

PROSPECTS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION *

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TWO years ago at a similar session of this conference, Abbot Rosen, Midwest Director of the Anti-Defamation League, discussed the problem of discrimination in education. In recognition of the earlier discussion, I will refrain from any lengthy review of the historical development of this phenomenon in America, but I do think it might be helpful to take a brief look at the past before giving consideration to the future.

While the existence of discrimination against Jews in institutions of higher learning was long recognized as a serious problem, particularly in some of the professional schools such as engineering and medicine, no real systematic effort to examine the scope of the problem was undertaken until 1947.

At that time, the American Council on Education, through a grant from the Anti-Defamation League and the B'nai B'rith Vocational Service, made the first definitive study of discrimination in college admissions. Shortly thereafter, a number of state bodies such as the New York State Board of Regents and others undertook similar studies and established evidence of extensive limitation of opportunity for Jews seeking higher education. As a result of these findings,

* Presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Conference of Jewish Communal Service, Chicago, Illinois, May 17, 1958.

in cooperation with the ADL, a national convention of educators was convened in Chicago by the American Council on Education.

Stemming from this initial effort, regional and state committees on discrimination in institutions of higher learning were organized by ADL. These committees of educators made a direct impact of real significance on the college scene. The Illinois Committee, in November, 1955, drew up and adopted a comprehensive model policy for educational institutions in the areas of admissions, housing, recreation, college employment, placement and others. Ten thousand copies of this model policy were distributed to officials of all colleges and universities in the United States and served as the basis for realistic self-appraisal and remedial action in many institutions.

For instance, ADL's "crack the quota" campaign had, as one of its targets, the elimination of potentially discriminatory questions on college application for admission forms. In this regard much progress has been made. In the past seven years we have heard of about 700 colleges in 21 states which have removed discriminatory questions from their application forms. More importantly, the past decade has witnessed a substantial decline in overt evi-

dence of discrimination in admissions. Very few complaints of educational discrimination have been filed with us over the past several years, and there has been much evidence that previous quota restrictions on Jews have been relaxed in many institutions.

By way of example, the B'nai B'rith Vocational Service's decennial census of 1955 reports that the percentage of Jews attending Ivy League schools rose from 15% in 1945 to 22.9% in 1955.

A similar situation was found in one of the midwestern private non-denominational schools. For the first half of a ten-year period—1947 through 1957—the proportion of Jews at this institution ranged from 7.0% to 9.3% of all students. For the latter half of the period, the proportion of Jews in attendance ranged from a low of 11.2% to a high of 12.2%. These typical examples of increased proportions of Jews are probably the product of two factors. First, the overall decrease in the number of students seeking a college education in these years, and secondly, the mounting pressures on educational institutions by community relations agencies and student bodies. However we appraise the influence at work, undeniably restrictions on Jews have eased significantly in the past decade.

It is against this background that I am going to attempt to explore our subject for today—"Prospects and Opportunities in the Field of Higher Education and Their Impact on Jewish Youth." The factor of most significance in consideration of this subject is the bulge—the greatly increased number of students that have, over the past several years, been progressing through the primary and secondary schools. To the college administrator the inevitable oncoming onslaught of applicants has been a matter of increasing concern. The baby boom of World War II and following years has almost worked its way through

the elementary and high school grades, and in the next few years should greatly increase the number of applicants for college training. While there were 2,700,000 college students in 1955, it is estimated that this figure will rise to 3,000,000 by 1960 and possibly to 4,000,000 by 1965.

In the expected increase of college applicants is reflected not only the increased numbers of this age group, but as well the effect of many other factors in contemporary American society. The rising standard of living of the American people has removed for a substantial part of our population the economic barriers to a college education that previously existed. The broad development of scholarship programs, increasingly backed by industry, by government and by every other civic force in our community, will further diminish the almost automatic selection device by economic class that so characterized the American college of only a generation ago. Moreover, there is a significant shift in our occupational structure to more skilled and specialized occupations, with a concomitant decrease in industry's requirements for semi-skilled and unskilled labor. Specialized training at the college level will, therefore, become essential rather than desirable, and the lack of this training disastrous rather than disappointing in terms of vocational goals of youth.

We are in the midst of a serious challenge to the American educational system. This has been developing for a number of years, and the newly dawned Age of Sputnik has changed what was a ground-swell of dissatisfaction with education in this country to a torrential flood of criticism that may sweep away many positive gains in American education by reason of a kind of anti-intellectual worship of the intellect. While there will be losses, there will also be gains. Principally, the gains will re-

sult from our communities giving a more concerned attention to our educational system.

What does this portend for the Jewish student? It is probable that the gains made in eliminating discrimination in the admission of Jews to colleges will continue as a long term trend. In addition to a positive educational program in this direction, and the readier identification with such goals by institutions of higher learning, to some extent the advantage of fair education practices legislation has provided additional built-in assurances of a gradual elimination of this problem.

To the long term trend of a greater degree of non-discrimination in college admissions, we must add the effect of a similar trend toward an increasing degree of merit employment. Law, human relations educational programs, and the economics of the market place are contributing to increasing freedom for Jews to find employment without discrimination. This is having its effect on the attitudes of the college placement officer, on the deans of the professional schools and these changes in attitudes are filtering down to the college admissions officer.

As an example of this interrelated concern, ADL has planned a conference to be held this Fall under the auspices of Chicago business organizations which will draw together college placement officers and industry recruiting officials to examine the disparity between industry's needs for specialized personnel and the ability of the college plant to provide a supply of trained and qualified applicants for industry. The special emphasis of this conference will be an examination of ways and means of bringing about greater participation in such training by minority students and greater utilization of trained minority group workers by industry. Significantly, the involvement of deans of

admissions, of secondary school administrators, of vocational guidance specialists, have been found essential to the objectives of this conference.

What schools do the Jewish college students attend? Two-thirds of the Jewish students who attend institutions of higher learning are concentrated in colleges and universities in the New England states—including New York—and in the Middle Atlantic states. A substantial proportion of these Jewish students attend schools in areas under the protection of fair education practices legislation. Despite these positives, it is likely that the significant increase in applicants for college admission in the next few years will cause at least a temporary reversal of this long term trend and result, in many institutions, in a higher degree of discrimination against Jews, in a more limited "Jewish quota," and generally in a far more difficult time for the Jewish applicant, which are not significantly enlarging their college plants or their faculty resources.

Let us examine this in greater detail. The 1955 decennial census of Jewish college students issued by the B'nai B'rith Vocational Service points out that close to three times the proportion of Jews of college age were in college than their non-Jewish counterparts. This was also the finding of their decennial census of 1945. This conclusion was borne out by an Elmo Roper study in 1949 of 10,000 high school students throughout the United States which found that 68% of Jewish high school students had applied for college admission—and intended to take such training—as compared with 36% of Protestant students and 21% of Catholic students. What is reflected in these differences is not only traditional and cultural characteristics of the Jewish community, but as well the fact that so substantial a proportion of the Jewish

community is of the professional and managerial socio-economic class. Sons and daughters of parents in the general community who fall into this economic classification attend college in approximately the same proportion as do Jewish youth.

The B'nai B'rith Vocational Service found in the 1955 census almost the identical number of Jews in college—200,000—as it did in 1945. In proportion, Jews now make up 7.5% of the college students as compared with 9% in 1945. There is reason to believe, therefore, that while there may be some increase in *numbers* of Jews attending college, reflecting general population trends, the *proportion* of Jews who seek college education is at its maximum and will not fluctuate much in the coming years. The expected increases in college attendance will then come overwhelmingly from the non-Jewish community and the proportion of non-Jews who seek college training will more and more approach that of Jewish students. This relative rise in the proportion of non-Jews seeking a college education will, without consideration of the factor of discriminatory policies, automatically act to decrease the opportunities for Jews. That the benefit of a higher education will be available to a much larger proportion of our youth is, of course, a matter for self-congratulation in terms of the best interests of our total society. Unfortunately, however, because of this pressure, we can also expect that in addition to diminished opportunities for Jews because of sheer numbers, discrimination on a religious basis will increase and existing quotas and limitations on Jews will become more severe.

There are other factors that should be considered in examining the prospects in higher education for Jews. The professional and managerial socio-economic classification characteristic of so large a proportion of Jews both causes and

is a result of the increasing urbanization of the Jewish community. The Jewish youth, moreover, seeks the professional and specialized training characteristic of his class. He will choose those schools in which he can obtain a professional training. For reasons of economy he chooses schools that are located in the large cities in which substantial numbers of Jews live. He tends to select those schools which have Jewish institutions—the nearby temple, the Hillel Foundations, the Jewish sororities and fraternities—which will provide him with a Jewish religious, cultural and social life.

The net result of these choices is that 67% of Jewish students are in colleges and universities with enrollments of 10,000 or over, as compared with 29% of non-Jews. 80% of Jewish students are in colleges and universities with enrollments of 5,000 and over, as compared with 50% of non-Jews. Two-thirds of all Jewish students attend an institution that can be classed as a university, as compared with less than one-half of non-Jewish students.

Viewing the Jewish student's choice of institutions of higher learning in another way, 51% of Jewish students are in public universities and colleges, and 41% in private non-denominational schools, with the remaining 8% in Protestant, Catholic or Jewish sectarian schools.

The public operated colleges and universities, to the best of our information, have been relatively free of discrimination against Jews. We have every reason to believe that this happy state of affairs will continue. However, the deluge of applicants will affect the public schools as well as the private schools, but we expect that only to the extent that the public college plant proves to be inadequate to the demand made upon it, will opportunities for Jewish students be affected, and this, by reason of normal

selection practices rather than by discrimination. It is likely, however, that in those public schools which receive an overwhelming number of applications, there will be a tendency to bar out-of-state students entirely, or to impose much higher out-of-state tuition fees. While theoretically this will affect all college applicants, it will have its most serious impact upon Jews who frequently have to attend away-from-home schools because of discriminatory practices in nearby private colleges of their first choice.

I have indicated above that 41% of Jewish students attend private non-denominational schools that all our evidence indicates the application of quota systems which act to the disadvantage of the Jewish student. Under the pressure of mounting applications, moreover, we can predict that existing quotas and limitations on Jews will become more severe in these institutions. It is, therefore, a matter of community relations concern that in the coming years discrimination against Jews will increase in the big city, private non-denominational university with 5,000 or more students, and will require, therefore, a broader dispersion of Jewish students.

In this connection, it is interesting to note that in 1955 in the twenty largest private non-denominational universities there were 60,000 Jewish students. In other words, 78% of all Jews attending private non-denominational schools attended these twenty institutions. These 60,000 Jewish students represented 32% of all Jewish students attending institutions of higher learning.

From this we can readily conclude that the big city college plant will have to vastly increase its facilities or the inexorable pressures on such institutions will result in more Jewish students having to leave home for their education, apply to the smaller schools, and expect

greater difficulty in obtaining professional training.

If we are correct in assuming that the severe applicant pressure on institutions of higher learning will inevitably result in increased discrimination against the Jewish student, then our community relations agencies must intensify their interest in and activity on behalf of equal educational opportunity. The cluster of Jewish students in relatively few schools noted earlier provides us with a narrowed target and an opportunity to make a significant contribution to preventing the development of the potential for increased discrimination.

The Anti-Defamation League, in recognition of these compelling pressures, especially in professional fields, is in the midst of a five-year study of the admission of Jews to the 78 accredited medical schools in the United States. It was because schools of medicine have in the past been an area of education in which discrimination against Jews was most flagrant that ADL decided to initiate a careful watch of their admission practices. Our survey of the 1956-57 freshman class in schools of medicine indicates that 1,326 Jews were admitted to the 78 medical schools, or 18% of the freshman medical class throughout the country. This is in sharp contrast to the 577 Jews admitted to medical schools in 1940, comprising then only 7% of the freshman medical students.

ADL is particularly concerned about the possibility of increased discrimination in the medical schools because the facilities of these institutions have increased very little in the intervening 16 years—admitting 7800 freshmen in 1956 as compared with an estimated 6500 freshmen in 1940. There is likewise little indication that the medical school plant will be enlarged at a more rapid rate than in the past, and it is expected that there will be a marked

increase in the number of applicants to medical schools commencing in 1961 or 1962.

Today's relative dearth of applicants to medical schools has led some deans of admissions in these schools to characterize their acceptance of applicants as "scraping the bottom of the barrel." Nonetheless, a recently concluded five-year survey of medical schools in Philadelphia, performed by the Philadelphia Fellowship Commission, provided clear-cut evidence that the applicant of Catholic or Jewish religious background is less likely to be accepted than the applicant of Protestant background. They point out that the Jewish applicant is at even a greater disadvantage than the Catholic in this respect. If this is the situation now with medical schools scraping the bottom of the barrel for applicants, what will it be when floods of applicants come knocking at the doors of the medical schools?

Similarly, today's aroused concern about the state of scientific education in this country will result in a heavy concentration of applicants in fields of science, engineering and advanced technology. While the Jewish student seeking professional training in these fields has had markedly improved opportunities to obtain such training over the past several years, here, too, is an area of special professional appeal to Jewish youth in which we can expect a sharp increase in discrimination.

There are other factors of concern.

Without question, we are moving into a period of more rigid application of selection devices by the schools. The

growing use of college board examinations, concepts of geographical distribution, intensified application of selection considerations on the basis of the sex of the applicant, will, instead of affording more objective measures for selection of students—particularly the college board examinations—provide an increased complex of factors through which the rejection of Jewish students can be more easily rationalized.

One of the areas of attack on our total educational system is that too large a proportion of the school curriculum—at the college level as well as at primary and secondary levels—is devoted to "life adjustment" studies and other so-called frills. Educators have emphasized to us their growing concern that courses in human relations, summer workshops, etc.—increasingly noted in the college curriculum—will be one of the first victims of this attack. This would represent a tremendous loss. As only one example, the vigorous student protest for better human relations on and off the campus, characteristic of recent years, has been, to an important degree, stimulated by such training, and thus this loss would have its effect upon the total adjustment of the Jewish student in the colleges and universities of our country.

I am convinced that we have a reason to be concerned about the effect on the opportunities for Jewish students in the tremendously increased participation in college training. I believe, accordingly, that this will be an important area of activity for the community relations agencies for the next several years.