

SOME STRAIGHT TALK

From the Address of Mr. Nathan S. Jonas, Honorary Secretary of the Brooklyn Federation of Jewish Charities, at a Meeting of the Membership Committee

"Practically nothing is being done by the various directors to secure new members or to increase subscriptions. General apathy and unconcern seem to prevail. Jewish humanitarianism is not sufficiently awakened or alive today in Brooklyn. Selfishness and niggardliness are more prevalent than generous, free-hearted, voluntary, open-handed giving.

"It is more blessed to give than to receive,' and it is in that spirit that I wish to speak and appeal to you. It is a privilege to help others, but, unfortunately, often people need to be educated to that fact.

"The Socialists claim that giving charity is wrong in principle and they demand justice or a reasonable existence for all. They say that 'equity is half religion.' I caution you that continued insensibility and indifference on the part of many of the rich may justify these contentions, or at least add strength to a growing movement partially created by sympathy for the afflicted, the unfortunate and the suffering.

LACK OF AGGRESSIVE LEADERSHIP

"I have only recently been referred to as a 'nut' on charity—why? Because I am earnest and solicitous, serious and hard-working for those who cannot help themselves; my persistency is criticised and to my regret is proving, to a great extent, abortive and non-productive. Even the letter containing the call for this meeting has met with harsh criticism as being too strong—it was made strong purposely to endeavor to persuade people to do their duty. I hope you will all become angry and red-hot to the fighting point. I shall retire this year from working leadership in our charities, in which work my efforts have brought me peace of mind and satisfaction; the responsibilities have grown too heavy for me, but although I shall step aside as a guide, I shall try to be a loyal assistant and aid to the new leaders who may now be developing, perhaps in this very meeting. What we lack is real aggressive leadership from the men of means in our community; other men govern themselves by what rich

men do. A man worth \$1,000,000 should pay at least \$5000 a year to our Federation and more or less in proportion. Thus, the man worth \$500,000 would pay \$2500 a year; a man worth \$100,000 would pay \$500 a year, and the man worth \$50,000 \$250 a year.

"In my opinion, there are at least 1000 Jews in Brooklyn worth \$50,000 or more and it is to them I am referring as the rich Jews, and not to a dozen men only of real large means. The latter, however, should be the leaders and set the example.

"This is no one man's work and the trumpet call of duty and of love for your unfortunate fellow men and women and children is summoning you and your children to awaken from your artificial life of luxury and ease, extravagance and self-consciousness, from your feeling of safety-first and smugness, to a realization of your opportunities and of the need for individual service; instead of forced giving, of the need for sacrifices on your part. Do not govern yourselves by what others give, but obey your own heart promptings. I do not care how you criticise me; my conscience is abuse-proof, so that if I can but arouse you from your apathy and listlessness, you may use me for a target and welcome. Some of my friends are calling me 'Rabbi'—I feel like a rabbi should feel, but have not the power of expression or oratory that the title calls for. Still I plead with you, out of regard for our poor people, for the honor and good name of the Jews of Brooklyn, for our own self-respect and out of the pride we should take in brightening and sweetening our own family and home life, to be serious and not frivolous; for your reverence of the name of the Almighty above, who knows all and before whom all material wealth will be vain and useless, I make this appeal to you, Brooklyn Jewish leaders, not only for increased subscriptions now, tonight, but for your constructive interest and united, persistent and untiring efforts to secure new members and increases from others.

VOLUNTARY INCREASES URGED

"Why do we need a Sacrifice Week to bring increases?—all of you spent much money at the Fair—let us make all such things, with the attending enormous amount of work and petty annoyances, unnecessary this year and in the future by placing the Federation on a really firm footing and giving freely and voluntarily without the sham and the show and the advertising.

"Do unto others as you would be done by.' You may be prosperous today and *war* may ruin you tomorrow. The science of putting aside for a rainy day, economy and thrift are all praiseworthy, but he who plays the game of safety-first too strongly and finely by selfish hoarding of money and deafness to appeals of charity here must answer in another place some day, and safety-first here may mean salvation of the soul last there.

"We Jews are proud of our belief in one ever-living and true God, to whom we owe all and to whom we must account and to whom we pray—I say if you expect mercy, you must show mercy. Our stewardship will be weighed and balanced by the good

we have done, the service rendered, the suffering relieved, the brotherly and sisterly love shown here. Do not procrastinate.

"Do not be satisfied with past performances. Give money, work harder. We ask for consideration and for justice, not for favors. Be bold. 'He that asketh faintly beggeth a denial.'

WOULD PUNISH CHARITY SHIRKERS

"If I had my way I would publish the name of and publicly pillory every man who did not do his full duty according to his means—I would have ostracized from membership in clubs, associations and society generally such unfeeling, unthinking, selfish, self-centered individuals and make them associate with money alone until they became sick and tired of it and volunteered without solicitation to bear their equal share of the burdens and misery of the world.

"Were it not for hope the heart would break.' Therefore, I plead for your generous sympathies and I ask pardon from any to whom I have given offense. Please let my concern for the future of our charities be my excuse for having spoken in this strain."

DEEDS ACCOMPLISHED

Jennie F. Purvin

Chicago

Two years ago, at the invitation of the Program Committee of the National Conference of Jewish Charities, the Chicago Woman's Aid was given an opportunity to bring an account of its civic and philanthropic activities to the attention of the Conference. What was then referred to as actual club work may, at this writing, be spoken of as deeds accomplished.

Such is the mission of the woman's club that it chooses from among the neglected needs of the society those which are most pressing and, with what strength, energy of purpose and resources it may be able to command, demonstrates to the public how these needs may be met and carries forward the demonstration to that point where official confidence and public recognition are won. At this juncture the municipality usually steps in and, through the department correlated, takes over the experiment, provides for its maintenance, gives it a permanent character and possibly enlarges upon it.

Such has been the pleasant fate of the more important enterprises with which the Chicago Woman's Aid was identified two years ago. Its most serious attention was then being given to the problem of the child leaving school at the age of fourteen, with an all too meager equipment, to seek a livelihood in the keenly competitive business world. It was financing one of the four vocational directors "loaned" to the Board of Education for the purpose of interviewing these young children and their parents, endeavoring to persuade the latter to retain the children in school until the sixteenth year; these vocational directors have also investigated conditions in factories still employing young children; they have placed such children as needed work in the most desirable situations to be found, and have attempted, by follow-up work, to hold the children in such positions in order to prevent the shifting habits soon acquired by young persons who launch into the busi-

ness world without any fixed purpose and previous training.

This vocational direction has been taken over by the Board of Education since the first of the year. It is therefore now a recognized part of the program of the School Board and should therefore gradually be extended until it reaches all the school children needing this valuable assistance.

Another movement sponsored by the Chicago Woman's Aid during the past five years has become an important activity of the Board of Education since the first of January. Recognizing the need for wholesome, well-planned recreation for adolescents, the club carried on very elaborate experiments in the use of a school house during the evening periods. Regular social center work, modestly carried on by the Board of Education, was enlarged upon by the supplying of special leaders for many attractive activities. Civic and social events were scheduled, Saturday evening dances were conducted. Meanwhile the movement has become so popular not only in this one neighborhood but also throughout the entire city that the Board of Education has adopted a very liberal policy in the granting of school houses for community work and has set aside the sum of \$50,000 to be used during the year in the conduct of community centers. Within the last month the idea of combining the night schools and social-center work in one building, which the Chicago Woman's Aid demonstrated to be quite feasible by an actual experiment a year ago, has been accepted by the Board of Education. For, upon the completion of the regular night school term, instead of closing the work, all classes were transferred to the nearest social center.

The club has been no less successful with the one municipal undertaking which it sponsored. Recognizing the need for public comfort stations in our city, a committee from the organization began a study of the cost, plans and possible location of such convenience stations in the central district of our city. The most available place at which to begin was found in connection with the public library. It took three years of constant agitation among the city officials

to have the site approved, the money set aside for the purpose and the station built. Today Chicago may boast of at least one very handsome, centrally located public comfort station, which the committee hopes will be but the beginning of a number of such places, for the City Council, having recognized the need of them, has appointed a special committee to cover the entire city in an investigation of the subject.

The club has also sponsored the formation of a central "Committee on Scholarships for Jewish Children." This work has hitherto been carried on in an efficient but modest way by the club itself, by several other women's organizations, as well as by the Conference of Jewish Women's Organizations. It is now the hope of the new committee to concentrate all the efforts in behalf of scholarship work and to enlarge greatly upon what has been done in the past.

To this program of work successfully consummated may be added one new feature. A year ago the club set aside, as a memorial to a past president of the organization, the sum of \$500, to be known as the "Fannie R. Adler Memorial Loan Fund." From this fund small loans are made, without interest, to persons in need of temporary assistance, persons whose circumstances are such that they could not secure the assistance from any other source. This fund has been administered through the Woman's Loan Association of Chicago and is subject to all the regulations of this association. It is used in those cases where the usual guarantors demanded upon the ordinary loan cannot be secured and yet the parties asking for help are trustworthy and deserving. It has therefore opened a new avenue of service to the Loan Association.

The winter's experience has thus been a satisfactory one. It has again demonstrated to the club the need for a very definite program of work from year to year, if final results are to be attained. One complaint against women's club work is that it is vague and indefinite, flitting from one program to another. The Chicago Woman's Aid may congratulate itself upon the fact that it has escaped this danger and may once again point with pardonable pride to the successful completion of some of its greatest undertakings.

THE TEXAS CONFERENCE OF JEWISH CHARITIES

George Fox
Fort Worth

When the writer became president of the Texas Conference of Charities and Corrections it occurred to him that a Jewish section of this Conference would be advisable. Texas is a very large state. Its Jewish communities are not as highly developed along organized charity lines as are the Northern communities. The distances are great and the schnorrers who make their way to the state put a very obstinate imposition upon the communities which they visit. Besides this, every winter brings its army of wanderers to the South land. Texas gets an army of tubercular patients bound for South and West Texas in search of health. The country immediately surrounding San Antonio and San Angelo is noted for a climate favorable for consumptives and this fact is well known now over the North. The result has been, as is easily seen, that the communities of Texas have been taxed rather heavily and the fact that the Jews in the smaller towns are very easily imposed upon has not remedied the situation. The section idea did not suit several of the leaders in the state and on November 17th, pursuant to a suggestion made by Rabbi Zielonka, of El Paso, Mr. Jules K. Hexter, one of the best known of the communal leaders of the state, held an informal conference, at which a number of rabbis and laymen were present and the preliminary steps for the organization of a State Conference of Jewish Charities were taken. Mr. J. K. Hexter was chosen president and Mr. H. S. Sche-line, president of the Federated Jewish Charities of Dallas, was chosen secretary.

Some forty letters were sent out by Mr. Hexter to different communities in Texas and out of these about twenty were received that were favorable to the movement. The larger cities which contained charity organizations were enthusiastic, while in the smaller cities where there are no relief organizations the officials of the congregations replied favorably. Needless to say, the rabbis were also in favor of it. If the present plans of the officers and those who are interested in the movement work out a conference will be held, probably in

connection with the Texas Social Welfare Conference in Houston or Galveston in the spring, when a permanent organization will be formed and the problems incidental to Jewish charitable work in Texas will be discussed.

Among the questions that the leaders in the proposed conference expect to discuss are those of the education of communities to the appreciation of the work of organized charity; the passing on problems and the dumping of transients into the larger towns; that of taking proper care of the dependent who lives in the smaller towns without pauperizing him; the question of handling tubercular patients and the educating of communities outside of South and West Texas to the value of out-door treatment at home. The loan fund feature will be emphasized and the question of just how Jews in both large and small towns may be made to meet their obligations to the poor will be taken up. Two other matters that will receive attention are the colonization possibilities in Texas for immigrants and the disposition and care of immigrants after the war in Europe shall have been over.

Those who are taking a leading part in this movement believe that it is necessary and timely. Whether here in the Southwest a Jewish Conference can exist is a question. Some of us believe that it can.

Ninth Biennial Meeting

OF THE

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF
JEWISH CHARITIES

Indianapolis, May 7-10

SEVEN SESSIONS

Delegates intending to go will please
send names to "Jewish Charities"
for publication.