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The End of Jewish Community Relations?

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If there has been some erosion of the Jewish commitment to the principles of Jewish community relations, it has not been warranted by objective conditions or changes . . .

The first necessity is to regain and resharpen our focus, to wit: the main business of Jewish community relations is political freedom, not social justice.

Everything changes; there is no reason for the field of Jewish community relations to be exempt. The question is whether, as a result, there needs to be a reformulation of basic philosophy.

There are two kinds of changes to consider: those having to do with new circumstances in the Jewish community; and those having to do with new circumstances in the American society. They are obviously not unrelated, but deserve separate consideration.

These changes are to be seen through the focus of the Jewish community relations agency (especially the Jewish Community Relations Council) and its professional, one of whose properties it is worth recalling. The JCRC is a cross between two types of organizations: the "public will" organization, whose purpose is simply to further the impulses of its members—e.g.: a neighborhood association whose members want certain zoning laws, traffic patterns etc; and the "expert knowledge" organization, whose purpose is to implement certain principles which have been developed through a body of science, history, etc.—e.g., a drug control agency. ("Expert knowledge" obviously doesn't mean absolute knowledge, or unarguable knowledge; but at least discipline, in which even the controversies are related to some organized bodies of experience, precedent, evidence and extensive, cumulative, systematic debate). Another cross organization, for example, a legislature, is at best responsive both to public will *and* to certain bodies of knowledge, such as legal precedent. It is a delicate balance, as witness the authorization of laetrile sales in many states during the past year.

So the Jewish community relations agency must be responsive to the impulses of its constituency, and at the same time, responsive to the special body of knowledge to which it is heir: the cumulative and applicable insights of Jewish history, community relations experience and theory, general history and social science.

By the same token, there are two types of staff persons (apart from generic skills): those who chiefly execute the will of their constituencies (who haven't the time), such as perhaps the director of a neighborhood association. And there are those who chiefly exercise *their* knowledge, such as the director of a drug control agency (or, indeed a lawyer, on behalf of clients). The JCRC professional is, again, a cross between the two. To put it simply, that professional job is to run a democratic operation without the "laetrile syndrome" setting in.

Changes In Jewish Community

All of this is very pertinent to the subject because of the kinds of changes that have been taking place within the Jewish community, as seen over a quarter century span. These changes can be seen from several different vantage points, often related:

1) *Israel-centered consciousness.* The centrality of Israel to American Jewish consciousness, and to Jewish public affairs has become so overwhelming as to seem commonplace. But it should be remembered that this was not the case twenty years ago.

2) *"Ethnic" consciousness.* Whatever "ethnicity" means, we've got it. And in a way we didn't have it 20 years ago. It partly reflects the so-called "ethnic renaissance" in America (which was, more likely, a political

renaissance of certain racial and ethnic groups). It partly reflects the new Israel-centeredness.

3) *Expressiveness*. The distinction here is between "instrumental" and "expressive" approaches to public affairs. An instrumental approach, of course, is one designed to get something done, to get some circumstance changed. An expressive approach is designed primarily to get some feelings expressed, to accomplish some emotional catharsis. The two are not necessarily unrelated in practice, but they are two distinctly different emphases. It is the perception here that the expressive need in the Jewish community has grown apace. It is partly a reflection of the growth of "ethnic consciousness," which is, by definition expressive. It is partly related to the general growth of the expressive mood in America and the world. It may be partly related to the kinds of objective problems which have arisen. Problems which are not easily subject to instrumental remedy obviously build expressive pressure. Conversely, a "panacea mood," which raises unrealistic expectations of quick remedy serves the same function. The involvement of the Jewish community in global problems over which they have less control builds the same pressure. (Parenthetically, this is an element of the Soviet Jewry problem which might explain some of the special characteristics of that heavily expressive activity on the Jewish public affairs agenda.)

4) *Inward-Turning*. For some observers, this is the heart of the change that has taken place in the Jewish community. But it is a vaguely descriptive term rather than an analytic one. In part, "turning-inward" is a resultant "other-side-of-the-coin" of Israel-centeredness, ethnic consciousness, and expressiveness. *Turning in* does not necessarily mean *turning away*—i.e., turning away from the general problems of American society, of non-Jews, but there has been a tendency in that direction.

5) *A New Generational Perception*. The above phenomena did not just gradually develop over the past 25 years. They had their most dramatic watershed in the middle and late 1960's. That was the time when Israel's centrality in the public affairs agenda became definitive, especially around the trauma of

the 1967 war. That was the post-civil rights period when the political and ethnic drive emerged so dramatically. That was a period of almost anarchic expressiveness in American life. And that was the period in which some new tendencies emerged which seemed explicitly inimical to Jews and Israel. But it was also the time when a new American generation emerged which had no experiential connection to the war against Hitler. That included a new generation of Jews as well. The "basic philosophy" of American Jewish community relations fully emerged in the war against Hitler and in the America which had emerged victorious from that war.

That philosophy, the one now being questioned, is simply that the security of the Jews (in America, but also elsewhere) is mainly guaranteed by the strength of the democratic process and commitment to pluralism in the society in which they live. Jewish public affairs leaders were weaned on that philosophy, which seemed certified by the events of the 1940's and 1950's. But that certification was flawed by the events of the 1960's. A new American generation grew up in the shadow of the Vietnamese war rather than in the shadow of the war against Hitler. A new Jewish generation grew up also around the war against the Arabs, and not the war against Hitler.

It is the proposition here that any impulse to re-examine the basic Jewish community relations philosophy comes from these changes in the Jewish community, rather than from changes in the American society.

Changes In America

In addition, it is the proposition here that there have been changes in the American society which threaten the position of the Jew; but that the manner of these threatening changes suggests a rededication to the principles of the Jewish community relations philosophy, rather than a reformulation of it.

These are some of the pertinent changes which seem to have been taking place in the American society:

- 1) *Group Emphasis*. The word in 1950 was "individual rights." The word in 1970 was

"group rights." It is not clear exactly what that shift meant. As suggested above, the context was probably not so much ethnic as political. But it projected images of group status, of proportional representation, of quotas, which would change the political character of the nation—and it put the Jews at a disadvantage in the American future as compared to their American past.

2) *Levelling*. One of the reasons that the apparent growth of a "group concept" had an uncertain meaning was that an apparently contradictory tendency was developing. The word in 1950 was "equal opportunity." The word in 1970 was "equality." This may have been the real meaning of the quota type drive, expressed through group politics. The emphasis was towards the equalization of individual results, not individual opportunities; towards the reduction of merit considerations, and towards the reduction of competition as a factor in American life. That tendency, too, would have changed the political character of the nation and put Jews at a disadvantage in the American future as compared with their American past.

3) *Government Growth*. Between 1950 and 1970, governance more than doubled in America, if measured by the growth of government employees, which also grew twice as fast as employment in the rest of the economy. That statistic probably corresponded in some rough way to government's increased relationship to the private lives of the citizenry. That could be a neutral fact, in itself. Many of us conceived many ways in which government should relate more beneficially to its private citizenry. But of course, Jews have learned to have at least a cautionary concern about big governments, when it wasn't their own (and perhaps, given the last Israeli election, even when it was). More than that, however, as a private and "different" voluntary community, Jews began to find themselves affected by more and more public regulations which tend to be homogenizing and which relate to private institutions and other private sectors. This, too, had a great potential for putting the Jews at a disadvantage in the American future, as compared to their American past.

4) *Group Divisiveness*. This might be considered a natural outcome of the growth in

"Group Emphasis." But it also had some further specific applications for Jews. For one thing, there was an unravelling of the old Grand Intergroup Alliance, only partly a fiction, under which the Jews had flourished. "A piece of the pie" was now the phrase, understandably enough. Some specific hostility was directed towards the Jews, who, it was said with some reason, already had their piece.

The old groups went riding off in different directions. The "levelling" drive, sometimes under the cover of group emphasis, and almost always by way of government intervention, created not just problems of direct economic competition, but divisions in political ideology. Even Israel became attached to this new pattern of conflict, as part of a "Third World" ideology, which was in turn usually attached to the "levelling" ideology. Expressions of anti-Jewish hostility, unfashionable and rare immediately after the war against Hitler, came to the surface again, initially legitimated by the left-wing strain described above, and then broadening somewhat.

5) *The Perceived Decline of America*. Confidence was shaken in America in the 1960s and 1970s. Vietnam, not the war against Hitler, was the big event which shaped consciousness. Not only America's ideals, but its ability to maintain law and order became suspect in some minds.

Now the question is: Do any of these changes call for any corresponding reformation of the basic principles of Jewish community relations? It may be worthwhile, for purposes of common discussion, to rehash those basic principles again in a few paragraphs.

Philosophy of Jewish Community Relations: A Review

There is more than one way in which one could lay out the rationale for those principles, all ending up at the same place. This is one vantage point: hostility for diaspora Jews (from Alexandria on) has always developed out of intolerance for the deliberately maintained difference of Jews—religious, national (or ethnic or communal), and political, or

some combination thereof. That is to say, that is the generic reason why Jews have been chosen as targets in those historical circumstances which generated a natural or artificial market for such targets, Jewish security has always depended on the kind of political society which respected and protected any such differences against the institutional exercise of intolerance. (Even if many people in the host society don't like Jews particularly. Part of our "body of knowledge" is the relative ineffectiveness of efforts directly to reform attitudes on that score).

That, in short is the definition, not of brotherhood, but of political freedom. And essential political freedom, so defined, has two kinds of axes: 1) the ability of the individual fully to operate as an individual with his or her individual differences—of belief or opinion or capacity or life styles; and 2) the ability of the individual freely to associate in a group which has differences of belief, opinion or life style. Both axes are crucial to freedom for the Jew, and for the ability of the Jew to flourish as a Jewish minority in a society. And the creation of a society with these two elements simultaneously strong is the basic principle of Jewish community relations.

It is still only option (to put it minimally). What are the alternatives? The Jews have already experienced them: group-pluralistic societies without individual rights, which didn't work well for Jews even in pre-industrial societies; or individual-rights societies without tolerance for group differences, as in modern Europe—and we know how that ended up.

Re-establishing the Focus

If there has been some erosion of the Jewish commitment to the principles of Jewish community relations, it has not been warranted by objective conditions or changes, but has been stimulated by some misconceived impulses in the Jewish community, coupled with some misconceptions about the principles themselves, even in Jewish community relations circles.

The first necessity is to regain and re-sharpen our focus, to wit: the main business of Jewish community relations is political freedom, not social justice. Social justice is a generic term which presumably includes political freedom, but also includes other aspects of social and economic justice. The pursuit of social justice generally is an imperative for Jews, but it is not the imperative for Jewish community relations.

This proposition does not mean that Jewish community relations, being a Jewish enterprise, can be allowed to violate the precepts of economic justice; it merely lays out the main business of Jewish community relations. Nor does it mean that economic justice is never on the Jewish community relations agenda, but that it is there most appropriately as a necessary strategy for the maintenance of political freedom.

The "precepts" of political freedom are more definitive than those of economic justice. That is because political freedom tends to be a matter of restraint: what government cannot do to a person, and what government says that one person cannot do to another. After a certain point, however, economic justice tends to be a matter not of restraint but of positive beneficence: what government can and should do for a person.

It is not that the boundaries for political freedom are, at any given time, crystal clear. As Learned Hand said, the First Amendment contains not blueprints, but "admonitions of moderation." Questions of pornography, group libel and even some questions of church-state are cases in point. But the goals of essential political freedom are clear: the protection of and non-encumbrance of individual differences in belief, opinion, life-style and capacity; and in association, as expressed through group differences.

But the goals of economic justice are less clear. Roughly speaking, the term can have three dimensions: equal economic opportunity, the guarantee of minimal living conditions, or economic equality.

Equal economic opportunity has the same

properties as essential political freedom: it demands the freedom for the individual to participate according to his or her individual differences in capacity and temperament at any given time; in other words, for the individual to compete on the basis of his or her idiosyncratic merit. And equal economic opportunity is implemented by way of restraint: government outlaws discrimination. While this may be seen as an aspect of economic justice, it is in principle an extension of political freedom, and belongs naturally and centrally on the community relations agenda.

The guarantee of minimally decent living conditions is, on the other hand, a matter of positive beneficence and of relative perception. Poverty is, by nature, a matter of relative perception. Thus, in the Talmud it says that "deeds of kindness . . . have no prescribed measure," but a "floor" is laid: "One should not leave *Peah* (the portion for the poor) less than one sixth of the field. And although there is no prescribed measure it should be fixed according to the size of the field, the number of the poor and the need." The parallel for modern society is a "poverty level," arbitrarily determined, below which no income is to be allowed to sink.

Of course, this kind of concern calls not just for charity, but for actions which will mitigate poverty in a more dignified way. Thus, the attempt to find employment for a person who can work is a first priority in Jewish tradition, and hopefully in modern secular societies. And then, the work is to be treated justly. "The wages of a hired servant shall not abide with thee until morning . . . for he is poor and setteth his heart upon it." Now they have Labor Commissioners in State Industrial Relations Departments to enforce just that stricture. These are partly legalistic matters of justice (as Maimonides points out, the workman must not defraud his employer of his rightful service, just as the employer must not defraud his employee of his rightful wage)—but they are, in the main, matters of compassion, having to do with maintaining

some level of sustenance and dignity above poverty.

These are indeed matters of mandated concern for Jews, as they must be for modern societies which descend from Judaism, but they are not primarily the business of Jewish community relations. They do not relate *directly* to the essential political freedom which is the main business of Jewish community relations. (The corollary is that the Jewish community relations "body of knowledge" includes special diagnostic and remedial insights in the field of political freedom, drawn from extensive and specific Jewish historical experience. The powerful moral insights which the Jews have contributed to society on the subject of economic justice do not carry such diagnostic and remedial skills, not, at least, in the post-Biblical world).

There are, of course, two kinds of ways in which matters of economic justice (and other such matters) can *indirectly* relate to the JCRC or to the Jewish community relations agenda.

Most indirectly, there are issues "appended" to the JCRC agenda because the JCRC is the only available mechanism for *communal* social action, especially where public policy is concerned. For most of the organizations affiliated with the JCRC, community relations is only one aspect of their own organizational agendas. If there is a strong consensual position among these affiliates on some public policy issue, other than a community relations issue, it makes some sense for them to use the communal social action mechanism which exists. That seems a legitimate enough use of the Jewish economy, but the problem is to do it without blurring the function and purpose of Jewish community relations.

However, there are also "derivative" issues; issues which are not just superimposed on the JCRC agenda, but have an indirect relationship to the fate of political freedom:

The obverse side of the principles of Jewish community relations is well-known: the main enemy of Jewish security is Political Extremism, whose end result, by definition, is the

loss of essential political freedom. In practical terms, political extremism flourishes where poverty is a seriously disruptive social problem. In other words, poverty does not touch on primary Jewish community relations business, unless it is *that* disruptive. It can be *that* disruptive if poverty is generally epidemic, a situation which has not existed in this country since the 1930's. Or it can be disruptive if a definable group is disproportionately poverty-stricken, especially as a result of some negative treatment in the past. That *has* existed in this country in recent times and gave legitimacy to JCRC concerns with anti-poverty programs as they affected Blacks or Latinos or Native American Indians.

In those circumstances, the primary business of the Jewish community relations must still be the effort to maintain the commitments and institutions of political freedom *even though* there is disruption in the society. (Just as it is the main business of Jewish community relations to maintain fair treatment for Jews even though people don't like Jews; or the main business of civil liberties organizations to maintain freedom of speech, even though there are more people saying more offensive things). Nevertheless, it would be short-sighted of Jewish community relations agencies not to do whatever could reasonably and effectively be done to help ameliorate conditions which are so clearly prefatory to political extremism.

The essentially derivative nature of this concern for Jewish community relations is pointed up by the fact that it has no special expertise on this subject with which to act, as it does in the area of political freedom. Finally, therefore, it is necessary for Jewish community relations councils to make a distinction between problems of poverty as matters of economic justice and problems of poverty which are seriously disruptive and are matters of imminent political extremism. And in practical terms, it is necessary for JCRCs to put such derivative issues on their agendas in a way that will least blur the focus of Jewish community relations function and purpose.

However, on the third perceived level of

"economic justice" there are problems not just of "blurring" but of downright incompatibility with the primary goals of political freedom. That sometimes happens when aspirations for ending poverty evolve into aspirations for economic equality. This relates to the "levelling" drive referred to earlier. If some form of economic equality would develop by way of equal economic opportunity, it would not be incompatible with JCRC goals.

But when this drive for economic equality is based not on nourishing all individual differences, but on negating individual differences and competition; when its goal becomes governmentally imposed similitude rather than the reduction of poverty, then the foundations of political freedom are threatened and the issue belongs antagonistically on the Jewish community relations agenda. It is not that such a catastrophic turn is around the corner in America. But the tendencies are there in the "levelling" drive. And this dimension should be part of the Jewish community relations consciousness as it examines all issues of "economic justice." That consciousness itself would help re-establish a clearer Jewish community relations focus.

There are several other matters usually included in the "social justice" basket, which are not appropriately defined as either essential political freedom or economic justice, and which often belong on the Jewish community relations agenda only in either an "appended" or "derivative" mode.

One is the matter of the mechanics of democratic governance. If this has to do, for example, with discrimination in the ability of certain citizens to vote, because of their differences, then it is obviously a direct adjunct of political freedom and belongs on the primary agenda. If it is, however, a more general question of one-man one-vote, or participatory democracy, or the matter of presidential electors, then it may be a matter of concern for Jews, but it is not a primary piece of Jewish community relations agenda. As a matter of fact, some proposed electoral

reforms also need careful scrutiny to make sure that they are not incompatible with the purposes of essential political freedom.

Then there are matters of general compassion with respect to governance. Prison reform is an example. Such matters, like poverty, should be a concern for Jews, but not a primary item on the Jewish community relations agenda; or even a "derivative item" unless they have the potential of serious social disruption, perhaps as a result of group differentiation.

These distinctions are sometimes difficult to make; and they are often distasteful to make. But it is important to start trying to make them more sharply. They have become blurred. The turning-away (not just turning-inward) mood in the Jewish community could be seriously harmful to American Jewry—second to Israel. The community relations approach may be able to remedy that mood. This unblurring, this returning to focus, must start within the field, as a professional matter. One of the historical reasons for this blurring is obvious. During the 1940s and 1950s and early 1960s, the "liberal" cause seemed whole and seamless. Civil rights, for example, touched compatibly on both economic justice and political freedom. So did the anti-poverty motif. The "coalition" still existed, and miscellaneous matters were dropped into the "social justice basket" without discomfort. As a matter of fact, they weren't that much noticed. Jewish community relations tended to be a leadership operation to which large sectors of the Jewish community didn't pay too much attention. Then came the explosions, and the changes in both American and the Jewish community noted earlier, and conflict issues within the coalition, and apparently within the "liberal" causes.

But "liberalism" had never really had that seamless unitary quality. The Jews have always taken "liberal" to mean the inviolability of political freedom. And the Jews have always taken "liberal" to mean the movement towards economic justice and social compassion. Modern history has shown us that there

is a natural tension between the two and that if this tension is unsprung, both political freedom and economic justice can be destroyed.

The current scene suggests to too many Jews that we have been betrayed by liberalism; that our guideline has to be that which is "good for the Jews;" that we have to spend "less time on general causes, and more on Jewish causes;" that we can "depend only on ourselves."

It is necessary to *integrate* again the Jewish point of view, and re-orient it to social actions and the nature of Jewish self-interest in America. The anchor around which that can be done is the principle of Jewish community relations, the principles of essential political freedom in America. It is a good instinct for Jews to be concerned about themselves. It is not unhealthy to ask what "is good for the Jews." But the anchor-answer is that (as far as external security is concerned) political freedom in America is the number one practical necessity for Jewish self-interest.

To put it another way: turning outward into the active arena of American life can be effected most educably, most unifiedly, if it is most consciously anchored in that section of Jewish self-interest which is the fundamental principle of Jewish community relations: the Jewish self-interest in the maintenance of political freedom. That is where the universal and the Jewish particular conjoin most forcefully in American life.

Conversely, if the focus of JCRCs disintegrates further, if JCRCs become the helter-skelter, *ad hoc* undifferentiated social action mechanisms for whatever public affairs impulses come up the pike, it could eventually mean the end of Jewish community relations as an effective discipline. And that would mean the withering of the main joint between organized Jewish life and American life.

Some Renewed Directions

Given all of that, what kind of "reform" program is indicated?

- 1) A deliberate campaign to recover the focus and reaffirm the fundamental principles

of Jewish community relations at this time, the kind of reflective assessment of issues and agenda priorities which will make that agenda not just an apparent imitation of the "liberal" agenda but an agenda flowing directly from the Jewish self-interest which is related to political freedom.

As an example: the issue of capital punishment falls into the general basket of "social justice" concerns. But it would only be by a strained dialectical exercise that this issue can be related to the principles of essential political freedom, as defined by Jewish community relations. For any given Jewish organization with a mixed agenda, this issue may belong at the top of that agenda. But it probably does not belong properly on a community relations agenda.

As indicated earlier, it is conceivable that this issue can become an "appended" issue for a JCRC, if there is a very strong consensus of affiliated organizations who wish to use the JCRC as a general social action mechanism for this purpose. But, at the least, it should be seen clearly as an appended issue, not a primary community relations issue. And, the economy of caution should be used in putting such auxiliary issues on the JCRC agenda at all, in order to avoid blurring the function, image and philosophy of the JCRC.

As another kind of example: the issue of unemployment is a prime issue of economic justice, but for the community relations agenda, is probably of the kind described above as "derivative:" it is of interest under circumstances where the issue may seem prefatory to the development of political extremism. Further, in approaching such problems remedially, it would be discreet for us to make the distinction between problems about which we have a concern, and those about which we also have some accumulative expertise. And, in issues of this kind, the possible tension between principles of economic justice and of political freedom must be reflectively assessed. We have a concern about what government becomes as it moves into economic spheres.

The point of all this is not to eunuchize

Jewish community relations or JCRCs by posting a list of forbidden subjects. We cannot afford to be totally detached from the strong consensual social action concerns of the Jewish community; any more than we can afford not to be the community's central social action body on public policy matters related to Israel. And we cannot afford to be totally detached from derivative issues which touch strongly on political freedom. (Nor do we need to point out the useful if sometimes tricky opportunity some of these indirect issues provide for working in coalitions with other groups in the general community).

But the point is to re-establish an anchor, a direction, a focus around which our agenda should be arranged. That may indeed require that some of the usually appended or derivative issues be put on our agenda more cautiously, or reluctantly, or not at all. At the least, it requires the kind of continuous assessment which will itself be therapeutic, educational, and advance the understanding of what we are about. Perhaps the current fashionable phrase for all that would be: "zero-agenda-making."

On that score, there are issues to be raised or reviewed, which are at once matters of substantive concern, and matters which will embroil the Jewish community in a deliberate process of reflecting about the principles of Jewish community relations. The question of "associational freedom" might be one example. There are clouds on the horizon with respect to the exclusive nature of certain Jewish institutions. A review of church-state issues might relate to such an examination. Or a review of the principles involved in the affirmative action—quota controversy, in the light of new developments, would also create the need to review first principles.

2) A deliberate attempt more clearly to integrate Israel-related concerns with the fundamental principles of Jewish community relations. The Israel-centered nature of modern American Jewish life will continue; indeed it has revived modern American Jewish life. But we have to build a more conscious relationship

between these two fundaments of American Jewish social action: the survival of Israel in the foreseeable future depends on America's support, politically and economically; in the final analysis, America's support of Israel depends on America's commitment to political freedom (vis-a-vis both the global struggle in which Israel is a geopolitical part and America's special attraction to Israel); and, more marginally on the strength of the American Jewish community which in turn depends on the state of political freedom in America. In short, anyone with a primary interest in Israel's survival has a stake in the primary American Jewish community relations agenda. Any turning inwards of the Jewish community, which also entails a turning away from that aspect of America, is self-destructive and ill serves Jewish self-interest.

3) Generally a specific function of Jewish community relations in this period may be to turn American Jewry towards the American arena—out of a Jewish community relations focus but in ways that extend beyond the formal Jewish community relations agenda. Perhaps it should be the function of JCRCs to stimulate a greater involvement of young Jewish leadership in the general affairs of the community; this subject needs some inventive attention.

4) A specific function of Jewish community relations in this period is certainly to try to

harness the increasingly expressive drive of Jews into constructive channels that relate to Jewish community relations philosophy. It was once more possible than it is now for the JCRCs to remain an "organization or organizations," to function instrumentally, and to let the various organizations take care of the expressive needs of their constituents.

Summary

In sum, what the changes in the Jewish and American societies prescribe is not a retreat from the fundamental principles of Jewish community relations, but, on the contrary, an intensified effort to return to those principles, refocus them, and reintegrate the Jewish community on the basis of that focus.

There is a tendency on the part of the Jewish community to turn away from the American arena, which would be suicidal. It is around the focus of profound Jewish self-interest in American political freedom that this tendency can most effectively be abated, and probably only around this focus. It is around this focus that ethnocentric and Israelocentric Jewish life can be integrated with American life (and, indeed, perhaps that some detached American Jews can be reintegrated with Jewish life).

This is the focus and the business of Jewish community relations, and especially of JCRCs. If they are up to it, the JCRCs may be entering the most important and influential era of their existence.