



FIGHTING POVERTY

**The Challenge to the
American Jewish
Community**

**A strategy conference
for the Jewish community**

CO-SPONSORED BY:

American Jewish Committee

**Jewish Community Relations
Council of Greater Boston**

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September 21-22, 1992

Ax Box - Social Problems

CONFERENCE REPORT

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THE CHALLENGE TO THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY**

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AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

JEWISH COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL OF GREATER BOSTON

NATIONAL JEWISH COMMUNITY RELATIONS ADVISORY COUNCIL

UJA-FEDERATION OF JEWISH PHILANTHROPIES OF NEW YORK

SEPTEMBER 21 - 22, 1992

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PREFACE

This publication reports the major presentations and findings of a conference on the American Jewish community's response to poverty, held on September 21-22, 1992. In publishing it, the conference organizers aim to reinforce Jewish efforts to take an active role in combatting poverty; provide a concrete set of policies to advocate that will be effective in reducing poverty and promoting self-sufficiency; and set out a specific list of action recommendations for agencies to follow in organizing and enhancing efforts in this field.

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OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE OF CONFERENCE

Gary E. Rubin

The planners of this conference believe that there is deep concern in the Jewish community about poverty issues, and that it is necessary to organize this concern and to challenge the community to take action. Two or three decades ago, it was assumed that the American Jewish community would always be a powerful and reliable participant in antipoverty efforts. While there never was a conscious decision in the community to turn away from national domestic problems, its concerns began to focus elsewhere—on Israel, on anti-Semitism—for very understandable reasons. These are survival issues for the Jewish community. This focus narrowed the Jewish community's agenda. Although many agencies continued to be active in national domestic affairs, the general trend has been away from intensive involvement by the Jewish community in the antipoverty field.

The object of this conference is to advise the Jewish community that this turning away has been both strategically and morally wrong. Along with intensive involvement with Israel, along with continued combating of anti-Semitism and concern with other core Jewish issues, for many reasons it is very much in the interest of the Jewish community to be strongly committed to antipoverty programs.

First, there are significant numbers of Jewish poor. They depend on Jewish communal institutions as well as on federal, state, and local government programs. The Jewish poor have to be at the top of the community's anti-poverty agenda.

Second, Jewish Federations depend to a large degree on government pro-

grams in areas such as vocational training, family services and support, care for the elderly and refugee rescue. If these programs are neglected, the quality of Jewish life and of urban life in general will suffer.

Third, the Jewish community has a direct interest in such issues as poverty, jobs, and opportunity because these are the issues of central concern to our historic coalition partners the black, Hispanic and Asian communities, the Catholic and Protestant churches. To maintain those coalitions requires Jewish

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responsiveness to our partners' concerns.

Fourth, the Jewish tradition has much to contribute to initiatives to help the poor, create self-sufficiency, and mobilize action behind antipoverty programs. It is the responsibility of the Jewish community to bring the wisdom of our tradition into the public policy arena.

Fifth, in the interest of maintaining Jewish continuity, the organized Jewish community has an obligation to reach out to the many Jews who are strongly interested in social-justice issues and help them to express their concerns through the organized Jewish community.

Sixth, if the Jewish community voluntarily removes itself from concern with poverty issues and concen-

trates only on its particular issues, it will have done the work of the anti-Semites for them by voluntarily withdrawing its influence from the public arena.

This conference has three goals:

First, to establish that the Jewish community has an interest in fighting poverty in the United States - for both pragmatic and moral reasons.

Second, to formulate a specific plan for combating poverty. While the problem seems overwhelming, there have been indications in recent years that the Jewish community can have an impact. During the past three decades, poverty rates among the elderly and disabled have come down significantly because those population groups were targeted. The problems now are concentrated among the young, among single-parent households, and among minorities. If the Jewish community focuses on those groups, it can contribute to useful policy initiatives.

Third, to plan effective strategies for mobilizing the Jewish community to make an impact on poverty in the larger society.

With these goals the participants in this conference, and the broad range of agencies they represent—Federations, community relations councils, national agencies, Jewish direct service providers—can go a long way toward advancing Jewish interests and reaffirming Jewish ideals. ■

OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEM AND A CALL TO ACTION

Arthur J. Naparstek

More than seventy cities in this country are suffering severely from poverty. For many, the problem is not just poverty but hopelessness. People are trapped in the system, living in what is called persistent poverty. They have been poor for two or three generations. In one year, between 1989 and 1990, the number of people in Cleveland on general relief assistance rose 32 percent and the number of families receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) increased 26 percent. Their situation was not helped when the governor of Ohio recently cut general assistance.

Cleveland has lost over 40 percent of its population since 1960. More than 100,000 manufacturing jobs have disappeared. Today, more than 50 percent of the city's neighborhoods are in poverty.

Children are disproportionately affected. More than 70 percent of the 73,000 children in the Cleveland public school system are on some form of welfare. About 65 percent of them live with only one biological parent. Some 6,000 children enter the ninth grade each year, but nearly 3,500 do not graduate from high school. Of the 2,500 who graduate, 350 continue their education by attending college. Yet, in the end, only forty or fifty graduate from college. That a system of 73,000 school children produces only fifty college graduates in any cohort indicates that the problem is not just poverty but hopelessness.

Research has shown that persistent poverty tends to be found in neighborhoods marked by a deteriorated social infrastructure. That means the churches, the fraternal organizations,

the cultural organizational networks are gone. Cleveland has 19,000 vacant lots; there are neighborhoods where one does not see people on the streets. There is empirical evidence from studies by William Julius Wilson and others to suggest that viable communities, no matter how poor, can create the context for people to get out of poverty. There is a direct correlation between the strength of social institutions in a neighborhood and the ability of its residents to find jobs and keep them. The question is how to begin

"There is a direct correlation between the strength of social institutions in a neighborhood and the ability of its residents to find jobs and keep them."

rebuilding a sense of community.

Much can be learned from the Jewish experience with poverty through thousands of years. The Jewish experience stresses the importance of a sense of community, of common faith and shared prospects. That's not happening in America. Nationally, we must come to a common understanding, and that is going to take extraordinary leadership. That leadership can and must come from the Jewish community.

Two years ago the Cleveland Foundation established a Commission on Poverty to develop a long-term comprehensive plan that would maximize the impact of available resources in pursuit of highly specific goals. The thirty members of the Commission included grass-roots neighborhood leaders as well as corporate, educational, religious, and labor leaders. Former Cleveland

Federation presidents are serving as chair of the Commission and chair of its economic development committee.

The Commission's efforts can be used as a model for finding solutions to poverty in other cities, because the problems facing the people of Cleveland are not unique—they exist across this nation. Guiding the Commission's work have been five principles that have been arrived at by assessing community-building and antipoverty initiatives throughout the country.

Principle 1: The effort must be community-based. Strategy should be tailored to individual communities. Communities are made of mutual-support systems and cultural networks, and these must be used as the foundations for local initiatives. It must be recognized that communities have distinct conditions and potentials, and therefore their problems must be dealt with in different ways. In Cleveland, for example, two communities may have the same high poverty rate, but one may have much lower rates of crime, infant mortality, and school drop-outs than the other. The reasons for the discrepancies lie in the organizational and cultural networks—the churches, burial societies, fraternal organizations, and others—and in the role that local political leadership can play.

Principle 2: A community strategy should begin with an inventory of the community's assets in order to organize projects to empower people. There are assets located within a community, no matter how poor it is. The question is whether the community controls those assets. With a mom-and-pop store, the dollar turns over seven or eight times before it leaves the community. That store is an asset. With a Seven-Eleven, however, that same dollar will turn over once before leaving the community.

That store is not an asset.

There are assets that are controlled from outside the community, such as schools. The question is how can the community gain control of those assets. The 19,000 vacant lots in Cleveland mentioned earlier are an asset, as is the 28 per cent of public housing that is vacant if it is used correctly. There are assets outside the community that impact on the community, and again the question is how to gain control. There are flexible, subjective assets: people with talent, communal groups, institutions, and culture.

How Jews used the assets of the shtetls is instructive. Life in the shtetl was not glorious, but Jews employed every asset to help each one another. For example, the shelter for the homeless and the soup kitchen were located in the study house where children and adults learned Torah. The voluntary associations of the shtetls were brought to America by Jewish immigrants. They were able to negotiate the megasystems—the schools, the hospitals, etc.—through the burial society. That was the mediating structure that connected individuals and families to the megastucture. The whole notion of accumulating capital in Jewish communities came from the free loan. Those kinds of organizational and cultural networks in many ways have been ignored by policy analysts and social workers who have not been sensitive to the cultural dimension through which human enterprise can be nourished.

Principle 3: Policy and program integration is needed. A single cure for poverty is impossible because poverty is the result of interlocking problems that reinforce and complicate one another. Someone on welfare who has three, four, or five children is not going to take a job without health insurance because the wel-

fare system provides Medicaid.

When new jobs were created in the suburbs following the loss of 100,000 jobs in Cleveland, the people living in the inner city who needed the jobs were at a loss: all the transportation routes go into the inner city, not to the suburbs where jobs now exist. All the issues affecting poverty - health, education, transportation, jobs - must be viewed in a comprehensive, holistic way. The notion of service integration is not new. Much can be learned from the experience of the shtetl—how to create service integra-

“Sweeping single solutions end in expensive failures because they ignore local contexts, bypass local energies and local cultures, and turn people into passive clients of self-perpetuating systems of limited scope.”

tion with people in the neighborhood controlling the services, and with a sense of accountability and obligation between the people of the community and the people who are providing the services. In Cleveland, the Commission is suggesting the rebuilding of communities from the ground up, calling them villages, and building into neighborhood people a capacity to control the services.

Principle 4: Community building combines process and product. Local residents participate in identifying assets and generating ideas and strategies. Professionals help frame local vision with concrete fundable programs.

Much of the tension in south-central Los Angeles was due to the

inability of the African American community to control capital and credit. Communities cannot be built without credit. There is a need for new mechanisms that will provide people with access to credit. One model is the twenty-two-year old Shore Bank, in the south shore of Chicago. The Commission hopes to use it in a modified way in Cleveland.

If one is not sensitive to the process issues, then the result often is parachuting programs into communities with a “made-in-the-state-house” or “made-in Washington” label. There is a need to look at ways in which the community itself can take ownership of these programs. Regarding public education, for example, a model for schools that may be effective in one neighborhood may not work in another neighborhood. Schools get defined by the parents who send their children to them. Ways to stimulate and catalyze the process of community ownership of programs need to be found.

Principle 5: Evaluation. The Commission will begin in three communities in Cleveland with populations of 5-7,000, and will carefully evaluate throughout the process, looking at what works and what does not. The Head Start program, for example, originated in work done thirty years ago by Kenneth Clark with preschool children in Harlem. On the other hand, the kinds of policies that produced the 1949 Housing Act should be avoided. The whole sense of community was lost in that act. It led to the construction of such projects as the Robert Taylor homes in Chicago—thirty blocks of twenty-story public housing, with outdoor elevators that freeze in the winter, separated from the rest of the city by the Dan Ryan Expressway.

Axiomatically, the larger the defin-

ition of a problem, the greater the likelihood of unanticipated consequences of its solution. Sweeping single solutions end in expensive failures because they ignore local contexts, bypass local energies and local cultures, and turn people into passive clients of self-perpetuating systems of limited scope. The community-based achievements of the past ten years call for an end to both federal laissez-faire and reactive grand plan prescriptions. Solutions must come from the bottom up, but they require top-down flexibility that opens up federal policies and systems to change.

If national leaders are serious about poverty in American cities, they will place the issue at the top of the domestic policy agenda, they will remove bureaucratic obstacles and policy rigidities that keep people trapped in the system, they will reward the creation of American jobs and will release resources to rebuild the infrastructure to support business development and home ownership.

That is not happening yet. The Jewish community has a major role to play in making that happen. Each of us must make a decision about our own advocacy, activism and commitment to the Jewish and general communities. Each of us must decide whether we are going to do only what we are paid to do or whether we are going to be real advocates for change. The role of advocacy never ends. We must make a genuine, complete commitment to advocacy, both day-long and life-long. We have to be prepared to use our skills and values to battle anti-Semitism, racism, sexism and shrinking economic opportunity. In partnership with the general community we will go forward as a Jewish community to make changes for the better. ■

COMBATING POVERTY IN THE 1990S: A PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

Representative Thomas Downey

Some numbers will briefly illuminate the social revolution that is going on in this country.

- In 1960, there were 64 million children under the age of 18, of whom 243,000 lived with mothers who had never been married. In 1992, there are 64 million children under the age of 18, and 5 million of them live with mothers who have

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never been married.

- The number of children living in single-parent households was 5.8 million in 1960. In 1992, it is 16.8 million.
- Of the 4.1 million live births in the United States in 1991, 1.1 million were out of wedlock, and 800,000 will never have paternity established.
- The Census Bureau reports that 1 million women see a doctor for the first time when delivering their child.
- In 1980, there were 900,000 neglected and abused children. In 1992, there are 2.7 million.
- The number of children in foster care in the United States is up by 50 percent since 1986. The number has doubled in the City of New York, which has nearly one-seventh of all the foster children in the United

States.

These are disturbing numbers. Something has gone terribly wrong with the quality of life for too many of our kids. What can we do about it?

The first thing to do is to understand that it is happening. There are many people who say “This is the responsibility of America’s parents.” Two-parent families used to be the norm in America; increasingly we see single-parent and no-parent families. Is there an appropriate government response to the needs of those children who are critically at risk?

In the fifty states the amount of money available to intervene to help these children has been systematically reduced. The system lavishes money to take a child from its parents and put him or her in a foster care system. Little regard, and even less in the way of resources, is given to keeping families together.

Much has been learned about intervening in families in crisis since a project called Home Builders was initiated in 1974 in Seattle, Washington. Home Builders assigns social workers to homes where there is a crisis, such as a child who has run afoul of the law, or an abusive father, or a mother with a particular problem. The caseworker becomes the adult in an otherwise dysfunctional home, and in this role can make sure that window screens are repaired, or rats eliminated or that the mother or father get to Alcoholics Anonymous or some other therapy so that the children will not be removed by the child protective services. Home Builders has worked, not only in Seattle but in a number of other cities where the program has been established. In 85-90 percent of cases, the families do not break up, the child is not removed from the home and put into foster care or a juvenile justice facility.

The Children's Initiative that passed the U.S. Congress in the fall of 1992 (and was vetoed by President George Bush) would have provided through the Family Preservation Act \$3.5 billion to the states for their use in supporting Home Builders kinds of programs. The Leland Child and Hunger Act, also part of the Children's Initiative, would have provided \$3.5 billion to address the needs of some 5 to 7 million kids who go hungry in the United States. A reason for their hunger is the food stamp program. The food stamp program is wonderful for the disabled and elderly, but does not do as much for poor families. The legislation would have changed the eligibility and allowance levels so that children could get more than the present subsidy of eleven cents a meal.

Raising children in poor settings is not conducive to their ultimate success. Given the reality of single parenthood, there is a need to find ways to move welfare mothers into the ranks of the working poor. When one considers that one-third of the people on welfare are transient (they go in and out of the system and eventually leave of their own free will), that another third will need some help and additional skill training to get off, and, that another third are not likely candidates for permanent employment, the problem becomes a little clearer. Consider the extraordinary situation of just discussing welfare mothers and never considering for a moment that there are welfare fathers who brought these children into the world.

The vast majority of single parents get nothing or very little from their spouses. Only 58 percent of all single parents have obtained orders of support that legally mandate fathers to make child support payments. Of that 58 percent, less than half receive what they are entitled to, and what

they are entitled to is less than \$3,000 a year. One-third of all cases are interstate cases, which means that unless the mother is resourceful and unrelenting the father can easily avoid providing child support.

Fathers, of course, need to be more responsible. But enforcing court-ordered child-support payments across fifty states is not feasible. What is required is a national system of collecting child support.

Such a system would, first, invest in establishing paternity. At the time of birth, the father is actually more

"Fathers, of course, need to be more responsible. But enforcing court-ordered child-support payments across fifty states is not feasible. What is required is a national system of collecting child support."

interested in the child than he is in the weeks and months following the birth. Catch him then. Make sure that the hospital records his Social Security number on the birth records, and that some counseling is given to him so that he understands his rights, and responsibilities. There are 800,000 births a year where paternity is not established. An infinitely better job of doing that needs to be done.

Second, a national system would make more consistent across state lines the rules and regulations that determine how much a mother is entitled to and then collect it through the Internal Revenue Service. Thus, once the order of support is put into effect, child support would be paid ahead of taxes. In the

event that a father who owes child support disappears, IRS records would provide a national locator system. Wages would be withheld from everyone who is mandated to pay child support, not just those who are delinquent.

In the event that the father stops working and there is no payment, the national government for a period of time would pay a child assurance benefit so that the mother would not be left without resources. Together with other policy proposals, such as expanding the earned income tax credit, a mother raising children would have the financial resources to keep her head above water.

A major change in social policy, including the passage of the Family Preservation Act, national system of collecting child support, and a major revamping of the welfare system, can be made in the Clinton administration. The next Congress will have more than 100 new members, Democrats and Republicans, and there will be more black, Hispanic, and female members. There is a sense of social activism and realism in the country. Help is on the way. Remember the great teaching of the Torah: "if you save one life, it as though you save the world." We have millions of lives to save, and we don't have a lot of time to save them. ■

**JEWISH POVERTY:
OUR CONDITION, OUR
RESPONSIBILITIES,
AND AGENDA**

Jewish Tradition and Poverty

Rabbi David Saperstein

Underlying the Jewish community's emphasis on confronting poverty are two basic assumptions in Jewish tradition. First, "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof"; that is, what we own, we own in a trust relationship with God, and the terms of that trust require that we share God's wealth with those of God's children who are less fortunate. This is not a matter of volition but of mitzvah. Second, government has not only the right but the obligation to intervene to ensure that economic institutions and societal processes function in ways that are equitable, fair, and compassionate for the greatest number of people possible.

The Jewish tradition does not place responsibility for ameliorating poverty exclusively upon either the government or the individual, but obligates both to be responsive to social justice needs. Furthermore, a social-justice system must function in a way that is effective and that enhances the human dignity of all — rich and poor alike. These are the standards by which Jews are compelled to test society's social and economic institutions.

While it is not accurate to say that at any point during the past quarter-century the Jewish community was wholly disengaged from economic-justice issues, the partial withdrawal of Federations and Community relations councils from this work in the 1970s and 1980s left a void that for the most part was filled by synagogues. There has been a veritable explosion of social justice activity by Jews across the country as synagogues have undertaken a vast array of programs to feed the hungry and shelter

the homeless in the general community even as they expanded efforts to provide for the needy within their own synagogues.

The data on poverty levels and social needs in the Jewish community are still inadequate to make comprehensive and accurate determinations about policies, programs and resource allocations. Such data can be obtained in two ways. First, on a national level, resources should be allocated by Federations, synagogues, and foundations for a comprehensive survey within the Jewish community.

"The Jewish tradition does not place responsibility for ameliorating poverty exclusively upon either the government or the individual, but obligates both to be responsive to social justice needs."

Second, the Jewish community should reevaluate its position about the exclusion of questions related to religion generally and Jewish identity particularly in the U.S. census. There may be legal ways to identify Jews in the survey under the "national origin" category rather than religion, while respecting the community's sensitivity to the separation of church and state and to concerns about anti-Semitism and discrimination.

Some communities, such as Chicago and New York, have done excellent research over the past decade that gives some glimpse of what the needs are, and have developed programs in response to them, such as Project Ezra in Chicago and the Metropolitan New York Coordinating Council on Jewish

Poverty, which are discussed by the next speakers. These communities, while more the exception than the rule, provide models for other Jewish communities.

On the basis of existing data, one may conclude that while the Jewish community is better off than the general community, poverty is a serious problem. Approximately 8 percent of the Jewish community lives at or below the poverty line. An equal number live in a state of economic vulnerability so narrowly above the poverty line, with such limited resources, that any temporary illness, accident, or job loss would immediately plunge them below the poverty line.

The potential for increased poverty in the Jewish community is linked to demographics. The Jewish community has the highest median age of any segment of the American public. Zero population growth among American Jews for the past two generations is resulting in a shrinking number of working people contributing to our communal social-service system, which supports an ever-increasing number of older people, many living on fixed incomes. Two problems are converging to exacerbate that situation. First, people who never needed support will likely need it now as interest rates reduce their incomes. Second, in the absence of systematic health care reform, the elderly are subject to devastating economic consequences in case of catastrophic or long-term illnesses.

Out of concern for Jewish poor as well as the poor in the general community, the Jewish community needs to re-engage far more effectively in reaching out affirmatively to serve the poor and help develop antipoverty policies. ■

RESPONDING TO POVERTY IN CHICAGO

Joel Carp

A year-long study initiated by the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago in 1982 revealed that about 15 percent of Chicago Jews—37,000 people—were poor, or at-risk of poverty, and that more non-elderly than elderly were living in poverty. In addition to data about increased requests for emergency financial assistance and for assistance with finding jobs, the study also showed that affluent Jewish families were being destroyed by the recession because of large-scale corporate down-sizing. These middle-and upper-level managers included many who are still not employed today, as well as a large number who have returned to work but will never again be as well paid as they were.

At the request of the Federation, the Illinois Department of Public Aid analyzed its caseload in the two Chicago areas with the largest numbers of Jewish households. This study, done first in April 1982 and again in March 1983, showed a 23 percent increase in the number of people receiving some form of welfare assistance between 1982 (1,900) and 1983 (2,500). The second study revealed that 74 percent were not elderly, compared to 60 percent in the first study, and it showed a rise in the number of cases in the suburbs.

While the analysis of the Chicago Federation's 1990 population study is not yet complete, in all likelihood the final data will show that not only is there no diminution in these numbers, but that the problem of poverty in the Chicago Jewish community continues to be underestimated.

The Jewish Federation leadership responded by providing seed funding, which, together with additional government and foundation support obtained by the Federation, added

millions of dollars in new services for Jewish and non-Jewish poor to the array of services provided by Jewish agencies. For two years Project Ezra, the Chicago Federation's domestic poverty program, was the centerpiece of the Federation's entire annual campaign.

The key principles guiding the Federation in this area were that services needed to be designed to assure easy access, maintain people's dignity, and provide for the chronically poor.

Among the programs established under Project Ezra were a 24-hour,

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seven days a week toll-free hotline, opened in October 1983, that still receives 400-500 calls each month, of which 75 percent are from non-Jews throughout the Chicago area; a 23-bed transitional shelter for homeless individuals of all ages and both sexes, and for families with children; and a Multiservice Center that has become a vital facility serving Jews and non-Jews alike in a neighborhood where a Jewish community once thrived. The Federation also intensified its public advocacy efforts in the area of welfare services because it became apparent that a significant number of Jews were also being hurt by bad public policies.

The Jewish community must participate directly and aggressively in the development of public policy. The stakes are just too important for both the Jewish community and the society of which it is an integral part.

The heightened involvement of the Federation in these issues requires the active partnership of professional

and lay leadership. The job of the professionals is to enable the lay leadership to understand how poverty issues affect the Jewish community, to explore their meaning and implications, to think about the role Jewish communal instrumentalities should play in addressing them, and to work together to formulate and then implement appropriate strategies. There also is a need to think about the extent to which the formulated agenda includes or excludes issues because of the personal bias of lay or professional leadership, as opposed to one that reflects true communal interests, derived from the needs of Jewish community members and from the Jewish community's role in the larger community.

For more than a decade the Chicago Federation has been engaged in this process at the city, state and federal levels, with offices and full-time staff located in the state capital and in Washington, D.C. Federation leaders view the Government Affairs Program as indispensable to the achievement of the Jewish community's goals, and they consider the chair of the committee governing activities in this area one of the most important leadership positions in the community.

The GAP also has become one of the strongest bridges to the community at large, enhancing the perception of the Federation among government officials and general community agencies, in terms of the Jewish community's ability to affect the public policy process and to secure and maintain government funded programs that benefit not only Jews but the community at-large.

As a result of all these efforts, there is no significant matter affecting health and human services in which the organized Chicago Jewish community is not involved in some significant manner at the city, state, and federal levels. ■

JEWISH POVERTY IN NEW YORK

William Rappfogel

As a whole, the American Jewish community has given short shrift to Jews in poverty. The image of wealthy suburban and urban Jews obscures the relatively small percentage of the community who are poor or near-poor. But their poverty is just as serious and acute as the suffering of those in other communities. During this period of crisis in the Jewish community, making resources available to help people get past a particular trauma—the need for cash assistance, food vouchers, housing, furniture, clothing and employment—must be the immediate priority of the Jewish community's antipoverty efforts.

Meeting these needs of the Jewish poor in New York City is the work of the Metropolitan New York Coordinating Council on Jewish Poverty. The Met Council's 1984 study "Low Income Jews of New York City" identified nearly 200,000 poor or near-poor Jews. These Jews were not necessarily residents of easily identifiable "poverty neighborhoods," and many were reluctant to identify themselves as poor. The "shame factor" combined with their choice of neighborhood makes it especially hard to engage in outreach and design programs. An updated survey is underway, and is likely to show that 50 percent of the estimated 750,000 American Jews living at or near the poverty level reside in the New York area.

The Met Council, an umbrella of twenty-four Jewish community councils throughout New York City and a conduit for United Jewish Appeal and government funding for antipoverty programs, has for the past twenty years been providing basic assistance to poor Jews who are

in need of cash, food, clothing, furniture, housing and jobs. Increasingly, Jews arriving from the former Soviet Union as well as Syria have needed these services as well. The challenge for the Jewish community is to be true to Jewish teachings: Kol Yisroel arevim zeh lazeh—each and every one of us has a deep and abiding responsibility for one another. ■

FIGHTING POVERTY: PROGRAMS THAT WORK

Robert Greenstein

Background on Poverty Trends

The U. S. Census Bureau data for 1991 showed that 36 million Americans, one of every seven, live below the poverty line. That is the largest number of people living in poverty in a quarter century. Two-fifths of the poor, more than 14 million people, were children, and among those under the age of six the poverty rate was one of every four.

Poverty is much more widespread than most people think. In 1980, one out of ten poor people lived in high poverty areas in the central cities. Between 1990 and 1991 an additional 1.1 million people living in the cities became poor, while another 1.3 million people living in the suburbs became poor. To be sure, the percentage of people who are poor is higher in the central cities than any place else. Nonetheless, poverty is widespread.

While poverty certainly has increased in the past couple of years due to the recession, the current high poverty rates will not necessarily disappear when the economy recovers. In 1989, the peak year of the longest peacetime economic recovery since the end of World War II, the poverty rate was higher than in any year of the 1970s, including the deepest recession years of that decade.

Four trends underlie the long-term movement toward significantly higher rates of poverty.

1. **Declining Wages.** The average hourly wage for a nonmanagement job in the private sector is now lower, when adjusted for inflation, than in any year of the 1970s or 1980s. While in 1979, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, one of every eight workers who worked year-round full-time was paid wages too low to lift a

family of four out of poverty, by 1990 the ratio was one of every five. A related factor is the substantial erosion of the minimum wage, which now is about 20 percent lower than its average level in the 1960s and 1970s. During those two decades full-time, year-round work at the minimum wage lifted a family of three to the poverty line. Today, it leaves that family \$2,000 below the poverty line, and a family of four close to \$5,000 below the poverty line. In any given year about 60 percent of the poor include within their

"In any given year about 60 percent of the poor include within their household someone who has worked during the year."

household someone who has worked during the year.

2. **Erosion of the Safety Net,** Particularly for the Non-Elderly Population. Two-fifths of the increase in poverty during 1979-89 was due to changes in the safety net, in particular the unemployment insurance program, AFDC benefits, and, at the state level, general assistance relief.

During the 1980s the unemployment insurance program was reduced at both the federal and state levels. During 1984-89, the proportion of the unemployed receiving unemployment benefits hit a record low in five out of the six years, with only about a third of the unemployed getting benefits. Until President Bush signed an unemployment insurance bill in late 1991, the proportion of the unemployed getting benefits was at the lowest level ever recorded during a recession.

Aid to Families with Dependent

Children (AFDC) is the principal public assistance program for poor families with children. The benefit paid to a family without other income is now 43 percent lower in purchasing power than the benefit that was paid in 1970. Today, AFDC and food-stamp benefits combined are, in the average state, at the level of AFDC alone in 1960, before the food-stamp program was created. Working mothers and their children have been the hardest hit.

The general assistance program is the last resort in the safety net for people who do not qualify for any other type of cash assistance from any level of government. In actions taken within the last eighteen months, most of the states with general assistance have either terminated the program, severely slashed benefits, or limited the benefits to six or seven months during the year.

3. **Demographic Changes, More Female Headed Households.** Half of female-headed families with children are poor. Sometimes the weight given this factor in explaining rises in poverty is exaggerated. In 1980, about 35 percent of all poor people lived in female-headed families; in 1991, 39 percent did. If there was such an increase, why has the impact on poverty not been greater? The answer lies in a second demographic change: female-headed households have been becoming smaller. In 1968, 45 percent of all female-headed families had four or more children; by 1986, only 15 percent did. The welfare rolls in the late 1960s show that one of every three welfare mothers had four or more kids. By 1990, the figure was less than one in ten.⁶

4. **Inequitable Distribution of Economic Gains.** There is a growing tendency of the economy to distribute its gains, especially during recoveries, in an increasingly inequitable manner. The latest data show that

between 1977-89 the aggregate increase in the income of the top 1 percent of the population exceeded the total income of the bottom 27 percent of the population in 1989.

Policy Changes Needed

1. **Expand the Earned Income Tax Credit.** This tax credit for working families with children is popular across the political spectrum. It is both pro-work—one has to work to get it—and it is pro-family—absent fathers are not eligible. It is a wage supplement that effectively boosts wages and lifts families closer to or above the poverty line, but it needs to be larger.

2. **Increase the Minimum Wage.** About three-fifths of all workers who are paid by the hour were adversely affected by the erosion in the value of the minimum wage during the 1980s. The minimum wage increases in 1990 and 1991 had no adverse impact on employment opportunities, yet the minimum wage remains 20 percent below its historic value. It can be increased further without any significant effects on employment, while improving the wages of low-income workers.

3. **Make the Dependent Care Tax Credit Refundable.** The principal child care subsidy today is granted through the tax system, the Dependent Care Tax Credit. Since the credit is nonrefundable, once a family's income tax is reduced to zero it loses the credit. Working poor families that do not owe income tax are ineligible. Near-poor families who owe a little income tax get only a tiny credit. Middle-and-upper-income families get the full credit. Thus this subsidy, which confers \$3 billion a year on families to help defray part of their child care costs, benefits those families that are least in need of it.

4. **Access to Health Care.** The current system provides health-care

coverage if a person is on welfare, but does not ensure such coverage if the person goes to work.

5. **Implement Fully the 1988 Family Support Act.** The two principal components of this legislation were collection of child support and the JOBS program. Neither has been implemented fully.

Collection of child support in the United States is a national scandal. When the father leaves, the poverty rate among children in these single-parent families doubles. In the 1930s, the principal forms of economic inse-

“Collection of child support in the United States is a national scandal. When the father leaves, the poverty rate among children in these single-parent families doubles.”

curity in the United States were “growing old” and “losing your job,” and the nation responded with social security and unemployment insurance. In the 1990s, the widespread form of economic insecurity is growing up in a single-parent family, and the nation has done nothing significant about it.

The Downey-Hyde Child Support Enforcement and Insurance bill was in the 102nd Congress the leading mechanism to resolve the problem of child support payment collections, and is the single most important antipoverty initiative currently pending at the national level (see summary of presentation by Congressman Thomas Downey). When more child support is collected, family incomes rise and welfare payments decline. The Child Assistance Program, a

variant of the Downey-Hyde approach, has proven successful in demonstration tests in seven counties in New York State during the past several years.

The JOBS Program, which seeks to move welfare recipients to employment, requires each state to put up matching funds as it draws down the federal funds allocated. Budget cuts in states have curtailed the availability of those state funds. Last year only nine states drew down their full allotment of federal funds. Only one out of ten AFDC family heads are in the JOBS program, despite evidence that it improves employment and earnings. Welfare-to-work programs, such as the GAIN program in California, have produced significant increases in employment and decreases in welfare payments, even for long-term recipients. This component of the Family Support Act could be fully implemented if the federal government would lower the matching rate requirements from states so they can draw down more of the funds.

Most of the current debate, however, has focused on reforming welfare. At the state level there is much discussion about family caps—if a mother on welfare has an additional child, she would not get additional benefits—and “learn-fare”—family benefits would be cut if a child misses too many days of school. The one study of “learn-fare,” by the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, found that it failed to increase school attendance. Extensive research on family caps shows that the level of welfare benefits has no significant impact on the rate of out-of-wedlock births. The general view of these attempts to alter the behavior of poor families through changes in the AFDC benefit structure is that they make families poorer.

6. **Four early intervention programs for low-income children that**

have a demonstrated track record—Head Start; Women's, Infants' and Children's health programs (WIC); Child Immunization; and, for youth, the Job Corps—should be fully funded.

7. **Housing.** Under federal standards established by the Reagan administration, housing is considered affordable for low-income households if it consumes no more than 30 percent of income. By that standard nearly all low-income renters have unaffordable housing. In addition, there has been a two-decade decline in the stock of low-rent housing. In 1970, there were 400,000 more low-rent units than low-income renters; by 1989, 4 million fewer low-rent units than low-income renters. That increases homelessness, leads to substandard and overcrowded housing, and pushes more families into low-rent areas that are dangerous and have poor access to jobs and to good schools. One solution would be to vastly increase funding for housing certificates and vouchers that would allow low-income renters to rent private housing by paying 30 percent of the rent with their own income and the balance with the voucher.

8. **Mobility Strategies.** This is an emerging area among urban specialists, but not yet among policymakers. Mobility strategies reflect one of the basic shifts of the past twenty years, the mass movement of low-skilled jobs out of the cities and into the suburbs. Most of the net new jobs created in urban areas, even during the recovery of the 1980s, were in the suburbs, not in the cities. Inner-city residents often do not learn of these new jobs, and, if they do, they often have difficulty commuting to them unless they have a car. There is a need, therefore, to develop strategies that will enable inner-city residents to have access to jobs in the suburbs.

Conclusion

None of these strategies or innovations can be pursued without adequate resources. In coming years it is likely that resources will be cut at both the federal and state levels. At the state level, in the last eighteen months the deepest cuts in programs for the poor have occurred in more than a decade. In these times of tight budgets everyone will need to be tougher when evaluating which programs deserve funding.

While this may seem to be a gloomy picture, there is another side. The budget agreement passed in 1990 reduced the federal deficit by \$500 billion over five years without significantly cutting programs for the poor, with an expansion of the Earned-Income Tax Credit, the funding of child-care programs, and the extension of medicaid coverage for every poor child in the United States. It is possible to deal with the nation's fiscal problems and make progress on poverty at the same time. The Jewish community must be in the forefront of these efforts. ■

PROJECT BREAD

Shoshana Pakciarz

Project Bread is a statewide umbrella organization dedicated to ending hunger in Massachusetts. It raises funds for more than 400 soup kitchens, food pantries, homeless shelters, and advocacy organizations. It also engages in advocacy for state programs and policies that will aid the work of this network of agencies. A major achievement in the advocacy area this year has been mobilizing support for the expected passage of legislation by the Massachusetts state legislature that will make Women's, Infants' and Children's health programs (WIC) an entitlement.

How that was achieved provides lessons in organizing and networking at the grass roots level. To get programs fully funded requires a successful advocacy effort, and that can be achieved only when there is a broad commitment by the mainstream community to making changes in social policy.

First, select the issue correctly and frame it in a way that will broaden the constituency to yield maximum support. Avoid the divisive and controversial political issues that might hinder the building of a broad constituency.

Second, find a way for people to get personally involved with the issue. In Boston, Project Bread has been organizing for several years an annual walkathon to end hunger. Last year the walkathon attracted 43,000 participants and 400,000 contributors.

Third, utilize the expanded constituency to advocate legislative changes. Out of the 43,000 walkathon participants, 6,000 became activists on behalf of lobbying the state legislature to pass the necessary legislation to make WIC an entitlement. ■

POLITICAL REALITIES IN FIGHTING POVERTY AMONG FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

David S. Leiderman

In the twentieth century there have been only two brief periods when the government tried to deal aggressively with the problems of poverty in this country. The first was during the Great Depression when the New Deal and a variety of programs that benefitted the poor were enacted. The second was the War on

"In 1980 there were 1 million reports of abused and neglected children in the United States. Last year there were 2.7 million."

Poverty in the 1960s and early 1970s. The war on poverty reduced poverty levels from an all-time high of 22.4 percent in 1959 to an all-time low of 11.1 percent in 1973. The War on Poverty worked, and there was a feeling at that time that government really did care about some of these problems.

After 1980, the war on the poor began and poverty rates climbed back up. During 1980-91, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, there was a 2.1 million increase in the number of poor people, bringing the total to 35.7 million, the largest number since 1964. The poverty rates for blacks is 32.7 percent, for Hispanics 28.7 percent. Poverty rates among children are 45.9 percent for blacks; 40.4 percent for Hispanics; and 16.8 percent for whites.

In 1980 there were 1 million reports of abused and neglected children in the United States. Last year there were 2.7 million. In 1986 the

child welfare population was 260,000. (That is the number of children in care—known as foster care generically, but it is all care outside of a child's own home.) Today, the number is 430,000.

For the past twelve years, the government has spent \$2 trillion on defense, \$750 billion on tax cuts in 1981 that did not benefit poor or working class people. This country's debt has increased from \$950 billion in 1980, to \$3 trillion at the end of the Reagan administration, to \$4 trillion today. The "trickle-down" strategy of the past twelve years has allowed the rich to get richer at the expense of the poor. During this period there has not been one comprehensive initiative on behalf of children and families.

We have also seen increasing incidents of "welfare-bashing" and "kid-bashing." In a number of states both Democrats and Republicans have been beating up on poor people. Not only are welfare benefits being cut, but proponents of these measures also are seeking in effect to modify the behavior of poor people. For example, if you are on public assistance with one kid and you have a second child, benefits for the second one will be denied. Or, if you are on public assistance and your children do not go to school, your public assistance will be reduced. This is absolutely outrageous, and political leaders in this country who play this game should be ashamed of themselves.

The question is whether the Jewish community is going to be part of the problem or part of the solution. As Jews we have had a long, great history of caring and activism on behalf of the poor, and there are a lot of people across this country who are Jews and have worked hard to make a difference. The perception, however, is that the organized Jewish community

is not involved. In contrast, the Catholic community has been consistently visible and outspoken on this issue.

The Jewish community has two jobs to do. The first is to make sure that children, families, seniors, and other people who are in need of assistance get help from Jewish institutions. Servicing the community, both Jewish and general, is a function carried out in a manner that is second to none by Federations in many cities, but it is a role that needs to be expanded by Jewish organizations across the country.

Second, the organized Jewish community must work to influence and change public policy. This job takes a tremendous amount of effort, money and leadership. For reasons of Jewish tradition and because the organized Jewish community once was active and visible on these issues, Jewish organizations again must play a prominent role in seeking to attain the policy initiatives that in a serious way will deal effectively with poverty and its associated problems.

What is needed now in this country is a major comprehensive plan that rivals the New Deal and the War on Poverty to deal with the range of problems facing poor children and families in the U.S. Americans know how to build housing, run schools, develop job programs and fix neighborhoods. It should not be difficult to put together and implement a comprehensive antipoverty program. What is lacking is political leadership.

It would not hurt for the Jewish community to express a little outrage, because what is happening to poor children and families in this country is outrageous. The Jewish community has got to be seen as a responsible player in this endeavor. ■

POLITICAL REALITIES IN FIGHTING POVERTY AMONG FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

Ruth Messinger

In New York City there has been an explosion in the last year of the number of families entering the shelter system because they have no place to live. The needs of some 14,000 families currently must be met on a temporary transitional basis every night. It is not unusual to have over 100 families, typically women with small children, spending nights in administrative offices, sleeping on hard plastic chairs or under tables on the floor. Forty percent of New York children live in families below the poverty line. More than a million New Yorkers are receiving public assistance. The unemployment rate—currently about 12 percent—is 50 percent greater than it was a year ago. These statistics are a direct consequence of the recession, an economic situation that also cuts into tax collection, reduces the ability of government to provide services, and slows government's ability to meet an escalating need. A new administration and Congress—even if they embrace not-for-profit programs that are proven successes and seek ways to create and fund more across the nation—still will face constraints.

The economic reality is that neither the recession nor the \$4 trillion debt disappeared on election day. The political reality is that the new Congress was elected in an atmosphere filled with anti-incumbent and anti-Congress sentiment. That environment does not make legislators feel secure, brave and prepared to embark on bold, new initiatives. Thus the caution that is too much a part of the legislative and executive mindset today is unlikely to be entirely wiped out with a Congress where a quarter of the members are

new. That caution is reinforced by the attitudes of most voters in this country who have decided that they don't like, trust, or believe in social programs, and by the panic that middle-class people are feeling from this recession.

The challenge is to reawaken in communities the sense of compassion and the sense of passion that will allow people to work for the new programs that are needed to fight poverty. If the programs exist, the challenge is how to persuade people to support them, and how to build political support for those that work. To meet these challenges requires investments, empowerment, and inclusiveness. These are three concepts that work on the political antipoverty front.

Investments is a concept that people readily accept and endorse because they do it in their private and business lives everyday. The most common example is housing because investment in housing benefits everyone. Housing construction and rehabilitation prime the pump of the local and potentially the national economy, particularly in a time of recession. Housing rehabilitation is a sound long-term investment in neighborhood stability. It assists in small business development, improves the local tax base, and provides homes for people who otherwise have no place to live.

The same is true about virtually every type of early childhood intervention, whether prenatal care, inoculation programs, day care, preschool education, or school-based clinics. Each of those is essentially an investment of dollars that has a short-term payback and provides some benefit to poor families, and has a long-term payback in that it saves money. Nowhere is that more clear than with regard to prenatal care, where it costs virtually nothing to provide compre-

hensive prenatal care to any mother as compared to what it costs for a day or a week of postnatal intensive care for a low-birth-weight baby.

Empowerment. When talking about social welfare programs it does not work right now to use language that simply suggests that we are giving a handout or doing for others. What will attract more people are examples of projects that encourage self-reliance and empowerment. For example, I sit on the board of the Jewish Fund for Justice, a fund that concentrates specifically on providing

“Housing rehabilitation is a sound long-term investment in neighborhood stability. It assists in small business development, improves the local tax base, and provides homes for people who otherwise have no place to live.”

self-help empowerment efforts, on helping groups that are working themselves to reclaim their housing, to set up their own parent education program, to create neighborhood economic development. There are examples in many communities.

If one knows that a program works, but does not describe it to other people and help them understand what are the key elements that make it work, and if one does not lobby government to find ways to provide funding that can be used to replicate those programs, then nobody will know that there is a way to turn communities of poverty around.

Inclusiveness. Most middle-class Americans do not know poor people,

do not meet them, and do not know about their lives. This atmosphere leaves room for fear and suspicion to breed and spread. What individuals can do as a first step is help to put a human face on poverty, for example, by telling the story of the grandmother who has asthma, and lost her benefits. Language must be found that says to middle-class people in this country, “Poor people have the same problems and the same dreams as the rest of us.” For example, I talk about a young woman I met in the nurse-training program that was set up in Harlem Hospital. She is a single mother, has a job, and attends school in the evenings and on the weekends. She told me, “To change things, you have to start in your own backyard. At the end I will have a skill that I can use in the community for the community.”

Or the widowed mother of a one-month old baby I met at a housing shelter on the lower east side of Manhattan who said, “My husband died and I lost my apartment. I love this program, but I really want housing I can afford and a job so my children will look up to me.” These real-life stories people understand, and they reenforce the reality that the dreams and the worries of the poorest people in this country are not that different from those in the middle class. ■

GUIDANCE TO DISCUSSION GROUPS

Two presentations preceded the conference participants dividing into ten discussion groups. From these groups emerged a number of recommendations for action on the local, state, and national levels following the conference. The recommendations of the groups, combined with those offered by the conference speakers, can be found at the end of this report.

Nancy Kaufman

Last Sunday, September 13, the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston took the first step toward reinvigorating the Boston Jewish community in playing a meaningful role in confronting the challenges of the social action agenda. This first step was our "Return to Passion" conference supported by the Boston Federation, by all JCRC member organizations, and by the community at large.

The one-day conference, held at Brandeis University, drew more than 300 people under the age of 40 who came together to explore concrete ways that Jews could participate in *tikkun olam*. There were Jews who spend their professional time as social justice activists, and there were Jews who spend their spare time as volunteers in social-justice causes. And there were Jews who never get involved but were ready to become involved and were looking for ways to begin.

The best type of assistance is prevention. For Maimonides, the highest level of charity was helping the poor to help themselves, which in the modern day is the concept of empowerment. Our challenge today is to figure out how we can get engaged and become part of the solution.

It does not really take much to change the realities surrounding poverty. It takes the Jewish community caring, and I believe we do. It takes being around the table in whatever way we can. We can pick any one issue on the social justice agenda. We just have to choose and then get involved.

Harvey Newman

Let us first borrow a phrase from the environmental activists—"think global and act local." What do we do with all of the data? How do we develop and implement strategies to affect local concerns? How do we act on a local level to affect national policies? Let us see if we can identify the real problems and focus on them in our discussions of services and advocacy strategies that can be used to address them.

No one here today is going to empower the Jewish community to act. We have to take power. We have to make decisions and act affirmatively to move this agenda ahead. Not everyone in the Jewish community will agree with us. There may be a range of opinion here and we may have to go back to our communities and convince people of our opinions; but let us use the discussion groups to talk about some strategies in that regard.

The aim of the ten discussion groups is to identify three concrete actions: What should you do? How do you implement all these ideas and strategies? How do you get to sit at the table where the decisions are made, developing the services and responding to the needs of the poor?

The outcome of the discussion groups, together with the counsel offered by the conference speakers, will inform the action recommendations emanating from this conference. ■

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE

Arthur J. Naparstek

At the beginning of this conference I spoke of community as a primary Jewish value. There are other values that can be helpful in developing an action agenda for fighting poverty at the local and national levels. Choice is a critical Jewish value. There are three themes today that people would like to choose from or, if they already feel a sense of empowerment, that they would like to control. People want equity, security and sufficiency.

Equity means fairness. Fairness often is judged by people in terms of their investing in a system and getting a return. Investment can be in terms of paying taxes and getting a return in services. Investment can be in terms of involvement in a process and the return is something happening as a result of that process.

Security is multidimensional. Physical security means that people go out in the street and don't get beaten over the head. Economic security means that there will be a paycheck, or that the Social Security check will not be stolen from the mailbox. Social security means that people will have access to institutions that are important to them, whether they be hospitals or schools.

Sufficiency means that people feel that institutions are a part of them and that they have sufficient resources to deal with them. There needs to be a correlation between equality of opportunity and equality of access.

People need to feel a sense of equity, security, and sufficiency in order to feel empowered to take control of their lives and as a community to control the rebuilding of their neighborhood. Whatever antipoverty programs and policies are discussed, those three themes must be part of

the planning.

Another important Jewish value is balance. Applied to the effort to combat poverty, there must be a balance between the macro policy initiatives and the community-building initiatives, for only when there is strong community will the macro work. Early-intervention programs cannot work without a community context. Head Start cannot be administered properly without a community context. The best housing programs are those that are conducted through local churches or community organizations. A local social and economic infrastructure is a prerequisite to any investment in a community.

These three values—community, choice and balance—force us to think in terms of process, not static ideologies. They create a context in which people can find new modes of solving problems in a dynamic and imperfect world. There is a need to make the connection between the macro policies and micro policies through understanding why systems that serve the poor and minorities have never worked as well as they should. Systems that serve the poor, the vulnerable and disenfranchised, must be re-examined and they must be opened up. Public welfare, public housing, and public education—three systems that serve the poor and disenfranchised—were each invented at a different point in time to meet the needs of different people. Public education in Cleveland was aimed at meeting the needs of Eastern and Southern European immigrants at the turn of the century and teach them how to become citizens. It was designed for the child with two parents, a father working and a mother staying at home. It was not intended to deal with people who had been on welfare for one, two, or more generations.

Public housing was for the family dislocated because of the Depression. Public welfare was for the white widow with two children. These systems must be reexamined in terms of how they relate to population groups in need today.

What is needed now is a paradigm shift, a distinctly new way of thinking about old problems. This paradigm shift should begin with networking, one of the most powerful social forms of bringing about change. Through networking, within the Jewish community as well as together with other groups, one can slip new ideas into a resistant system on a national or a local level. Social change can be effected when one recognizes that institutions are not bureaucracies but the actions of people, and that within these institutions there are people working who can and should be influenced by, if not made a part of, the networking.

When there is a policy vacuum, a stagnation of the bureaucracy, then gaps in the system arise and those gaps can be filled by new energy and creative ideas. That is happening today. Around the country people are drawing on hidden resources to create a new and better order for people to get out of poverty. New forms of social partnership, investment strategies, and networking are arising within the shell of old ideologies. It is happening in the revitalization of block after block after block in the South Bronx; it is happening across the country. At least outside "the Beltway" there is energy around the nation that gives hope for a promising future that the fourth Jewish value—caring—will lead to the kinds of actions that can nurture creative and effective solutions that, much like the cultivation of a seedling into a tree, will help facilitate the regeneration of neighborhoods and communities. ■

ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS

Diana Aviv

1. Take responsibility to educate and invigorate leadership in your own communities and organizations on the need to reinvolve the organized Jewish community in issues of economic justice. The topic should be placed on the agendas of board meetings, task force and committee meetings, or create special committees to deal with the issues. Invite people from the community to speak about their programs that work and, if possible, arrange visits of leadership to those community programs that are successful.

2. Work to gain a deep commitment from the broadest spectrum of leadership in the organized Jewish community, both locally and nationally, especially those who do not have a deep knowledge about the issues. Understand the cause of resistance in the community, and develop strategies to attract those leaders in the Federation, community relations council or direct service agencies that are reluctant to support antipoverty efforts as a top priority. Arguments to be used might include Jewish values such as *tikkun olam*, or that the United States must address the needs and abilities of its own citizens if it is to be a competitive force in the world, or the state of Jewish poverty, or our view that the well being and security of Jews are inextricably tied to the economic and general stability of the society.

3. Broaden the tent to include Jewish people who already are interested in poverty issues but have not found a way to express their concerns Jewishly. The organized Jewish community can and should provide that framework.

4. Develop a partnership between lay and professional leaders so that both are committed to creating a

concrete plan of action with goals and a timetable. A commitment from the highest levels of leadership of organizations is essential to preparing a plan of action that will seek to provide support for community programs and to influence the evolution of public policy.

5. Write articles for the Jewish and general press, letters to the editor in response to articles, and pieces for organizational newsletters. The more that poverty issues, both the challenges and potential solutions, are discussed publicly, the more likely people will be interested in addressing them.

6. In developing a plan of action at the community or state level first determine what resources already exist—people with expertise in certain areas, organizations that are active, etc. As this national conference crossed institutional lines by bringing together direct service, advocacy groups in the form of Federations and CRC leadership from all parts of the country, so, too, can local organizations create these kinds of structures.

7. Determine what resources exist in the community before embarking upon any kind of programs. There are in each community people with expertise, ongoing advocacy efforts, political leaders, religious leaders, and not-for-profit organizations. There are establishment leaders and leadership not part of the establishment. It is important to work with the establishment leaders but be aware of types of leaders in other groups, such as the church leadership in the African American communities and establish contacts with them.

8. Work in coalition. Where coalitions exist, join them. Where they don't exist, create one. Explore with coalition partners on other issues the ideas of working together on antipoverty campaigns and strategies.

By creating multiethnic, interreligious coalitions, Jews can influence their direction, facilitate them, and play major roles in achieving their goals. Such coalitions should include service providers who are experts in public policy and advocacy.

9. Determine priorities based upon what the community needs, what the Jewish interest is, and how the organized Jewish community can be involved. The Jewish community cannot do everything, but it can do a piece and make a significant contribution.

10. Educate about the centrality of the federal government in making certain programs available to all, rather than depending on the uneven coverage of individual states and localities.

11. Federal and state services are limited by shrinking budgets and tough competition for public funding. As government, both at the state and federal levels, moves to balance budgets, work to ensure that programs designed to aid the poor are not cut out. At the state level, work with the people who plan the state budgets and allocations to convey to them what programs and policies are of concern to the organized Jewish community. At the national level, there will be a lot of competing demands on the administration and the Congress. The organized Jewish community can play a role in ensuring that these issues are on the front burner of any administration that is in office. When making appointments at home or in Washington to meet with elected officials, let them know that addressing these issues is important to the Jewish community.

12. Advocate for federal policy changes including:

- expanded earned income tax credit
- refundable dependent care tax credit
- increased minimum wage

- full implementation of the Family Support Act
- full funding for Head Start, WIC, Child Immunization and Job Corps
- capturing child support from absent parents.

13. On the state and local level: Create a sense of community and build a viable community infrastructure. Programs and projects that occur in a community have to be owned by the community. If programs and projects are replicated in other communities they need to be tailored to the particular conditions of the community adopting them and need to be responsive to the cultural milieu and resources in that community. ■

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

5:00 pm Reception and Registration

5:30 pm Welcome:
Maynard I. Wishner, Chair, National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council

5:45 pm Chair: **Mimi Alperin**, Chair, National Affairs Commission, American Jewish Committee

AMERICAN JEWS AND THE POVERTY ISSUE: WHERE WE ARE; WHERE WE NEED TO BE

Speaker: **Gary E. Rubin**, Director, National Affairs, American Jewish Committee

OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEM AND A CALL TO ACTION

Speaker: **Dr. Arthur J. Naparstek**, Conference Scholar-in-Residence; Grace Longwell Coyle Professor of Social Work, Case Western Reserve University, and Director of the Cleveland Commission on Poverty for the Cleveland Foundation.

7:00 pm Dinner

8:00 pm Chair: **Stephen D. Solender**, Executive Vice President, UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York

COMBATTING POVERTY IN THE 1990'S: A Public Policy Agenda

Speaker: **Representative Thomas Downey (NY)**

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

8:00 - 8:30 am Breakfast

8:30 - 10:00 am

Chair: **Judith Stern Peck**, Chair, Public Policy Committee, UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York

JEWS IN POVERTY: OUR CONDITION, RESPONSIBILITIES AND AGENDA

Speakers:

David Saperstein, Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

Joel M. Carp, Associate Executive Director, Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago

William Rapfogel, Executive Director, Metropolitan New York Coordinating Council^o
on Jewish Poverty

10:15 am - 12:15 pm

Chair: **Ruth Fein**, Vice President, Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston

FIGHTING POVERTY: PROGRAMS THAT WORK

Speakers:

Robert Greenstein, Executive Director, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

Shoshana Pakclarz, Executive Director, Project Bread

12:30 - 1:45 pm

Luncheon

Chair: **Lynn Lyss**, Vice Chair, NJCRAC

POLITICAL REALITIES IN FIGHTING POVERTY AMONG FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

Speakers:

David S. Liederman, Executive Director, Child Welfare League of America

Ruth Messinger, President, Borough of Manhattan, New York City

1:45 - 3:45 pm

INTRODUCTION OF THE ACTION AGENDA

Presenters:

• **Nancy Kaufman**, Executive Director, Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston

Harvey Newman, Executive Director of Public Affairs, UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York

Breakup into small groups to develop action strategies.

Group Facilitators:

Irving Cramer, Executive Director, Mazon

Robert J. Fishman, Executive Director, Connecticut State Jewish Community Relations Council

Iris Lav, State and Local Director, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

Stewart Liebowitz, Vice President of Research and Negotiations, AFSCME 37I Social Service Workers of New York City

Ilene Marcus, Director, City Policy, UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York

Marlene Provizer, Executive Director, Jewish Fund for Justice

Ronald Soloway, Director of State Policy, UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York

Eleanor Stone, Executive Director, Association of Jewish Federations of New Jersey

Eric Yoffie, Vice President, Union of American Hebrew Congregations

4:00 - 5:00 pm

Summary of Group Recommendations and Plan for the Future

Dr. Arthur J. Naparstek, Conference Scholar-in-Residence

Diana Aviv, Associate Executive Vice Chair, National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council

CONFERENCE ENDORSING ORGANIZATIONS

Anti-Defamation League, New York Regional Office

Baltimore Jewish Council

B'nai B'rith

Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston

Council of Jewish Federations

Hadassah

Jewish Community Relations Council of the Federation of Jewish Agencies of Atlantic County (NJ)

Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago

Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Philadelphia

Jewish Community Relations Council of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties

Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington

Jewish Federation of Greater Bridgeport

Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford

Jewish Federation of Greater Phoenix

Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago

Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County

Jewish Federation of Southern New Jersey

Jewish Fund for Justice

Jewish Labor Committee

Jewish War Veterans

Metropolitan New York Coordinating Council on Jewish Poverty

National Council of Jewish Women

New York Association for New Americans

Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

United Jewish Federation of MetroWest (NJ)

Union of American Hebrew Congregations

Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America

United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

Westchester Jewish Conference

Women's American ORT

Women's League for Conservative Judaism

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