CURRENT AND PROSPECTIVE TRENDS IN JEWISH COMMUNAL SERVICE*

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IN a subject as broad and as basic as this we need to define at the very beginning what we are dealing with—and what we are not. It will not be my purpose to catalogue every field of service and list the major developments in each. That has already been done, expertly and in detail. What I shall try to do instead is to select the trends—or if not yet trends, at least pertinent developments—which cut across the various areas of service, which will affect all or most of our work, and which point the directions for the main highways we are likely to travel.

Jewish Communal Service Distinctive

We are dealing here with Jewish communal service—a service distinctively rooted in a religious code in which the obligations of social justice, of man's humanity to man, are central to a way of life. Underlying that service are values and motivations which have become pervasive in the mores of a people—whether as individuals they are observant of Jewish ritual or not.

It is a religion of action—social action, not a creed of belief alone. "What doth the Lord require of thee," the prophet asked, "but to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with thy God." It is a religion centered in the infinite sanctity of each individual, his life, his spirit, his dignity—in which the highest level of social service has been the prevention of human need.

Changing Communities

These are the imperishable roots which have nourished Jewish communal service through the centuries and which sustain it today. The stream of substance has been a continuous one, although the forms have changed.

Admittedly, we are a different Jewish group than we were a generation ago: largely native-born instead of immigrant; economically more secure, predominantly middle class and upper middle class; increasingly university-educated, professionals, owners and managers of business; more homogeneous economically, socially, culturally.

There is today a genuine foundation for a sense of community—for sharing and cooperation—which did not exist to the same extent a generation ago. But there are also counterforces, notably the geographic spread and movement of population, manifest in the new suburbs. They have posed problems of organization, service, and financing—and ques-

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tions of relationships between public and voluntary programs, between sectarian and non-sectarian responsibilities. They are problems which are yet to be met.

If the solutions have not been realized, the approaches are emerging—with increasing agreement on the following principles and guidelines: the suburbs are related to the central community as parts of a larger metropolitan community; planning and financing should be based on the larger metropolitan area; existing agencies should serve the new areas centrally or through branches, or at least give the new areas the benefit of their experience, rather than have them go through trial and error to learn for themselves what is already known; residents of the suburbs should have opportunities and responsibilities for leadership— action should be taken *with* them, not for them; their participation should be reflected in the boards, committees, and structure of community organizations; as a middle class group, they should finance the services they receive to the full extent possible; there should be no strait-jacketing of uniformity for all new areas—nor merely a repetition of what has been done before—rather these areas present opportunities for flexible experimentation with new forms and new methods, which should be developed with imagination and energy.

Synagogues Take Larger Role

The suburbs already have brought changes in the role and relationships of organizations, notably the synagogues. Like the churches, the synagogues have been the first organizations and structures in the new areas. They have taken on a centrality and a scope not matched in the older, core communities. More than places of worship, they have set their sights as recreational, educational, and social centers. They have taken a larger part in intergroup, interfaith community relations. Their rabbis are involved increasingly in marriage problems and pastoral counseling.

Separateness between welfare organizations and synagogues is today hardly possible. Communities face the questions as to whether they shall duplicate, use, or supplement the often-costly, existing synagogue facilities for recreation and education. They must take account, in financing community programs, of what the very same people are already paying to construct and operate their synagogues. They must look to the leaders and members of the synagogues for community-wide leadership too.

These relationships pose many questions, both of philosophy and fact—the ability of people of varying religious beliefs to take part comfortably in synagogue recreational programs, to share in educational programs of a particular ritual and denomination. There are the gaps between the synagogues' aspirations for recreational programs and the realities, as harassed trustees struggle with budgets which leave little for leisure time programs, with little or no specialized staff for the purpose, and with waning enthusiasm as the wear and tear of healthy, romping youngsters mar proud gleaming walls and structures.

Only the barest beginnings, and isolated ones at that, have been made in developing continuing, cooperative working relations between synagogues and community organizations. But the facts of life are increasingly impelling community organizations and synagogues to a process of joint planning and cooperation for which the structure, method, and direction are still largely yet to be charted.

Community Perspective

The spread of responsibility to encompass the suburbs reflects the growing awareness that all of the people in a geographi-

cal area have a stake in the well-being of the entire area; that in today's mobile and fluid society, social problems can not be isolated, and that there is really "no hidin' place out there"; that all are affected by these social ills and all benefit from their solutions; that the problems indeed are too large to be met by small groups through their own resources.

It explains in part why agencies operating in the same field have coordinated their work and have merged. They have done so not because of any abstract theory or philosophy, but rather voluntarily, on the basis of their understanding and conviction, impelled by the force of events.

The notable exception is the field of Jewish education, where there has been a decentralization among the many new synagogues, with a scattering of many small units, bringing problems and implications which unfortunately we do not have the time to deal with here.

But that is the exception and the basic, general direction, I believe, is clear. The movement to a community perspective has brought a problem-centered rather than an agency-centered focus. We are concerned more with the object of our services — namely, the people receiving them—than with the instruments of the services, the agencies.

Our concern for the aged, for example, no longer rests entirely in the "old folks home." Seeing all of the needs of the aged, and all of the resources required to serve them, a community adds a day care program for services to non-residents; develops a variety of specialized non-institutional services through the family casework agency; extends and intensifies treatment for long term illness in its hospital; provides counselling, placement, and sheltered workshops through its vocational agency; inaugurates summer camping programs, and year-round recreational services in its community center; and regards all of these as but parts of a total community program, rather than entities in themselves.

What has been happening in care of the aged has been happening too in our health programs, with the growth of medical centers through mergers or coordination of previously separate operations.

It is beginning to happen in our understanding of mental health—as we look together at the problems of senility among the aged, of emotionally disturbed children in our child care agencies, psychiatric needs in our family welfare agencies, the growing involvement of our general hospitals in psychiatry, the special programs of our vocational agencies for the mentally retarded and emotionally disturbed.

Problems More Complex— Goals, Concepts Change

These and other similar developments are more than structural and organizational. They reflect the fact that the problems with which we deal have become more complex—or perhaps with greater knowledge, it is only that we recognize more fully their complexity. With that knowledge our concepts have changed, and our goals have advanced.

We are no longer content with wasted idleness for our aged. We seek opportunities for them to remain gainfully employed as long as they can be, living usefully in the community as part of the community. We no longer accept senility as inevitable when it occurs—but rather seek to find the causes, to prevent it, to overcome it.

We have joined in the search for the cures to long term illnesses, physical and mental, which have baffled science. We have few orphaned children today—and try to serve instead the difficult needs of the emotionally disturbed. Our family

welfare agencies are involved in the stresses of threatened family break-up, rather than primarily in the giving of relief. Our vocational services deal with the most marginal and handicapped, to bring them into the labor market, self-respecting and self-supporting.

Our Jewish education is no longer teaching what our fathers learned in Europe, in the way they learned it, but seeks new methods and curricula, adapted to our children and their American environment. Our community relations programs have gone beyond incidents of discrimination, to the far-reaching and fundamental concerns of civil rights and church-state relations.

If our goals are broader and greater, as they must be, our standards are also higher. This is entirely consistent with the Jewish traditions and aspirations which our services express, with the leadership role they must fill as voluntary agencies.

Nowhere has this change been more dramatic than in our programs for the aged. What were often among our most backward agencies only a couple of decades ago are today among our most imaginative and advanced. But it is true also of other fields, where the complement of services offered by the community, the fund of information and understanding on which they are based, the skills that go into their execution have advanced notably to new levels.

Experimentation

Where higher standards have been achieved, they have come about through imaginative experimentation that increasingly characterizes our best Jewish communal services. The examples are numerous—the resident treatment homes developed by our child care agencies, the foster home experiments for the emotionally disturbed, new nursery programs for such children of pre-school age, "half-way house" and foster homes for the mentally ill on the road to recovery, home care programs operated by hospitals, experiments in synagogue and community center cooperation, combined community and synagogue Jewish education programs, apartment and small group residences for the aged, and many others.

These advances have charted new paths not only for the agencies which have initiated them, nor only for the communities they serve—but rather for the entire field of Jewish communal service, and indeed in a number of instances for social welfare generally. This level of leadership deserves and should receive the warmest support and highest tribute.

But that is not to say that this is uniformly true. There are marked discrepancies among fields, among agencies, among communities. We are not uniformly putting to work the best that we know and can do. The cost of this lag, the human cost and the true dollar waste is tragic, and unnecessary.

Research

An essential element of the experimentation going forward is research. For many years there have been important special surveys as all of us know, and such studies are still being made. They are important. But increasingly research is becoming part of the ongoing operations of federations and their agencies.

Much more *continuous* fact finding and analysis are needed on the causes of social and individual problems, to test our methods and to evaluate the results of our work. It is needed in casework, in group work, in health services, in our other programs. The task is admittedly difficult, dealing with an entanglement of factors which obscure the links between cause and effect. But the difficulties argue for, not against, the need for research.

Prevention

What research should help lead to, as should all of our work, is the *prevention* of social disability. It is to that highest aspiration of social welfare service that we are turning our sights. This is reflected in a number of the programs I have already mentioned; and it is reflected too in our family life education to strengthen family bonds as the core of our Jewish way of life—to prevent break-up, separation, and divorce; in our community center programs, not merely to "take kids off the streets" but to help develop balanced and healthy personalities; in our child care services to prevent the blight of mental illness; and in our community relations programs, to get at the causes of inter-group problems and civil disabilities—to build constructive inter-group understanding, affecting not only Jews but all Americans.

Serve Entire Community

What must be apparent is that our horizons have broadened greatly. Our communal agencies are concerned today with the well-being of the entire community, with how the whole community lives, not just "the other half." Benefactor and beneficiary are the same. The giver and the receiver are the same. We serve ourselves.

Surely this is true of our hospitals, our community centers, our Jewish schools, our family casework, child care, aged, vocational service, community relations—the whole gamut of our community agencies and programs.

This is a development which is still growing, and which has a direct bearing on planning and on financing, with which I want to deal in a few moments.

It has been made possible, of course, by the fact that we no longer have a large Jewish dependent population—and that government has assumed the major responsibility for economic need. Jewish communal service does not and cannot take shape in isolation from the total community of which it is a part. The causes of the problems with which we attempt to deal lie often in the basic social fabric. The solutions often can be found only through action by society as a whole.

It is encouraging to see the growing involvement, and indeed the leadership, of Jews in community chests, united funds, and councils of social agencies concerned with the progress of the total community.

There is, however, only a partial parallel in the concern for the standards of public welfare. Far too few agencies, and agency leaders—volunteer and professional—actively seek improved public welfare legislation and appropriations, probably because too few as yet recognize the direct impact of such legislation on the work of their own agencies, and on the entire community.

Much more national leadership is needed for this and is developing. Perhaps an indication of what is to come more generally may be seen from the recent action of the New York Federation in setting up a special committee on social legislation and public welfare. This is obviously a responsibility which Jewish agencies cannot carry alone, but it is also an arena from which they cannot be absent.

Jewish Responsibility

As public responsibility for social welfare becomes more deeply ingrained in American patterns, as community chests are extended to united funds, as social integration continues, American Jews find it necessary to make more conscious choices of what are properly the special responsibilities of the Jewish community, and what are not.

These questions are being asked about hospitals, about care of emotionally dis-

turbed children, when the cost is over $5,000 per child per year, about establishment of recreational programs in new suburbs, and about casework, especially in small cities.

The answers will not be simple. Not one, but many criteria are involved including: the Jewish elements and goals of communal programs; the availability of other services; the standards of those services; the readiness of Jewish people to use them; patterns of other religious groups in sponsorship of welfare programs; the role of voluntary agencies in demonstration and experimentation; immediate, interim and long range factors.

Local Responsibility and Inter-City Sharing

Much of what I have been saying applies mainly to our larger cities, but it would be a mistake to overlook the very significant developments in our smaller communities. There are hundreds of such communities, and there is a growing concern among them for their own welfare and progress. Starting as fund raising and fund disbursing agencies, they are becoming more sensitive to their family and child welfare needs, their aged, community relations, leisure time, and Jewish educational requirements. They are engaging professional, full-time staff for the first time, building or acquiring physical plans for community centers and homes for the aged.

Where they cannot accomplish this alone, they are doing it jointly—through state-wide or regional child care programs, and through homes for the aged cooperatively established, financed and administered. Small communities increasingly are using the services and facilities of near-by large cities—where the small cities cannot duplicate them, and where it is necessary to seek help outside of their own communities. This spread of inter-city cooperation represents one of the most significant developments in recent years.

But let me make clear also that the strengthening and broadening of local responsibilities is by no means universal. There has been a counter-weight of disintegration among some small communities, since their peaks of fund raising in 1948, where enthusiasm and commitment has ebbed, or leadership has changed. They need more national help—and more consistent help—than they have received.

Overseas Responsibilities

This relates also to an area of responsibility I have not mentioned at all—but which has had great influence—namely responsibility for helping to meet the needs of our fellow Jews overseas. Over half of the funds we have raised in recent years has gone into rescue and rehabilitation of the men, women and children who escaped the Nazi extermination, who were found tortured and starved in the concentration camps, and those who have left the Middle East, North Africa and other countries to seek a new life and new freedom in Israel and elsewhere.

The needs in Europe have ebbed with emigration of hundreds of thousands, and with the rehabilitation of those who stayed, but the requirements in Israel remain great, and will continue to be for years to come. Many of the almost 1,000,000 immigrants who have poured into the tiny country in the past ten years have not yet become self-supporting—and others still come.

There has been much speculation regarding the effects of Israel upon the culture and development of American Jewry. As time passes, it becomes clear that each will gain from the other in a two-way exchange—culturally, spiritually, and practically. But it is also becoming clear that a predominant influence on American Jewry will be the American environment, the impact of

first-hand surroundings and events, and that American Jewry in many respects will have to build its own culture and shape its own future in that setting. We are just beginning to face up to it in an organized and planful way.

National Programs—and Planning

What I have been saying about Jewish responsibilities involves national as well as local agencies. The basic trends are the same on both levels, although for inherent reasons the pace has been quicker locally. But nationally too agencies operating in the same field have begun to come together for coordination, joint planning, and joint financing—community relations agencies, religious bodies, Zionist organizations, major overseas services, immigration agencies.

And tying together these national and local developments is the bridge of growing understanding and cooperation between the national agencies and the community organizations. Communities are being recognized as more than sources of funds and membership — rather as sources of organized responsibility, policy, and strength. Divisions between leaders regarded as "locally minded," or "nationally minded," or "overseas minded" have been vanishing as the same people are given leadership in all three areas—leadership which understands the totality of responsibilities, and recognizes their interdependence.

One of the most striking examples of this sharing and mutual confidence has been the development of the Large City Budgeting Conference, in which representatives of the communities and of the agencies sit together for cooperative, frank and penetrating review of the agencies' budgets, programs, aspirations.

Financing

We are dealing with needs of tremendous proportions. In the 12-year post war period our Jewish federations and welfare funds have raised a total of $1,660,000,000 for local, regional, national, and overseas Jewish needs. And the total expenditures of our agencies, taking account of all sources of income, have been much greater. It is a memorable achievement. These fund raising results would have been impossible except for the permanent year-around structures of federations and their committed leadership.

But no one believes that we have reached the full potential of American Jewry's capacity to give. The needs are larger than we have met. And the response has varied considerably from year to year—and from city to city. For the country as a whole, federated fund raising totaled over $140,000,000 in 1957—a gain of 33% over 1955. Some cities raised the largest sums in their history last year. Others reached only half of their peak amounts. There are many reasons for these contrasts—but we do not have time to go into them here. What is clear is the need to re-examine and strengthen fund raising organization constantly—to root campaigning in solid, basic community organization—to build in terms of understanding the long range, large scale commitments at home and abroad, instead of depending mainly upon the emotions of year-to-year emergencies.

But fund raising is only one aspect of financing. We are now broadening our perspective to take account of all sources—including fees for service, community chests and united funds, tax support, Blue Cross and insurance programs, trust, annuity, and life income plans.

If we are serving people who are not generally dependent, we need to take a fresh look at what they are paying directly for what they receive—and what they can pay. The concept of full payment has long been accepted in hospitals—and it is gaining in homes for the

aged, community centers, Jewish schools, family service and child care. Fees brought family service agencies $94,000 in 1951, and jumped to $296,000 by 1956. Fee income of child care agencies doubled in the same period.

Such income is some agencies is extensive, in others minimal or even nonexistent. The differences are more a mirror of agency policies than of the ability of members or clients to pay. Self-support of summer day camps has demonstrated that payment will follow conviction regarding the direct importance of a service. Surely, fee income could be much greater in many agencies—always with due regard for the fact that the community as well as the individual has a stake in his well-being, and financing policies should reflect it.

Community chests and united funds supplied $12,750,000 to Jewish agencies in 1956, 6% more than the year before. Some Jewish agencies have had much more courage than others, really more understanding, in presenting their needs, and more basically in taking an active role as partners in community chests. Here too the realistic potentials in some communities are greater than the achievements.

In the use of tax funds by Jewish agencies, the contrasts among communities are particularly striking. Some have avoided entirely the use of such funds while others have depended very substantially on them for parts of their programs. Tax-support for Jewish child care agencies grew from $1,317,000 to $2,079,000 between 1951 and 1956. But some cities shared none of it. Hospitals in some communities received hundreds of thousands of dollars in tax funds—others none at all. The latter were paying for the same services with voluntary contributions—funds which the former were able to spread among all other types of community needs.

Acceptance of public funds does pose questions of policy and intake which cannot be overlooked, in their long term as well as their short term aspects. But the answers will be found not through closed, stand-pat assumptions—rather through fresh and careful re-examination.

Third party payments, including Blue Cross, account for 43% of the income of Jewish general hospitals. They have been growing. But here too there are marked variations in standards and policies, with some cities much more imaginative and forceful than others in lifting the level and broadening the concept of such payments.

And just beginning on a systematic and well planned basis are the efforts of a few federations to develop living trusts, annuity, life-income programs, as well as bequests, to attract income which otherwise would not be available, both for the short term and for the long term future.

Planning

Financing should reflect planning, and increasingly it does. One of the most striking developments in communities across the country, of medium size as well as large, has been the establishment of year-around planning committees. Their purpose has been to bring together representatives of the agencies, and community leaders at large, for continuing attention to community needs as they cut across organizations and fields, to see the gaps that fall between agencies, to be alert to new needs, and to act on them while they are still manageable and *before* they grow into critical emergencies.

This kind of planning, perhaps not as glamorous superficially as the excitement of crises in communities, but far more constructive, bespeaks the growing understanding and maturity of our communities.

There are stirrings even more fundamental. Instead of planning and budgeting only on a year to year basis, a few communities—but as yet only a few—are beginning to think in terms of five and ten year goals. In that perspective, annual decisions become part of a larger pattern—decisions are made not in the isolation of absolutes, but in proportion to more basic objectives. Goals which cannot be achieved in one year are approached step by step over several years. Outmoded services which cannot be cut off abruptly are reduced step by step, and then stopped. It is something we need to do, and are more prepared to do.

Leadership

Much of what I have said has been in terms of needs, programs, and organizations. But our communities and our agencies are not abstractions. They are people, and especially the people who are leaders. It is they who give shape and character to our planning, it is they who by their own example set the level of our fund raising.

One of the most striking and most hopeful developments in Jewish communal service in the past few years has been the development of outstanding leadership. Communities are systematically seeking out the most able young men and women, giving them an understanding of communal needs and services, enabling them to move up the ladder through a series of increasingly important responsibilities. While under the auspices of federations, these leadership programs encompass the functional agencies as well.

Underlying much of this development of volunteer leadership is the professional. At a time when the requirements for professional workers are greater than ever, the shortages are greater than ever.

We are only now beginning to address ourselves to this crucial problem through community-wide recruiting efforts, Jewish and general—through national and local programs. Each community of any considerable size must look to its own population as the source of its communal workers. It can not depend on others to export them. And it is the members of a profession itself, who have a primary responsibility for attracting others to that profession.

We must get the full number of workers needed. But we are concerned with more than quantity—we are concerned with quality. No profession can be better, nor more effective than the people in it. And in communal service, only the best will do. For what we are asking them to serve and to lead, with statesmanship and with vision, is the noblest of man's undertakings—the building of a better community, a better society, and a better world.