

PROCEEDINGS

Eighth Biennial Session National Conference of Jewish Charities

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FRIDAY MORNING—Continued
Standards of Relief—Continued
Discussion—Continued

✓ Morris D. Waldman
New York

A schedule of monetary relief, such as has been worked out by Dr. Bogen, or by the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor of New York City, valuable as it is as a standard, can only guide us, but cannot be arbitrarily applied. The ancient Jewish principle of considering the antecedent condition of a family should always be a consideration; but, above all, the true test is efficiency of relief rather than sufficiency, and though the term "efficiency" has been overworked of late years, I think it hits the nail on the head and am glad that Dr. Bogen uses it so freely. For the widow and chronic invalid, a regular amount to enable her to bring up her children to normal development, physically, mentally and morally; for the tuberculous, to enable the patient to regain his health and prevent the infection of the other members of the family and the community; for the aged person, sufficient to end his days peacefully and decently; for the deserted family, not niggardliness of relief as a cause to force the husband back, as Dr. Bogen suggests (because a man who abandons his family does not ordinarily worry about the extent of relief granted to those whom he forsakes), but preferably the method of the National Desertion Bureau in apprehending the husband rather than penalizing the wife and the children; this is a more humane as well as a more effective method. These tests for different cities, where the cost of living differs, are surer and saner than any arbitrary schedule.]

These are the tests New York has applied. In our joint tuberculosis work, for which we raised a special additional fund of \$40,000 over and above the funds available from the United Hebrew Charities' treasury for these cases, and in other cases,

with the co-operation of the Board of Patronesses, the Hebrew Orphan Asylum, the Widowed Mothers' Fund Association and private individuals interested in individual families, New York is providing generous allowances for a considerable number of widows, deserted women and other families, so as to bring about complete rehabilitation. And through liberal loans from the Self-Support and Self-Help Funds to enable capable persons to remain self-supporting, or if they have already been forced to accept relief, to be placed in the position where they can again become self-sustaining.

We in New York have studied the condition under which our dependents live, not only through the Council of Jewish Women, referred to in Dr. Bogen's paper, but the Joint Tuberculosis Committee made an investigation, whose report was published a short time prior to the report of the Council, which, in the main, disclosed a similar situation. The United Hebrew Charities has made a scientific analysis of the condition of its tuberculous families. Careful physical examinations, including anthropometric measurements of all the children in these families, have been made. These facts have not been published, because we are contemplating an examination of the children of non-tuberculous families, as a basis of comparison. But we know pretty well where we have failed in the past. Even our rehabilitative work is being subjected to a scientific test in order to determine their value and to arrive at effective standards. In connection with the Joint Tuberculosis Committee work, a similar number of families not so generously provided for, under the care of the United Hebrew Charities, is being kept under medical observation, in order to have what is known by medical research workers as "control," or a proper basis of judgment. We have also just secured an appropriation to enable us to engage a household economist or visiting

housekeeper, who shall, for a definite period, study the household conditions, including food expenditures, of families whom we have moved into the Bronx Borough, including those of the Board of Patronesses, with a view to determining more accurately than we have been able to up to the present time, what efficiency standards should be.

But of greatest importance, it appears to me, is a test that has not yet been applied, which may revolutionize our accepted theories and methods of relief work. An inkling of what I have in mind was given at last year's Conference of Social Workers in Atlantic City, in referring to a contemplated examination of our industrial inefficiencies or *schlemiels*. A study we began several months ago is leading to a suspicion that a large percentage of our families, those who were generally considered capable, including widows and chronic invalids, commonly considered victims of circumstances, also belong to this inefficient class. Otherwise why do only 1000 consumptives come to the United Hebrew Charities out of probably 10,000 Jewish sufferers in New York? And 500 widows out of an equally large proportion, and so on? Most of these people belong to the wage-earning classes and are not merely in temporary distress. Where are they and what are they doing, and why do they not apply for relief at the doors of organized charities?

A keen student of sociology with an intimate knowledge of the psychology of the poor, gained through years of study and observation, propounds the theory that it is impossible to pauperize a self-respecting man and equally impossible to make a pauper independent. This sounds like a sweeping statement; perhaps it is. Yet should not our accumulated experience lead us to advocate a psychological examination of applicants for relief as well as their physical examination?

Now that the Eastern European immigrants have established themselves pretty firmly and are, on the whole, able to take care of themselves in temporary emergencies without the aid of organized charities, should we not carefully analyze and classify the comparatively small number who do apply, to make sure that we do not assume the responsibility of promoting an increase of families who are unfit, and thus prevent

the accumulation of burdens not only for our generation, but for future generations? Is it not possible to apply this new test so as to determine whether applicants for relief are fit or unfit? And if we find unfit families, should they not be broken up and the members placed in institutions, and the parents separated from each other? For those who do appear normal, should not the most determined efforts be made, supported by most generous allowances, so as to give them every opportunity to become self-supporting? Should we be in doubt and unable to determine to which class the family belongs, the family could be placed in a third category, on probation, so to speak, to be more carefully studied. The experience of Baltimore, pointing toward the existence of "pauper blood," is the experience of New York and would probably be recognized by other cities if careful observations were made. Here is a very significant fact. Reports that have reached us from abroad seem to indicate that, in spite of the general adoption in some countries of compulsory insurance of all kinds, a number of families requiring aid of relief organizations and the amount of relief disbursements, have not diminished in these countries. If this is so, would it not indicate that there is a sub-stratum in society, composed of persons who are beyond any scheme of self-protection and self-support? Social insurance has been generally and voluntarily adopted by the Jewish immigrant of this country; mutual benefit societies, providing death, sickness and even unemployment benefits, include practically every self-respecting Jewish wage-earner or petty tradesman. May it not be that the Jewish wage-earner who has failed to join a mutual society or has not purchased insurance from commercial companies, belongs to that sub-stratum, upon whom the compulsory social insurance schemes which may be adopted will have little effect? Is it not time that the principles of eugenics (not positive eugenics, for that is still in its embryonic stage), but of negative eugenics, so far as they are definitely determined, be applied in relief work, so that we may check the accumulation of evils for which economic conditions may be only partially and not wholly responsible, as we have believed during the past two decades?

Only a play
on words—
today we
would prefer
sufficiency
to more of the
concerning what
was meant
in 1914.

If such psychological tests as I refer to can safely demonstrate the fitness or unfitness of a family, and if suitable and ample custodial facilities will be afforded, we shall be in a better position to adopt proper and efficient standards of relief. To those self-respecting families who are actually only victims of circumstances, we will be able to apply uniformly the good old Jewish standard leading to constructive policies for the family's rehabilitation.

To summarize the essential points as I see them, I would say, in reply to the query "What stimulated a desire for the establishment of a proper standard of living?"

(1) A change in the character of the dependent families from "temporary" to "continuous."

(2) Contact with families on the part of many new agencies has evoked more generous allowances than heretofore granted.

(3) The experience of relief societies shows the futility and harmfulness of inadequate relief as provided for in past years.

(4) Recent experiments have demonstrated that adequate relief does not pauperize, but, on the contrary, rehabilitates.

In reply to the query, "What is a proper and effective standard?"

(1) A standard that is no lower than the minimum upon which independent families are living.

(2) One that is no higher than that of the average independent family.

(3) An arbitrary amount cannot be fixed which will apply uniformly to all families in every locality.

(4) The true test of a proper relief standard of efficiency rather than sufficiency, to assure rehabilitation and self-support. This test can be uniformly applied. The extent of relief will, however, differ in individual cases.

(5) The need for determining at the outset, whether a family is of pauper blood or not. If this can be determined, institutional, and, if necessary, custodial, care should be afforded instead of relief in the home. If not, generous efforts at self-support should be made in cases where this is possible; and where continuous relief must be afforded, efficient relief should be granted.

THE CHAIRMAN: The topic is now open for general discussion.

Oscar Leonard
St. Louis

While listening to Dr. Bogen's excellent and erudite paper dealing with standards of relief, I could not help wondering about the relation of the standard of relief to the standard of wages. These must be closely tied up together. Dr. Bogen speaks of a standard which seems to be around \$800 a year for a widow with four children. As a matter of fact, an able-bodied laborer usually gets \$1.50 a day. If he works six days a week for 52 weeks in the year he receives \$418, which is about half of Dr. Bogen's standard of relief. If the man be fortunate enough to have some skill, say in the needle industries, he will average about \$2.00 a day. If he works six days a week for 52 weeks in the year he will get \$624 a year. This again is below the standard of relief. I ask, then, what will the business men, who are part of the relief committees, think of a standard of relief which is way above the standard of wages they pay to men who work? This is an important consideration.

Again, if we decide that a family of five must have about \$800 a year if the family is dependent on charity, we must then find out how many families have smaller incomes than our standard and supplement their earnings. You can readily see that this would be impractical. The practical thing to do is to raise the standard of relief by helping raise the standard of wages. Unfortunately, the standard of living and the cost of living—both are important and must be taken into account—rise faster than the standard of wages. It is here that some good work is to be done. Until the standard of wages is raised we cannot raise the standard of relief. It would not be practical nor desirable that persons depending on relief organizations receive larger allowances than persons of the same group receive in wages when employed. The reasons are so obvious that they need not be enumerated here.

MRS. GELLER, Duluth: Dr. Bogen said that in Cincinnati where a husband was maintained three years in the tuberculosis hospital the woman and four children were given something over \$800. Another family, where there were six children, received \$529 from the charities. I have learned

already from Dr. Bogen that they distinguish in this way by giving to tuberculosis-inclined people more as preventive, but I would like to know whether this assistance is given in money, or how, and whether the living of the family is carefully supervised, so that the assistance is really of value to them.

DR. MOSES COLLINS, Denver: I want to say a few words as to the problems met with in tuberculosis work. It may not be known that anti-tuberculosis activities are probably the original factors in much of the improvement of the social work of this country and abroad. Going back to the original cause of many of these movements, you will find it is lodged in the activities of the anti-tuberculosis societies throughout the world. It is largely through their work that we have found that many people were not getting enough to eat, and still more that they were not getting the right kind of food. You do not have to make scientific investigations along this line now—they have already been made. You can save much trouble and research if you go to the reports of results already obtained. The tuberculosis specialist will tell you that it requires just so many calories of food for each adult—that if you go beyond that the body will suffer and you will have illness, and loss of work and life. The mistake that has been made, particularly in sanatoria and in many social dispensaries, is that of a tremendous waste in the supply and quantity of food given to tuberculous patients. I have in mind several institutions that, upon investigation, found they were giving from one to three thousand more calories of food per patient than were necessary. There should, then, be conservation of food. There has been too much waste along this line in our efforts, and the patient must be taught what to eat and when. If you will bear this in mind you can, I believe, save a great deal of the money that you are now spending on your dependent families.

The same thing holds true with housing facilities. It is much better to live in a small, cheaply-constructed bungalow, with a sleeping porch, than in a fine house, all closed in. Some of the social organizations of various cities have moved their families into a proper environment and reduced ex-

penses greatly in this way. I know, of course, that this is not a new idea to most of you—there has not been much that is new done by any of us, nor much that is new talked about here. I have listened patiently to a number of long papers, and think that it would have been much better had there been fewer papers and more discussion.

About the mental condition of patients spoken of in one of the papers. There is a great deal of truth in what was said. But Mr. Waldman and his Bureau can save much time, labor and research if they look up results already obtained in this respect. The class to which he refers falls in the class of "handicapped," and when you treat and deal with people that are handicapped, whether physically or mentally, each case must be considered individually and handled accordingly.

Friday Afternoon, May 8th 2.30 o'clock

The meeting was called to order by President Sulzberger.

MR. SULZBERGER: I am going to take advantage of the few remaining minutes of my presidency to say a word on the last subject, the subject of discussion at the preceding session, namely, "Standards of Relief."

I want to say that I told Mr. Waldman, as he said, not to be too modest about New York as has been our habit, for this reason: it has been the fashion at this Conference in its various meetings—and I do not know what this Conference would be if that fashion were intermitted—to make New York the butt of all the jokes, on the theory that nothing is being done there.

Now, having been myself for over twenty years, I am sorry to say, doing things in New York, and having seen things done there these twenty years, I have felt that it is hardly fair that the impression should go out not alone to the Jews of America, but to the rest of the community, that the city of New York, comprising more than half of the Jews in the entire country, is as negligent of its duty and as dilatory as these half-jesting, half-seriously meant statements would imply, and it is only because I did not want that false impression

to gain currency that I asked Mr. Waldman to state some of the facts—he could have stated many more—in reference to the way in which New York does its work.

Our maxim has always been similar to that of the dance hall keeper in the Rocky Mountains which prompted him to put up the sign: "Please do not shoot the fiddler; he is doing his best." That is what we are doing. Our work is far from perfect and we know it; but we realize our deficiencies better than our critics know them. Dr. Bogen referred to certain cases of which Mr. Waldman spoke, saying it was not clear how long the allowances were continued. These cases were among what we call Board of Patroness cases, where the relief that would ordinarily be given is supplemented by one lady who adds to the relief fund of the charities a sufficient sum to make adequate relief, and every woman who takes up such a case is told that unless she is prepared to continue it not one year, but year after year, we do not want her assistance. We consider it better for the family to remain on a lower standard than to lift it to a higher standard and then after a year to drop it back.

If Mr. Waldman will permit me an additional word. I want to say a word about his plan of segregating the *schlemiehl*. What constitutes a *schlemiehl*? Somebody has defined dirt as misplaced matter, and I am disposed to think that many times a *schlemiehl* is simply a misplaced man, and when you think how these misplaced men have been torn from their natural environment and forced into another, it is a grave question whether he is not simply a square peg in a round hole, and I am sure it is a grave question which none but God Himself is competent to decide, whether that man should be prohibited from increasing and multiplying.

The Chicago Woman's Aid Jennie Franklin Purvin

In 1867 Charles Dickens made his second visit to the United States. The newspaper men of New York, of whose profession Mr. Dickens was a member, planned a dinner in honor of the distinguished visitor. Some of the newspaper women, of whom there were already a few, asked to attend the festivity. Their request was politely

turned down with the reply: "We want no women." These words caused havoc in the camp of the militants; for the would-be guests gave a dinner of their own, at which Mr. Dickens was the only man present.

History might have passed over the incident unconcerned save for the fact that from this group of women diners sprang the first idea of a real woman's club. Together with their friends, they resolved to form the Sorosis of New York, today the oldest club in existence. Thus, over the teacups, forty-seven years ago, there was concocted the mighty scheme which has resolved itself into an organized movement numbering far beyond the million mark.

The evolution was, of course, gradual; for, while Sorosis may have, from its incipency, taken on the form of a real organization, in the large majority of instances, the process of club growth has been well marked. It has at all times been coincident with the change which has come into woman's life due to the transformations into our modern system of living.

For, so long as household duties, obligations and cares filled a woman's days, there was but little thought in her mind for the events transpiring in the great outside. Baking, weaving, spinning were the most important items of state and progressed uninterrupted from the early morning hours, through the daytime, into the candle twilight.

But when, piecemeal, the factory, with its giant machinery, took over the home tasks, when not only the harder work of the homekeeper, but also a large part of the entire occupation of the homemaker, was carried over into the walls of the smoking monster, then came for the first time hours of leisure and need for new occupations. Do you recall the pastimes of the first hours free from toil? Hidden away somewhere in everyone's memory chest lie the relics of barbarism we once thought so beautiful—lambrikins in every shape and color, mottoes with the still potent and now much-needed words, "God Bless Our Home"; tidies which once covered every available spot on the good old substantial furniture; and linens with yards of hand-made stitches and laces, now treasured in lavender scent as the last beloved reminders of hands rested from their labors.

But a less selfish use for her new-found leisure than that involved in stitching the hours away was soon sought by the average woman. From time immemorial her sisters had been the handmaidens of the church; and while they could not in recent centuries minister at the altar, they could perform those acts of tenderness and mercy for the unfortunate which the feminine sympathy well understood. A basket of coal to a destitute family, a set of clothing for the underclad, a flower to the dependent hospital patient, with similar temporary alleviations, were our preparatory lessons for later work.

But, in this age of specialization we, too, soon learned to specialize; and, therefore, joined by women who had started out to master in predigested tabloid form the secrets of the sphinx, the philosophy of Browning, the religion of Buddha, we found that man cannot live by bread alone, nor by philosophy alone; hence the desire to do intensive work, which in one way or another marks the better organized clubs of our own day.

In such clubs careful plans are laid to vitalize the energies of that portion of the members which desires to work; plans which will care for an actual need, but which, however remedial they may be in the beginning, look forward and aim toward a constructive and permanent good; plans which have been carefully studied, deliberately discussed and investigated; which will permit co-operation with other forces working along the same lines; and which, in Jewish women's clubs, will always and everywhere be, not for egotistical but for egoistical reasons, distinctly aimed toward the betterment of the Jewish part of the community.

Will this lead to narrowness of purpose or vision? To the contrary, it will leave us privileged to co-operate in every worthy civic movement, but give us opportunity to do what we can to keep the pledge made by our first American Jewish ancestors; and also to do intensive work, work which, because of its thoroughness, will be worth while. For, in every American community large enough to support a distinctly Jewish woman's club there will be a settlement of co-religionists needing all the help, material,

spiritual, social and intellectual, which a given club will find it possible to offer.

It may be somewhat difficult to carry this thought of Jewishness into the program building of an organization which concerns itself with cultural and civic ideas; but I confess that it is the hope of my own club that its delegate will carry home from this meeting enough suggestions for Jewish speakers to fill many of our programs during the coming club year. Surely we who rank pre-eminently in social and civic accomplishments the country over ought to possess enough good men and women speakers to fill the programs of Jewish women's clubs without their being obliged to have recourse to much of the indifferent and even some of the better themes and men we accept, in no way related to our social, civic or religious club work.

If the experiences of my own city may be accepted as typical, we have sorely lapsed from the path of good judgment in program building; we have often listened to much twaddle and inconsequential material, scattered over an exceedingly wide range of topics; whereas, if we had confined our time and resources to a discussion of our special lines of work, we would have helped ourselves personally, our causes materially and our standing as Jewish communal workers, intelligently. In this field of program building we have not yet learned singleness of purpose. To be sure, we are "clubbed" to a greater degree than are our non-Jewish sisters. And it is, therefore, difficult to build up a program which shall be attractive to all classes of members, especially to those who are affiliated with two, three or more Jewish organizations. But since we need all our members, no matter how many times over they are joiners, we shall have to learn how to combine attractiveness with worth; how to provide amusement for milady who joins a club for social prestige, and interesting programs for that contingency of membership composed of those who, relieved of home duties and trained for no special service, desire a serious outlet for their energies and find that outlet through service in the name of their organization.

Could not a speakers' bureau be established in connection with the central office of the National Conference of Jewish