicate that group work may become available to every section of the Jewish Community, in neighborhoods of large cities down toward communities of 25 Jewish families. This development is spotty, but there are examples in the rural program demonstration of JWB, the over-all commu-

nity-wide Center set up in Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, Newark and possibly Cleveland; the extension programs of Cleveland, Chicago, and elsewhere.

2. *There may be continued progress in the direction of securing more adequate staff.*

Better personnel standards have been emerging. Fairly standard job loads are being developed. For example, we are learning that a group worker generally can not effectively carry more than fifteen to twenty groups, depending, of course, on the situation and his own abilities. We have moved far away from the concept that a group worker may be expected to work day and night on a sixty to seventy hour week. Salaries are more nearly uniform and valid than in many years. (Will these standards continue when reaction sets in?)

On the other hand, while there is more emphasis on questions of qualification, particularly on academic and specialized educational background, little work has been done in defining Jewish attitude and content prerequisites, and less has been accomplished by way of training. In the speaker's mind, this represents a great need. The Jewish community will demand increasingly those services which are a result of knowledge and a positive attitude concerning Jewish needs and interests. They will not be satisfied with a pinch of Jewish salt, here and there. We group workers have begun to learn the dangers and the lack of response to inadequate information and training.

3. *The program of group work will broaden and deepen because of need, and will not narrow because of community organizational definition.*

Group work will not become only the youth services division. The character-

istic of a Center, for example, is that it is a membership organization, consisting of children, youth, young adults and adults. The Center when properly conducted becomes a home of activity for those people; not merely for athletics and dances, but for contacts with other people and ideas, as well. They are at home in the Center, and speak to one another of the matters in which they have an interest, and also confer with the professional when they have confidence in that professional. The Center worker knows, of course, that treatment and therapy may require the intensive provision which a specialized agency can offer. But for the majority, learning to make friends, and learning of Jewish matters and talking over personal problems is a natural development in a Center.

As Centers develop there will be an intensification, not only of the traditional club and activities program, but of personal vocational and educational services as well, generally in cooperation with the specialized agencies.

An intensified Jewish educational program will develop, both formally and informally. Not only will Hebrew Schools be housed in Centers, they will increasingly be integrated within the total Center program; but more important the concept and the commitment of the Jewish educational basis in activity will increasingly become the rule. There must be more than a lip service devotion to the Jewish survival idea than has been the case in many of our Centers and other youth serving agencies.

More intensive program services for and with young adults, adults, and the aged will characterize Centers in the future. The growing age of our population, the great need for these services, make this development imperative. We have not yet found the ideal method of

THE SAN FRANCISCO CONFERENCE

young adult participation, except perhaps in the Council type of activity, unless it is to be re-discovered in the old YMHA process, of self-interest and provision.

- A. Club activities, special interest classes, courses in marriage, contemporary Jewish affairs, the organization of the American Jewish community, discussions of Jewish and general problems, have already aroused interest and participation, especially where they are planned by the young adults.

4. *The development of city-wide organization for Jewish group work will continue.*

Social planners and the community generally will not be satisfied any longer with group work for some and not for all. If the Center and other similar functions are valid for part, they are valid for all, and to the same degree regardless of religious, social or economic status. Every Jewish community and neighborhood needs a home, professional guidance, competent planning and effective programming for its activities. They seek evidence of unity and security and satisfaction in accomplishment in many levels of activity. Fund raising and anti-defamation are not sufficient. They are not ends, they are a means of substantiating Jewish survival, but they are not creative of it on a year round, daily basis.

But there is yet much defining to do. For example, how do you balance central planning and local autonomy? How do you relate an over-all Center program to other community organizations? How do you work with the Bureau of Jewish Education, with Federations, Jewish Community Councils? If yours is an over-all Center Association, what services should be given to other youth serving

THE SAN FRANCISCO CONFERENCE

organizations, to organizations not meeting in Centers, to synagogues, to Workmen's Circle and Jewish National Worker's Alliance Centers? Are your specialists available to community groups? On what basis?

These questions arise out of the newness of the form of a Jewish Centers Association, but they also arise out of the newer conception of the Center as a community motivation which operates both within and beyond four walls. In Los Angeles we have had only 3½ years, in Boston 2, in Chicago about 1, in which to derive principles from experience and to project new patterns. But it is my conviction that despite the expense, this functional operating and coordinating Center plan is here to stay. It will be modified by the tests of experience, but the pattern will persist. It must. Social planning is becoming big business. Center group work must be represented in a unity of community organization. Planning and provision must be comprehensive. Centralization, of course, must be balanced by the safeguarding of local initiative and responsibility through self-government by local groups. If the result of centralization is to be oligarchic control, it will throttle local development, especially in our field.

The advantages of a community approach to group work are varied and include:

- A. Uniform provision of services and program.
- B. Balanced planning.
- C. Continuity and progressive program development.
- D. Higher and more equitable standards applied universally.
- E. Opportunity for community-wide events.
- F. Opportunity for research and testing.

5. *In small communities, the characteristic of the Center as the community organization will continue.*

In the large cities, Centers become more closely identified with community organization patterns and needs.

The Center can and will increasingly deal, through its program and services, as the instrument by which community affairs can be given real meaning to the body politic, represented in Councils. The Council deals primarily through representatives or organizations which in many instances, meet in Centers. Forums, discussions will have increasingly as their subject matter items which are considered by Councils.

Moreover, the quality of the Center as a meeting place, in which people rub shoulders, provides a setting for discussing problems which beset them. Reality can be given to Jewish life by the form and process of club activity, by creative artistic and cultural expression, and by the give and take of individual groups.

The Center is not the only machinery for Jewish unity, but it can and has frequently been an effective means.

Conclusion

These are only a few of the plethora of propositions which can be predicted. They do not include a presentation of such questions as:

1. Increased training in democratic concepts through the committee, council, board participation of members.
2. The preparation of better materials for program and the encouragement of creative writing and arts related to Jewish needs.
3. The expansion of Center camps.
4. The development of case work-group work services.

5. The growing cohesion of diverse elements in the group work field.
6. The perfecting of recording and the development of research methods.
7. Youth Councils and inter-cultural programs.

This paper has reviewed, too briefly, these propositions:

1. That group work in the Jewish community will expand.
2. Staff will continue to improve.
3. Program will deepen and expand.
4. City-wide organization for group work will develop further and in new communities.
5. Centers will become increasingly identified with the Jewish commu-

DISCUSSION ON GROUP WORK SERVICES

By ISADORE DICKMAN
Jewish Community Center,
Oakland, Calif.

THE conviction of Jewish survival is that it is dependent upon the unification of services of all agencies and their objectives. Emphasis in Mr. Fichman's paper was placed upon the family unit and the "need for being realistic, as well as idealistic, or face the destruction of a universal social welfare". The Center movement on the West Coast was envisaged over the coming five year period as a dynamic mobile and ever-expanding one. The following highlighted the trend of events:

1. An expansion of the Community Center movement with the doubling in the number of Jewish Centers occurring on the West Coast within the past six years.
2. Program services to expand materially.

THE SAN FRANCISCO CONFERENCE

nity, beyond the confines of traditional membership.

These propositions, it seems to me, are fundamental, first because there has been encouraging demonstration of their validity; and second because the American Jewish community is in need of the strengthening of its opportunities for participation and for the demonstration of group accomplishment. The Center does not claim to be the only agency in Jewish life for community expression. It claims that a creative survival needs a location, a program, a participation and a leadership tied together in a democratic group process, if it is to have reality—and validity.

3. Increased and improved personal standards.
4. Expansion in small intermediate communities where Centers are now taking root.
5. Field extension types of Center activities.
 - a. Small plant but large field service program.
6. Improved and increased qualifications for Center work.
7. The changing attitudes of the Jewish Community towards a positive Jewish approach.

The Center—Area of Influence

The speaker pointed out that a Community Center rightly was a home of activities for the entire family unit, children and adults alike. Here was a natu-