

Shortly after the arrival of the large immigrant Jewish population in America it became apparent that in the cultural readjustment of the group there were three possible avenues to be followed. There might have been the blind maintenance of the culture of the past. The possibility of such a solution, however, was rapidly shattered by the civilization of the new country; working day on Saturday, long working hours, the difference in dress, in physical and personal hygiene, the secular schools, etc.

Another approach was to exchange cultures; that is, to give up that which it had brought over and adopt that which it found in the new country. The common name of this process is assimilation.

The third approach was to develop a new culture which would harmonize with the civilization of the times. But, as previously illustrated, civilization was becoming international. Since the Jewish group could not satisfactorily maintain its old culture and had to seek something new, it seemed wholly logical that its new culture be international in scope.

The immigrant generation itself found it rather difficult to merely drop, as though it were an external thing, its old culture. But the next generation, that had never actually lived with it, could very easily feel the need and pursue the quest for a new culture.

It should, therefore, be no shock to us when we hear the accusation made that many young Jewish people are "radicals". It is a very natural and logical way out.

Our finest groups, by which I mean those that see the problems of the Jewish group and are sufficiently interested to do something about it, have this radical approach. They are good Jews because they are conscious of the need for solving the Jewish problem. If in solving it they do

not carry along the traditions, beliefs, and attitudes of the previous generation, we must realize that they are not living under the circumstances of former generations.

In the case of the Jewish Center, discouraging such groups from meeting and from carrying on activities will drive from itself the most progressive and active groups. We shall be left with those who either see no problems or have not the intelligence to do anything about it. This has already been happening and has worked as a double-edged sword driving out the progressive groups and failing to attract new and energetic blood into the membership of the Jewish Center.

My contention is, therefore, that in the case of American-Jewish youth problems there must be a synthesis of the economic (the civilizational) and the cultural phases. In scanning the programs of various youth movements, I can see numerous groups that handle quite adequately the economic side of the question, the foremost one of these groups probably being the American Youth Congress. But there is a dearth of organizations that have worked out a program which while including the economic approach, also includes in the framework of its set-up an attempt at a solution of the cultural problems of the Jewish group. Perhaps the only group with any validity in its approach to Jewish youth problems is the Poale Zion Party, which has at all times been active in the social front and has tenaciously maintained its interest in Jewish culture; and has actually worked out a Jewish culture with international orientation. I view this movement as a very healthy one for American-Jewish youth. It is not the Zionism in this program which I regard as most important, but its definite social stand and its interest in the preservation of the Jewish group.

CASE WORK AND THE PROBLEM OF JEWISH YOUTH

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TO SAY that case-work has known and felt the impact of the many problems described in the foregoing papers, is to say the obvious. And it is equally obvious to say that to problems of youth in the mass, to the Jewish youth caught up in the chaos of our economic and social life today, case-work offers no panacea. Case-work deals, as its name implies it must, with individuals on an individual basis. Nevertheless, case-work and case-workers are sharply aware that these individuals reflect, are damaged by, and are part and parcel of, those same problems that affect all youth. The Irvings and the Shirleys, and the Miltons who come to the case-worker for help are representatives, if you will, of that vast body of their peers. To each of them his problem is an individual one that eats into his flesh, that confuses his thinking, that breaks his spirit. They are expressed a hundred different ways, the problems of these Miltons, and Shirleys and Irvings whose real name is Legion.

"I just can't find work. They say that there are jobs in Texas", or "My father says he'll throw me out unless I get a job", or "When they ask me what can you do I have to say 'everything,' and that means 'nothing,'" or "I'll have to leave home if my mother doesn't stop nagging me. She thinks I'm too radical and I think she's too religious", or "I'm beginning to think there's something wrong with me or my family — we just seem to be going to pieces".

These then are the everyday problems of youth that face the case-worker: the desire to run away from an intolerable

financial situation; lack of understanding on the part of parents that today's youth faces a different and more difficult environment than they knew; lack of understanding that youth must find its own and different answers; need for training and vocational guidance; need for money, need for recreational outlets; bewilderment and frustration in the face of a close-fisted world; a need for self-expression, for reassurance, for gaining a sense of perspective. These are not maladjusted young people in the sense that that maladjustment rises from constitutional inadequacy or personality distortion. These are normal young persons temporarily stunned by the impact of present day conditions.

In the face of this the question as to what the case-worker can do becomes almost ludicrous. Almost. But not quite.

It can be most sharply summarized, perhaps, by an analogy which is old but which bears reaffirmation. In the thick of present day problems the position of the case-worker becomes analogous to that of a physician working in the midst of a devastating war. He may say, "War is hell. There is no need for it. There is no excuse for it. I must help to shape conditions so that there will be no more war". And he may close his medical kit. Or, he may say these self-same things but keep his eyes and ears and hands at the service of those persons who stumble into his hospital healing wounds, helping to allay hysterias, quieting pain, and for those healthy persons who come to him, giving inoculation and immunization against war diseases.

It is in this latter position that case work

has validity. In the midst of ravage and confusion what do we do with the problems of those young people who turn to us?

Sometimes very simple things may help. Money, for instance. A palliative, of course. But to take a trolley car, to join a club, to see a movie, to buy new shoes, to buy a lab set; these needs, to continue at school, to have recreation, to have clothes, to have freedom to move and be active depend on money, and are as necessary to young people as bread and salt.

The steering of young people into recreational and group activities is another case-work service. To see himself in relation to a group, as part of a community of interests, is for each young person a broadening and maturing experience. Referral to a settlement or center may seem to be a stereotype in case-work. Yet for the individual young person it may take on many and diverse meanings. It may mean simply a release of energies in athletics. It may mean satisfaction in being accepted as part of a group. It may mean, too, the recognition of common problems and common aims among other young persons like himself.

But case-work does more than function in these redirective capacities. To those parents in conflict with their sons and daughters, of different cultural or socio-economic backgrounds, perhaps, who do not understand that youth has inherited a disordered earth; to them the case-worker is an interpreter. To draw them out of their own frustration and bewilderment over their children is the case-worker's first task. And then to help them into an understanding not only of present day external conditions and of their children's place therein, but also to the acceptance of the fact that young people must be freed and released to find their own answers and

make their own best adjustments.

And last, and most important. To young people beset by feelings of personal failure, fear, doubt, anxiety, confusion—all those symptoms that arise out of negation and thwarting—to those young persons case-work, by counselling, by moral support, by understanding, by interpreting, by discussion, by stimulating free emotional expression, helps to restore a sense of personal adequacy and to substitute for confusion a sense of perspective. It seeks to achieve a freeing of the young person from whatever concepts fogged his vision and whatever conflicts crippled his energies, so that he may see his problems clearly and throw his energies into such opportunities as arise which are satisfying to him and are socially easeful and constructive.

But the case worker's job does not finish there. All through his process of understanding and helping he must bear in mind that these particular problems he deals with are not necessarily particular at all, but are representative of youth problems in the mass. Steeped in this realization he must not only witness but must give tongue to what he has come to see and know. The thinking case-worker does not understand the concept of status quo. There is no status quo. There is movement, and if it is not forward it is bound to be backward. When the Irvings and Shirleys and Miltons have been helped as individuals the case-worker must look outward at the wider scene. If he is as honest, if he is as mature, if he is as free as he has aimed to make the youth with whom he deals he must do one thing further. He must align himself with such progressive thinking and such progressive movements as seem to him will most squarely face and will most effectively modify those social conditions which breed this common problem of present day youth.

JEWISH EDUCATION AND THE JEWISH YOUTH PROBLEM

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WHEN we talk about the problems of youth, we too often tend to speak only of the unemployed youth, or in terms of our special interests and in the light of our own philosophy of Jewish life. Thus Young Israel sees the problem of youth as one of bringing a godless young Jewish generation back to God and the Synagogue. A Zionist Halutz group sees the problem as one of getting the Jewish youth of America to go to Palestine as pioneers. A radical group sees the problem as one of so changing the social order that there will be no unemployed or vocationally maladjusted youth. But very few of us ever see the problems of youth in their entirety, in their integral relationship.

The fragmentary approach to the problem of the Jewish youth will lead to no real solution of the problem. Palestine is not enough, Biro Bidjan is not enough, religion is not enough, and economics is not enough. Each youth group may have its motivating interest, which for it constitutes the center of Jewish living. But it should be remembered, that it is only the center, and not the whole of Jewish or general life. Each group must try to encompass the whole of Jewish life within it, no matter what its basic orientation. The only way in which this can be effectively done is to join with all other Jewish youth groups in some such organization as the Youth Congress, and to work and fight together for the things they have in common. And this is what they should have in common:

1. A desire to help the Jewish youth realize itself here in this country. This means fighting with all non-Jewish groups

against war and fascism, and for measures which will bring nearer the socialist millennium.

2. A desire to help the Jewish people to reconstitute itself in its ancient homeland.

3. A desire to help, aid, defend and relieve stricken Jewish youth everywhere—in Germany, Poland, Rumania, wherever such aid is needed.

4. A desire to help establish a real healthy Jewish community life and organization which will more adequately care for recreation, Jewish education, vocational guidance, etc.

5. A desire to promote Jewish culture and other arts.

The chief deficiency of Jewish education, as far as the problems of youth are concerned, is that its main, and often sole emphasis has been on the transmission of the Jewish past. In the newer schools, emphasis is also laid on Palestine and Hebrew. But Jewish schools are too little concerned with the economics and politics which condition the means of their survival. We do not teach our students the nature of the society in which we live, nor do we relate the Jewish religion and Palestine to their daily lives, and to the concrete struggles and situations which they will have to face. Although little can be done with very young children, a great deal can be done with the adolescents.

More important than provision of courses in contemporary problems, and of vocational guidance, is a reconstruction of the subject matter we teach in history and Bible, and religion, in the light of modern science, Jewish as well as general, and grounded in socio-economic realities.