## JEWISH WELFARE FUNDS: BALANCE SHEET

By JACOB GROSS

Worcester Jewish Federation, Worcester, Mass.

OR over a decade there has been a new and continuing growth in the number of welfare funds, community councils, and federations in the Jewish communities of the country. For many years patterns of organization existed in the larger Jewish communities, and while some of the smaller communities also had some form of communal organization, by and large, the development of centralized organizations has come chiefly in recent years. From approximately fifty such Jewish organizations in the United States in the early 1930's, the number has grown to over two hundred and fifty in 1946. It is important to indicate that the form of Jewish organization varies from community to community, and the names by which these organizations are known cannot be said to be descriptive of their functions. Generally the terms welfare fund, community council, and federation are used almost synonymously. The intention of this paper is primarily to discuss the central fund raising organization regardless of the name by which it is called, but referred to herein as welfare fund.

The stimulation for this type of organization stemmed to a very large extent from the crisis period beginning with Hitler's ascendency and the concomitant problem created for the Jewish populations of Europe. For some time prior to this period, however, the Coun-

cil of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds had emerged from its function as the Bureau of Jewish Social Research, and had played a significant role in the development of community organization. Through its efforts, communities for the first time were made aware of the peculiar problems with which they had to deal. Community consciousness was created and the need for organization developed out of that. For the first time in many small communities (Jewish populations up to ten thousand and twelve thousand) a professional was employed who was charged with the responsibility for community organization.

Stimulated by the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, and faced with the staggering task of raising huge funds for overseas relief, many communities which were not organized to deal with so large a problem began in 1938 and 1939 to feel the need for improved or new forms of organization. This was a period of de-emphasis on local social services. The demands and the terrific dramatic appeal of the overseas crisis made it necessary to build more efficient and more effective machines for fund raising. In this respect the achievement was enormous. The record of the community contributions to the United Jewish Appeal alone during this period is ample evidence of that

Because of the unusual appeal for al-

of the challenge involved, welfare funds succeeded in attracting new and aggressive leadership from among business men of the community in unprecedented numbers. Year after year, greater and greater sums were raised. Most communities were able to report greater and greater numbers of contributors to the fund raising effort. Many communities were able to indicate that their volunteer organizations had reached a state and degree of perfection hitherto undreamed of as possible.

After these years of operation, it would seem to be in order to discuss welfare funds to discover what has been achieved and to note some of the problems which remain to be faced. Their achievements and how they solve their problems may determine the ultimate position which welfare funds will occupy in organized Jewish life. Can welfare funds, because of their fund raising efficiency up to this point, and because of the prestige thus engendered, become the answer to our total community problems? Have they attracted and held the most intelligent, loyal and devoted leadership available in the community? Have they succeeded in building a communal identity which related them to the communities' problems whether local, national or overseas? Have welfare funds succeeded in giving their leadership a deep sense of responsibility so that less dramatic problems than overseas assistance get the consideration they merit?

Prior to the development of welfare funds, many of our national organizations and agencies came into the communities, at their own discretion, to raise as much as possible for their programs. The demands on the few willing workers were tremendous. Usually efforts were sporadic and unorganized.

leviating overseas suffering, and because The amount raised in the community by any of the organizations was totally unrelated to either their budget or their needs. A good solicitor or organizer was able to obtain large sums, very frequently for small organizations, and not infrequently large organizations were not able to obtain what might be considered a fair share from the same community.

> In communities where welfare funds were organized this situation was corrected to a large extent. A budgeting process was set up. The community, together with the agency, determined the responsibility which the community would bear. There was one campaign organized on a year-around basis and directed toward every potential contributor.

> In its development the welfare fund evolved a situation in which it was possible for agencies with diverse points of view, and sometimes of conflicting ideologies, to obtain allocations. The theory underlying this seeming paradox was logical. The communities' resources were gathered by a central organization for the support of all or most agencies and therefore any agency, regardless of ideology (not permitted to campaign in the community on its own) was entitled to support. This would be especially true where an agency had had a following in the community. It is therefore not surprising to see in welfare fund budgets contributions to organizations and agencies representing every outlook and point of view in Jewish life.

> As a consequence of the budgeting process, some organizations felt that they were getting what they felt to be an unfair share of the total raised. The smaller organizations often felt that the amount allocated by the welfare fund was not related adequately to the sums

they previously had been able to raise in their own little campaigns. They were unwilling to accept the principle that the welfare fund divided the money on the basis of need, and the complaint was heard that "pressure groups were at work in determining community budgets, and that where pressure was absent an agency or organization would not be likely to get its just due."

This unification of fund raising has developed to include almost every Jewish community of any size. Is this unity, which is economic primarily, a real one, or is it merely an expedient deriving its strength from the emergency of the period? In the process, of course, individuals and/or groups often transferred their interest in one or another national organization to a primary interest in the welfare fund. What was achieved, say some, was an organization whose point of view is neutral, since funds must be raised from the total community and distributed to all organizations and agencies. United fund raising was achieved, basic interests of individuals or groups were de-emphasized or lost.

The intense suffering resulting from the political development and persecution in Europe, created a renaissance of interest in the Jewish community and some of its problems. This factor also contributed towards building a sense of oneness among Jewry which had previously not existed. Events had compelled every American Jew to become his European brother's keeper. The Jewish community and Jews everywhere could and did unite in their denunciation of what was occurring in Europe. Jews put aside their differences to work together to solve some of the problems arising out of the disaster in Europe. Thus it was possible to attract persons with leadership ability who had stayed outside the fold

of organized Jewish life. Given an opportunity to work toward the end of alleviating Jewry's suffering, many of these individuals become important figures in the development of the welfare fund as a fund raising machine. Added to the loyal leadership of earlier days the result was impressive.

But the test of that new leadership is yet to come. When the crisis period passes, will that leadership be content to deal with the day to day problems of every day Jewish life, many of which do not have a dramatic appeal? The spring campaigns of 1947 showed some evidence of a break in this leadership. The pseudo-enthusiasts began to drop out. Those who had hoped to achieve a solution, at least of the relief problem, saw the problem as endless and dropped by the wayside. Some tired easily. The challenging game had become hard continuing work. Many had been concerned only with the relief problem, and were unaware that before the European situation occurred, the Jewish community was a functioning organism with problems that needed solutions, questions that needed answers and policies that had to be determined. The campaign workers, the base of the campaign pyramid, also manifested the same symptoms. The period is at hand when the real test of welfare funds will be made. Will there be enough of the new leadership remaining to maintain at the same high level the vigor and vitality which has characterized welfare fund activity in the last few years? Will the devoted leaders of pre-Hitler days have been pushed aside beyond recall? Will the welfare funds succeed in maintaining the voluntary campaign workers' organization which they have developed in the past few years?

Coincident with the problem of lead-

ership is the problem of giving. The new leadership was characterized by its generous giving. It is not to be forgotten that many of these were connected with small businesses and perhaps only because of the war had made large sums of money. This together with tax deductions made generous giving easy. Is this basic generosity, or is it a flash in the pan made possible by the abovementioned factors? What will occur when the giving is out of pocket, as far as this group is concerned, is highly speculative. The campaigns of spring 1947 brought to light ominous signs. When giving came in a large part from the 90% excess profits tax and overall giving was cheap, contributions were on a very high level. When the excess profits tax was reduced from 90% to 38% and giving began to take money out of the contributors' pockets, in many communities there were signs of grumbling. Fortunately, perhaps there was the cushion in the so-called Section 102 of the Internal Revenue Act which called either for expansion of one's business or the distribution of 70% of the profits in dividends. This proviso made it possible for contributors to give if not out of corporate profits then out of personal income which became sizeable because of the enforced distribution of dividends. If personal and corporate taxes are again reduced, the first test of genuine giving will take place. The giving in the period between 1939 and 1947-48 can no longer serve as a criterion or as a base of campaign goal setting. Will a substantial portion of the contributors who gave large sums of money rebel when giving really means giving out of pocket?

Those active in fund raising have still another question to ask about this leadership. How thoroughly was it acquainted with the problems for which

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it gave money so generously, and how much of a residual interest will there be in basic communal problems? At many conferences, groups of professionals have discussed this problem. It was agreed generally that a small portion of the community, about 10% of the contributors, gave 80% to 90% of the money. The disturbing situation was that in this group the contributions were not on the basis of the total needs but on the basis of that illusive theory that one is giving "to relieve suffering and starvation." As a matter of fact, fund raising in this group not infrequently became a game: a game of blackmail and bludgeoning. Once the top few were lined up in their giving, it became a matter of "making the other fellow come across as he should." The fund raising methods used in this group were often far from scrupulous. What will happen to giving from some of this group when money making returns to more nearly pre-war levels is open to question. It must be said, however, that giving took place, whatever the methods used, on a tremendously high level. A contributor now giving a sizeable amount is not likely to return rapidly to the insignificant gift of earlier years.

There arises too the question of how much was lost in the transfer to the welfare fund of a former interest in one or another organization or agency in Jewish life. In achieving a neutral point of view the welfare fund has striven to make its leadership community-conscious rather than national agency conscious. In achieving this consciousness, whether now or later, there will be a loss of individual or group interest in a particular problem or point of view. Whether or not this is a gain remains to be proved.

Perhaps there is a "nationalism" in

the local community attitude which welfare funds want to develop. In the end this "nationalism" must result in an attitude which is merely financial. Because of its method in fund raising and allocating, the community can develop no attitude in Jewish life. Some communities, aware of this possibility set up community councils which were forums for the development of communal attitudes. Some regarded community councils as instruments for arriving at a position on one or another issue in Jewish life. But this too has created problems. Community councils claiming broad representation often vied with the welfare fund in stating the community position. It has happened that on a question such as National Budgeting, for example, the community council voted against such a procedure while the welfare fund in the same community voted for it, or vice versa.

It must still be determined whether or not in achieving unitary fund raising the advantages far offset some of the losses. One point must again be made: as indicated above, giving was most often related to the European crisis. In addition, among most of the larger contributors, there was little understanding of what the contributions were for except for relief. It might be safe to assume that had it not been for the welfare fund type of organization the total contributions of this group would be considerably smaller. In putting all needs together, and in setting up the types of fund raising called for by the critical period, funds were made available for causes and organizations which might otherwise have received little, if any support, from most of the contributors.

In their relationship with the organizations and agencies seeking support, welfare funds encountered new problems; problems which had not plagued the community prior to the organization of the welfare fund. Because of their fund raising ability the welfare funds had sizeable sums to distribute. Organizations and agencies requested and demanded larger and larger allocations. Sensing their financial power, which was real enough, welfare funds began to make demands on national agencies for changes. These involved requests for representation on boards, changes in methods of financial reporting, and even, at times, changes in function. It was discovered in budget studies, by committees, that there was duplication and overlapping of function. At conferences of welfare funds, as a group, these communal organizations made some of these demands. It should be stated that this duplication exists in many areas of Jewish endeavors. In the fields of research, health, Zionism, overseas relief, civic defense, overlapping of function seems apparent. Not only in activity but in administration and fund raising is this true. Despite the concerted request of the welfare funds for change, very little happened.

National agencies are able effectively to resist the demands of the welfare funds even when those demands are presented by the welfare funds as a group. The experience of the large communities in attempting to achieve a greater share in the decision making of the United Jewish Appeal is a case in point. The demands of the welfare funds on the unification of the civic defense agencies illustrates again the difficulties involved in a basic relationship. Perhaps the thought is implicit in the attitude of the national agencies that welfare funds emerged out of nothing and that they will sink back into oblivion when the crisis period has passed. Perhaps the

national agency attitude is predicated on the supposition, consciously or sub-consciously, that national agencies have had years of experience and that the local communities unfortunately are in no position to get the basic information which the national agencies have at their command. Or, perhaps, national agencies feel that the procedures which would have to be developed in order to get to community representation would be too awkward and too ineffective to enable quick action to be taken on any problem. They may feel that it is to their best interest to have on their boards only those people who have an avowed special interest in the problems with which the agency deals. Again, the national agency may feel that it has a unique point of view and that its board should consist only of those who share that. Perhaps the final factor which motivates the resistance of national agencies is the untried position of the welfare funds, particularly that of the new ones which have sprung up in the past few years. The national agency may honestly question the broad survival values of welfare funds in terms of continuing problems which go on year after year, good times or bad, under crisis as well as non-crisis conditions.

It must be remembered too that until recently an individual in the community, who had an interest in a special problem, identified himself with a national agency dealing with this problem. Has the local community succeeded in weakening that loyalty, justly or unjustly? Has the local Jewish welfare fund succeeded in transferring the affections of these individuals from the national agencies to the community? More pointedly perhaps, has the national agency been supplanted in terms of planning or in terms of identity,

but not in function, by the local welfare fund? If true, this would assume that individuals in the community were now at a point in their development where they are concerned with the total problem of Jewish life rather than any particular problem. The observation of the writer and others who have discussed this problem would seem to indicate that this point is far from having been achieved.

Related to the above and other problems is the assumption that the lush fund raising era will end. When this period comes to pass many other questions and problems will beg answers and solutions. The lush fund raising period of the war years made possible a type of attitude which is beginning to disappear. That attitude expresses itself in "what's the difference, what is a few thousand dollars more or less." The prevalence of this attitude pretty much throughout the Jewish communities of the country brought in its wake a problem that requires intelligent solution. Every agency and organization in the country sought larger and larger grants. The programs of some of these national agencies leaped skywards. Locally, nationally, and overseas, tremendous sums were made available for enlarged programs, as well as for the increased costs of normal operation. The funds raised for capital structures reached new heights. Added together, they will represent a continuing responsibility for the American Jewish community which may or may not be comfortably financed in the new era which appears about to begin. Very often these new programs and new capital structures were achieved without foresight and without understanding of the total problem. It is a well known fact that the cost of most service

programs often increased many fold. Whether or not in more difficult fund raising days to come these programs can be carried remains to be seen. The experience after the last war indicated that much difficulty was encountered when lush fund raising ended. To this problem welfare funds have been contributory. In fact, very often the welfare fund gave consent to this type of fund raising and even used its organizational machine to raise money for such purposes. Often welfare funds did not analyze but readily accepted increased and expanded services.

A corollary of this problem is a question involving national membership organizations. Among those now making application to welfare funds for support are membership organizations, organized for a specific purpose not necessarily related to the total problem of Jewish life in the United States or abroad. Because of the success of welfare funds, these organizations also applied for support and many were given allocations. These organizations are not responsible to the American Jewish community as a whole, whose support they seek with regard to how they spend their money. The principle seems simple. An organization should be responsible to the body from whom it receives its funds. On this point, most of the organizations thus involved agree but argue that it is really only an academic matter. Actually they maintain that they are not responsible to the body from which they receive their money, but are only responsible to their respective memberships. The number of such organizations seeking support from the welfare funds has increased in the past few years and is still increasing. The theory behind this is that most of these organizations have

memberships so large that they are, in effect, in local communities, as numerous as contributors to the welfare fund itself. The argument goes on that should they seek their funds independently the communities would be plagued with multiple fund raising campaigns. This, of course, in addition to the campaigns by the welfare funds themselves. In recognition of this "nuisance" value many welfare funds have given allocations to these membership organizations. Many welfare funds may be unaware of the condition they are creating.

In the above problem, as in others yet to be encountered, a solution would be to create an awareness in the leadership, and in the community as a whole, of the basic principles by which the welfare fund must be guided. Efforts in this direction have been made, on the whole, unsuccessfully. This conclusion is arrived at as result of the many conferences among professionals where the solution to this particular problem plagued everyone. In the days before welfare funds, each agency and organization attempted to interpret its own program by direct mail publicity. While the welfare funds have attempted to provide an overall interpretation, the national agency publicity continues to come in mountains to the laymen of the community. This publicity material has been the source of great irritation to many of the laymen. National agencies of course justifiedly feel that they must make every effort to make their work known to American Jewry. Their efforts take the form of written and printed material, regional and national conferences, and visits from field representatives. At this point, it must be freely admitted that national agencies

have somehow failed to find the medium by which the broad interpretation can be achieved. Communities as a whole are unaware of the nature, the scope and the solutions to Jewish problems and Jewish leadership is only too often characterized by the same lack of knowledge and understanding.

It is not to be assumed from the above that efforts toward integration have not been made. Welfare funds have published magazines and newsletters; have had workers' meetings and rallies; and even social gatherings directed toward achieving greater awareness and greater understanding among the people of the community. We have mentioned above what national agencies have done in this respect. It is to be hoped that in the not too distant future an integrated method will be found which will be genuinely effective.

In summary, it is important to observe that welfare funds are still in their infancy, both as fund raising mechanisms

together with the local welfare funds and as instruments for communal leadership in all types of problems. It cannot be gainsaid that this form of communal organization has achieved much in the way of united community action on many Jewish problems. It has succeeded in developing new standards in fund raising, and it has brought into Jewish life additional leadership. Out of a once chaotic method of campaigning, it has brought a more orderly and more dignified method for raising funds for all Jewish needs. Welfare funds have not yet succeeded in overcoming many of important problems, some of them created by the very organization of the welfare fund itself. As this generation moves from one era to another it is clear that much lucid thinking will be needed in order that even greater effectiveness in communal operation may be attained. Present and future problems will demand for solution all the intelligence. devotion and resources that our communities, singly and collectively, can bring into play.

## **COMMUNAL ASPECTS OF** JEWISH EDUCATION

By RALPH SEGALMAN

Executive Director, Sioux City, Jewish Federation

IN the last few decades, educators everywhere have begun to relate their material and methods to the conditions of the world in which their pupils live and to the psychology of their students. They have begun to educate their students more along lines which will help them adjust themselves to the world and will help them become better citizens of the world. It is, of course, rather late to begin to teach children to live in a world of either atom bombs or international brotherhood, after years of teaching Latin and memorization of poetry. In fact, it did not take a second World War to bring about interest in teaching children to prepare for a life of pressure and social tension. The extent of modern family problems, economic differences, cultural differences, political differences, religious differences, organizational and community problems and conflicting allegiances, have filled many volumes of sociological nature. The important point, however, is that life in this world becomes daily more and more complex and difficult, and that education has not kept pace in helping man to face and work out these complexities and problems.

A member of a minority group faces the same complex living problems as others, but in addition, he faces other problems which make life even more difficult. For the Jew, for example, there are all of the problems of choosing

whether he will attempt to be happy within his group, or attempt assimilation in the majority group. Within his group he faces a continually intense communal life, with all the elements of confusion, frustration, competition for recognition, etc. The intenseness of Jewish personal, family and communal life was best described by Abraham Lincoln, when he said, "Jews are like any other people, only more so." This intensity of life, brings with it greater sensitivity (and when problems come, greater problems). Employment, economic, housing and social discrimination add to the problems of the Jewish family and individual.

Life in the so-called "National Jewish Community" is also complex and bewildering to many. Wherever one looks one finds competition between groups in overseas relief services, Palestinian services, civic protective activities, religious programs and fraternal orders. In the largest remaining Jewish community of the world on which is dependent the security of Palestine and the succor of the homeless in Europe, there is no completely agreed upon central clearing house for even such simple problems as the setting of dates for national conferences, the certification of legitimate national fund raising campaigns, etc. Political and financial anarchy and "carpetbagging" have been kept down only by organized local Jewish communities and their clearing house, the Council of