# THE CHANGING JEWISH COMMUNITY-AN APPRAISAL\*

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A NY attempt to forecast the future is likely to reflect the forecaster's wish as well as his judgment. Confronted with the subject, The Changing Jewish Community, there is an impulse to forecast the changes that we have not been able to bring about by the application of our ingenuity. In one fell swoop the frustrations of a lifetime can be swept away in a single conference paper. The temptation for this kind of indulgence is almost irresistible.

To counter-balance the easy road to a better make-believe world the discipline of our profession calls on us to be objective—to concentrate on the society we see rather than the fantasy we might prefer. We can draw some conclusions from our day-to-day experience in communal service, isolate and evaluate some of the influencing factors, and reflect on the changes that appear to lie ahead. If this presentation is not pure in its objectivity, at least it is committed to restraint in its subjective excesses.

Let us first evaluate the factors which influence the nature of Jewish communal service. These divide into three areas: (1) The influences which are beyond our control and our area of professional expertness; (2) the elements over which we have limited control and about which we are somewhat knowledgeable; and (3) the factors affecting the future of Jewish communal service which are internal to the Jewish community and to which our skills have the greatest application.

Among the factors that are beyond our control, the most pervading is the economic and political climate of our country and of the world in which we Whether we have economic proslive. perity, and the continuation of a liberal or a liberal-conservative society is more important in the development of Jewish communal service than any other single factor. A catastrophic economic depression, or the emergence of social and political reaction would demoralize our social planning even if it never appeared on the agenda of our social planning committees. The prevention of such developments is not within our exclusive control. In the same category comes the question of war or peace in the world.

Insofar as all individuals and groups can be regarded as having some part to play in the development of the political and social life of our country and the world, so Jews and the Jewish community help influence this development.

<sup>\*</sup> Keynote address at the National Conference of Jewish Communal Service, St. Louis, May 27, 1956.

The major impact, however, is rather in the other direction—the flourishing of Jewish and general communal services, the course they take, the level of their development—all of these depend, in a primary way, on the economic and social soil in which they grow and on the political atmosphere which may nourish or destroy them.

As we move closer to the Jewish social services themselves, we must relate them to the general social work setting of which they are but a part. Here there is a somewhat more evenly weighted interaction of one area of service upon the other. Developments in Jewish child care influence the level of child care services generally and the medical skills and techniques developed anywhere become a part of practice in Jewish hospitals.

Social services under the auspices of industry, unions, private organizations and government all have their effects on the nature and extent of our work. In the last two decades industry has developed a tremendous social service structure which includes recreation, counselling, service for the aged, vocational guidance and health services. More than 60 per cent of the expenditure for private welfare in 1950 was for the financing of industry programs.\* In New York and some of the other larger industrial and commercial centers, participation by Jewish employees in these programs is significant as social service for Jews even if not under Jewish auspices. A Jewish employee will have the choice of bowling at his YMHA with his B'nai B'rith lodge or in his company league. He will be able to take his retirement problems to a Jewish agency for counselling or to the service provided

### by his employer. Each choice will have its own peculiar advantages.

There is a parallel development under labor auspices, where larger unions are developing a network of social services for their members and their families. In Detroit we've already seen the United Automobile Workers Drop-in Recreational Centers for retired members develop from an experiment to an established program with general community financing. The United Community Services, the local Council of Social Agencies, finances this program. In a minimum way this is already making a difference in the balance of funds for Jewish and other sectarian activities. The increasing emphasis on the nonsectarian suburban services to meet new. more pressing, and in many instances primary elementary needs, is competing for financing with Jewish agencies long established in metropolitan centers. The philosophical basis of sectarian programs is challenged by the expressed or demonstrated wish of Jewish suburbanites to substitute services under general auspices. Similar competitive financial pressures come in behalf of new services for blighted areas.

The largest force of all in the general social work field is that of government services. Public welfare spent over 12 billion dollars in 1950—more than 2½ times the expenditure on programs under private auspices.\* There follows a movement in two directions. On the one hand the establishment of government services makes it unnecessary for Jews, or other sectarian groups, to duplicate these services. The most dramatic example of this is the government's acceptance of the relief-giving function. Working in the opposite direction is the increasing responsibility taken by gov-

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ernment for financing of services under private and sectarian auspices. It would be easy to stimulate a nightmare if we naused to think of what would happen to our own Jewish services if all forms of government financing-direct or through individuals-were stopped. Picture if you will the disappearance of Old Age Assistance, Old Age and Survivors' Insurance, county and state payments for hospital beds and child care. Closely associated is financing through third party payments to hospitals. Reduction of deficits to manageable figures, thanks to public funds and the third party payments, will withdraw the question of hospitals under Jewish auspices from the ideological arena.

Our policy toward the social service structure which surrounds Jewish communal service can impede or accelerate the development under non-sectarian auspices. Shall we fight for continued support of sectarian agencies in the metropolitan suburbs while community chests are proposing parallel services under general auspices? Shall we accept financing of casework and child care programs on a unit cost basis when this will eliminate Jewish differentials?

There will be an unevenness in our position from community to community but the likelihood is that the rigid lines of sectarianism will continue to decline where the major source of income is from the Chest-unless more powerful sectarian groups, notably the Catholics, will keep it alive. This decline may be regarded as a threat to the continued existence of Jewish services and it may very well be a menacing factor at the time it takes place. On the other hand the acceptance of responsibility by public agencies or government, or by nonsectarian agencies, has been an inspiration to our ingenuity to develop under our own auspices a more specialized service requiring more highly developed skills for a smaller number not yet served in the total community framework. In group work, for example, it is likely to mean de-emphasis on recreation per se and increased attention to Jewish cultural programs with the cultural factor moving in from the edges toward centrality.

As we turn toward consideration of the Jewish field itself we can examine the internal factors which have primary importance.

1. The development of central communal organization as represented by the Jewish Federation has influenced all of the Jewish services. The trend towards centrality has gone to extremes in some communities and has tended to achieve more of a balance in others. The luxury of exclusive loyalty to a single agency or service appealed to a simpler set of philanthropic impulses. The idea of interdependence is accepted on the local Jewish scene as on the world scene. The "my agency" layman is a constructive community leader today only if at the same time he respects the whole family of community services.

One of the risks we face is characteristic of any trend toward centrality. A Federation or welfare fund in a large city is not a single unit but an integrated central body made up of many separate units.

The success of the Federation idea is due to its respect for the limitations of its inclusiveness. The willingness to accept integration and coordination is a more important prerequisite than the readiness on the part of the central body to enforce it. The preaching that all Jewish services should be under a single authority as Jewish community life "matures" is insufficient basis on which to prophesy that this will come to pass. The base of maturity on which our central communal life is built is that we do together only those things which we agree we can best do together and we are free to engage in other programs as

<sup>\*</sup> America's Needs and Resources: A New Survey (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1955). J. Frederick Dewhurst and Associates.

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we choose. As the experience in Federation continues there may be more services but never all services—encompassed by our central structure and program.

2. The nature of the need for Jewish services is changing and with it the conception of our clientele and of our function is also being modified.

Two-thirds of the Jews in America are native-born.\* There has been a tremendous economic advance in the Jewish population. The Jews are basically a middle-class group. These facts have been presented as reasons and abused as rationalizations for many new proposals.

There has been a great deal of talk about services being increasingly available to all Jewish groups. This new interest may be due to the fact that our services have been disowned by the poor who are now able to find help-financial help-from government agencies at one level or another. The change of function on the part of our agencies and the awareness of the service needs of other than the poor are often motivated by a loss of the old clientele. It is an interesting coincidence that the stimulation for examination of the function of the family agency takes place in a period when there is a decreasing refugee case load. In New York City, a decade ago. the family agencies did not accept refugee service either as a program or as a substitute for the examination of their function. Whether it be in the field of family service or community relations or group work the budget presentation which begins with "It is precisely now .... " arouses reservations. It is often precisely because we have a Fair Employment Practice law (or because we do not have one) that we must expand the budgets of the community

relations services and precisely when there are no longer dependent children around that we must do a more intensive job with disturbed children.

We have conjured up a new model of the client we seek to serve. This applies to family and children's agencies as well as to community centers. Behold this ideal, though mythical client who can give our agency status. He is in the upper middle class economically. He was referred to us by a board member with whose family he is personally friendly. He is ready to pay the full fee for services. He recognizes readily that there are psychiatric implications in his problem. He lives in a newly developed suburb where most of the other Jewish residents want to shake themselves loose of the organized Jewish community. He does not seek institutional care for his aged father, but wants to make an arrangement for him to live "in the community." Despite all of these distinctive characteristics this model client does not insist on dealing with the agency director. He is a contributor to the annual campaign but is above mentioning this when the agency requests a fee. Even having such an idealized client in its case load would not justify the agency claim that it serves evervone.

We need to strike a balance. Our agencies *cannot* serve everyone. They can give an equal priority to everyone without regard to economic or social position or geographic location. If we stay in business, we will serve more middle class persons because there will be many fewer poor clients to serve.

3. The change in our clientele brings with it a change in the source of our financing in at least one direction. The client's payment for service will be an increased source of revenue dollar-wise even if it is not as impressive in percentage of agency budget.

This may do a great deal for our

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services. They will be almost as expensive as private professional or commercial services and they will have to be as good or better to get the business.

4. There has been a striking change in the nature of our lay leadership brought about largely by the sociological changes in the American-Jewish community and by the increased economic fluidity. It is a healthy prospect that the entire community includes potential clients—and at the same time the entire community includes potential board members. It is much easier to enter the economic group from which board members come in our present era of prosperity than it was a generation ago to change the country of origin of one's parents.

5. Professional leadership also has changed. There are more professionally trained people in Jewish communal service and there is a great increase of professional consciousness among staff members of agencies. In spite of this increase a great shortage of personnel continues as a problem. In keeping professionals as practitioners and in recruitment we must look both to salaries and other prestige factors. The whole question of professional leadership cannot be discussed without reference to the necessity for a school of Jewish communal service.

6. The creation of the State of Israel and the contributions that the Jews of America have made to it have had a strong impact on social workers and social services. The programs of our centers and schools have been enriched, our fund-raising campaigns have been given new inspiration. The entire American-Jewish atmosphere has been stirred with a new spirit and added dignity.

The new excitement has given rise to new problems of welfare fund relationships and organizational structure. Almost to a man we have shouted down the extremist who sees no room for Israel in the American-Jewish community program. We also have been on guard against the extremist who finds no place for American-Jewish life in the American-Jewish community program. The balanced welfare fund has become the meeting ground for the integration of these two great components of our culture.

7. Communal services operate on a very conservative basis-there is a resistance to change. One of the most telling arguments for maintaining a service is that it has always existed. History seems to justify continuation. Only changes are challenged. We often rationalize the fact that our agencies meet some needs and do not meet others. We do not give relief in a family agency because, we say, this has become a government responsibility. Is it a fact that we do not duplicate services which the government provides? Vocational guidance is a government responsibility assumed in many places by the school svstem and also provided by the Jewish community. The explanation is offered that the government, in this case the school system, does not provide adequate vocational guidance. Can we conclude from this that we are satisfied that the government does provide adequate relief?

Dependence on the relatively fixed base of past performance makes for conservatism both in the availability of income and-what is more directly important for the services—in the amounts available for expenditure. In fundraising the major factors in helping a contributor determine the size of his gift are what he gave last year and what his social and business associates give. Similarly, in determining what services our agencies will provide, the major factors are the services they provided last year and the services that other local agencies give or that are provided by agencies in comparable communities.

<sup>\*</sup> Social Characteristics of American Jews, 1654–1954, Nathan Glazer. American Jewish Year Book, 1955.

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We must not conclude from this that there have not been changes and that there will be no change. Examination reveals that many of the changes have taken place only because services which agencies historically provided were no longer necessary and agencies found it possible to use funds so released for new programs. Budget committees will continue to find new needs more attractive when old money is released to meet them.

8. A factor of increasing importance that influences the changing Jewish community is the development of community service programs under synagogue auspices and the relation of such synagogue programs to community programs. This is particularly applicable to the field of Jewish education, formal and informal, and to recreation. Synagogue programs have a lesser impact on family counselling and community relations. The Conference recognizes the growing importance of this factor and its associated relationships and is therefore devoting a special session to a more detailed consideration of this development and the implications.

9. The relationship of the Jewish community to the general American community both in its positive aspects and in the fringe areas of anti-Semitism is not an internal question under the sectarian control of the Jewish community. The extent of anti-Semitism, the potential for anti-Semitism, is part of the general atmosphere in which the internal programs of the Jewish community operate. All Jewish communal agencies, regardless of function-casework, group work, health services-have a community relations content in their program and a community relations responsibility that influences our status. Community relations agencies have a function which they share with all individuals and groups in America. Specific identification of these two separate responsibilities is still a technically unsolved problem.

10. It would not be fashionable these days to omit citing the move to the suburbs as a factor affecting Jewish communal service. For some individuals this move was intended as an escape from the clamors both of city life and of Jewish life. For others, in predominantly Jewish suburbs, it stimulated the desire to shape, what was for them, a new kind of Jewish life, primarily around the synagogue. Community organization is faced with an intensified conflict between those who moved to lose themselves and those who moved to find themselves. In planning services, central organizations will learn when to regard the suburban development as a new satellite community calling for a fresh approach and a new relationship and when to recognize it merely as a new neighborhood requiring basically the same kind of examination and relationship that once new neighborhoods within the political limits of the older city merited. The emerging program of services for the suburbs will need to meet each at his own level of interest as it did in the neighborhoods from which he came.

Some conclusions regarding changes in communal programs are inherent in the factors as they have been presented. Others merit separate consideration.

1. The inclusion of Israeli causes, primarily the United Jewish Appeal, in the framework of the welfare fund, has broadened the base of identification of the Jewish population in every community. Presenting the domestic and overseas themes on the same platform has given the friend of the local agency a world perspective and has given to the devoted friend of Israel the understanding that the Jewish world includes his own home town. Thanks to this concert of objectives the welfare fund has gained in breadth of concept and the Jewish population that constitutes a welfare fund has developed a comprehensive and balanced homogeneity. This has been a

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major positive contribution. It has demonstrated the usefulness of getting things done together through the most effective machinery for communal action that has been developed in America on a voluntary basis.

In earlier years the struggle between the United Palestine Appeal and the Joint Distribution Committee for priority took place within the structure of the UJA. More recently, with the growth of the Israeli part of the program the battleground for priorities shifted to the welfare funds. In some ways this conflict can be described as an attempt to reduce the welfare fund from a coordinating idea to a mechanism of convenience. Other national and local agencies or groups of agencies from time to time also have tried to rise beyond the local welfare fund in prestige and position. This situation is emphasized by the vast size of the United Jewish Appeal in organization and dollars. It is tempting for a partner whose income from local Federations ranges anywhere from 30 per cent in some communities to 95 per cent in others to try to rise above the community of which it is a part.

Nevertheless there are evidences of movement toward the achievement of balance. Whether the UJA should raise its money through the welfare fund or outside of it is by now recognized as academic. Communities have learned that a pre-campaign percentage advantage is illusory. The UJA likewise has learned that a higher percentage of a lower total is a hollow victory.

The welfare fund enables the contributor to express his interest in helping himself and others through organized processes. While we still talk about giving money to the United Jewish Appeal the money is actually given through the welfare fund for the people and programs of North Africa and Israel. There appears to be an increasing understanding that the basic elements of this relationship are the contributor and the beneficiary and that the agencies are mechanisms which help the contributor serve the beneficiary.

2. As a result of the increasing homogeneity of the Jewish community with the middle class of the total community, an increasing proportion of Jews will be served through non-sectarian auspicesindustry, unions, and private agencies, notably in suburban areas. As a result of these trends it is likely that there will be less volume of social service and more volume of cultural services under the auspices of the Jewish community. Social services are likely to be provided under non-sectarian auspices except for the needs requiring very highly skilled, specialized and expensive procedures. Already in the development of the Jewish vocational field there is an increasing emphasis on rehabilitation, and the difficult-to-place applicant rather than on routine job finding.

Counselling as a function of a casework agency may be moving increasingly toward general community sponsorship. In the process, casework skills will be used more widely in connection with other services under Jewish auspices such as child placement, recreation, education, and homes for aged and chronically ill.

Relieved of the responsibility for a volume of casework service by other private and public agencies, the Jewish casework agency will be free to provide individual service more heavily weighted in the direction of intensive treatment for children and adults to fill the gap between private psychiatry and presentday casework. This development, while expensive, will be encouraged by the stimulation of fees more closely approximating costs. Whether this type of service will be under the auspices of hospital clinics or casework agencies will be determined largely by how effectively each of these agencies develops realistic fee payment programs. Both the clinics and the agencies can learn from the experience of their former professional associates now in private practice.

One of the counter-indications to the withdrawal of social services from Jewish auspices is the influence of the source of financing. This withdrawal is not likely to take place where government financing is a factor in sectarian services such as in hospitals and in homes for the aged. In the field of Jewish Vocational Services and Workshops the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is beginning to make some impact on financing.

3. The increase in cultural services under Jewish auspices is very difficult to judge in the present disorganized situation. The cultural needs of Jews as Jews are the happy hunting ground of all varieties of agencies in and outside the welfare fund: the religious organizations, community relations agencies (national and local), and the community centers and schools to cite an unexhausted list. In an attempt to be all things to all members, organizations with unrelated purposes throw in a little art, music and a smattering of Jewish education and culture as promotional talking points.

Only a dismal pessimist would question that this situation is bound to shake down. Just how much of it will be under synagogue auspices and how much under communal, center or school auspices, and how much of it will be independent of all of these is difficult to forecast. It is hardly speculative, however, to assume that meeting cultural needs will become a major part of local and national communal programs, financially and otherwise. These programs demand and are receiving steadily larger communal financial support. If only because of the increased centrality of the source of funds there is apt to be a greater degree of integration among the programs regardless of auspices.

## In the increased emphasis on cultural programs the importance of the community center is expanded in the Jewish communal picture. It meets the requirements of the middle class Jewish population and its potential as a flexible cultural institution has an appeal for the broadest group. Public and private non-sectarian institutions will compete with the center for Jewish membership and the Jewish community certainly will not want to exclude its people from participation in such desirable programs. Where the Jewish community affords a center that is a well-equipped city club for its middle class population. it will be more successful in developing an integrated package of recreation with a Jewish cultural component for large segments of Jews who continue to desire such a program under our auspices.

4. The movement towards serving a middle class clientele is accompanied by increasing charges for services. The increase in income from fees is particularly marked in such programs as camping, homes for aged and hospitals. It is beginning to become more significant in family counselling and career counselling. All of these services will be brought closer into competition with similar services under commercial auspices and this kind of competition is likely to have the effect of raising the level of our communal service.\* The whole concept of people getting their money's worth is an important one in setting the kind of standards which will be expected and very likely provided. The client paying a fee that approximates cost will evaluate the service more critically and the agency is bound to be aware of this. While this may be a subtle influence on the agency it nevertheless can be very real as a factor in

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sharpening skills and improving the effectiveness of service.

Charging fees for service tends to call attention to cost of service. This, too, could result first, in more accurate measurement of cost, and, more important, in the isolation and elimination of costs not related to providing service. This may mean a new look at case recording, staff conferences, and similar procedures. While this begins to sound like commercial time-study influence in social work it should be regarded more appropriately as an opportunity to improve the effectiveness of the functions we are established to carry out.

5. The prophecy that Jewish education will become the sole responsibility of the synagogue is unwarranted. This is as unlikely as the forecast that all Jewish education will become the responsibility of the organized community under the Federation. The development will be uneven from community to community, with more synagogue schools in some larger communities and more communal schools in others. The increased willingness and ability on the part of parents to pay for the education of their children may very well reverse the trend toward the development of the larger communal school. Central financing made for more central integration and administration of schools which had the benefit of this financing. Less dependence on central financing as the increase of income from tuition continues may halt this trend. While a marked increase in the number of small low-standard separate schools is not indicated, larger congregations will be able to provide Jewish education with relatively minor supplementation and they may proceed to do so.

Jewish educators must be relieved of pre-occupation with financing, organizational relationships and central coordination, which are the responsibilities of community organization. Educators must be left free to apply their knowledge and ingenuity more productively to the development of curriculum for the native-born child, raised in the American-Jewish home of today. Our eagerness to get at the heart of this problem is reflected in the current national study of Jewish education, which parallels in many ways the recent study of the Jewish centers. Both are evidences of our turning, beyond observation, to social research in our efforts to find direction.

6. There is likely to be a variation in the extent of cooperation between Jewish community center and synagogue recreational units. Parents are more reluctant to pay for recreational programs than they are for the education of their children. This is especially evident where the recreational programs do not include such facilities as swimming pools and bowling alleys for which we have become accustomed to paying fees.

In some communities, major physical education facilities under non-sectarian auspices will be more readily used by the Jewish community and the Jewish center therefore will not provide them, relying on the synagogue plant for club and special interest programs.

The cooperative synagogue-center administered by the center staff is already increasingly evident and promises to be more so. Here again the development will be uneven from community to community. In cities where synagogue facilities are used to a very large extent by the communal school, the center will have separate facilities. In other communities the communal school will have its own separate facilities.

7. It is difficult to foresee any relief from the shortage of professionally trained personnel in communal service. As a result of re-evaluation of the professional requirements of the job, there may be a reassignment of some communal responsibilities to personnel not professionally trained. This parallels

<sup>\* &</sup>quot;Some Practical Aspects of Fee Charging," Leonore Rivesman, Journal of Jewish Communal Service, Spring, 1956. p. 331.

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the development in the medical field of the use of the practical nurse in place of the registered nurse. In social work it would leave for the professionally trained staff member more of the professional content and separate other aspects of staff responsibility now carried in large part by professionals but not necessarily needing professional skills and training.

The Jewish social agencies, particularly those which give service to individuals, will concentrate on a more highly technically skilled aspect of the job, leaving other aspects to non-sectarian services. This will affect the number of staff members and the level of professional development Jewish agencies will require of them. Staff will be smaller and necessarily more highly trained. Professional personnel will continue to come from the non-sectarian training facilities.

The increase of programs under Jewish auspices in the cultural educational area-the enrichment serviceswill emphasize the need for a special kind of training for professional personnel in Jewish communal service, a training which cannot be made available in non-sectarian schools of social work. Such training will have to be provided under Jewish auspices, hopefully in a school organized by the American-Jewish community. The increased homogeneity of the total Jewish community seems to counter-indicate separate schools under segmentary theological auspices. While there seems to be a tendency to develop such separate schools at the moment, the problem of financing the small number of students, the high unit cost and the overall interdenominational Jewish character of the field they serve point to integration and centralization. American-Jewish organizations have recognized the need for European and Israeli-Jewish schools of social work with the major component being the professional skills

of social work. We also shall have to recognize the need for an American-Jewish school of social work—with the emphasis on the Jewish component. Here and there a welcome breath of Israeli culture will be wafted across the seas to us. To integrate it we need an American-Jewish culture of our own.

8. The shifting of responsibility for some programs now under Jewish auspices to non-sectarian auspices will affect the community relations field as well. This shift depends a great deal upon the leadership which the Jewish and general groups give to this field. The safeguarding of democracy, the protection of minority groups—in fact most of the present programs of the large community relations agencies, national and local, are morally a responsibility of the entire American community, public and private. In the public area there has been progress along these lines in the fields of employment, housing, public accommodation, schools, and civil rights generally. How long the Jewish agencies will have to hold on to these aspects of their function is in many respects an internal Jewish problem. The continued sponsorship of these programs under obvious or subtle Jewish auspices beyond the pump-priming period may delay the assumption of these responsibilities under more appropriately nonsectarian auspices. There will be a greater effort to define more specifically the proper area of Jewish responsibility for community relations work in the future.

Now, for the concluding conclusion: A neatly drawn symmetrical outline of the future cannot accompany our projection of the changing Jewish community. One of the predictions in which we can have major confidence is that there will continue to be unevenness in the development of our voluntary Jewish organization. New York City always will have its peculiar variations, and so will every

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community down to the smallest. Symmetry makes more sense in conference papers and discussions than it does in reflecting the way people live. Some see a totally integrated Jewish community in the future-or deterioration. Others see the emergency of the centrality of the synagogue-or deterioration. Many see hope for the future in the revival of Hebrew: a few see tragedy in the demise of Yiddish. Each has his own sense of direction and with it his own set of predictions. Each has his own signpost of achievement or failure: Israel, education, philanthropy, liberalism, Kashruth. One of the great strengths and contributions in the field of professional social

work to American life and to American-Jewish life is the recognition of differentials, the respect for differences between people and among peoples. Our restraint in developing an over-all authority which will push individuals, groups and programs into a logical, more easily manageable model is a mark of our professional understanding. It is a dominant virtue in our ability to foster positive and healthy growth of the people and those services which by common consent-and only by common consentmake up our community organization. If the crystal ball appears unclear at many points, that, nonetheless, is the way it is in a voluntary society.