

A CALL
TO THE PRESIDENT AND CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
from
THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF JEWISH SOCIAL SERVICE

Letter of Transmittal to the President

July 28, 1931.

President Herbert C. Hoover,
White House,
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. President:

I have the honor to transmit to you a Resolution adopted by the National Conference of Jewish Social Service at its last Annual Meeting, in Minneapolis, June 13 to 17, 1931, regarding our country's social needs arising out of the present industrial depression.

I know that I speak for the members of our Conference in wishing you the greatest possible success in dealing with the present emergency, as well as with the other manifold problems facing our people and the world at large. We hope that your health and strength will be equal to your burdens and responsibilities. We hope also that during your administration our country will regain its prosperity and will exercise the influence for good in world affairs which its position, wealth, and greatness make possible.

Yours very respectfully,

(Signed) Maurice J. Karpf,
President.

Letter of Transmittal to Members of the
House of Representatives and Senate

My dear { Senator —
Congressman —

I have the honor to transmit to you a Resolution adopted by the National Conference of Jewish Social Service at its last Annual Meeting, in Minneapolis, June 13 to 17, 1931, regarding our country's social needs arising out of the present industrial depression.

I know that I speak for the members of our Conference in urging you to give your best thought and effort to the problems dealt with in this Resolution. The needs in the present emergency are so great that they call for concerted and constructive action from the Legislative and Executive branches of our government. Millions of our countrymen are in distress. They look to your government for help. Wise and courageous leadership are essential. Democracy is on trial. Will it be found wanting? You and your fellow congressmen alone can answer.

Yours very respectfully,

(Signed) Maurice J. Karpf,
President.

THE RESOLUTION

Adopted at the Minneapolis Meeting, June 15, 1931.

Whereas, The National Conference of Jewish Social Service, in common with other forward looking organizations, views the present economic situation as an opportunity for, and obligation on, the social, economic and political leadership of this country, to reexamine and if necessary to modify our social structure, so that human life and happiness, the ultimate goals of social organization, be not destroyed; therefore be it

Resolved, that the National Conference of Jewish Social Service, in convention assembled, respectfully urges the President of the United States to deal with the present emergency, not only to alleviate present and immediately impending suffering, but to lay the foundation for the effective prevention of similar social and economic catastrophies in the future. Be it further

Resolved, that the National Conference of Jewish Social Service, representing the entire United States in all phases of social work, together with other informed individuals, and groups, is apprehensive of the consequences of the present industrial depression in terms of its effects on individual and family life, and is fearful that the winter of 1931 and 1932 will be even more severe than have been the winters of the last two years. It therefore respectfully requests the President of the United States to take such steps in the form of federal emergency relief on a large enough scale to alleviate existing and future suffering; construction of public works, to stimulate and revive industry; the formulation of a comprehensive program of social insurance; and the creation of such commissions as will assure wise social administration of these and other necessary measures. And be it further

Resolved, that this Resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States and to the members of the Congress of the United States."

**The National Conference of Jewish Social
Service Needs You**

A CALL FROM THE PRESIDENT

By MAURICE J. KARPf

THE thirty-second annual meeting of the National Conference of Jewish Social Service has come and gone. Dire predictions that there would be very few delegates to the Conference because of the depression and because it was to be held in Minneapolis did not materialize.

The attendance was not much smaller than in Boston and Atlantic City when certain necessary allowances are made. Once again the Conference demonstrated to all who would see that it has a real hold upon the Jewish social workers of America and that it fills a vital need which no other agency can meet.

In many ways this was a crucial year for the National Conference of Jewish Social Service. Even some of its friends, who need not be convinced of the value and the place of the Conference in Jewish social work, were concerned about the outlook. There has been considerable hammering at the Conference during the last few years. A small but rather vociferous group has been insisting that there is no need for the "Jewish Conference," that it serves no really useful function; that questions of professional practice and development, (mistakenly referred to as "techniques"), are not discussed

there but at the National Conference; that there are no distinctively Jewish problems to be discussed; that the staff workers, i. e., case workers, prefer to go to the National Conference; that the existence of the "Jewish Conference" prevents Jewish social workers from attending and participating in the National Conference; etc. On several occasions the annual meeting was almost done away with. Questionnaires were sent to the membership to determine whether a Conference should be held, but the returns were

not especially helpful for they were interpreted in accordance with one's wish in the matter.

The Executive Committee was puzzled. Sentiment in it seemed to be about evenly divided and its decisions for or against seemed to depend on the presence or absence of

friends or enemies of the Conference. What seemed to some as a clear mandate from the membership, for the continuation of the Conference seemed non-existent to others. And so we had "four to five and five to four decisions" of our own, with the life of the Conference in the balance.

Even a reversal of a decision by the Executive Committee not to hold a meeting in 1929, by the membership, settled nothing except that a meeting was held that year. The question came up again in 1930 and 1931 with more or less the same arguments and the same proposals for afternoon sessions during the National Conference, for a one day Conference, etc. Ultimately compromises were arrived at which were fully satisfactory to neither side and resulted in a weaker program than necessary, with crowded sessions, inadequate discussion-time, and a considerable amount of dissatisfaction on the part of the dele-



MAURICE J. KARPf

gates. The meetings in Atlantic City, Boston, and Minneapolis were the results of such compromises. While these were partly necessitated by the change in the National Conference time from Sunday to Sunday instead of as formerly, from Wednesday to Wednesday, they were primarily due to the situation described above, as a reading of the minutes of the Business Session in 1930 will show.

I have reviewed this bit of Conference history because it seems to me to be symptomatic of deeper struggles which

have their origin in deeper and less apparent conflicts and which strike at the very heart of Jewish social work. I have been an interested and participant observer in the meetings of the Executive Committee of the Conference for more than ten years. During this time I missed only two meetings, due to illness. From the discussions at these meetings, I am by no means certain that the continuation of the Conference on an adequate basis and for that matter on any basis is assured. Convinced as I am that a strong Conference is essential to the best development of Jewish social work, I am naturally concerned about the future of our Conference. There is little doubt that the Conference has not been gaining in strength of late. A number of things have happened in recent years to weaken it. There is no good reason for believing that the situation will improve unless its friends rally to its support. The influences seeking its disintegration are no less determined today than they were in the past despite their repeated reverses, and the programs of the last few years were not such as to take the ground from under them completely.

Moreover, the limited financial resources at the disposal of the Conference will not make any very decided improvement possible this year. To be sure, in the coming Conference, we shall have once more something resembling the amount of time we formerly had. A resolution adopted at the last meeting of the Executive Committee calls for the opening session to be held on Thursday evening, thus giving us three full days for formal and informal meetings—only one day less than before the change. We shall do our very best to provide a challenging, stimulating and helpful program. I hope that as a result of the coming Conference we shall go back to the full Conference time with ample provision for informal meetings which are so important an influence, especially on the younger workers. But that is insufficient. The Conference needs more than that for revitalization and rejuvenation. It needs to draw in and effectively hold all the elements active in Jewish social work. It needs an organization to further and promote its interests during the entire year and to make adequate preparation for the meetings. It is unfair and unwise to place the burden upon one person who is already overburdened with many other duties. The present Secretary and his predecessor have earned the gratitude of the Con-

ference and all its members for the many years of service which they gave it. But it is not to be expected that volunteer service alone will build up the Conference. No other organization is built up that way, as we social workers know only too well.

The Conference needs and Jewish Social Work merits a full-time Conference Secretary. The scope of the Conference should be broadened, the Executive Committee should be enlarged, the former presidents who are professionally active in Jewish social work, in most instances the leading spirits in Jewish social work in America, should regain full membership on the Executive Committee and should retain it as long as they are in active service. The budget of the Conference should be increased to meet its needs, including the publication of the *Proceedings*, unfortunately discontinued for this year. Publishing some of the papers in the *Quarterly* is by no means an adequate substitute. The *Proceedings* give a quality, tone, color, dignity and status to the Conference and Jewish social work that no other publication can.

Jewish social work can and must afford a Conference worthy of it. Yes, even in a year like this when "economy" and "retrenchment" are shouted from the housetops. It is precisely at a time like this that an organized body of opinion, on a high professional level, can be of inestimable value in stemming the tide of unwise, dangerous, and perhaps even reckless slashing at standards. As individuals we may not be able to withstand the pressure. With the support of carefully considered and timely expressed judgments by the national organization, the individual social worker would be tremendously strengthened in his battle for standards. No single agency can have the strength and effectiveness of the Conference if rightly organized and wisely administered.

The time has come for a reorganization of our Conference. If such a call should come we shall heed it. But whether the Conference is reorganized or not, we must change our attitude toward it. Conference attendance alone is not enough; reading papers or discussing them is not enough; the Conference needs your interest, your good will, your support, your loyalty. IT NEEDS YOU. Will you respond to the call?



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Proceedings of the Annual Sessions of the National Conference of Jewish Social Service MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA JUNE 13-17, 1931

THE annual meeting of the National Conference of Jewish Social Service was held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Saturday, June 13, to Wednesday, June 17, 1931.

Following the practice established at previous meetings, the Conference organized itself in two general sessions at which consideration was given to the effects of the economic depression on Jewish social work and in eight special group meetings, "round tables," for the discussion of such special problems as community organization, training of personnel, functional values of case conferences and case committees, child placement, care of the chronically ill and mentally deficient, and care of the aged.

OPENING SESSION

The Opening Session was held on Saturday evening, June 13, at Temple Israel, Arthur Brin, President of the Jewish Family Welfare Association of Minneapolis, presiding.

Following the invocation by Rabbi Albert G. Minda, of Temple Israel, Minneapolis, and an address of welcome by Judge Gustavus Loevinger, of the District Court of St. Paul, Minn., the President of the Conference, Philip L. Seman, General Director of the Jewish People's Institute, Chicago, delivered the presidential address, taking for his subject, "The Place of Character Development Agencies in Our Jewish Social Agencies."

The session closed with a benediction by Rabbi David Aronson, of Beth El Synagogue, Minneapolis.

FIRST GENERAL SESSION

"*Jewish Social Work in the Economic Depression*" was the theme of the general session held on Sunday morning, June 14, at the Gold Room of the Radisson Hotel, under the chairmanship of Samuel A. Goldsmith, Executive Director, Jewish Charities, Chicago.

The keynote papers on this subject presented by Marc J. Grossman, president of the Jewish Social Service Bureau of Cleveland, and Dr. Solomon Lowenstein, Executive Director of the Federation for the Support of Jewish Philanthropic Societies of New York City, were discussed by Dr. Ben Selekman, Boston; Virginia C. Frank, Chicago; Dr. Ludwig B. Bernstein, Pittsburgh; H. Joseph Hyman, Indianapolis; Isidore Hirschfield, Washington, D. C.; George W. Rabinoff, New York; Armand Wyle, Atlanta; Benjamin Glassberg, Milwaukee; and Dr. I. M. Rubinow, Cincinnati.

SECOND GENERAL SESSION

The second general session was held on Sunday afternoon, June 14, at the Gold Room of the Radisson Hotel, Dr. I. M. Rubinow, Secretary, B'nai B'rith, Cincinnati, presiding.

"*The Effect of the Economic Depression on the Stand-*