

A SUGGESTION FOR CHILD-PLACING

Saul Drucker

Baltimore

The law of demand and supply fails, unfortunately, at the very fundamental necessity of human life. Demand something for the weal and progress of the race and ingenuity and skill will devise some means and ways of supplying the demand, but demand private homes for the dependent children and the supply is very far from adequate.

Possibly the future may better be enabled to equip the individual child with an individual home, which method of child-caring is now generally recognized as the best, but until that happy period comes our leading Jewish communities are alike, one and all, confronted by the same problem: How to find the proper homes and a sufficient number of them in which to place the dependent child.

In Baltimore the Jewish Children's Bureau, an organization composed of representatives from the various Jewish benevolent and child-caring agencies in the city, has, for its several years' existence, done most excellent and efficient work in caring for all the dependents brought before it. Regarding the private home as the superior method of placing the child, the Bureau has employed capable investigators to find proper homes, and while some homes have been found that came up to the requirements, there are still not enough to cope satisfactorily with the problem. Homes willing to accept children for a compensation of so much per week or month were often not up to the standard required, and those eminently suited to raise children were not willing to accept a child with or without compensation. When, as it often happens in all cities, the child-caring institutions are taxed to their utmost capacity, the problem then becomes even graver.

Why not try to find homes among the Jewish rural inhabitants? This question presented itself to me after observation of the good results obtained by the Henry Watson Aid Society in placing children in the rural districts.

The Jewish farming population has increased considerably in the past decade, particularly in the Eastern States. Through

the aid of the Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society, which offers both educational advantages and modern farming facilities to the men on farms, the average Jewish farmer today is intelligent, up to date and receptive to new ideas. Would not a home found in the country, which would bring the usually half-starved and wholly neglected little waif to the soil and make it acclimated to an agricultural pursuit in the very years when its mind is most susceptible to the influence of surroundings and environments, be of more benefit than any of the usual homes found in the city? And who could tell but what from this crude recruit to the soil might yet evolve the Jewish farmer of the future?

At the recent Convention of the Federation of Jewish Farmers, held in New York city, I had the honor of representing our Children's Bureau and making a formal proposition to the assembled farmers regarding the child-placing project. I had previously made inquiries and investigations to ascertain what degree of success had attended the placing of children in country homes by a New York institution and had found, on the whole, very favorable results, in fact, more satisfactory than that from the average city homes.

In making the proposition to the farmers I suggested that the Federation should establish a child-placing bureau, under the immediate supervision of the organizer or special field secretary already employed by the Federation; this executive, or an assistant, if need be, to find desirable homes, make all preliminary investigations and correspond with the various children's bureaus or organizations which should desire to place children in the country.

Also that each case should be carefully followed up by proper visitation and monthly reports submitted to both the Federation and the various child-placing agencies. The extra cost of administering this department would be met by a per capita charge upon the organization placing the child, which should also be responsible for the fare and other incidentals necessarily incurred in sending the dependent to its desti-

nation. To properly establish and develop this new department, the various child-caring agencies of the Eastern States should be interested and, if possible, be induced to co-operate with the Federation.

The farmers themselves seemed greatly impressed with the idea, even more so than had been expected. Their questions were both intelligent and pertinent to the subject. A goodly number seemed cognizant of the responsible task and duty incurred in caring for the well-being of a strange child. It is quite possible that some of them would make excellent foster-parents.

While the majority may have been attracted by the remunerative consideration, there were some who actually were willing to care for a child without recompense, but in nearly all cases very young children were requested—some with an aim to adoption, others desiring companions for their own young children. Undoubtedly, there were some also who hoped to profit by child-labor, but these could very readily be eliminated after proper investigation.

Another question of interest that awoke critical discussion was the religious education to be given the children, as the farmer confronts a problem in giving a school, and especially a religious, education to his own children. From the general consensus of opinion expressed by them, it seemed that they hoped for a happy solution of the educational problem when they had a sufficient number of children in the vicinity to warrant the employment of a Hebrew teacher.

It appears that the idea took root with some of the representative farmers, who, subsequently, on their return to their homes,

did not wait for an executive committee to be appointed to act upon the question, but individually made inquiries as to the qualifications necessary for a foster-parent. In one case a secretary from one of the local rural communities wrote on behalf of the entire community, requesting particulars. It was intimated that it would be desirable to introduce the project as a communal activity. Should the child-placing agencies meet the farmers half way the experiment would undoubtedly be interesting and useful.

No fear need be entertained that the child on the farm would be exposed to more hardships or in any way taken more advantage of than the child in the city home. As efficient and careful supervision in the country as prevails in the city would practically eliminate all undesirable homes, while the advantages over the city homes are many.

The country environment is both wholesome and invigorating to the physical and moral development of the child, and instead of the lurking evils of the city streets and the nickel theatres, with their indiscriminate pictures, there are the live pets, plants, flowers, insects, etc., most potent in their appeal to the heart and brain of the average child. Even the doing of chores (not overdoing, of course), such as the farmer's own child often does upon the farm, would be productive of energetic endeavor that could not but be of service to the child in later life. A healthy mind in a healthy body!—would not that be a splendid asset for the community to give the dependent child for a proper start in life?

WORK OF A SISTERHOOD

Josephine Miller

Newark, N. J.

The Jewish Sisterhood of Newark has a day nursery where children are cared for whose mothers are compelled for economic reasons to become bread-winners. Children are admitted from six weeks to six years and are kept after they enter public school until they are twelve years. Under this minimum age limit we obtain from the charities support for mother and child. The improvement noted in children

after the care given here is self-evident. Bathing, fresh air, sunlight, clean clothes and healthful food show the results desired. By this part of the work many cases of aid from the charities are avoided, while in numerous instances the home is kept intact that would otherwise be disrupted and necessarily add to those now in orphan asylums. As the children are regularly inspected by physicians, sickness is much

less prevalent among the nursery children than among the others of the neighborhood. This work is non-sectarian.

There is a mothers' club of immigrant women of the neighborhood who are striving to become a sick benefit society. The dues are five cents weekly and in the five years of existence \$400 has been banked. Of course, the sum is augmented by picture and theatre benefit performances, both in and out of the House. This club is self-governing, though I act as secretary to avoid confusion in accounts. While some deserving cases have been helped in the club, no regular payments will be made until the sum in bank is \$600.

We have a playground, about 30 by 70 feet, which has a worker to direct games and classes morning, afternoon and evening during the months of July and August. This has been in such demand that this year we shall extend the evening sessions through September. Our day periods reach about 100 children of all ages up to sixteen daily, while the evening usually means 100 to 150 more of working age, with one evening reserved exclusively for girls. Many parents use the yard at night, bringing the family with them.

The Savings Fund is a branch of the savings department of a local national bank, in which are received deposits of five cents and upward. When the depositor has five dollars, an account is opened at the bank with a bank book, and 4 per cent. interest is paid on same. The account is safeguarded by two cards, one issued to the depositor, with one retained by us, both punched simultaneously when deposit is made, while total amount is marked upon card retained by us. We receive deposits twice a week during the day, periods of two hours each, with one evening hour. Since we adopted this system at the local savings institution the weekly deposits have trebled in five months. Forty persons have saved sums ranging from \$5 to \$25, upon which interest is being paid; about \$300 has been withdrawn for needed purposes, while \$700 is in the Sisterhood account. All accounts from our Savings Fund are listed under my name as guardian, although many children have to have a parent's signature to withdraw.

Of course, there are many clubs and classes for boys and girls, each of which is under the guidance of a leader, paid or volunteer, who attends the weekly or bi-weekly meeting. This includes sewing classes, whose courses do not duplicate public school work; dressmaking and millinery, cooking, literary, debating, civic, advertising, dancing, reading and athletic interests. A very important feature is the recreational side, which we aim to develop through monthly House dances, managed by a committee composed of representatives from each senior club in turn through the year; individual club dances, plays, mock trials, debates, basket-ball games, some of which are held here and some outside of House, but all under our supervision. We hold celebrations upon all important Jewish holidays, both for nursery children and club members. This work is entirely among immigrant and first generation children.

Each club helps in the support of the House by contributing a monthly proportion of the dues collected. There is a Club Council, composed of a representative of each club, which meets monthly to discuss affairs affecting the government of the House. All matters of discipline are referred to it and its recommendations are usually adopted. We are working toward self-government for senior clubs.

The Volunteer Workers of the House come together for a monthly meeting, at which matters of interest are discussed and the policy of the House formulated. This body is represented on the Board of Trustees (composed of women), who manage the House, and upon the Advisory Board of men. Frequently professional workers bring us a message from the outside world upon a subject pertinent to our work.

In connection with our Nursery it should be noted that every case is investigated before being admitted.

Engage Your
ACCOMMODATIONS
At Once
HEADQUARTERS
HOTEL CLAYPOOL

REPORTS

By Maurice B. Hexter

Reports sent to Mr. Hexter, Milwaukee, will be reviewed in these columns

The New York Report

Very illuminating and encouraging is the forty-first annual report of the United Hebrew Charities of New York City. The receipts in the form of donations and membership contributions amounted to \$212,560, as against \$189,014 during the previous year.

The report shows the amounts the larger charitable organizations in New York city spent are more than the previous year, due to the depression, and concludes that the smaller relative increase in the case of the United Hebrew Charities is due, "on the one hand, to the more generous standards of relief by which we had been operating, and on the other hand, to the thrift and prudence of the Jewish working people. The resources of mutual aid societies, to which most of them belong, aggregating large sums, were readily available and were drawn upon very freely." The spirit of the paragraph dealing with the special loan fund to self-respecting families deprecates the establishment of such a fund, stating that an investigation of 500 families not known to the organization from a relief standpoint did not tend to confirm the impression of the urgency of the fund, but nevertheless the establishment of the fund aided the cause by placing funds in the hands of loan societies and mutual benefit organizations, the demands on which had been so large as to exhaust their loan funds.

The endeavors of the organization to place all who come within its scope upon a self-help basis has taken among others the following directions:

1. Promoting plans for providing open markets for push-cart peddlers.
2. Vocational guidance department, to afford the thousands of children an opportunity of becoming better equipped for industrial and commercial life, so as to escape from the slough of dependency and humiliation in which misfortune has plunged them.
3. Removing more families from the congested East Side to more healthy suburbs.

4. Suggested the establishment of a model open-air garment factory in the Bronx.

5. Workroom for women where training for self-respect is promoted.

6. Co-operated with the Bureau of Industry of the Kehillah and the Federation of Women's Employment Bureaus in re-organizing the employment agency work.

The report announces the investigation of the structure and functions of the organization by the New York Foundation. The results of this research are, however, not ready for publication. The immediate results of the Industrial Department, which endeavored to secure the valuable waste of the community, are not rosy. Personal conversation with Mr. Waldman, however, leads one to the thought that since the publication of the report this department has improved greatly and the organization looks forward to a steady income from this source.

EXCHANGE BUREAU

An intelligent, efficient young woman—high school graduate—seven years business experience, graduate Pratt Institute, New York city, normal household science and art, one year paid social worker, six months visitor in training Associated Charities, at present engaged in social work, desires a position with Federated Charities or in connection with child-placing. Can furnish excellent references. Esther R. Belsinger, 326 Bull Street, Savannah, Ga.

Young man, 28, college graduate, good reputation, experienced relief and social worker, at present superintendent of a charity federation in a small Jewish community, seeks position in a larger community. Will accept any offer. Address J. R., JEWISH CHARITIES.

Officers and Directors
of Organizations
are especially invited to the
Indianapolis Conference