

JEWISH WELFARE FUNDS: BALANCE SHEET

together with the local welfare funds 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

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

Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds. Only in well organized communities does one find an absence of such anarchy. In the larger communities (and this pertains to the American Jewish community as a whole) we find thousands of people unaffiliated with any Jewish activity, small synagogue and temple attendance, little ownership of Jewish books by individuals, and no centrally responsible Jewish voice. In a national Jewish community which cries for an unanimously accepted central body, there are many who find recognition in being among the first to declare a veto on unity.

Once the synagogue acted as the place where ideas in Jewish life were born, exchanged and finally expressed to the community. In the synagogue were formed plans and operations for civic defense, philanthropies, education and all the elements of communal living. The synagogue in most towns in Europe and the American colonies *was* the Jewish community.

With the breakup of Jewish religious organizations into three major groups (orthodox, conservative, and reform) and with the growth of competition between these groups and their own constituent sub-groups, seminaries, Yeshivas, etc., this is no longer an area of common meeting ground.

Beyond this disagreement and anarchy is a distinct lack of balanced integration in the communal interests of the American Jew. In each of us there is a tendency to attach oneself to one small phase of Jewish life or Jewish activity, at the expense of one's allegiance and service to the larger ideal and group. Even though all may rationally accept the fact that the survival of Jewry is more important than survival of any one of its

subdivisions; nevertheless, we find groups fighting for recognition, power or status.

This picture of the American Jewish community is related to Jewish education in two ways. It sets before us the kind of a Jewish world in which the Jewish child must live, so that Jewish education may relate its teachings, if possible, to prepare the Jewish child for life in this milieu. It also gives us the milieu in which Jewish education operates, exists and derives its support.

The field of Jewish education, like the American Jewish community, has within it many proponents of differing points of view. Even the matter of what time of day the school should be in operation is basis for violent disagreement.¹ There are some who support afternoon schools, to follow the public school day. There are others who maintain that children have time for Jewish education only on Sunday morning and propose the Sunday school.²

There are others who believe firmly in the all day school where the responsibility for teaching arithmetic, English literature, etc., is accepted along with Jewish subjects. The disagreement on type of school is small, however, compared with the differing points of view on curriculum. There are those who propose Hebrew as the main subject,

¹ In recent years, some conservative synagogue schools have been adding two afternoons a week to their Sunday school programs. This trend may be a step in the direction of the time schedule of the four or five times a week Talmud Torah or Hebrew School.

² In spite of the fact that rabbis and temple and synagogue boards realize how little the children learn in Sunday school, many Sunday schools are retained by sheer pressure from parents who wish their children to have some Jewish education without its infringing on the child's afternoon music and dancing lessons, play, dentistry appointments, etc.

and others who oppose it. There are the pro-Yiddishists and those opposed. There are those who emphasize prayer and ability to pray in Hebrew (with or without understanding what is read), and those opposed. There are the proponents of teaching Jewish history, Jewish ethics, Jewish tradition, holiday festivals, Jewish community life, etc., and their opponents. There are those who are in agreement on inclusion of one or another of these subjects, but there is a violent disagreement on whose version of each subject shall be taught—that of the Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform, that of the Zionist, Bundist Socialist, or assimilationist.

Even teaching methods have been background for disagreement, with some proponents and practitioners still in favor of the arbitrary compulsory teaching of the "Rebe," who depends on his ruler for the students' attention. There are still others, who realize the losing game that is played for the child's attendance and attention, and rely excessively on gifts to children for activity commonly expected of the child in public school. There are a few trained teachers,¹ experienced in the development of democratic classrooms, to which children come because they like the atmosphere, the projects, the intellectual incentives and the teacher. Even though there are few such teachers, there is a growing group of proponents of this type of teaching.

In spite of these differences, the Jewish education field and its central body, the American Association for Jewish Education, has made great strides in attaining certain minimum achievements in many cities. In some large cities, for example,

¹ Current estimates of the annual numbers of graduates of teaching seminaries are less than 75 per year, to fill annual vacancies of almost three hundred.

Boards of Jewish Education have been developed and accepted, which include within their structure most of the Jewish education schools in their cities. These boards serve schools of every type within their communities, whether they be all day schools, afternoon schools or Sunday schools, or whether they are sponsored by synagogues, temples, Zionist groups, Yiddishist groups, etc. In these schools, the curriculum may also vary considerably, not only because of the differences in time available, but also because of the difference in points of view of the school sponsors in each case.¹

The Board of Jewish Education in such a city agrees on a set of minimum standards for teachers (eligibility to teach, methods of teaching, pay, methods of supervision, etc.), and also sets up a teaching outline which lists the minimum for each subject for each type of school. In this way, it is hoped that each child in the city in attendance at every Jewish school will get a minimum of each of the important subjects of Jewish life.

In the smaller cities, where more than one school is impracticable (or impossible due to lack of personnel and funds), the school is often the direct responsibility of a Board of Jewish Education. Here, the attempt is made (often not too successfully), to give the child the necessary basis in each subject from a commonly

¹ If all the Jewish schools in a city operate a three, four or five day program, attendance at a Jewish education school becomes an accepted fact among the children of that community. Where some operate only one day a week, attendance at the weekday school is harder to maintain. Similarly, attendance at the Jewish afternoon school becomes an accepted matter for children who have experienced communal nursery schools and Jewish day camps, and who can look forward to attendance at a Jewish afternoon "high school" or postgraduate classes in the community.

accepted point of view.¹ The synagogues, temples, Zionist youth groups, etc., supplement this general Jewish education with their particular points of view and versions, through Sunday schools, and youth activities.

All too often, unsupervised schools not under democratic Boards of Jewish Education have made their aim the propagandizing of the child to their point of view or version of Judaism. The "each for himself" attitude of some national Jewish agencies has to a great extent reached into Jewish education, to the detriment of Jewish communal life. The generally accepted (but not often followed) aims of Jewish education have been expressed in many ways. In brief, these aims of Jewish education might be listed as follows: to maintain Judaism (not one phase or sect of Judaism, but Judaism as a commonly accepted religion), to give the individual a feeling of belonging and wanting to belong to the Jewish group (to give him security and thus make him a happier individual), to make him a better Jewish citizen through teaching of ethics—fair dealing, reasonableness, etc., and finally, to make a better citizen of the world through the same ideals.

Most of our American Jewish educational teachers are untrained. Many come from other fields, and failing there,

¹ The position of Jewish education in the small community is often paradoxical. Because of its small size, and its inherent nature or organization, agreement on curriculum, philosophy, program and type of school is more easily reached. Because of its smallness and its distance from the large centers of Jewish life in America, however, the small city often encounters great difficulty in securing adequately trained and qualified personnel, and is hampered in carrying out a program. Thus, the small city can be kept from its goal even after having achieved what might, in larger cities, be considered almost unattainable.

come to Jewish school teaching because they have nowhere else to go. It is a field with low salaries and little prestige. Too often the untrained teacher is a person of unattractive personality, with little imagination and ingenuity. Often the excellent project materials of leading Jewish educators are ignored by teachers due to inability or unwillingness to understand and carry through instructions. Some teachers come to the field because they enjoy working with children, but even that is insufficient, in the face of inadequate supervision of these untrained people.

If the aims stated above are accepted, it would then seem that what we wish to teach is more a matter of development of personality and attitudes in the child, than a matter of subject matter. In examining the child's psychological reactions to arbitrary teaching, well known to the frustrated teacher, we find that the child cannot be forced to learn. His weapons in a battle with an arbitrary, ununderstanding teacher are of various intensity. He can call out the light infantry or the heavy artillery. He can agree to go but make excuses (or miss the Jewish school bus which comes to pick him up by hiding from it), or pretend tiredness or illness. He can attend, but come late and have reasons to leave early. He can refuse to pay attention, or not prepare his lessons, or leave his books at home. He can pay attention, but purposefully forget subject matter. He can retain subject matter, but not recall it when called upon. He can, as is most often the case, "be a good boy" and do as expected of him at the moment, but immediately after class, or after Bar Mitzvah, forget everything he learned. More importantly, he can later in life remember the incidents of forced learning with revulsion, and associating

this with Judaism in general, become a member of the daily growing unorganized and organized groups of militant and non-militant assimilationists. All too often, it is an arbitrary unimaginative untrained and rote teacher who stays on and on in Jewish education, with such results. In view of these facts, it is easy to understand why such a small percentage of Jewish children attend any type of Jewish education school in the United States.

It is also easy to understand why it is that such a small group of those who do attend actually ever complete their course, and why it is that such a small number continue their education after completion of the course of study. It is easily discerned not only from the inability of Jewish schools to attract and retain students, but more clearly from American Jewish life itself, how dismally unorganized, uncontrolled, unplanned, and unsupervised schools have failed us up to now. It is easily seen from the lack of commonly accepted Jewish leaders, from the lack of common precepts, ethics, and decent behavior of some elements of Jewish organizational leadership, and from the lack of individual Jewish emotional security and love of Jewish life (as evidenced by growth of assimilation, lack of Jewish literature and low synagogue attendance, preoccupation with Jewish self-defense, etc.), how American Jewish life needs organized supervised Jewish education. The efforts of the American Association for Jewish Education, and local boards of Jewish education are indications of healthy moves in the right direction. The difficulty lies in unwillingness of special interest groups to give up Jewish education as their propaganda tool—which more basically lies in their unwillingness to give up their status and

independence. This cancer of revolting cells growing at the expense of the body is not something unique to Judaism. It exists in the daily struggle at the UN, where a group of nations may refuse to give up their prerogatives at the expense of world security and survival.

Jewish education is obviously the result of conditions within American Jewish life. It is also a growing force within American Jewish life, especially as it attracts communal minded personalities in its program, personnel, and its boards. Actually, the field of communal Jewish education has made great strides, especially since the growth of other communal ventures (Jewish Federations, Welfare Funds, and Community Councils). Success in achieving an adequate program of Jewish education, in any community, is a step in the direction of wholesome Jewish communal life in America.

It is important, then, that American Jewry should know, not only the promise of the Jewish education movement, but also the steps by which such promise becomes reality in any community. The steps in development from narrow education limited by the boundaries of attitudes of the sponsoring groups to a communal educational program are many. Each of these steps can be achieved when the community is ready for it, and not before. Often, attempts to take two steps when the community was ready for only one, has resulted in a complete return to non-communal schools. The achievement of these steps has been, in most instances, preceded by achievements in other fields of Jewish community effort on a community-wide basis. The strength of the Jewish educational program in many cities is dependent on the strength of its other communal programs. Planning for Jew-

COMMUNAL ASPECTS OF JEWISH EDUCATION

ish education requires just as much, and many of the same skills, as planning for any other Jewish communal efforts.

The steps in building a central communal Jewish education program center on bringing the existing schools together, if possible. If it is not possible to develop this on a complete basis, then a partial basis of shared personnel, materials and building is a beginning.¹ A step in the same direction is community subsidy of recognized schools (or school), by the federation. The federation's requirement of minimum achievement in standards may be next. Eventually, policy responsibility should follow financial support. This may come about by broadening the membership of the Jewish Education Board to include communal minded persons, and persons of all community points of view. Into this group are introduced concepts of progressive education, both practical and theoretical. With this comes the introduction of project materials, progressive methods, etc., into the classrooms, on an experimental basis. Often, outside educators are invited in, either on the basis of one evening's discussion with the school personnel and board, or even on intensive surveys of the program, in which the outside surveyor examines the program, and carries the board along

¹ Jewish educators generally have pointed out the impossibility of securing qualified teachers, or separating children by grades efficiently in the smaller schools, where there is a small enrollment, and small financial resources. They point out that the aims of effective Jewish education often require the consolidation of small schools into the type of operation which makes possible the hiring of sufficient and adequate teachers, specialists and administrators, even though such consolidation may take away from the religious and political groups of the community their day-by-day contacts with their hoped-for future members.

with him, as he develops recommendations and conclusions. The job is not done, though, until the parent and student group understand the aims of such a program, and accept such a curriculum. As it stands today, with limited teaching personnel available, the problem which seems hardest to solve is that of teaching the teaching personnel to use progressive methods and communal curricula, after finding personnel willing to learn and use such methods and material. Jewish educators point out, however, that even with good personnel and curriculum, a school will not continue to progress without capable continuous and active supervision in a continually broadening educational program for all age groups.

Often a community may come just so far, and then be hampered and frustrated by lack of suitable personnel or unwillingness of one or another small group in the community to accept new approaches. The community structure and achievement may vary in the time required in its development, depending on many factors in each community. The difficulties apparent in development of a communal educational program are in many ways similar or common to other communal developments. A Workmen's Circle group or a Zionist group, or a religious institution may be fearful of giving up its control over a school. Similarly, a community Zionist group, or fraternal group, or Jewish women's organization may be fearful of encroachment of its right to conduct fund raising drives for the quota set by its national office. Some local groups will hold to their time honored prerogatives to operate their own special civic defense or welfare program or other communal operation. It is important to realize that each of these projects—a

COMMUNAL ASPECTS OF JEWISH EDUCATION

school, a fund drive, or a special program—is a method of keeping the organization alive, getting new members, and maintaining itself. Just as the fund drive, or civic defense program, or welfare project has to be brought in or geared in to the central communal program, so the separate schools have to be brought in, or geared in, to the community education program. The ways in which this can be accomplished depend on the situation in the specific community, including such factors as the strength of the central communal body, the extent to which that body is democratically controlled and representative of the community, the understanding of educational goals by the board of that body and the general community, and the extent to which the community wishes to do something about the problem.

Improvement in Jewish education throughout the country may be partially stimulated by constructive steps in which all communities may take part. These are:

1. Setting up scholarships within the AAJE (accomplished by larger federation grants to AAJE).
These scholarships might carry with them obligation to teach in the Jewish field for a number of years, and might include certain course requirements suitable to community goals in Jewish education.
2. Offering of adequate salaries to trained, experienced personnel as a means of drawing young people into the field.
3. Development of a pension system for Jewish education personnel, such as is at present being developed in other communal service fields.
4. Greater emphasis on Jewish education as a communal effort in federation interpretation in the communities.

These basic steps can be taken by communities interested in the problem. Such steps, and many others, should be taken since Jewish communal education is a vital factor in the future of Jewish unity and achievement in America.