

one loathes a Jewish law-breaker more than Jews themselves.

In every city of the land there should be a Social Service Committee of the I. O. B. B. Too often the recent Jewish arrivals inhabit a most unsanitary part of the city. No night-school classes have been provided for them; no playgrounds are available for children and the public school equipment is much inferior to that in other sections of the city. Why should the child suffer these extra handicaps in addition to the poverty of the household? This Social Service Committee should work with city officials to provide the same advantages as obtain in other sections of the city.

The industrial situation will concern this department. Israel ever honored labor and the artisan, but in America Jews have fallen short of our historical ideals. All too many strikes have occurred in which the majority of employers and strikers have been Jews. Why should not this Order, in which are enrolled both employers and working men, do something to prevent strife, bloodshed and even loss of life? Is Israel, which produced Karl Marx and Ferdinand La Salle in the nineteenth century, bankrupt of prudent, constructive and wise economists in the twentieth? Our critics say the Jew only knows how to make money. Let us prove that in whatever industrial field the Jew enters he sets a higher ideal, pays better wages and creates a cleaner standard of ethics.

Then this department will concern itself with the very serious problem of unemployment. In Chicago the I. O. B. B. has successfully conducted an employment agency for five years. Now we shall spread out and try to place Jewish people in all manufacturing towns within a radius of 100 miles. Later on the field will be enlarged so as to provide employment for an ever-increasing number of Jews. Thus we shall have agents in many cities prepared for the influx at the close of this horrible European War.

In other words, this department aims at constructive and preventive philanthropy. There are fine and splendidly equipped charity organizations throughout the land. Our department, however, will continue where they leave off. We are not concerned with charity in the sense of alms-giving;

our aim is to contribute, however little, to prevent the need for such a condition of affairs.

We decline to subscribe to the New Testament doctrine that the poor will always be with us. Charity is a Christian concept which had its origin in Greece and poverty was for many centuries encouraged by the Church.

This department will do all within its power to abolish poverty and render charity unnecessary. It is highly significant that a recent publication on the "Abolition of Poverty" was written by a Jew, Professor Hollander of Johns Hopkins University. Let our contribution to American freedom be that we give of our strength and of our best thoughts to blot out those conditions which increase slums, tenement districts and make for the continued need of doling out charity.

Our Jewish people have come to America and increased in wealth, but the acquisition of money has not decreased prejudice against us. We thought that when our Christian neighbors would learn the truth about the slanders against the Jews, when they realized that the Jews did not kill their God (as if any god could allow himself to be killed), the prejudice against our people would fall away. Events proved to the contrary. The university clubs in the different cities of America, where culture and education should obtain, are practically unanimous in denying admission to Jews. The sure method of preserving our liberty in this blessed land is to offer to America such ideals as the Jew possesses and this country needs. To this task this new department consecrates its service. We hope that this Order will vitalize and strengthen Jewish interests throughout the land and by breathing nobler ideals into them bless America and strengthen its citizenship.

The Situation in Denver.

Many readers of JEWISH CHARITIES have no doubt heard of the dissolution of the Federation of Jewish Charities in Denver and the formation of a new Federation. An authoritative statement of the situation will be presented in the next issue of this magazine, showing the matters at issue leading to the dissolution and the different ways in which they were approached by the people interested.

THE CONFERENCE OF JEWISH WOMEN ORGANIZATIONS

Mrs. Benjamin Davis

Chicago

The Conference of Jewish Women's Organizations was called into existence in 1910 under the auspices of the Council of Jewish Women. Mrs. Henry Solomon and Mrs. M. A. Weinberg, first chairman and secretary, respectively, of the Conference were its founders.

The ever-increasing number of Jewish women's clubs in this large and cosmopolitan city and the selection of similar dates for some of their various meetings, social functions, lectures, etc., was the cause of much confusion and waste. This and the overlapping and often duplication of work that was known to exist and the necessity for considering the comparative value of new work were the main causes that led to the formation of the Conference. Experienced club women were strongly convinced that much waste of valuable time, energy and money could be eliminated by co-operation.

Co-operation, then, was the keynote of the Conference. A simple constitution was adopted. When the permanent organization was completed twenty-six organizations were represented, each by two delegates and two alternates. Officers were elected for a term of two years and *were not eligible to re-election*.

The Conference is now in the third term of its existence. From twenty-six affiliated bodies it has grown to sixty-one, which represent an aggregate membership of approximately 11,000 Jewish women of Chicago. Meetings are held monthly. All shades of Judaism are represented, as are all degrees of Jewish culture. Delegates from religious, charitable, educational, civic and fraternal bodies mingle and become acquainted with each other's work and, what is very important, with each other. Business of common interest is presented, discussed and appropriate action taken; reports are carried back by the delegates to their respective organizations, each of which has retained its autonomy.

Has the Conference accomplished its objects? Yes! and more.

The attempt to avoid a clash of dates is always made. All organizations are requested to select and publicly announce all important dates at the earliest possible time. Many calendars are consulted before the final selection is made. Among so many organizations it is almost impossible to provide for "guest days" and many other social functions, in addition to regular meetings, without some conflict, but this has been reduced to a minimum.

Duplication of work has not only been prevented in a number of instances, but organizations learning of each other's work have been led to combined effort, such as the annual book and magazine collection in May, when discarded books and magazines are sent to *one* place to be distributed by *one* committee to such as require them, placing in the hands of *one* committee the vocational scholarship fund which provides a better training for self-support for Jewish boys and girls whose parents cannot afford to keep them at school; uniting such agencies as give institutional relief and entertainment, thus preventing one from receiving too much and another too little; systematizing general relief work so that each shall have its particular field.

Co-operation has been promoted in many ways: Beginning with the support of a kindergarten in the congested Jewish district by our affiliated organizations and including co-operative work for our fallen girls and immigrant investigation and aid for men and boys, the Conference has brought about the adoption by one organization (with the co-operation of others) of the work for the blind which formerly had been done in a scattered and desultory fashion. The affiliated organizations of the Conference have also signified their willingness to co-operate with the Rabbinical Association in securing the services of a Jewish chaplain for our penal and corrective institutions.

One of the early developments of the Conference was the establishment of a monthly "Conference Day"—a social day

to be selected by one or a group of organizations for the purpose of bringing into prominence or promoting its special aims and objects and at the same time extending the hand of good fellowship to the members as well as the appointed delegates of each club. An appropriate program followed by a social hour, including the serving of light refreshments, is the order of the day. Its importance can at once be realized. "Conference Day" has been very successful in bringing together pleasantly various groups that otherwise would never have met in disseminating valuable information among our club women.

One "Conference Day" brought directly to the attention of the clubs an exhibit of the work of the blind, with a plea that we do justice to their handiwork. This exhibit proved so attractive and profitable that it was afterwards shown in other parts of the city. Another affiliated organization brought the Palestine Welfare movement to the Conference, arousing much dormant Jewish sentiment and bringing us more closely to the problems of our people. A "Palestine Welfare Day" was recommended to all the organizations. The response proved to be very generous.

The Jewish War Relief Woman's Fund is another instance of the value of the Conference in philanthropic endeavor. A Conference Committee was appointed. It immediately proceeded to divide and subdivide the city into wards, precincts and blocks and noble women volunteered to make a house-to-house canvass, which resulted in collecting approximately \$7,000. This Committee has again been called into action and the Conference has recommended that each affiliated organization devise ways and means of paying a stated monthly sum to this fund. We cannot doubt that the response will be liberal.

Another outgrowth of one of the Conference afternoons was the impetus given to Girl Welfare Work. Not long after, the Social Welfare League was launched for the purpose of caring for Jewish border-line girls who might fall by the wayside unless trained for a useful and honorable life. True preventive and constructive work, alas, is much needed in our community.

In civic matters the endorsement and co-operation of the Conference has been

eagerly sought. We have been interested in social and sanitary state and municipal legislation, non-sectarian travelers' aid, peace propaganda, public school questions including vocational systems and such other subjects as touch the welfare of the home and the family, for we are an integral part of the municipality.

The Conference has also developed into a forum which eminent men and women have availed themselves of to deliver their special messages. They know that the delegates assembled will carry their message to a larger audience. The Conference has thus become an important educational factor in club life and in many instances is also a training school for the less experienced members who often benefit by the advice and encouragement of the more experienced. Much latent ability has thus been brought to the surface, much inspiration has been imparted and many valuable suggestions have been utilized. The effect, however, is reciprocal; she who gives also receives. In this lies the great value of the Conference.

Representatives of all nationalities and divisions of Judaism come together and view each other from a humanitarian standpoint. What is the result? It is most interesting to observe how prejudice vanishes and respect or admiration often takes its place—on both sides, mind you—as each grows to understand and appreciate the work of the other. When ignorance is banished heart speaks to heart, eye to eye, and enduring friendships are often formed among women who otherwise might never have met.

And then the magic strength of a union of forces, even if they be diverse. Points of agreement can always be found. The work of the Conference has kept pace with its growth. In fields of Jewish endeavor and civic work, although each unit is autonomous, all stand ready to focus their strength in one combined effort for the public weal. They realize the *power* of organization.

The first term of the Conference, that of Mrs. Hannah G. Solomon, was filled with pioneer and constructive work; the second term, that of Mrs. Ignatz J. Reis, might be called its formative period, and the present term the period of development.

A TRULY JEWISH HOME FOR WORKING GIRLS

Oscar Leonard
St. Louis

The purchase of a new home, or rather of a home of its own, by the Ben Akiba Home for Jewish Working Girls in St. Louis is an event of some interest in Jewish social work. The Home is only three years old. Before the Home was established Jewish girls whose earnings were meager had to find cheap lodgings in insanitary tenements with overcrowded families. They could not afford good food and were underfeeding their bodies in order to make ends meet with their small earnings.

All large cities in this country have the problem of the girl who earns little yet must pay at current rates for the things she needs. This problem is particularly acute in case of the girl who has to rely on her own resources, the Jewish immigrant, who frequently does the pioneering for the family. She may be first to come here in the hope that by her labor and her thrift she will be enabled to help the others follow.

It was for this girl that the Ben Akiba Home was started. The idea for such an institution was first suggested in this city by Mr. Philip L. Seaman, who was at the time superintendent of the Jewish Charities in St. Louis. It took some time for the idea to take root. It was difficult to convince even an appreciable part of the community that the Home was needed. After all, those who understand the needs of a community are few and far between. Among those few was Mrs. Henrietta Cook, who is now president of the Home. She has come by her interest in social service honestly. Her father, who is affectionately referred to here as "Old Dr. Epstein," did the first charity work undertaken in the St. Louis Jewish community. Mrs. Cook worked hard to see the Home established. No one was as happy as she when in November, 1912, the Ben Akiba Home for Jewish Working Girls was formally opened. The original expense was \$1500. The Home was open two months before any one applied for admission. Those who did not believe there was need for such a home joined the "I-told-you-so" class. The writer of these lines predicted the day the Home was dedi-

cated that before a year would elapse there would be a waiting list. Knowing the situation, he was convinced that St. Louis needed a home for more than twenty-four Jewish girls, that being the capacity at the time. Before a year was over there was a waiting list. Those who ventured into the Home liked it so well they told other girls who were living in crowded tenements. Here was a fine, clean home, good food, pleasant surroundings, companionship and the motherly interest of both matron and president. Of course, the girls liked it and said so to their friends.

The girls who come to live in the Ben Akiba Home are mostly immigrant girls. When they come they do not know the language of the land, but they acquire it soon. They are all advised to go to evening school and they readily take this advice. Each girl pays 40 per cent of her earnings for board and lodging and laundry. This makes the rate uniform. Last year the average pay to the Home was \$1.90 per week per girl. When a girl is out of work she is not expected to pay. Girls who earn enough to be able to afford board and lodging in good private homes are not accepted. Girls who, in the judgment of the president, do not earn enough are aided in obtaining better positions. If a girl shows special talent of any kind or possesses any special abilities she is guided into channels making for the development of such abilities or talents.

It may be interesting to know that Dan Cupid is not barred from this Home. There is a nice parlor, where the girls may have callers. This is part of the idea of making this place a real home and not an institution. In the three years of its life the Ben Akiba Home has had the pleasure of marrying off eight of its girls. Some of the girls were married right in the Home. All of them have retained a love for the place and frequently return to visit the friends they have left behind.

There is a great deal of social life in the Home. Dances are given at frequent intervals, picture-show parties are formed and at times the girls all go to a dance together.