

Contemporary Issues Affecting Future Jewish Community Center Planning*

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RARE have been the times when change has affected social policy, practice and organization as deeply as it has at the end of the sixties. Planning for the seventies must contemplate a society radically altered by the mid-century experience.

The Jewish community center was fashioned by American Jewish ingenuity and adapted to the American environment. It is an instrumentality for sustaining Jewish group life in an open society which is quite different from the closed-in communal existence of the Jewish past. Closely linked with the American milieu, the Center therefore is keenly sensitive to changes in the general scene.

Revolutionary social convulsions invariably have had an impact on the Jewish community and its institutions. World War I, the boom of the twenties, the Great Depression, and World War II gave abundant evidence of this. Center planning must deal with the implications of contemporary social upheavals and of the new changes which surely lie ahead, all of which will markedly alter society generally and Jewish life as well.

The forces which influence Center planning are by no means confined to the general social scene. Radical changes in the experience of the Jewish people exert profound effects upon their institutions. What could be a more vivid in-

dication of this than the recollection of the impact on American Jewish life of the cessation of European immigration, the holocaust, and the establishment of the State of Israel! Centers planning for the future must weigh the meaning of the factors which continue to alter the nature of Jewish existence in America.

What, then, are the issues with which Center leaders must contend as they project the Center's future under these rapidly changing conditions?

1. Vital Jewish Living in An Open Society

The position of the Jew since the holocaust has altered dramatically. Western society has opened to him and his stance no longer is shaped by a hostile, external world intent upon his destruction. Economic, political and institutional doors are accessible to the Jew as never before in American experience. It cannot now be said that Jewish identity is fueled by an outer society which forces the Jew back upon his Jewishness as was the case in the past. For the most part, the Jew is free to move as he chooses, even relinquishing his Jewishness if he wishes to do so.

Few Jews aspire to such separation. Yet, while accepting their Jewish identity, most lack an inner-directed Jewish commitment which grows out of appreciation of the worth of their Jewish heritage. What is necessary to ensure personal identity and group continuity is that the Jew know his heritage and understand its relevance to contemporary life. The achievement of these pur-

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poses requires change in the ideology, practice, structure, participation, and leadership of Jewish institutions. Jewish educational enterprises must be revised radically. Jewish knowledge must be taught as vitally related to the current concerns of people, particularly to the acute social issues for which drastic solutions are so pressing—poverty, racial injustice and war. Jewish values must be understood and experienced in these terms.

A significant Jewish life in an open society requires Jewish commitment by the mass of Jews. If Jewish *peoplehood* has meaning and if assuring the viability of the Jewish *group* is a guiding purpose for Jewish leaders, the focus of education must be on the broadest Jewish constituency. It is illusory to aspire to Jewish survival through a small "saving remnant." While the intensity of Jewish education may differ for some, American Jewry as a whole must acquire a sense of the meaningfulness of its Jewishness.

The Jewish community center must provide itself with the orientation, the program, and the organizational arrangements by which it can enable Jews to understand their Jewishness as a modern force able to sustain itself as the Jew moves freely in the open American society.

2. Dynamic Relationships to the Larger American Society

The mobility of American society has generated anxiety among many Jewish leaders about the future of Jewish life. They view with alarm the acculturating impact of the society upon Jews. Some believe the Jewish people cannot sustain themselves against these pressures. They conclude that Jewish survival requires withdrawal into a sectarian isolation within which to build a Jewish existence.

This is untenable inasmuch as full

participation in the free society is the modern Jew's only valid stance. A viable life orientation includes a Jewish *and* an American identity. In this context, the Jew moves freely in many relationships with his non-Jewish neighbors, even as he retains a rich Jewish commitment and involves himself deeply in Jewish life. He molds his living pattern on the pluralism and diversity which is fundamental to America. The task of Jewish leaders must be to cultivate this duality. They must encourage this life-orientation, provide personal models of it, and guide people in its implementation.

Problems are inevitable in the dynamics of Jewish relationships with the general society. The recent anti-Semitism from the New Left and from Black and Arab sources must not be exaggerated for America is essentially positive in its attitudes towards the Jew. However such challenges must be confronted. Relationships must be fostered with the Blacks and other groups, and constructive inter-faith and inter-group experiences dealing with shared concerns must be encouraged. Jews and their organizations must play a significant part in correcting the social ills which afflict the nation and perpetuate wide injustice. The present milieu gives great sanction to maintaining ethnic identities and provides a fruitful field for inter-group relationships based upon mutual regard of groups for one another.

The Jewish community center must be animated by these purposes and its programs must cultivate these relationships. The Center's person-centered, growth-through-experience orientation equips it uniquely to deal with the need of Jews to live Jewishly as they participate in the larger society. On levels from verbalization to group action it can help Jewish persons to express the unity of their Jewish and general selves.

3. The Orientation of Jewish Youth to American Jewish Life

The alienation of Jewish youth is the subject of much apprehension in the Jewish community. Jewish teen-agers and college youth tend to dissociate themselves from Jewish institutional life and to be bitterly critical of the Jewish establishment. This parallels their attitudes towards the larger society. Youth has contempt for an adult generation which has not coped with poverty, racial inequality and war. It expresses this in verbal disapproval and unconventional behavior, including the use of drugs, unusual apparel, relaxation of sex taboos, and militancy. It rejects most organized expressions of Jewish life and charges Jewish leaders with lack of integrity in their personal Jewish practice, preoccupation with conspicuous consumption, placidness in the face of critical social crises, and remoteness from the younger generation.

However justified their anxiety about youth, it is useless for Jewish leaders to regale young people with criticism. It is more important for them to understand the reasons for youth's rebellion and what can be done constructively to deal with it. What is required is an empathetic outreach which is non-judgmental, accepts hostility, and strives for a ground upon which Jewish youth can communicate, identify and act within the Jewish community. Most Jewish youth reject not their Jewishness but the forms, practices and institutions with which contemporary Jewish life is garbed. A flexible, non-institutional approach emphasizing values and action, not structure and organization, has the best chance to gain their acceptance.

The objective should be to help young people understand that Jewish values are closely akin to the social goals which must animate action to solve contempo-

rary social ills. They should become aware that these objectives are shared by many fellow-Jews with whom young people can make common cause in social action. Young people should be encouraged to utilize Jewish associations for action to influence social change. They should implement Jewish values through involvement in Jewish life, sharing in Jewish communal efforts, defending Jews in other lands, and supporting the people of Israel. They should be enabled to speak to the Jewish community about their apprehensions and criticisms and feel that their voices are heard. In a time of emphasis upon *participation*, young people must be given the chance to take part in the policy-making of Jewish organizations and the Jewish community as a whole. The criticisms youth make of Jewish life should serve as the basis for needed change.

Focused as it is upon the needs of youth, the Jewish community center has a heavy responsibility in this field. An effective reaching-out to Jewish young people must be implicit in its work. It must be motivated by these guidelines in its youth programs. Only in this way can the Center help the Jewish community to redesign a strong link with its young.

4. The Dilemma of the Jewish Family

The declining efficacy of the Jewish family has been reported by many observers. Today's mobility enables the members of families, especially the young, to go further afield than ever was the case in the past. The external influences to which they are exposed have expanded greatly. The family no longer is either the exclusive or often the primary setting in which young people mature. It competes with outside forces as well as those invading the home itself through television and other means of communication.

The family has particular importance in Jewish tradition and its erosion debilitates the capacity of the Jewish institutional structure to integrate the young into Jewish life. This certainly vitiates the force of the family in affecting the personality development of its members. Reinforcement and rehabilitation of the Jewish family should be pursued through counselling, educating parents, expanding communication between young people and their parents and increasing opportunities for experience by the family as a whole. Creative activities are needed in which family members can join together, including those in which Jewish values can be applied to social issues through family social action. Family tutoring of deprived children, leadership of groups in settlement houses and centers in ghetto areas, support of the United Jewish Appeal and action on behalf of Soviet Jewry can open new vistas for families.

The Jewish community center can contribute importantly to this. Its family basis of affiliation enables it to serve large numbers of families, and through its program orientation it can do so flexibly and creatively. It can be a locus for family activities as well as family life education and counselling about family problems. The Center program must contribute to the renewed vitality of the Jewish family. Centers must relate to family members individually and collectively and make family enrichment a conscious goal.

5. Identification with the Jewish People as a World Community

A new unity has permeated the Jewish world since the holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel. Broader dimensions of Jewish identity and joint action among Jews are much in evidence. In an era so internationally oriented, it

is all the more comprehensible that American Jews have deepened their sense of belonging to the Jewish people as a whole. This provides larger scope and meaning to Jewishness, at the same time that it gives the Jewish milieu a quality appropriate to the times.

This identity needs nurturing through forging ties to Jews in other lands and cultivating two-way associations with them. Jews in Europe, Latin America, South Africa, Australia and elsewhere must become familiar to American Jews through the interchange of visits and other contacts. Particularly important is the obligation of American Jews as the freest and strongest part of the world Jewish community to defend the rights of Jews in other lands whose freedom is imperiled. This is notable in the case of Jews in the Soviet Union and other Iron Curtain countries, as well as those in the Arab lands. As the most affluent of the Jewish peoples, American Jewry has heavy responsibilities to provide succor to Jews elsewhere who need assistance, in keeping with its proud tradition.

The Jewish community center has a particular opportunity to give this objective daily meaning. Center programs must familiarize members with Jewish life throughout the world, encourage a feeling of identity with all sectors of the Jewish people, cultivate active relationships through creative programming and involve members in action to aid and defend their fellow-Jews.

6. The Dynamic Role of Israel for the American Jew

Nothing has demonstrated more dramatically the bond between American and Israeli Jewry than the response of American Jews to the six-day war crisis in 1967. Together with the events which

followed, this gave new meaning to the psychic, cultural, ethnic and social meaning of Israel for American Jewry. It is recognized now that the mere existence of Israel, not to speak of the dynamism which it infuses into the Jewish group, can contribute significantly to the life of the American Jew. For this reason, there is far greater awareness today of the importance of interchange between American and Israeli Jewry. Reciprocal visiting, programs of study and service, exchange of workers and leaders and other joint projects must be multiplied. Important also is the obligation of Jews in the United States to express their identity with Israeli Jewry through material aid and support of Israel's efforts to maintain its national integrity.

Future projections for Jewish community centers must emphasize the opportunities and the responsibilities in programming for understanding and association between American Jews and Israelis. Israel-oriented activity in the Center can deepen the sense of Jewish identity and provide fertile involvement in Jewish life. This link already has been made through the growing number of Israelis working on the staffs of Centers, through training programs in Israel for American Center staff, travel in Israel by Center members, Israeli visits to the United States, cultural programs using Israeli resources, UJA campaigning on behalf of Israel, and social action to support Israel. The sponsorship of the Jerusalem YM and YWHA by the Centers of North America has made a highly important contribution to Israeli life at the same time that it has provided a basis for productive Israel-related programming in Centers. The experiences afforded Center members can be enriched if the Center builds upon these foundations and enlarges the scope of its Israel focussed activity.

7. A New Generation of Jewish Leadership

The quality of its leadership is the measure of the Jewish community's capacity to deal with future confrontations, just as it is for American society as a whole. The integrity of the American voluntary system requires well-oriented, capable leaders and the priority accorded leadership development in the Jewish community is a response to the leadership challenge in the whole nation. A Jewish communal leadership development program serves to meet both responsibilities.

There must be special emphasis upon developing new leaders from the emerging generations. This requires cultivating young people with leadership potentialities, training and guiding them to progressively greater leadership roles, and integrating them into communal activity. The Jewish community requires leaders with a positive Jewish commitment, broad vision, wide social perspective, and good leadership skills.

The Jewish community center is one of the Jewish community's effective instruments for the discovery and cultivation of leaders. Voluntary association in the Center is a natural setting in which leadership talents can be identified and nourished through guidance, training and experience. The Center must accent this function as a central part of its task in serving the Jewish and the general communities. This is necessary also in order that the Center may obtain the leaders essential to its own functioning.

Coupled with developing lay leadership is the necessity for expanding the ranks of qualified professional leaders. The best recruits for professional careers in Jewish communal services are the young people who acquire their Jewish commitment through education and

community experience during their developing years. With professional training and additional Jewish preparation, such persons can be outstanding professionals in Jewish community service.

Inasmuch as this recruiting can be done best from among the young people active in the Jewish community, the Jewish community center is in a special position to discover them and to nurture their interest in careers in the Jewish community. As a continuing matter, Centers must apply special attention to finding, encouraging, and guiding persons with potentialities for professional Jewish communal service.

8. A Vital Sense of "Jewish Community"

While American Jews have given dramatic evidence of coordinated action in crises, Jewish life falls short of the unity and coherence of a true "community". This is evident from the lack of primacy accorded the concerns of the whole community vis-à-vis those of particular groups and the absence of a consistent pattern of joint action especially when there is no crisis.

The viability of American Jewry requires that it function effectively as a local and national community. Within this community, there must be recognition of the importance of particular groups, their obligations to one another, and the need for common action on major Jewish concerns. Such a viewpoint can heighten the effectiveness of action on Jewish and general needs and elevate the meaning of Jewish identity.

The Jewish community center must give particular attention to measures which generate a deeper sense of community commitment. The Center can create a feeling of community internally through the approach taken by its board and staff and the way it conducts its affairs. Its sensitivity to Jewish and

general communal issues, its consideration for other organizations, its emphasis on inter-organizational cooperation, and its accent on "community" in its program can go far towards this objective.

The Center must apply these values in both its operational system and its program. Its structure must provide opportunities for participation in Center policy-making. Its planning must emphasize interrelationships with other agencies and collaboration in such planning. It must be affirmative towards Federations and Welfare Funds as well as United Funds & Councils and cooperate closely with them. In these ways the Center can generate an appreciation of the meaning of "Jewish community" and the centrality of Jewish communal obligations.

9. The Continuing Process of Social Change

Though this generation has lived through unprecedented social change, a continuing revolution in ideas and institutions is predictable. The demand for institutional adaptation will be unabated, and tomorrow will require no less sensitivity and accommodation to new conditions than did yesterday. Scientific, social, economic, and cultural changes will influence profoundly the future of the Jewish community, even as they have up to now.

The ascent of the socio-economic status of Jews doubtless will be sustained, with inevitable implications for their values, aspirations and daily behavior. It will continue to demand radical change in Jewish institutional functioning. Forecasts indicate a further rise in the college-educated portion of the Jewish population, surpassing the more than 80 percent of college-age Jewish youth who presently are in college. The Jews of the future will be almost en-

tirely college-trained. The effect of this on intellectual and cultural interests and tastes is as apparent as is its significance for further alteration in the occupational and social patterns of Jews. The implications of these factors for institutional revisions are inescapable.

The acculturation resulting from the greater involvement of the Jew in the life of the general community has markedly changed him. The continuance of this evolution is inevitable and it will necessitate more adaptation of programs and practices. Though the traditional intergenerational conflict has been accentuated by the times, it has hardly run its course and the adaptations it requires will preoccupy Jewish leaders in the future. Greatly revised attitudes and means are needed to build new relationships between the young and the adult generations and to close the widening gap between them.

If new knowledge and practice have altered institutional programs and arrangements for health, educational and social welfare services, they have but foreshadowed what is yet to come. Research and demonstration will produce additional insights into human growth and development and institutional functioning which will revolutionize concepts and systems of service. Agencies must adapt to new knowledge and techniques, revised ways of organizing programs, and vastly different relationships among fields of service to people. This adaptation will have great meaning for the internal programs, staffs, and organizational relationships of institutions like Centers.

Centers must anticipate a future of uninterrupted social evolution. The necessity for profound accommodation will be imperative. There will be "no hiding place down here": the obligation of leaders will be for alertness to change, a quest to understand it, and a non-

defensive receptivity to the reorientation and revision it makes necessary.

10. The Radically Altered Urban Complex

Few social changes have had a more telling impact on the Jewish group than the radical alterations in the urban constellation. As an urban people, Jews are profoundly affected by what happens to the metropolitan areas of America.

There are several elements in the urban picture which have implications for Jewish agencies. The movement of population from the core city into the suburbs has required major planning within the central city and the suburbs. Programs to restore the decaying urban core have caused the construction of new multiple dwellings in the center of cities for the middle and upper economic classes as well as for low income people. While this has resulted in the return of some Jewish population to the central city, especially middle-aged and aged persons, the Jewish group in most areas still is essentially suburban. The return of Jews to the central city has yet to become a significant social phenomenon, though it cannot be dismissed as a future possibility. The New York metropolitan area obviously is a special situation with its own unique characteristics. For the nation as a whole, the predominant Jewish mobility continues to be to the suburbs. While declining core areas are being resuscitated through physical rehabilitation, they are areas still rejected by most Jews. The core of the cities with their combination of deteriorated slums and new housing usually is the residence of the poorest, most deprived population which suffers from racial injustice. Further upward mobility by Jews is likely to bring a continuing aspiration for improved living standards and a march to the sub-

urbs in search of it. The suburb and its growing social complexity will constitute a deepening challenge to the Jewish community.

These suburbs differ in important ways from the older areas of residence. They lack the homogeneity of city neighborhoods with primarily Jewish population. Living in these mixed areas has changed Jewish life patterns and accelerated the outward mobility of Jews. On the other hand many of the central city's problems of decay are appearing in the older suburbs. Poverty, crime, housing deterioration, and poor planning have accelerated the decline of these suburbs and many suburban Jewish communities face problems not unlike those in the core of the older urban centers.

At the same time, the remnant of the Jews in the city residential areas from which Jews have moved is a source of concern. The plight of the Jewish merchants and the residual Jewish older adults in decaying cities has serious implications for the Jewish community, especially in regard to intergroup relations.

In the transition accompanying the replacement of Jews by Blacks and Puerto Ricans, intergroup conflicts and tensions have been inevitable. They are aggravated by the lack of meaningful community programs for improving housing, welfare, medical services, education, and racial equality. Militant protest action has engendered a backlash of counter-action. Anxiety has escalated in the whole city even as the demand for decisive social progress has increased in crescendo.

The collateral effects of this situation have been felt by public and voluntary institutions. Jewish organizations have been urged to deal with the serious social problems in the urban ghettos, complicating their dilemma as agencies

whose *raison d'être* is to meet Jewish needs. In some cities, pressures have been exerted by the United Funds to shift funds to programs for low income populations, precipitating questions about the obligation of the Funds to established agencies, such as those serving the Jewish community.

These conditions make substantial demands upon Jewish community centers and other Jewish institutions. There is a need for continuous planning for the future of the Jewish organizations in the old areas, as well as the development of Centers in new communities. When Jewish agencies leave old areas to go elsewhere to serve Jews, they must engage in a community process to assure that new general community auspices take responsibility for continuing the services in the old community. There are program implications of these developments dealing with the responsibility of Jewish agencies for promoting intergroup understanding, for making their resources and skills available to underdeveloped minority communities, and for applying Jewish values to social action for community betterment. These measures must be taken within the context of the primary Jewish purposes of Centers.

The pressure for diversion of United Fund resources away from such agencies as Centers to programs concentrating on work with the poor brings into question some basic principles of organized community life. The desire for evaluation of present services and the selection of priorities is sound. Moreover, there can be no challenge to the urgency of work with the poor and the expansion of voluntary effort in this field. But this must be done through expanding the funds raised, rather than taking them away from agencies serving special group needs. The Jewish community established its agencies to serve its distinctive

requirements. When it joined in general community campaigns for funding Jewish agencies, it was animated by a spirit of community unity and never intended that its right to the support of these services would be challenged. The viability of United Funds as inclusive community instruments depends upon the safeguarding of this principle.

Operational policies of Centers are exposed to scrutiny by these conditions, raising issues such as non-Jewish membership and participation in Centers and the inclusion of non-Jews on Center boards of directors. As institutions helping Jews to rationalize the problem of living Jewishly and at the same time participating in the general society, it is inescapable that Centers must make their facilities available to all. However, it should be explicit for all Center participants, Jews and non-Jews alike, that the Center is an institution of the Jewish community designed to serve Jews with a program which will intensify and enrich their Jewishness. In addition, because the Center is a Jewish institution carrying out specifically Jewish purposes, it is appropriate that its board consist of Jewish persons prepared to give leadership to such a program.

For an indeterminate period, the conflicts and crises in urban areas will necessitate reevaluation and adaptation by Jewish community centers.

11. Community Responsibility for Human Services

Social changes have raised issues dealing with the responsibility of the community for meeting human needs. Some argue that people should "help themselves" rather than depend upon society to provide services for them. While such programs as the social insurances have become permanent parts of the national life, old notions still persist in

the assertions that people are losing their independence to a welfare state. The American people have not yet accepted the fact that the total interests of society are served best when essential health, welfare and educational services are provided on a community basis.

This assumes significance in regard to the middle-class whose members have proposed need for the whole range of health, educational and social services. Subsidization of programs for these people by community funds has been challenged in the voluntary sector. There is too little understanding of the economic position of the American middle-class and the indispensability of community subsidy for the provision of services to them. Middle-class people are no better able to afford fully their needed social services than their educational institutions, for which community subsidy is accepted as a matter of course. While there is acknowledgment that people should pay for services to the extent of their ability to do so, there is difference over how to determine this. The issues in this controversy require much more clarification. The validity of community responsibility for the provision of services to middle income people must be sustained. In light of its commitment to a primarily middle-class constituency, this subject has much pertinence for the future planning of the Jewish community center.

In the social welfare community, the debate continues over community responsibility for the range of developmental and preventive services for all people versus services chiefly or entirely confined to the poor and the sick. Many philanthropically minded people incline to the poverty-therapy emphasis, with its strong appeal to social conscience and social responsibility. Others are aware that the security and well-being of the whole society depend upon the

social, emotional, and communal maturity of a cross-section of citizens. People require social services to assure their growth and development even though they may be free of economic want or the need for therapeutic service. Out of this controversy has emerged a greater acceptance of the idea that the community is responsible *both* for services to the poor and the sick *and* for developmental and preventive programs for all. This discussion is likely to persist and Jewish community centers will have to effectively interpret their task with particular emphasis on the latter.

Another currently argued ideological issue deals with voluntary versus governmental obligation for human services. American society has experienced frequent shifts in emphasis on this matter. There have been periods of stress on the primacy of public services in meeting human needs, with voluntary services dismissed as old fashioned and so rigid and unchanging that only government initiative can provide the breakthroughs for meeting new social requirements. This viewpoint fails to recognize that rigidities afflict public as well as voluntary services and the pressure for change to meet new needs must be applied to both.

The present tendency is towards a balance in this matter. Both voluntary and public services are acknowledged to have important parts in the complex of social services and the former are being encouraged by government itself. The role of each and the means for their best collaboration will continue to be argued as a matter of social policy.

There are fields in which the primacy of voluntary responsibility is generally accepted. One such area is that of serving the particular needs of religious communities and the provision of sectarian programs. In a democratic system, the functions performed by the

Jewish community center in meeting Jewish needs and enriching American Jewish life cannot be carried out under public auspices. While the Center can accept public funds for specific projects which have general significance and are open to the whole community, its basic program must be supported by the Jewish segment of society which has created it to serve its unique needs.

The Jewish community center inevitably is affected by these debates. It will be reinforced in its efforts to secure ideological and material support as these questions become clarified, and particularly as society appreciates the role of voluntary initiative and gives recognition to it.

12. Issues in a War and Defense-Oriented Society

The Viet Nam war and the military defense orientation it has given to American life has been a great source of frustration and discontent in recent years. Apart from its clash with the general popular abhorrence of violence between human beings, the war and the defense milieu have had deeper effects. They have caused a value alteration with respect to violence and the sanctity of human life in the nation. The use of violence on the college campus and in the community for social confrontation reflects the deterioration of the sanction for peaceful social change. The war orientation resulting from the nation's long-term Far-Eastern involvement quite apparently has affected profoundly the attitudes and the behavior of Americans.

These commitments also have caused the diversion of the country's resources to military purposes. This has retarded the use of the nation's wealth to meet urgent social problems, evoking the anger and fury of the poor and the guilt and frustration of many of their fellow-

Americans. The consequent rising militancy has caused a counter-action which is punitive to the poor and the blacks, resistant to the programs necessary to alleviate social ills, and productive of a retaliatory attitude which encourages rightist tendencies in the country. Such a condition can have an adverse effect on all minority groups, including the Jews.

This has many implications for the Jewish community center. The Center must provide a means through which people can inform themselves about the complex issues in the situation and can take constructive social action to influence the nation's policy makers. People are seeking ways to express their frustration over the war and Centers should give them opportunities for reflective study and constructive social action. Centers should provide forums for discussion of the war and the programmatic flexibility to enable their constituent groups to act upon the question. They should attempt to counter the decline of morale and the deterioration of values. Centers should bend their best efforts to sustain confidence in orderly, peaceful means of effecting change. Young people seeking counselling concerning Selective Service should be able to receive such help from the Center. Through its educational programs, the Center should help offset illiberal ten-

dencies and encourage conviction about the importance of solving America's social problems. It should nourish confidence in the potentialities of democracy for affording effective avenues for change.

A Perspective for the Future

Jewish community centers confront this era as significant resources for helping the community to face the future. The special strength of Centers in meeting the needs of American Jews is their distinctive way of working with people. Center leaders are convinced that people learn best that which they experience. Centers provide an infinite variety of Jewish associations guided by skilled leadership which can alter attitudes, communicate knowledge in functional terms and profoundly change behavior. The commitment to this process of growth through social relationships marks the uniqueness of the Center. The Center gains strength from this and from its intention to enrich people's interests, broaden their life experiences, and integrate these qualities into their capacity to live significantly as Jews in the open American society. It is the appreciation of this which enables Center leaders to deal confidently with the challenges of the complex and ever-changing future.