

PROFESSIONAL LEADERS RESPOND

RONALD I. COUN

The field owes a particular debt to Gerald Bubis for his cogent inventory of issues that contributed to the growth of the Jewish Communal Service Association of North America (JCSA), which, in its many permutations, has attempted to enhance the professional activities of its disparate affiliates.

Bubis, whose seminal role as practitioner, teacher, and leader in the development of Jewish communal service as a distinctive profession, has more than earned our serious attention to his current prescription to vitalize a badly wounded enterprise. He challenges the membership to debate the issues and reminds us in his closing to do so expeditiously.

The current strains resulting from shifting priorities placed upon Jewish service agencies and institutions, whose survival heretofore has been inextricably linked to a federated system of funding and allocation, have to be recognized as an integral component of any analysis of the need to maintain a broad-based Jewish communal professional organization.

I came to JCSA from one of the newer Affiliated Professional Associations (APAs; although the Jewish vocational service field has a lengthy history with JCSA) and have been an active participant in its governance for the past 16 years. For a considerable part of that time, JCSA, as Bubis reminds us, could lay claim to be a central Jewish communal address — at least at its well-attended Annual Conferences that were enriched with interdisciplinary and affiliated participatory professional sessions. These meetings offered a forum in which to hear from and have dialogue with the field's leading thinkers and doers.

Yet, competing interests were always present within this collective accomplishment. The creative tension between the

APAs and the combined entity — JCSA — over program prerogatives and organizational ownership permeated much of the discourse at JCSA's business meetings and inhibited the efforts of professional visionaries who attempted to define all of what we do under a single "parent" organization and thus move the membership past its professional parochialism.

However, for a considerable period of time, this was accepted as part of the organizational give-and-take. External events that allowed for healthy funding and increases in services were favorable toward the growth of our individual fields of practice. The strenuous differences in interpretation regarding JCSA's mission did not deter those efforts that were mutually beneficial, such as promoting women's professional advancement, developing universal personnel guidelines, engaging in interdisciplinary problem solving, considering recruitment and retention issues, and creating synergistic educational experiences (the latter achieved not only through the formalized curriculum of the schools of Jewish communal service).

In stark contrast with the previous decades, events of the recent past are challenging the vitality of the APAs in their individual fields of practice. The 1990 CJF National Jewish Population Survey that resulted in a re-examination of roles and mission in many of our communities and the severe effects of the economy on local campaigns have had a double impact on the service entities represented by the various APAs. Jewish agencies and institutions face the consequences of attenuated philanthropic funds and will have to make harsh choices that will drive the individual fields of practice (APAs) into competitive postures that are counterproductive to interactive profession building.

These competitive postures are mitigating against Bubis' goal of a single overall professional membership entity. The most difficult barriers are the individual survival agendas being pursued by many of the various APAs on issues that are considered particular to *their* future and the degree to which they must compete with each other in their worklife for shrinking Jewish resources and changing funding priorities.

The downside of the imperative goal of Jewish continuity, cited by Bubis as an outgrowth of the CJF study, is the trivialization of the term itself as each field of service figuratively rushes to libraries of Jewish learning to attach appropriate talmudic justifications to their service and/or program repertoire in seeking new credibility — as if the rendering of service to those in need in our communities requires redefinition.

Despite these challenges to the historical roles of the individual fields of practice, the leadership in these fields must bear the responsibility for ensuring that, in the attempts of the APAs to re-energize their own memberships, they not discard the commonality of purpose that does exist for interdisciplinary professional interactions afforded by a fully supported JCSA. Agency and institutional management does set the tone for professional membership and activity. New and experienced professionals alike are directed by the priorities of their administrative leaders who decide where an individual agency or institution invests its conference and/or educational budget. The value attached to JCSA involvement has always been nurtured by those in charge.

As the ultimate "gatekeepers," federation professional leadership, who direct the priorities of their communities, have the most

to gain by vigorously supporting a collective membership enterprise. If services under the umbrella of the federation are to act in concert for the benefit of the community, then the professionals who perform these services must continue to recognize and respect the validity of each other's particular contributions. JCSA is the only national membership arena for Jewish agency professionals to engage in such mutual discovery and issue resolution. However, Bubis' closing model assumes there is still a level playing field of interest for such rebuilding. There is, in part, a fragmentation of interests and goals that has to be redirected under the current climate of survival and shifting priorities if we are, in Bubis' terms, able "to adapt to a new future."

In closing, although I am in general agreement with Bubis' analysis, I do take exception to his characterization of nonsectarian funding as an antithetical survival mechanism to Jewish continuity. The JVS field, for example, has long provided complex and costly human services to Jewish populations that are financially prohibitive of secular philanthropy in even the wealthiest communities. A full range of services to the Jewish disabled, new emigres, aging, and other critical need groups have only been forthcoming because of a willingness to extend services into the general community and more than leverage funds for the Jewish community's own needs. In addition, involvement with the general community accrues relationship value and keeps faith with the altruistic and social justice philosophical foundations of the American Jewish community. I welcome a greater debate on this issue.



LEONARD FREEDMAN

Gerald Bubis' article presents a factual and historical perspective on the development of professional educational opportunities in the field. Not only does the author offer a 45-year perspective as a practitioner, administrator, educator, and leader, but he goes even further to project a blueprint for the future. His analysis of the ramifications of the internal (agency) changes that have taken place and the external (community) changes — economic, new specializations and disciplines, a changing Jewish community, and the de-emphasis on social work — is right on target.

As to the question — are we a profession or a field — having been in the field for 35 years, I bequeath that to succeeding generations. Will the answer ultimately change our mission, service delivery, or practice? I think not.

Local hiring is a reality, and its implications both for the local agencies and the field as a whole are dramatic. It affects the internal culture of the agency as well, including the quality and depth of service and practice. Thus, the case is made for what Bubis terms "deprofessionalization." What is alarmingly missing when either a board or committee member or a worker from a nonsectarian agency joins the professional staff is the sense of being part of a movement, a commitment to a field of practice, and the educational process of becoming a professional — these cannot be supplied through supervision. Herein lies the need for quality in-service training, continuing education, and further development of standards and certification. Local agencies cannot alone meet that need.

The emergence of "local hires" came about not because of the scarcity of trained professionals but rather because they provide an opportunity for agencies to hire cheaply. Moving costs are eliminated, and salaries are lower. Yet, does this hiring practice not present a moral, ethical, and

professional dilemma of hiring the lowest bidder, rather than the most qualified? And what statement does this practice make to the community about the value of the professionals serving them? Further, there is implied sexism underlying local hiring: lower salaries are offered to women because "the husband is the provider" or "she doesn't need the money."

It is the agency executive who has nurtured this trend — all because of the reality of shrinking dollars. When insurance premiums double and triple and utility rates skyrocket, these funds are found at the expense of salaries. I hope the time will come soon when budgets are no longer balanced on the backs of the staff.

In addressing the role of the Jewish Communal Service Association (JCSA), Bubis again offers a road map for the future. JCSA has been struggling with its role and identity, but has yet to confront its future. The world has changed and JCSA has to catch up. The most significant change to date has been its name change from CJCS to JCSA. The organization must view itself not solely as an entity unto itself, but rather as the convener, the forum, the voice of the field, the think-tank. It must identify and support the needs of the APAs and address common concerns.

JCSA is the most logical vehicle to facilitate standard setting, to identify and implement training needs, and to develop and administer professional certification. This Forum is a great beginning for a JCSA strategic planning process.

Schools of Jewish communal service emerged out of a clear-cut need not met in traditional nonsectarian institutions. What role did the JCC Association, the Council of Jewish Federations, and other national organizations play in the development of these schools and their curricula? What role can and should they play today? These umbrella organizations are the most obvious

and natural resources representing and articulating the training needs of their respective constituents.

JCSA should become the broker, the facilitator. A rabbinical seminary recently, for example, initiated an educational track to train Hillel directors. An eminent former Hillel director is the coordinator and instructor, yet the national Hillel organization played no role in its initiation. This seminary is also considering a Judaic specialist track for JCCs. Will JCCA be involved?

This is not a criticism of the seminary, but rather an example of a gap in communication that must be addressed.

Bubis brilliantly identifies a missing dimension: the volunteer. It is vital that they be included in partnership with the JCCA, CJF, and the like to develop and implement solutions vital to the health and enrichment of the Jewish community, with JCSA as the convener.

Yashar Koach to Gerald Bubis on helping us into the next century.



BERT J. GOLDBERG, ACSW, BCD

As always, Gerald Bubis examines the issues of the field with thoughtfulness and insight. His suggestions for the future of the Jewish Communal Service Association (JCSA) are worthy of the deepest consideration and could help revitalize the organization. I appreciate being given the opportunity to offer my reflections on the subject, with the understanding that these are my thoughts alone and are not the official positions of either my employer, the Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies (AJFCA) or JCSA, of which I am president.

Jewish family service agencies have been affected by some of the changes described by Bubis' article for a long period of time, although some have not affected us at all. The movement toward the employment of individuals with bachelor's degrees has, in general, had very little impact on Jewish family agencies. We remain the field of service with the highest percentage of MSWs employed, and I expect we will retain that distinction into the future. The personnel changes that will face us will be brought about by forces outside the Jewish community. In the United States, as some form of national health insurance takes hold, agencies will be forced to make changes in staffing patterns to enable them to continue to be reimbursed for the provision of services.

For non-managerial positions, our agencies have always hired locally. By and large the direct service staff of Jewish family agencies come from the surrounding community. Only in rare circumstances, usually those individuals looking for upward mobility, do people move from community to community to find a better position. Most of our direct service staff are women, who are not yet as mobile as men in moving to a new community for career advancement. In reality, our line staff employees stay with the agency because it is an attractive place to work, with a well-developed professional program, a collection of personable colleagues, and a commitment to the dual missions of serving the Jewish community and those in need. Where else can one find all that under one roof, in congenial surroundings?

Many of the female employees are married and are not the primary breadwinner for their families. It has been said that the physicians and attorneys of the Jewish community subsidize Jewish family agencies by making it possible for their wives to work for our agencies at low salaries. This allows them the luxury of working for our agencies, even though career advancement is limited and salaries are 80% of what they could earn in private practice or in a hospital setting. This inequity must be addressed if Jewish communal service employees are

ever to hold a position of status in the Jewish community. As long as employees are caught between their positions in the agency and their positions in the community, the field of Jewish communal service will be caught between that of a profession and that of employees.

Given all these obstacles, how do we effect change? I believe there are several steps we need to take.

- By and large, agency administrators are career employees. The JCSA needs to concentrate on them. In conjunction with the APAs, JCSA should create a yearly "Leadership Conference," inviting the top 200 executives in the agencies that comprise our field throughout North America to meet, debate, and formulate positions on the vital issues confronting the Jewish world today. The results of these deliberations will be shared with our lay leadership in forums, conferences, and assemblies and will represent the position of the true leaders of our field.
- To have an impact on leadership in the lay community, JCSA must play an appropriate role in the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. At present we have observer status. We must move to the table if we are to have any influence.
- We must develop our ability to reach out broadly to our membership. As Bubis notes, each national agency now trains its own employees, and the schools of Jewish communal service offer field-wide education to those few who enter such programs. Nowhere, however, are the vast majority of our employees socialized to the field of Jewish communal service. JCSA has an important role to play in developing educational programs in this venue, concentrating on the use of the newer technologies, such as interactive computer classes and satellite broadcasts.
- Conferences and training programs of-

ferred by the fields that make up Jewish communal service omit one vital aspect that JCSA could supply. Under no flag do people who work in different fields come together. Where do those who work with teenagers in a center, a counseling office, and an educational environment come together to share information on the most effective methods of reaching out to teenagers today? There is no place, unless JCSA steps forward. The creation of a computer network with assorted "Discussion Groups" that cut across fields of service is imperative in today's difficult environment with its tight travel budgets. Through the use of electronic media, age-group-specific employees, marketing specialists, and endowment professionals, among others, would all be given the opportunity to talk together and learn from each other.

Conference budgets are tight, and Jewish communal professionals choose to be trained by their national organizations and their professional subgroupings since that best serves upward mobility. There are many educational gaps, however, that can be filled. If people cannot travel to JCSA, then JCSA should travel to them. We can develop "conference modules" that are presented in regions or satellite programs with a keynote speaker and discussion groups in different communities. The desire to meet together has not changed; only the method of satisfying that desire. If JCSA is to be successful in meeting the interchange needs of today's Jewish communal service staff member, it must develop new methods of reaching out. We can no longer continue to rely on old methods, to practice in old ways. We must join together to create the future, or we will be swept away by it.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many of the ideas presented here came into being as the result of conversations held with Joel Ollander, the executive director of JCSA.

MARK HANDELMAN, ACSW

Gerald Bubis has written a very thoughtful and insightful analysis of current issues confronting the field of Jewish communal service, particularly in the areas of professional education, certification, and continuing education. I am still not certain where he comes out on the "profession versus field of practice" debate. I shall restrict my comments to his suggestions about the role of APAs and the JCSA in certification and continuing education.

Bubis is absolutely accurate in concluding that Jewish communal agencies concerned with downsizing and budget reductions have opted for less qualified and lower salaried personnel, thus leading to what he terms "deprofessionalization." However, to suggest that APAs and the JCSA have the power to turn this situation around through recommendations of salary scales, benefit package guidelines, and entry-level standards credits these structures with a degree of power and influence over agency boards, executives, and funding sources that they simply do not and cannot possess.

The APAs and the JCSA are in the midst of their own struggles to find a relevant niche for themselves in the Jewish communal service field (or profession). Even if they were to reorganize according to the Bubis APA model of definition by "what its professionals do," rather than by functional field or area of specialization, they still would have limited ability to affect the decision making of funders, policymakers, and administrators of Jewish communal agencies. Bottom line, it is the executives of Jewish communal agencies who ultimately will be to blame or who will get the credit regarding the state of the profession and of professionalism within the field of practice.

Those executives who are committed to staffing their agencies with degreed and qualified personnel who can meet the guidelines for professionals in Jewish communal service suggested by Ralph Goldman and

Gerald Bubis will advocate with their boards and funders for proper salaries and benefit plans for such professionals. They will also plan and budget with a priority placed on staff development and in-service training opportunities both within and outside their agency structures. They will strongly encourage their staffs to affiliate with APAs and to attend the JCSA Annual Conference, the World Council on Jewish Communal Service, and to write for publication, with particular emphasis on the *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*. They will lend their vision and commit their leadership skills to the building of strong and viable educational programs for social work and human services within schools, colleges, and universities under Jewish auspices. They will contribute funds and help raise funds for many of the national and international professional associations and conferences within Jewish communal service.

Executives of agencies in New York, for example, including NYANA, FECS, the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, and the UJA-Federation, have invested heavily in staff development programs, subsidized social work graduate education (particularly for newcomers from the former Soviet Union in conjunction with Yeshiva University), and provided in-service training and subsidized conference attendance for practitioner-level staff. In many instances, these activities have been made cost effective through interagency coordination and joint ventures.

In 1994, FECS held a management institute for attendees at the annual meeting of the International Association of Jewish Vocational Service in Miami, NYANA held a national symposium on Jewish refugee resettlement, and the Weiner Center of UJA-Federation held an add-on institute conference to the JCSA Annual Conference for Jewish communal practitioners from the

former Soviet Union. This national contribution to continuing education for Jewish communal service occurred because these executives were committed to the development of the field as a whole, as well as their own agencies and communities.

These examples of executives investing in professional education, training, and certification programs are not exclusive to New York. Many executives throughout the United States and internationally have recently dedicated themselves to a new and revitalized "World Council of Jewish Communal Service." Meetings are being

planned to reorganize and revitalize the national Jewish Family and Children's Professional's Association through the efforts of JFS executives. Executives from many functional fields continue their debates, struggles, and planning efforts collectively on behalf of JCSA.

I would hope that many of the executives and senior management of Jewish communal agencies throughout the United States who have not advocated strongly enough for professionalization will heed Gerald Bubis in his call for action. The answer is indeed "in our hands."



JEFFREY R. SOLOMON, PH.D.

Gerald Bubis continues his prolific and substantive contributions to the field with this article that asks some serious core questions about the status of Jewish communal service as it approaches the end of its first century as a "professionalized" entity. This writer has focused on some of the same issues in preparation for the 1994 Maurice B. Hexter lecture at the Jewish Communal Service Association (JCSA) Annual Conference held in New York in June of this year.

Professor Bubis reviews the literature on whether Jewish communal service is a profession or a field of service. Although I would argue in support of the latter position, I am afraid that this core question is analogous to that of how shall we rearrange the deck chairs on the Titanic.

Jewish communal service as either a profession or a field of service is in serious trouble. It is no longer the hub from which a series of specialized spokes emerge. The spokes are operating with a centrifugal force that is moving them farther and farther away from a smaller hub. Although the growth of Jewish family, nursing home, community center, education, community organization, and vocational affinity groups is laudable, there needs to be greater recog-

nition of the synergy of interdisciplinary collaboration.

How does this manifest itself? For many years, the JCSA Annual Conference was a command performance for the leadership of the field. It attracted up to 1,000 professionals, and all of the leadership of all of the components of Jewish communal service were present. Agencies encouraged junior staff to attend, who did so willingly in order to learn and to connect to a field that served as a magnet for the principles of Jewish community life. However, the 1994 Annual Conference attracted less than 400 participants. With rare exceptions, chief executives of major federations, national agencies, or leadership functional field agencies did not attend. In fact, the Annual Conference was in competition with a Jewish educators' conference and a Jewish nursing home conference held at the same time at different venues. No discipline exists. Little leadership is exhibited.

Bubis' article also speaks to common language with regard to ethics. In previous deliberations on this issue in the context of a Wexner Foundation-supported evaluation of a Jewish communal service academic program, the central themes of Jewish com-

munal service and the degree to which they are based on shared values were discussed. To this end, the editor of *Sh'ma* asked this author to borrow from the computer field a strategy that creates these *Ten Commandments of Jewish Communal Service* (Solomon, 1994):

- I. Thou shalt begin with the foundation of Torah, *Avodah*, and *Gemilut Chassidim*.
- II. Thou shalt build community.
- III. Thou shalt participate in the aspirations of the Jewish people by helping build a homeland in Israel.
- IV. Thou shalt respect the diversity of this people by standing in the place of all Jews of all denominations and beliefs.
- V. Thou shalt seek excellence.
- VI. Thou shalt seek to transmit Jewish values.
- VII. Thou shalt act to respect thy colleagues working in behalf of the community.

- VIII. Thou shalt advocate those values of human and social justice that make us a light unto the nations.
- IX. Thou shalt educate the community through thy work.
- X. Thou shalt educate thyself through continued Jewish learning.

Bubis presents a challenge and action plan that deserve debate and support. The abandonment by professional leadership of their responsibility to professional development is neither healthy nor in our communal self-interest. I urge us to heed the challenge posed by Bubis to develop a shared vision, values, commitments, and standards to ensure that 50 years from today we are stronger as a community.

REFERENCES

- Solomon, Jeffrey R. (1994, April 1). Developing an ethical framework for Jewish communal service. *Sh'ma*, 24, 471.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Although the following article by Bernard Reisman was written in response to Gerald Bubis' piece, it stands alone as an analysis of trends toward deprofessionalization. Based on Reisman's research and readings, this article presents its own prescription for strengthening Jewish communal service.