

## IN THE COMMUNITY

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### THE ST. LOUIS JEWISH YOUNG ADULT COUNCIL

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THE Jewish Community of St. Louis saw its first Young Adult Council get started in 1942. A number of clubs and organizations came together, at that time, to form a central body. The idea was short lived and had to be abandoned as war depleted membership lists. In 1947 the Jewish Federation was approached by a group of young adults who expressed a need for a council under Federation sponsorship. The large fund raising campaign of that year gave the young adults an opportunity to work together in large numbers on a common project. The plan for a permanent body did not, however, materialize immediately. A full time professional was assigned almost a year later in early 1948 to the task of organizing and directing a young adult council. This action came about as a direct result of the expressed needs of young adults as well as a survey which also emphasized the need for a federation of young adult organizations.

Despite the fact that a council was not foreign to the young adult community, its creation offered problems. Lists of organizations were compiled with the aid of the group work agencies. The first step was to call representatives from these organizations to a general

meeting. The response was excellent and the group was welcomed by the Federation President. The Federation Director also welcomed the group and introduced the new Council Director, who took the opportunity to discuss the work of councils in other cities and to draw out their feelings about the proposed project. Fears were expressed around the questions of Federation control, organizational autonomy, fund raising exploitation and a host of others. They wanted to make certain that the council would be autonomous and not to be governed by an adult body. At the same time it was made clear that a council was wanted.

Giving the new organization a start and creating a constitution became the responsibility of an interim committee of ten representing as many groups. The process involved in creating the constitution necessitated calling representatives from the organizations together for many meetings to endorse the work of the committee. An exhibition of caution and conservatism was demonstrated in the entire process. The aim was to keep a clique or organization from gaining control of the council, and to make certain that autonomy would be guaranteed. The stress was so great for safe-

guards that the constitution when completed turned out to be a restrictive document. Significantly, with the further development of the council there is an increasing demand to liberalize the constitution.

The final draft of the constitution was distributed to the young adult organizations for ratification. Groups who ratified the constitution numbered twenty and were considered charter members. The organizations represented a real cross section of the Jewish young adult community and included wide variations of ideologies and social and economic levels. The only prior experience the groups had in working together was in the campaign for the Jewish Welfare Fund. Now there would be a more sustained program of cooperative effort.

The process for holding the first election of officers was determined by organizational presidents called together to work out the problem. A nominating committee representing the key leadership selected a slate of candidates from the official representatives to the council. As each organization ratified the constitution they were required to submit the names of official delegates. This was the list combed for leadership. Elections were held and with officers officially charged with responsibility, the council began to gain momentum.

The first project, a community calendar of young adult activities, caught on immediately. A monthly publication of young adult news has become a community favorite. In less than six months after adoption of the constitution we began to see ideas put into action. A social affair attracting over 500 people introduced the new officers to the community with their formal installation. To acquaint the membership with national Jewish agencies interested in young adult

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work, a series of discussions is being sponsored, with representatives from the National Jewish Welfare Board, Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, and the Joint Distribution Committee as speakers. In cooperation with the Board of Jewish Education and the YM-YWHA, the council is sponsoring a leadership institute designed to provide young adults with a working knowledge of organized Jewish life, contemporary problems, and methods and techniques in working with organized groups. In the Jewish Welfare Fund campaign the council will assume major responsibility. Among other projects a camp institute and a mass membership campaign to bolster the active lists of the constituent organizations are but a few of many of the ideas that are waiting to be translated into action.

As the central communal organization for Jewish young adults, the council has already demonstrated its effectiveness in areas of importance to the community. First, we find organizations working in harmony with each other on common projects. Secondly, there is now a medium for young adults to articulate their needs. Thirdly, it has provided an agency through which all organizations in the young adult age range can coordinate their activities for the common good. Fourthly, the community's resources are being "discovered" by young adults so that the council as it recognizes problems can make proper referrals or may work together with existing bodies in a common solution. Finally, the formation of this central body has set the stage for the promotion and achievement of community-wide projects too difficult or too large for any one group to undertake.

The council through its many com-

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mittees is also serving a valuable purpose in stimulating its constituent groups to a continuous self-evaluation and improvement of their activities. The projected area of council operation is broad. The major aim is to give the young adults opportunities for experience with real community situations. This includes working with their adult counterparts in every phase of community planning. The Jewish Federation represents the adult's way of organizing to meet community needs. Generally speaking the young adult needs are similar in many cases to the needs reflected by the adult community. Precedent and pattern as well as experience has made it impossible for the individual young adult organization to make their needs felt. The council is giving them an opportunity to work as an effective organization able to develop their own patterns to fulfill their needs, and also to work in cooperation with other existing community organizations.

The Young Adult Council in St. Louis is still too new for any conclusive observations to be made. We do know, however, that the council has given young adults experience and training

opportunities for leadership. We also know that the young adults' potential value to the community is being recognized. For instance, a short time ago the President of the Jewish Federation appointed two young adults to the important Group Work and Recreation Committee of the Federation. Consideration is being given to the appointment of a council representative to a planning committee of the St. Louis council of social agencies. Recognition of this kind was not granted young adults until they were formed into a city-wide council. The recognition of these young adults as a potentially effective force in the planning aspects of Jewish community life is also very recent. As young adults become recognized their attitudes and opinions receive greater acceptance. Through their permanent autonomous council the gap between the young adult community and the total community is narrowed. The blending of the thinking of all groups as to the needs of a community, and the joint action with respect to concerted thought is a long stride forward in giving real meaning to the democratic process in community organization.

## SOCIAL PLANNING DEVELOPMENTS IN MILWAUKEE

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**I**T has taken the better part of ten years to interpret to the Milwaukee Jewish community the fact that the Welfare Fund, the central communal organization, is responsible for both fund raising activities and the social planning of the community. For the last four

years we have had an active Central Planning Committee which has devoted itself to numerous studies and to the solution of pressing and at times critical community problems. Acceptance on the part of the various agencies involved has in the main been most satisfactory

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and progress in understanding both the program and function of the planning body has been achieved. It must be said that interpretation to the general community and its understanding of the function of centralized social planning has been somewhat slower. Visible signs of real progress are becoming increasingly evident.

We think we have demonstrated to our cooperating agencies the obvious fact that cooperative action between social agencies is a basic ingredient of community progress. The lay leaders and executives who are involved in the work of our Central Planning Committee are evidencing a real cooperation and have helped to bring about a healthy approach to the problem of social planning.

Many "unmet needs" in the community have remained "unmet" due not only to our preoccupation with the critical overseas needs of the past fifteen years, but also to the fact that there had been nobody with a definite and continuous program of planning. Now we have reached the point at which we can feel that we can look forward to more than leisurely progress. Actually, implementation of some of the studies that have already been made has taken place, and we are on the verge of accomplishing major projects for the community.

In this brief description of central planning for social services we do not mean to give the impression that there had been no centralized action of any kind in the community. Even during the years of maximum concentration on fund raising, coordination and orderliness had been achieved in the fields of civic protection through the Milwaukee Jewish Council, service to immigrants through the Milwaukee Committee for

Jewish Refugees, and education through the newly established bureau of Jewish Education. Eventually it is hoped that these services as well as all other community activities will be planned through the Central Planning Committee and that each and every local community problem will be processed through it.

When the Central Planning Committee was finally established in 1945, it came as the logical culmination of discussions initiated by the Welfare Fund with the functional agencies. These deliberations had resulted in general agreement that a permanent body should be developed through which the agencies could work together, where each could have the guidance of others and the strengths of all could be combined to deal with problems of common concern.

The Central Planning Committee for Jewish Services was developed as the social planning arm of the Welfare Fund and the total Jewish community. Its purposes have been defined in very broad general terms as being "analyzing various community services and agencies to determine relationships which they bear to each other, the uncovering of unmet needs in the community, planning for the solution of problems and interpreting agencies' programs, needs and objectives to the general community."

Agencies which have voluntarily associated themselves with the central planning body include the Mt. Sinai Hospital, the Jewish Community Center, the Jewish Family and Children's Service (which represents a merger of the Jewish Social Service Association and the Milwaukee Jewish Children's Home), the Jewish Vocational Service and the Children's Outing Association. The Home for Aged Jews and the Jewish