

PRESIDENTIAL REPORT

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The past 2 years have been difficult ones for our people. We are facing serious problems that we cannot ignore — many related to the *intifada*, the lack of a meaningful peace process in the Middle East, and a slow but clear erosion in the support for Israel among non-Jews and Jews. At the same time, we are faced with the challenge and opportunity of a victory in our long struggle to free Soviet Jews. When I began my term as your president, emigration from the Soviet Union was down to a trickle, and now the floodgates are wide open. Our world has changed in ways that could never have been predicted just 24 months ago.

This is the context for an assessment of what has been accomplished in the past 2 years. From my vantage point, we were not able to keep pace with the rapidity of change in society. Yet, we have begun a crucial journey that, if successful, will change the nature of CJCS. It will make possible a new vision of our tasks that will transform the popular view of CJCS as an organization that sponsors an annual conference and a quarterly publication into the major integrating organization of Jewish communal workers in all fields. In its final meeting, the CJCS Board in Philadelphia passed a motion almost unanimously to change the name of CJCS to the Jewish Communal Service Association.

This is the first of a number of decisions that are emerging from the "Selig process" to which the leadership of CJCS and its APAs have devoted a great deal of time during the past 2 years. The issues were simple to state but difficult to solve: How do we harness the forces of our field in a way that will provide the necessary strength and vitality required to move into the next century? Can we develop a common bond that will bring to the fore a new identity that we will all share while main-

taining the important specialized interests of the APAs?

I think we are on our way to resolving these issues. It will be the task of the next administration to build on the process of the past 2 years and to make certain that we not slide back. There is too much at stake.

On other fronts, we have also made progress. Although we are far from secure financially (what nonprofit association is?) we have avoided deficits and have some reserves. The attendance at the Philadelphia Annual Meeting exceeded our expectations, and several of our APAs had their best attendance ever! An agreement with the World Conference of Jewish Communal Service will bring our two organizations much closer. We will now be providing administrative support for the World Conference from our offices, and our executive director will also serve as the WCJCS secretary-general. The combined resources will permit us to add to our small staff.

Our quarterly professional journal is under the direction of a new editor and the transition has gone very well. Several outstanding issues have been published. This is a major benefit of membership and a crucial contribution to the practice knowledge of our field.

The recruitment committee has published a brochure to attract new workers in all aspects of our work. Some 50,000 copies were printed initially, and a board-approved distribution plan is being implemented to make certain that these brochures will reach the intended audience.

During the past 2 years we have begun to collect data about salaries in the various systems that make up the Jewish communal service field, as well as salary information in the general service community. Our goal is to demonstrate where gaps or inadequacies exist and to provide guidance to our members and personnel committees. We

still have much work to do in this area, but already some gains have been made in specific communities.

My hope had been that we would escalate our commitment to social action and social policy. Our voice—based on our expertise and grassroots connection—must be heard with greater effectiveness. We did issue during the past few months a public policy statement on reproductive rights, which I commend to your attention. It fuses both Jewish tradition and social work values in a model way.

I would not want to end this brief report without calling attention to the activities of our associated groups (APAs) and our local groups. They add variety, specialization, and vitality to the tapestry that is CJCS.

The work is not finished. I inherited a full agenda from my predecessor, and I pass on to my successor an even greater list of challenges. There is a critical shortage of trained personnel for our field. We need not only to attract new workers but we must also investigate why so many leave the field of Jewish communal service after a few years.

For me, these 2 years have been exciting ones. No one works anew or alone. The foundations for the accomplishments of the past 2 years were laid by past leaders: presidents, directors, and board members.

We owe them gratitude. To my colleagues on the CJCS Board my deep thanks. Our organization is blessed by having at its professional helm, Joel Ollander, whose guidance and friendship were and continue to be invaluable to me. The key support for all the work he does—and we do—is Minna Nelson, for whom this is a mission and not just a job.

I also want to thank my colleagues at B'nai B'rith and at the National Council on the Aging who understood the importance of this task and helped along the way.

Finally my thanks go to an organization. Almost 50 years ago, I arrived in this country as a refugee. At Queens College as a timid 16-year-old, I found a home in the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation. Later, I spent more than 2 decades with the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization. The contribution of these 2 movements to the personnel that make up CJCS cannot be underestimated. Even if I had not spent 10 years as its executive vice president, I would want to recognize B'nai B'rith. I am also in debt to B'nai B'rith for friendships that were forged decades ago and still continue to this very day. Among them are my wife, Ernest Kahn, Ferne Katleman, Sam Skolnick, Steve Hoffman, and scores of others.

Thank you for the privilege you gave me to serve our people.