

THE IMPACT OF THE INTEGRATION STRUGGLE UPON JEWISH COMMUNAL SERVICES *

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In the letter which I received asking me to undertake this paper, the hope was expressed that the paper would deal with the following questions:

“Can Jewish services be kept Jewish in the light of increasing demands for non-discrimination in housing, employment, recreation, etc? Will those Jewish services located in neighborhoods with no specific Jewish characteristics be urged to follow the lead of Jewish hospitals in serving clientele on a non-sectarian basis? Will there be pressures by public financing agencies upon Jewish homes for the aged for non-discrimination in intake? What will be the impact upon Jewish community centers which are or will be located in areas containing large number of Negroes? What effect, if any, will there be upon Jewish family and children’s agencies in areas where similar non-sectarian services are undeveloped?”

These questions are very much like those we have been raising and discussing around the impact of public funds. The integration impact is, of course, more dramatic and immediate and has some special implications. But, in both instances, an external development has created an atmosphere of uncertainty, confusion, and insecurity about the role and future of Jewish services.

In the case of public funds, there were at issue legal and fiscal pressures. We

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recognized that fiscal control can mean policy control. In the case of the integration impact, it is moral pressure, but our concern is possibly even greater. We are like a government without a clear foreign policy. External events tend to create crises because there is no carefully thought out viewpoint which guides actions and reactions. We have a situation in which we, the professional leaders of Jewish communal service, are not in a position to give clear leadership because we are not sure in which directions we should lead.

The Immediate Impact

It is interesting to note that the questions are posed in terms of the future. They are all phrased in relation to possible developments which, presumably, have not yet taken place. I checked this against our experience in Philadelphia. If there were a current impact, we could expect to find it there. It is a city of 2,000,000 people in which there are 700,000 Negroes and 250,000 Jews. Negroes represent 27 percent of the population and more than 50 percent of all school children. Often the two groups live in contiguous areas, with the Negro group rapidly entering near or into the Jewish areas of population. The Negro social revolution is active and well led, and there are all of the social and political problems related to the upheaval.

To date, there has been practically no impact upon our services. There has not been a single instance of a request for service to a Negro in an agency which serves only Jews. This applies to our home for the aged and to family and children's agencies, which have traditionally served an exclusively Jewish clientele. We are frank to say at this point that we anticipate no problems. If any of these agencies were asked to serve Negroes, our response would be unrelated to color. It would simply be that we serve only Jews and this would include Jewish Negroes, who have been served on rare occasions as they applied.

Since our hospitals and health agencies have always served people regardless of race and religion, there is no problem of integration. The problem for these agencies is a different one, namely, what is their role as Jewish communal services? In our vocational agency, we have a mixed situation. The core agency, which offers intensive counseling and placement service for the hard to place, is limited to Jewish clients. The much larger part of the operation, a series of workshops supported almost exclusively from public and other funds, is completely integrated. In fact, a special project addressed to high school dropouts serves primarily Negro youngsters. Federation approved this project as a contribution to the general welfare in a time of crisis.

It should be pointed out that our concern about the future of our vocational agency arose long before the integration crisis. It stemmed from the impact of public funds. Federation and the agency have fully consulted on the matter and every step has been taken with a mutual recognition of the dangers. Our fears have been minimal because the board and the executive of the agency have a firm philosophy about their Jewish purposes and role. Expansion of the workshops has made it possible to serve more

Jews as well. The core agency, upon which the total operation basically depends, remains wholly Jewish. Its full support comes from Federation and the Jewish Board participates actively in all relevant phases of Federation work.

There has been an impact in the case of our two community centers but, again, not in actual experience. One of the centers is located in a completely white neighborhood with a large Jewish population. The other center is in a "center city" area of mixed population. The latter has a policy which permits non-Jews associate memberships for building use, but no voting privileges. Here, too, there has been no noticeable change in membership application patterns.

We happen to be in the midst of intensive discussions leading to merger of the two agencies. Related to these discussions is a major capital program involving millions of dollars and new buildings. The integration crisis has pointed up that, in the large city, we can no longer think in terms of exclusively white or Jewish neighborhoods. The question of eligibility for membership therefore becomes crucial. How does the center maintain its Jewish character? There are serious differences of opinion on what the policy should be, ranging from advocacy of a completely open policy to one of complete exclusiveness.

Of greatest significance in this discussion is the growing recognition that the question involves determination of what the center is supposed to be: what are its purposes; why is it here; what is the nature and scope of its sectarian responsibility; why and how should it be different from a non-Jewish center? For the first time, community and agency leaders are beginning to understand that these are the basic questions which determine programs, services, and membership policies. They are finding that the less developed their philosophy of

Jewish center work, the more confused and insecure are they about what membership policies should be.

These discussions have emphasized the basic problem we are facing on this entire question. That is the problem of our sectarianism: how do we define it, what is its rationale, and why are we still confused and insecure about it.

Sectarianism and Community Relations

The question of Jewish agency sectarianism has been and continues to be largely dominated by community relations considerations. I believe this to be a major reason for our continuing lack of clarity and conviction about a positive approach to and acceptance of the sectarian role of many of our services.

In a characteristically thoughtful paper, Professor Arnold Gurin has pointed out that, up to the end of World War II, our health and welfare services were rationalized primarily by community relations concepts.¹ Since the end of the war, there has been increasing emphasis upon the identification of individuals with the group. The function of Jewish organizations has become less to enhance the participation of Jews in the general life of the community and more to enhance their participation in and identification with the Jewish group of which they are a part. Thus the rationale for Jewish communal services has two aspects: an historical one dominated by community relations considerations and a more recent one related primarily to in-group considerations of identity and survival.

May I suggest that this latter development concern with problems of identity and survival, while it is a very real

and growing dimension in our thinking, is still sufficiently removed from so many of us as to be a minor factor as compared with the community relations element in our thinking, which is traditional and entrenched. The dramatic nature of the integration crisis has further served to highlight issues of community relations, thus further obscuring the more basic issues of in-group rationale. This can be illustrated by several recent developments.

In March, 1961, the National Community Relations Council conducted a conference on "Community Relations Components in the Work of Other Jewish Communal Services." The proceedings of this conference include a series of conclusions and recommendations which were approved by a large and representative number of Jews from all walks of life, including many leading Jewish communal professionals.

It is of unusual interest to note that this conference, primarily concerned with community relations, found it necessary to develop a rationale of sectarianism for Jewish communal services. It was recognized that these services strengthen Jewish group identity and commitment and that they "help toward a greater appreciation of Jewishness as a way of life." This was followed by the statement that "the foregoing rationale is of a community relations character in the sense that it rests on certain assumptions as to the best ways for Jews to relate to the general community and to one another."² In fact, to emphasize this, it was stressed that any such rationale must not be used to justify an exclusive reliance on sectarian services or a proliferation of such services, because this would interfere with harmonious inter-group relations.³

The important thing to note is that

¹ "Community Relations Aspects of Communal Service Programs," *Community Relations Components on the Work of Other Jewish Communal Services*, National Community Relations Advisory Council, New York, June 1962, pp. 11-12.

² *Ibid.*, p. 28.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

the community relations field, even when it develops a rationale for Jewish communal services, does so not because of a primary concern with the survival of Jewish life or services per se, but for primary reasons of community relations.

A recent local community experience also serves to point up some of the dangers in an exclusively community relations reaction to the integration crisis. The Jewish Community Relations Council of Philadelphia formulated *A Program of Action for the Jewish Community in the Present Race Relations Emergency* (June 26, 1963), which was distributed nationally by the National Community Relations Advisory Council.

This statement can be viewed with pride. It is clear and forthright in setting forth a progressive program of Jewish community and agency action in support of integration and in opposition to all manifestations of discrimination. However, when it was received by the Philadelphia Jewish agencies, it resulted in a series of negative reactions ranging from confused doubt to hostile rejection. And yet, no one disagreed with any specific point in the statement. Further analysis, including individual and group discussion, crystallized the fact that the initial negative reaction arose more from what had not been included in the statement, and the implications of this omission. The statement made no reference whatsoever to sectarianism, or to any of the in-group considerations which validate sectarian policies. There was the feeling that the statement, because of its force and impact, might create pressure to integrate where this was unnecessary or undesirable from certain viewpoints. Also, that the Jewish character of our agencies might be placed in jeopardy because the unsophisticated person, focussed upon the need to alleviate the civil rights crisis, might ignore the necessity and right of Jewish agencies to have policies of exclusiveness and

that such policies, being perfectly sound within the framework of our democracy, did not imply segregation or rejection of any group. In other words, while the statement was a splendid example of constructive leadership in relation to social objectives and as a reaction to an external crisis, its focus obscured the in-group considerations of sectarianism and survival.

The director of the Philadelphia Jewish Community Relations Council was surprised that his statement should cause disturbed reactions. It had never occurred to him to cast doubts upon the validity of many sectarian policies and practices. In fact, his viewpoint made him a strong defender of these policies. But this experience does indicate how the community relations focus, with the best of intentions, nevertheless is related primarily to external forces and community relations per se, rather than to the in-group questions which are not its primary concern.

Sectarianism and Positive Rationale

I believe that we can take a giant step toward clarity about sectarianism by shifting the focus to in-group considerations. To put it another way, it is time we begin to face more directly the fundamental question of our philosophy of Jewish communal service. Since this is not a paper on philosophy and rationale of Jewish communal services, it would be inappropriate to state a philosophy in detail. However, the response to any external impact upon Jewish communal services must stem from a viewpoint which determines the nature of the response, and I am therefore listing here a number of principles which determine my own response. These are as follows:

- (1) The organized Jewish community is basically concerned with the survival of the Jewish people, their culture, institutions, and values.
- (2) The support of services to Jewish

people, be they international, national or local, is a major expression of this fundamental purpose.

(3) Jewish communal services are therefore more than mechanisms for doing things for people. They are social institutions of the Jewish community; they express our historic religious and cultural values; their support calls for unified communal effort and they are therefore unifying influences; they are the visible symbols of united communities, visible to the client, to all other Jews, and to non-Jews. They are therefore concrete affirmations of the will of the Jewish community to maintain its sectarian identity, to develop and to survive.

(4) Within a democracy of cultural pluralism it is valid for any sectarian group to limit its services to coreligionists. This is an expression of its desire to carry out its basic sectarian objectives, and does not in any way express or imply a rejection of any other group.

It is important to stress that there is nothing in these principles which in any way inhibits the fullest support of and cooperation with all progressive forces in our society who are pressing for full democracy for all groups. In fact, our own insistence upon the validity of sectarianism compels an obligation to support the rights of all minorities. The record on this is a clear and proud one and I do not stop to elaborate it here since the facts are easily available.

Not infrequently, the non-Jew is clearer than we are about the validity of sectarian practices. The fact is that many non-Jews expect us to be positively sectarian, and they respect this. In Philadelphia, our United Fund assumes that we are sectarian for valid religious, cultural, and other in-group reasons. This was well expressed recently by the director of agency operations of the Fund, who stated:

“... the sectarian agency should have a distinctive program flavor to fully justify its separate existence. The framework of program, the professional qualities of staff, the content of service and the organization of board may all closely parallel that of the nonsectarian agency but the extra “some-

thing” must always be present and it must have sufficient emphasis to make it readily visible.

“Some people have called the sectarian agency divisive in a democracy. The agency which knows its sectarian mission and practices it effectively can strengthen democracy, not weaken it. American democracy is made up of many homogeneous and special interest groups which make their own peculiar contributions to the whole. The sectarian agency in its work with its constituents must emphasize the distinctive values which are part of its philosophy but at the same time strive to find ways to make these values a unifying rather than a divisive force among its members as they function in the total community.”

One source of continuing confusion is the fact that many Jewish agencies have non-sectarian intake policies. In Philadelphia, for example, only four of our twenty agencies supported by the United Fund restrict services to Jewish clients. But a non-sectarian intake policy does not eliminate the Jewish character of an agency from a community viewpoint. This must be stressed in spite of the fact that Jewish agencies, particularly in the health field, sometimes function in a way which obscures their Jewish communal role and responsibilities.

Dr. Maurice Hexter put it well when he said: “. . . the organized Jewish community has a dual responsibility to provide services with Jewish intent and content for Jewish clientele and to provide services to the general community. I do not see a basic contradiction in this concept for, in many of our programs, services can be extended to the total community without in any way impairing the general character of the services to Jewish clients.”⁴

While non-sectarian services are part of our contribution to the general com-

⁴ *A Unique Symposium—The Foundation for the General Assembly, Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, New York, 21, October 16, 1963. (Mimeo.)*

munity welfare, they maintain their Jewish community character by the commitment of the board and administration to the preservation of the Jewish community as an entity; by accepting financial support through the Jewish community; by cooperating in general community planning affecting Jewish people and other agencies; and by having their agencies meet the specific needs of Jews as Jews. The fact that this is not always realized in practice should not prevent us from being clear about the rationale. Thus, if a Jewish hospital does not provide kosher food or religious consolation for those Jewish patients who require it, it can be pressed to do so only if there are people with a viewpoint who see this as a necessary element in the hospital's role as a Jewish community service.

A general philosophy rarely gives specific answers to concrete questions. It does, however, provide guidelines to such answers. It reduces confusions and uncertainty and makes it possible to approach the questions with a sense of clarity and security.

A good example of this was provided at last year's Conference in a paper by Morris Grumer.⁵ The paper deals with the problem of keeping the Jewish vocational agency within the orbit of the Jewish community in the face of the massive pressures of public funds compelling non-sectarianism, but is equally valid in relation to the integration pressure. Mr. Grumer spells out a series of principles which deserve our closest study and might well apply to many other fields of service. These are as follows:

"(1) The primary function of J. V. S. is to serve those members of the Jewish community who have personal, special problems

⁵ Morris Grumer, "Jewish Vocational Services in the American Jewish Community," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Vol. XL No. 2 (Winter, 1963), pp. 207-11.

in adjusting vocationally through their own resources, who need and can profit from the services rendered by the agency.

"(2) Where the cost of service to non-Jews is carried by sources in the general community, service will be extended to non-Jews to the extent that the essentially Jewish character of the agency is maintained.

"(3) In all program planning the agency's basic commitment and responsibility to the Jewish community is to be maintained.

"(4) If a special research or demonstration program is to be considered by J. V. S. which would be essentially non-sectarian in intake, it should have the approval of the federation and should be developed in such a way as to protect those programs of the agency which serve an essentially Jewish clientele. This may mean that there will be periods during which such non-sectarian programs are not operative within the agency.

"(5) J. V. S. will have to accept the fact that as agencies of the Jewish community there may be practical limitations on the scope and extensiveness of their programs, but that in order to insure a full range of services to Jews in need, they may have to be active in stimulating developments of needed services by others.

"(6) The basic financial support for the agency should come through the Jewish community. All planning and supplementary financing should involve the planning body of the Jewish community, with a view toward obtaining its approval and financial support. Where financial support from the Jewish community is not available, its approval should be obtained before seeking other sources of financial help.

"(7) The J. V. S. board should be 100 percent Jewish."⁶

This was worth quoting in detail because our vocational agencies are probably feeling the integration impact more strongly than other Jewish agencies. Mr. Grumer's agency has also had substantial expansion because of public funds. At the same time, he is prepared to maintain the sectarian character of his agency based upon a clear and positive philosophy of Jewish community service.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

Answer to the Questions

With a positive Jewish viewpoint as a firm philosophical framework, it is now possible to answer the original questions posed by the Program Committee for this session:

Question: *Can Jewish services be kept Jewish in the light of increasing demands for non-discrimination in housing, employment, recreation, etc?*

Answer: They can, if we are clear about the Jewish character and responsibilities of our agencies, and the nature of American democracy. The demand for non-discrimination is rarely presented to Jewish communal services. Non-Jews, including Negroes, generally accept the validity of sectarian groups serving their constituents. To object to this would be to object to a basic minority right in a pluralistic democracy. From the Jewish agency point of view, the question of color doesn't enter. It is a question of non-Jews, and a Negro Jew would be served.

Question: *Will those Jewish services, located in neighborhoods with no specific Jewish characteristics, be urged to follow the lead of Jewish hospitals in serving clientele on a non-sectarian basis?*

Answer: I do not believe agencies will be urged to integrate, but there is the possibility that they will feel an urge to do so. Each community will have to answer this question in relation to many specific questions, such as type of agency, local traditions, availability of other services, etc. However, here too, a general viewpoint can be helpful. They should be clearly named as Jewish agencies and their programs should be geared to Jewish purposes and clients. In Philadelphia, we have moved agencies out of areas as Jewish residents moved out and, in some instances, where an agency remains in a changing area during a transition period, intake has been opened to non-Jews including Negroes. This was done with the clear understanding on the part of agency and federation that it was a temporary necessity.

Indefinite continuance of this type of policy can only confuse both Jews and non-Jews about the nature and objectives of Jewish services. Wherever desirable and feasible, the agency should be moved to a site less fraught with difficulties.

Question: *Will there be pressures by public financing agencies upon the Jewish homes for aged for non-discrimination in intake?*

Answer: I do not think so and I know of no instance where that has happened. If it does, it should be opposed with every resource at our command. The basis for opposition would be the sound democratic principle of the right of a minority group to serve its own people. Up to now, all levels of government have accepted this, even to the extent of encouraging church groups to provide housing for their own elderly constituents. There is no reason to assume a contrary trend. The question itself is a reflection of our own fear and of the community relations elements which still dominate our thinking.

Question: *What will be the impact upon Jewish community centers which are or will be located in areas containing large number of Negroes?*

Answer: In the case of Jewish community centers, the problem is more complex. One cannot easily relocate expensive buildings. Furthermore, the nature of the service is such that it may be eagerly sought by the non-jew, including the Negro. The facilities and programs often have general appeal. Fundamentally, the Jewish center protects its basic sectarian character by the clearly sectarian nature of its program. Jewish atmosphere, focus and program will naturally appeal more to Jews. It is perfectly valid to provide for various types of associate membership geared to use of certain facilities and participation in certain programs. Experience demonstrates that the non-Jew, including the Negro, respects the right of the Jewish center to serve Jewish people in a Jewish way as a primary responsibility. But this posi-

tion can be validly maintained only if the program has a truly Jewish character.

In Philadelphia, the integration movement has had an immediate effect on our thinking and planning for the future of our centers. In the first place, we are assuming that traditional concepts of Jewish neighborhoods are no longer valid. This also implies a growing decentralization of Jewish population with concentrated Jewish areas having a shorter life than in the past. This means that buildings must be designed and programmed to serve larger areas, to be centrally located regional centers, with satellite programs in neighborhoods where necessary.

Question: *What effect, if any, will there be upon Jewish family and children's agencies in areas where there are no similar non-sectarian services?*

Answer: Non-sectarian planning councils and fund-raising bodies raise this question from time to time to the discomfort of the Jewish federations and their agencies. I have lived through several experiences of this kind. In each instance, I found that the general community had no clear concept of the sectarian objectives and character of the Jewish agency. This was a reflection of the non-sectarian image presented by the Jewish agency. Invariably, when a sectarian rationale was offered clearly and unequivocally, it was readily accepted and respected.

This also illustrates one of our basic misconceptions, namely, that the Jewish character of the agency is determined by the presence of specific Jewish content. In present-day American Jewish life, the Jewish character of many of our agencies is determined more by their communal role. In the case of family and children's services, their very existence expresses a traditional concern with

the welfare of the Jewish family unit and our very special sense of responsibility for the Jewish child. This is deeply rooted in our religious and cultural values, and transcends any consideration of specific content. It is this which must be understood and presented with conviction.

Conclusion

Up to now, the integration crisis has not had a significant impact upon Jewish agency policy and practice. It has had a marked impact upon our thinking, by focussing attention upon the basic questions of sectarianism which in turn involves coming to grips with the rationale for Jewish communal services.

It is evident that we still do not have a rationale which is widely accepted in our professional group. We are therefore not in a position to give effective leadership when our sectarianism is threatened by external events and crises.

A major problem is the continuing pattern of thought which sees problems of sectarianism primarily as matters of community relations. This hampers our ability to view the problem within an internal, in-group context. It is the latter which is more crucial for us, and which will help us to understand that our agencies are institutions of the Jewish community, serving basic purposes of identification and survival.

We still have to reach the point where we can accept our sectarianism as valid in a pluralistic democracy. In the final analysis, our Jewish communal service will not be threatened by real or imagined attacks on their sectarian character as long as we are prepared to defend our sectarianism with a clear cut, positive rationale which is rooted in Jewish and American values.