

that the program be more specific in certain aspects. I feel that social workers have specific information to give to a social program far in excess of the average economist. I would like, for example, to see in the program a clear definition, on the basis of a social worker's experience, as to what constitutes a living wage. I would like to see a maximum set for hours of labor. In that portion of the report which speaks of the necessity of the recognition of organized labor in the proposed system of economic planning, I feel that specific mention ought to be made that in any system of industrial control organized labor be recognized as having a legitimate part in the management of an industry.

While on this subject of organized labor, I would like to say that while I agree with all the report has said in establishing the advisability of the recognition of labor organizations, there should be a still further admission of the inalienable right of labor to organize and to be recognized. As I see it, certain things rest not on their value but on their inherent rightfulness and justice. The recognition of organized labor is one of these.

A social program ought to lead rather than follow. It is generally agreed in most circles that the demand of adequate child labor legislation are not satisfied by a sixteen-year age limit for school age. I feel that such a report as this should definitely come out for the eighteen-year limit even though the sixteen-year limit is still something for which we are striving.

One thing that I have missed especially in the report is an avowed declaration of our responsibility specifically as *Jewish* social workers. I will admit that the basic aspects of social work are not bound by denominational or racial lines. We must recognize, however, that just as there are

specific problems of Jewish life in America and elsewhere, there is a unique approach to social service ideals from the Jewish point of view. I have very little sympathy with Jewish social service merely on the basis of the "Stuyvesant-promise" tradition. Our president, Dr. Rubinow, exploded this idea most convincingly in an article in the *Menorah Journal* some years ago. I feel that there is a spirit to Jewish social service that is unique. It partakes of the sum total of general social ideals, but it interprets them concretely and intimately through the medium of Jewish traditions. These Jewish traditions have always been essentially along the lines of social justice. We have been reminded almost to the point of monotony that there is an underlying significance to the fact that the Jewish word for charity "zedakah" means basically "justice." And although the Jewish social worker may prefer to emphasize the secular approach in his profession, it would be most unfortunate if he were to disregard entirely the Jewish spiritual heritage of social justice as contained in the prophetic writings and in the Talmud. I mention these facts because I feel that Jewish social workers in formulating a program of social policy can with frankness and pride emphasize the social justice aspects of a Jewish philosophy of life and interpret them through the medium of their own profession.

The social worker is becoming less and less the administrator of private philanthropy and more and more a functionary of sound modern political economy. It is because of these facts that an intelligent social program becomes a greater necessity than ever in the equipment of organized social service. The excellent report of your Committee on Social Policy is characterized by a large measure of the realities of today and the vision of the future.

By FRED M. BUTZEL

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WHETHER for the rabbinate, social workers, or other professional groups, I have always felt that any form of program of legislation involving political action is inadvisable. A broad statement of pious general principles usually means very little. On the other hand, a highly technical, limited, and specific program involves technical skill which the broader professions, as a rule, do not furnish. If there is no overwhelming agreement on the program involved, it is unfortunate to try to bind opposing minorities. Of course, no form of argument or presentation related in any way to the main objectives of a conference should ever be suppressed or tabooed, and a conference as a platform for discussion is an ideal place for propaganda.

Conceded that a legislative program should be adopted,

no one should take exception to the report just read by Dr. Selekman. It seems to be post-prophetic of the Roosevelt victory. I voted for Thomas and, therefore, it does not appear to me quite as far-reaching as it might have been.

It is a conservative statement and if published some years ago might have had some element of the sensational. I must admit that most of the matters discussed therein are quite technical, and without a more definite outline of the exact methods of application of the principles enunciated they seem to lose some value. I know that there are few people who are better posted on the implications of these proposals and the best methods of application than Dr. Selekman, and for me to discuss them verges on the impudent.

Of equal importance to social work—even if not so directly—are our foreign debts, disarmament, and tariff policies. A program within the capitalistic system which comes out so frankly for the unionization of labor should very definitely have called for the amendment, if not the abolition, of the anti-trust law.

We seem today to be on the verge of co-operative action and state control and maybe it behooves us as social workers to be looking ahead and preparing for the day when reaction in sentiment must set in because individual rights and personality may not be adequately protected.

A Protective Organization for Jewish Social Workers

Protective Aspects of the Program of the American Association of Social Workers

By MOSES W. BECKELMAN

Young Men's Hebrew Association, New York

THIS paper is intended to serve as an entering wedge for the consideration of the problem of protective organization in social work. It seems logical to begin our discussion with an analysis of the American Association of Social Workers, since this is today the only national organization of social workers which attempts to cover the entire field of social work. As such, its experience with and treatment of the problem of protection merit our study.

If we limit the application of the term "protective" to a complete program which includes such direct matters as contractual employer-employee agreements, tenure of jobs, salaries, vacations and conditions of work generally, cursory knowledge will indicate that the A.A.S.W. is not a protective organization, for none of these aspects of its program has been concretely developed. In its broader sense, however, the concept of protection includes all activities which may, in their end-results, effect changes in the work situation and it is from this basis that the program of the A.A.S.W. will be reviewed.

The first part of the paper is based on the materials of the American Association—interviews and correspondence with the Executive Secretary, a reading of the minutes of the Executive Committee from 1916 through 1932, and an analysis of items concerned with protection appearing in *The Compass*. Lack of time available to the committee for its analyses and the fact that the material was not readily accessible made completeness impractical but it is the feeling of the committee that the records which were analyzed fairly represent the attitudes and activities of the Association on the question of protection. The second section of this paper is concerned with reactions to the A.A.S.W. and is

based on the replies of some sixty members and a like number of non-members of the American Association to a questionnaire distributed among 150 workers in eight Jewish agencies in New York City. It is thus limited in its reference to the New York City Chapter only.

This paper does not reflect the policies or activities of other local chapters since information on these was not available in sufficient quantity to make their inclusion feasible for most chapters. It is important that this fact be noted.

Before discussing the protective role of the Association a few words should be said concerning its history. The A.A.S.W. is an outgrowth of a placement bureau for social workers organized as part of the Intercollegiate Bureau of Occupations in 1913. In 1917 this bureau became an independent membership organization and changed its title to the National Social Workers' Exchange. In recognition of the many phases of professional status associated with placement the exchange was, in 1920, made a placement bureau of the American Association of Social Workers which was then organized and which adopted its present name in 1921. In January 1927, the placement bureau was discontinued as a branch of the A.A.S.W. Some idea of the Association's objective may be obtained from two statements of object made in 1924 and 1932. The 1924 statement reads: "Its primary objects are the maintenance of ethical and technical standards of professional performance and the promotion of conditions of employment which make these standards possible." In a circular issued in 1932 the objectives were stated to be as follows: "To develop a spirit of unity and common interest among social workers;

to discover what are the standards and requirements of the various fields and in what ways these need to be changed or improved; to study the relation of professional education to the needs of the various fields; to promote fair and reasonable personnel practices in social agencies which will attract persons of high educational and personal qualifications to the profession; to give social work a voice in measures to improve social conditions in the community; to publish the results of studies and research in the methods, practice and philosophy of social work."

Since its inception the Association has had standards of training and experience for membership in its own ranks, which have repeatedly been raised. These standards are not as yet universally accepted by all agencies, and membership in the Association, while required for a number of positions in the field of social work, is by no means a prerequisite for all social work appointments.

Considerable discussion has gone on within the Association with reference to the development of training standards through certification of social workers by the government, following the practice of licensing teachers, druggists, dentists, etc. Some chapters have taken action in this direction, and the Annual meeting of 1932 endorsed a report which put the National Association on record in favor of certification legislation in the several states.

In this connection there should also be mentioned the research activities of the Association, including the Job Analysis Studies, three of which have been published, with two more in process, and the pamphlets on vocational aspects of family social work, medical social work and psychiatric social work. The Association works on a number of projects with the Association of Schools of Social Work and participates in Section XI of the National Conference of Social Work on Professional Standards and Education.

The question of salary standards for social workers has received much consideration from the Association, but so far as we know, no standardization has yet been attempted. Some studies have been stimulated by the Association, and the Committee on Personnel Practices requested the Russell Sage Foundation for a study of social workers salaries which resulted in the studies made by Mr. Ralph G. Hurlin of the Foundation whose most recent publication in this field is "A Study of Salaries in Family Case Work Agencies in 1932." A number of chapters have undertaken such studies of salaries in their own communities and the national association in October 1931 issued a statement to chapters objecting to salary cuts for social workers and suggesting several arguments to be used by workers in fighting any proposed cuts in their own communities—the arguments of comparatively low salaries, harder work during depressions, need to maintain living

standards, etc. As we have indicated, however, the Association has never drawn up anything that might be considered a minimum salary standard nor have its salary studies been sufficiently inclusive to be used as a basis for such standards.

In the field of general personnel practices the Association took its first action when it sponsored conferences in 1921 and 1922. Later a Committee on Personnel Practices was appointed which began a survey in 1925. There has been frequent discussion of personnel practices and the problems of relationship between social workers and their employing agencies, but no definite ethical code or set of personnel principles has yet been formulated though on occasion it has been suggested that local chapters might undertake such formulation.

Cases in which a worker has a grievance against a social agency, or vice versa, in which the agency has a grievance against a worker are treated by the local chapter on an individual basis. No machinery has been set up for this purpose, it being the custom to fit the method of procedure to the particular case.

The Association itself has in a few instances taken a stand objecting to decisions adversely affecting social agencies such as the telegram sent to the Governor of Colorado objecting to his closing of the Department of Social Welfare. In other cases where the national organization has studied particular situations, its only conclusion has been a recognition of the need for the development of desirable standards since until such a code has been formulated it is not possible logically to defend the existing standards in any one agency or community. When a local chapter, however, made a request in 1930 for the development of a code of ethics, it was decided that the national Office did not have time to promote such activities and it was suggested that the local chapters might undertake such study.

This plan of referring such matters to local chapters reflects an important policy of the A.A.S.W. which must be considered in a study of its protective aspects—namely, its tendency to increase the scope of activity and authority of local chapters.

Activities of the American Association in the direction of enhancing the professional status of social work include the securing of professional classification for social workers in the 1930 Federal census instead of the semi-professional grouping which had obtained unto then, and the recent development of the Association's policy in endorsing and furthering social legislation. After considerable discussion the problem of pensions and retirement funds was referred to a committee which developed a plan, now under consideration by the chapters, for a self-supporting national group annuity insurance. Other aspects of the Association's efforts to improve social work status are a resolution pro-

testing against caricature of social workers on stage and screen and an endorsement of the right of social workers to express their own opinions on social and political questions.

Reference has already been made to the fact that, in the opinion of the national office, insufficient information has thus far been accumulated to make possible the preparation of desirable uniform salary schedules and standards of personnel practice. In this assumption is implicit the philosophy of the American Association so far as it affects the question of protective measures. In effect, the position of the A.A.S.W. is that as the social worker improves so his position improves.

This attitude toward protective measures is not in accord with the desires of a group of social workers in New York City who submitted replies to a questionnaire distributed by this committee. These replies constitute the material for the second portion of this paper, having been received from 59 members of the A.A.S.W., New York City Chapter, and from 61 social workers in New York City who are not members of the Association. All were unsigned.

Some idea of the amount of participation in chapter and national activities by the membership group responding may be gleaned from the following analysis: Of the 59 A.A.S.W. members who filled out questionnaires 21 had not attended any meetings of the local chapter this year, 14 had attended one meeting, 8 two meetings, 9 three or more meetings, 7 did not reply. Only ten of the members replying had served on A.A.S.W. committees.

Only one member felt that adequate protection was offered by the Association. Nine believed that some protection was afforded through the program of the organization but that its potentialities in this direction had not been exploited, 36 felt that it offered no protection and 13 did not reply to this question. Of the 36 who felt that no protection was offered, the majority reported this opinion as a shortcoming in the A.A.S.W. program, but ten believed that protection did not fall within the scope of the Association's activities. Several members pointed out that the restrictions on membership in the A.A.S.W. made it impossible for that organization to serve a protective function, since it could not, by its own terms, include all social workers.

Seventeen members felt that the professional standing of the A. A. S. W. was high, 13 qualified their approval, while 7 felt that it had little professional standing. Estimates of the educational activity of the organization were: good, 10, fair 17, poor 9. Fifteen felt definitely that membership in the A.A.S.W. carried social work status with it, 12 felt that something was being accomplished in this direction, 6 had a completely negative reaction.

The questionnaire distributed to non-members showed a

marked similarity in response. Of the 61 who reported, 47 were eligible and 14 ineligible for A.A.S.W. membership. Of the ineligibles ten will join, when eligible, chiefly because the A.A.S.W. is the recognized professional social work organization. The 47 eligibles are not now members because three of them are not interested in any group organization, 27 feel that the A.A.S.W. is "backward in policy," "controlled by executives," "lacking in vitality" and "does not make itself felt," 12 believe the dues are too high and 5 suffer from inertia or negligence. Thirty-six of these 47, however, plan to join; 12 because they believe in an organization and hope that new membership blood may help to strengthen what are to them the present weaknesses of the A.A.S.W., 18 because they believe that membership will enhance their professional status and two because they may not be eligible later. The eleven eligibles and four present ineligibles who do not intend to join report a dissatisfaction with the program and policies of the A.A.S.W. in terms which have already been indicated.

The estimates made by these workers of the values and shortcomings of the A.A.S.W. coincide very closely with the general sentiments of the 59 Association members who filled out questionnaires.

Both members and non-members of the A.A.S.W. who replied to the questionnaire are in substantial agreement that the professional standing of the organization is high, that its educational program is reasonably successful and adequate, and that membership in the American Association does confer some social work status and is of some value in placement and promotion. Criticism of the Association seems to center about the matter of rank and file participation in program and policy making which most of the respondents feel is deficient or lacking, domination of affairs by social work executives and a recurring feeling that the A.A.S.W. is dodging fundamental economic and social issues implicit in the present crisis.

Major dissatisfaction, however, was expressed with what most of those who answered the questionnaire felt to be the failure of the American Association to offer adequate protection to its members. Against this must be contrasted the Association point of view, already discussed, that improvement in the position of social workers depends upon and follows improvement in social work and in the equipment and ability of social workers. Because of the limitations under which this study was conducted, these findings cannot and should not be construed as an adequately documented critique of the protective aspects of the A.A.S.W. program, nor as sufficient evidence that the A.A.S.W. is necessarily disqualified from assuming in future a larger responsibility for protective measures.

The conclusion to which this paper points is that the A.A.S.W. does not now offer a well-developed protective

service for the social work field generally or even to its own members. Out of this conclusion flow several questions which will be amplified in the succeeding papers and which must logically be considered in this morning's discussion. First, as to the possibility or desirability of setting up minimum personnel standards on a national basis, defining the qualifications necessary to those entering social work in the future; second, the possibility of developing minimum salary standards for social workers on a national basis and the desirability of defending already existing salaries against reduction; third, the desirability of setting up a code of ethical personnel practices and of establishing ma-

chinery by which grievances may be heard by a disinterested jury; fourth, the feasibility of national action rather than local action in dealing with the foregoing questions; and fifth, the possibility of securing sufficient funds from social workers to finance such undertakings.

The limitations under which this analysis and report have been made have already been indicated. The conclusions which this paper has reached and the questions which have been posed, have their chief value, therefore, as catalytic agents for discussion and as points of departure for the remaining papers of this morning's session. They are so offered.

Experiences in Protective Organization for Social Workers in New York City

By SONIA GINSBERG

Chairman, Organization Committee, Association of Social Workers, New York

IN the midst of the profound crisis, which has invaded every aspect of social work, and as a result of a deflation in personnel standards and salaries that has propelled social workers to a serious consideration of their economic status, New York City has witnessed the inception and vigorous development of a pioneering attack upon the problem of protection.

This approach differs fundamentally from previous attempts at solution. Firstly, it frankly regards the social worker as an employee and the Board as the employer; the executive being regarded as an intermediary between board and staff in this relationship, but by reason of function, closer to the Board than to the staff. It recognizes that the full financial responsibility for an adequate social service program rests with the Board, as employer. It considers that, by virtue of this employer-employee relationship, the interests of Board and staff diverge at certain critical points; that this divergence finds expression in the clash between the desirability of maintaining adequate salary and personnel standards and the tendency of Boards to operate social agencies at the lowest possible maintenance cost. Previous attempts to resolve this clash have essentially failed because they have largely depended on the intercession of the Executive and the goodwill of the Board. The new approach is characterized by the realization that in an employee-group consciousness and in the collective thinking and action of such a group, expressed in a bargaining relationship with the Board, a more effective technique has been developed towards the objective of economic security.

Employee-group thinking and action finds its medium in

organization; organization which must enlist the participation of all workers in any agency or agencies in question. Since clerical workers and other non-professional workers are also employees and since they are likewise affected by insecurities arising from the same sources as the insecurities of the professional staff they logically belong in a common organization. Lastly, this new approach is based on the concept that there is inherent in protective organization by professional workers an identity of interest with all working groups in the defense of their standard of living.

This approach to the problem of protection was not conceived in an *a priori* fashion, in study circles, but had its logic hammered into the thinking of groups of social workers in New York City by specific issues, which followed one another in rapid succession, and which disturbed the daily professional routine because they involved the very basis of all working standards. This development is illustrated in a brief account of (1) the Association of Federation Workers, an organization of the employees of the constituent agencies of Federation for the Support of Jewish Philanthropic Societies, (2) of Workers' Councils, individual agency bodies both within and without Federation agencies, (3) the New York City Committee to Protect Standards of Workers in Social Agencies, a non-sectarian coordinating body with a protective function.

The first announcement, in December 1931, by the New York City Federation for the Support of Jewish Philanthropic Societies of a salary cut mandatory for all constituent agencies, stirred the workers in their thinking. Immediately, the Association of Federation Workers, a hither-

to relatively inactive organization, became the medium through which the workers expressed their reactions toward Federation's announced salary cut, and evolved plans of activity for dealing with the situation. Whereas the organization during its six years of existence had not until then succeeded in making itself felt as a vital force to the workers, the discussion of the salary cut brought the workers of Federation agencies to the meeting in great numbers. Old concepts of the basic philosophy of the organization were discarded and new concepts developed. The constitution was revised and the structure of the organization changed to meet the new thinking. A primary principle of the organization prior to this time had been the developing of a strong professional consciousness. While the constitution bore reference to an interest in salaries, the organization in practice had steered away from any controversial discussion of salary scales, and sought to develop progressively higher professional standards on the assumption that professional competence would command of its own weight material recognition on the part of the Board. The experience of salary reductions, coming during this period of increased professional devotion, subjected the faith of the workers in the good will of the Board to a critical analysis and resulted in a recognition of the need for reorganizing the Association on a frank economic basis, aiming directly to protect the personnel standards of workers in social agencies.

With this as its primary aim, the Association of Federation Workers, has been functioning for the past year. The structure of the organization is rather simple. Policies are proposed and voted upon at general membership meetings. Officers are elected annually by the general membership. The executive committee, consisting of the officers and delegates from the constituent agencies of Federation, meets between membership meetings, carries out the policies determined at the general meetings and initiates activities on the basis of these policies. The membership within the Association of Federation Workers is at present about 400, representing workers in all the large case-working agencies,—which have close to 100 per cent membership,—together with workers of the social service departments in a number of the hospitals and a few recreational workers. The strength of the Association thus far has been largely within the case-working agencies. However, a very active Organization Committee has already shown in the relatively short period of its activity definite results in extending the interest in organization among the staffs of other functional groups in Federation.

At its inception the Association of Federation Workers, then known as the Association of Federation Social Workers, consisted, as the name implied, only of professional workers. On the basis of actual activity in resisting salary

reductions, the workers learned that they could not function effectively without, at the same time, taking into consideration the needs of the non-professional staffs. Unified activity of all categories of workers similarly affected, it was believed, was essential for the attainment of the aims of the organization. With the revision therefore of the Constitution all workers, professional and non-professional, became eligible for membership. Executives who maintain direct contact with the Boards and who have the power of "hiring and firing" were excluded.

The question of the inclusion of executives was discussed at the very beginning of the formation of the organization, was again discussed at length during the period of reorganization and is still raised by new members. The executives of an organization, occupying an intermediary position between the staff and the Board, have interests and loyalties that are not, because of the very nature of their position, basically identical with those of the staff. Despite a deep and genuine concern for the interests of his staff the executive is committed, especially during critical periods, when economy is the watchword, to the decisions of the Board. The staff, on the other hand, believes that better standards for the workers can be gained primarily through the medium of a strong, collectively minded, self-expressing group—a realization which has become the basic *raison d'être* of the organization.

During the past year and a half, the work of the Association of Federation Workers has been concerned mainly with the problem of resisting salary cuts. As the organization progressed the workers began to realize that sending a protest resolution to the Board of Federation was insufficient of itself. Publicity was recognized as an important means of resisting the lowering of salary standards. Perfecting and strengthening the organization was also considered as a major prerequisite for gaining effective results. A primary objective of the AFW since its reorganization has therefore been growth through the inclusion of all workers in Federation agencies.

While in the process of strengthening itself as an organization, the Association continued in its efforts to maintain standards. The first cut, effective January 1932, was followed by a threatened second cut in September 1932, when Federation reduced the budgetary allotments to the constituent agencies. At this time the Association sent protest resolutions to individual board members and the boards of several of the constituent agencies where salary reductions had been announced and called upon the Board to make known their position with regard to Federation's salary cutting program.

Outstanding in the organization's development was the meeting of a Committee of the Association with representatives of the Board of Federation in November 1932. The