NOMINATION AND INDUCTION OF NEW BOARD MEMBERS

group a process of what the army calls indoctrination will be necessary.

Perhaps the best method of accomphishing this is thru a board member institute or seminar of several sessions. This would have to be arranged jointly with other agencies to make the group large enough.

A modification of this method is to have the first board meeting of the year geared to the needs of the new members. The program might include a review of the agency's history, the main areas of its activities, the staff qualifications, the professional skills involved, relations to other community agencies.

Publications, clear, simple and brief, can also be used with some effect to familiarize the board member with his agency. I suggest that a board manual is as important to the board as an office handbook is to the staff.

A personal conference by the executive with the new member, perhaps with the president participating, has some value in special situations.

The role of the executive in this whole process of nominations and induction is defined, as in his other board relationships, by his function of providing the board and nominating committee with pertinent material, and with a careful analysis and evaluation of that material. so that they might arrive at a decision with intelligence and conviction. For example, the hit-and-miss process of nominations might be examined in terms of attendance, interest and understanding of board members, and in terms of community reactions. Information on what other agencies have done about the matter can be collected and presented. If enough provocative material is made available to arouse some basic thinking on functions of boards and responsibilities of board members, I have little doubt that the final outcome will result in a set of policies that will eventually be productive of personal growth and increased usefulness on the part of board members.

HOW TO WORK WITH YOUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

By BEN L. GROSSMAN

Executive Director, Home for
Aged Jews, Chicago, Ill.

Institutional care for older people has become one of the important parts of a total community welfare program. The changes in trends in the care of our elderly persons has placed heavier responsibilities upon Boards of Directors and Executive Directors of Homes for the Aged than ever before in the history of our country.

In order for the Homes to function properly so that the needs of the aged will be met, there must be proper direction. Policies must be determined by the Board with the help of the Executive Director to meet the needs of the aged in the community; the problems involved must be understood and accepted; and the Board and Executive must have knowledge of funds which can be made available.

Broadly speaking the Board and the Executive are similar to the Governor and Legislative body of a state government. The Board legislates, it determines policies, approves programs and is a representative body of the community. In order to do a good job the Board must have the information and understanding of the needs of the older people in the community. Our task as Executive Directors is to bring to our Boards matters involving policies, trends in the care of the aged, needs for improving the Home's program and the needs of the aged as related to the total community. We must not fall into the error of bringing petty administrative details to the members of the Board. Their job is to

handle the broader aspects of the Home's place in the community.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF BOARD MEMBERS

Each member of the Board of Directors should have a real conviction of the individual human being and should join with others in a willingness to work for the good of the Home.

Each member should attend meetings of the Board and committees regularly, because an interested, informed and participating member requires frequent contact with the Executive or with the staff who are actively carrying to accomplishment the purposes and policies of the Home.

The Board has the responsibility of determining the intake policy with the cooperation of the Executive Director.

Each member should be stimulated by the Executive to take the initiative of keeping in touch with community progress and action about the aged.

The Board members should share with their friends and others their specialized knowledge and understanding of the work of the Home, the problems presented by its residents and the needs and problems of older people living outside the Home.

The members of the Board should be encouraged by the Executive to serve on those community committees which are working to provide better care for older persons.

The Board, Executive, and staff should work together in reviewing from time

to time and to revise, when necessary, the policies governing the work of the Home.

The Board should be willing to accept the responsibility for studying legislation relating to the welfare of older people with support of strengthening and improving all such legislation at the Federal, State, and local level so that the best interests of the aged may be safeguarded.

SELECTION OF BOARD MEMBERS

Since the thinking of the Board is a product of the thinking of its individual members each member of the Board should represent a variety of types, ages, talents, background, and of those forces concerning the interest in the work the Home is doing.

One of the most important, and responsible committee assignments is the membership or nominating committee. Its major task is to discover and select persons in the community who might become valuable members of the Board. This committee determines to a large extent the caliber of the future leadership and representative body of the community.

This committee should be willing to accept all suggestions, and make final selection only after careful consideration of each individual. However, the general Board itself makes the final decision and selection.

It is the responsibility of the nominating committee to sit down with the prospective member to tell him what the work of the Home will be and what it means to the community and to the people living in the Home. The prospective member should understand that he will be expected to attend meetings and to serve on one or more committees. He should be willing to take part through special study or participation in

an orientation course given by staff and more experienced Board members.

It may be desirable for Homes for the Aged to develop its own statement of specific qualifications for Board members. Reducing this statement to writing may be helpful to Board members themselves as well as to a nominating committee.

Number of Board Members

The constitution or by-laws of the Home generally defines the number of persons who shall be on the Board.

According to all good practice, there should be enough members to provide a variety in point of view; large enough to allow for satisfactory performance of duty without undue burden upon any one member. In other words, if the Board is too small it would not be representative. Then too, if it is too small it would be too easily dominated by one or two persons. It might be suggested that the minimum number of members should be twenty to twenty-five and the maximum number should be between fifty and sixty. These numbers would serve the community's major responsibilities. It should never be too big to be unwieldy, but always to be sufficient in size to be flexible. The Board should be comprised of both men and women. A quorum should be entitled to do business.

ROTATION OF BOARD MEMBERS

Mary Hemingway in her article, "How Long Shall a Board Member Serve," states, "In the realm of social work, the idea of rotation in membership is popular; not, I believe justifiably, but certainly understandably. This is so on two counts: first, it affords a painless, if somewhat cowardly, method of removing dead wood; second it spreads information about the organization by an annual drawing of new people into the group

of initiates, one of whose prime duties, once they are informed themselves, is to accomplish through their informal contacts with their own friends the sort of publicity that creates sympathy and increases understanding as no printed word can hope to do. These are both important considerations. Dead wood must certainly go; so must live wood, if it has grown right across the patch of progress, but not by cutting down the whole grove."

How Should Rotation Be Managed?

The term of office should be long enough to include time for "learning the ropes" followed by time in which to make an effective contribution; election for a term of 3 to 5 years with a limited possibility of re-election is often desirable; it is sometimes possible to arrange for such persons to serve as members-atlarge for a year without vote; some may be asked to return after an interval of one year. Such persons are often the best material from which to choose committee members.¹

COMMITTEES

The Board of Directors work through committees and the Executive Director should be a non-voting member of these committees. He should attend all committee meetings so that he may be able to supply a continuity of information and other data as the committees may need to perform their work efficiently and satisfactorily. Appointment to committees should be made on the basis of knowledge concerning the committees' work. Assignment of members of committees takes into consideration the capacities and interests. Committees should be free to select as non-voting members anyone from the community

to help, even though he may not be a member of the Board.

The number of committees should be as many as are necessary to accomplish current, and to plan for future work.

Each member should be appointed to a committee of his own choosing. The term of office of each committee member should expire at the end of each year with the exception of those committees which have not completed their specific task.

Special committees should be created for special tasks as emergencies arise. These committees should be dissolved when their job is completed.

Committees should be composed of three or more members of the Board (but not more than eight) appointed by the presiding officer or in accordance with the by-laws of the Home. When appointed, the committee members should be given a clear statement of its function and responsibilities by the Board. Carefully prepared minutes should be kept of all meetings. These might be the committees essential to all Homes: (note the qualifying statement in reference to the Executive Committee).

Executive Committee—depending upon the size of the Board, there should be an Executive Committee to be composed of the Chairman or president and various officers of the Board, the chairmen of other committees, and a limited number of other members. If it develops that the officers and chairmen of sub-committees consist of less than one half of the Board, then there should be an Executive Committee.

The responsibilities of an Executive Committee depend in large measure upon the geographic spread of constituency, the Board's workability and flexibility, and demands of the specific Home. In all cases, the function of an Executive Committee should be clearly understood

¹ "The Board Member"—New Haven Council of Social Agencies—1936.

and be acceptable to the Board membership.¹ by-laws of the Home; it should report to the entire Board its action on each

An Executive Committee is needed only if the Board is too large to function as a unit.

Budget Committee—This committee should consist of the chairman of each of the other committees. It should assist the Executive Director in preparation of the annual budget. When the budget is completed by this committee it should be presented and explained to the entire Board of Directors for its approval.

Finance Committee-It was suggested by one of my Board members that this committee should assure the Board, with the cooperation of the Executive Director, the installation of a bookkeeping system which is adequate; the preparation of the annual audit by an outside certified public accountant; the presentation of a monthly financial statement; the provision of sound banking facilities and depositing all monies in the name of and to the credit of the Home; the institution and supervision of procedures which safeguard cash transactions; the maintenance of a systematic record of legacies and their limitations; the assurance that adequate insurance is carried; the review of maintenance contributions from relatives: set up investment policy and investments of all funds of the Home; should represent the Home in financial dealings with the Community Fund and with other welfare agencies.

Admission Committee—This committee should work closely with the Executive Director or with the social work department of the Home in selecting those applicants for residence who are eligible for admission as indicated in the

to the entire Board its action on each applicant in order to receive the Board's acceptance or rejection of the committee's recommendation; at regular intervals, committee should review the current situations of the applicants waiting to enter its Home; the Committee should be continuously informed of the applicant accepted to enter the Home by the Executive Director or social worker, until and after the applicant enters the Home; it should help the Executive Director or social worker in making necessary suggestions to help the applicant while waiting to enter the Home: and to assist in referring rejected applicants to other sources where they might receive help.

House Committee—This committee should be the advisory committee to the Executive Director in reference to the physical operation of the Home such as: building and grounds; housekeeping; purchase of food, linens, janitorial supplies, fuel, etc.

This committee itself should not be given the task of actual buying or other administrative duties. It should be used in the capacity of advisor and as a guide.

Medical Committee—This committee should help with the total medical needs of the residents. In this connection it should have the responsibility of assisting the Executive Director and Medical Director in planning the Home's medical program; of securing the cooperation of a general hospital for specialized care for the Home's residents; and of securing the cooperation of the kind of specialists necessary to provide consultation and help to the Home's medical staff.

Recreation Committee—This committee should have the responsibility of helping to meet the social and recreational needs of the residents by: giving help and counsel to the Executive Director, recreational leader, and resident's

The Jewish Social

ment of a progressive recreation and occupational therapy program.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BOARD AND ITS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Executive Director of a Home for the Aged should be a qualified administrator selected by the Board. He should not be one of the members of the Board. He should be given the full responsibility for carrying out the broad policies as set forth by the Board of Directors and should act as advisor and source of information while policies are being decided.

The Executive should be directly responsible to the Board and not to individual members of the Board.

He should be present at all meetings of the Board and should give a written report to the Board at the monthly meetings of the conditions and transactions of the Home, together with such recommendations and observations as he may deem wise for the best interests of the Home. The wise Board which employs a competent Executive Director gives him the responsibility of the Home for the employment, supervision, discharge, and for the training of the entire staff of the Home.

The Executive should keep in close touch with the current developments in the field of Homes for the Aged and in the general field on the care of older people. He should report his findings to the Board at regular intervals. In connection with this phase of his work, the wise Board of Directors will desire that its Executive will be given time to study such, as a special course, at a university, and be granted time to attend Conferences.

The Board is not a social work group. It is not the Board's responsibility to help the individual of the Home. It is the Executive Director's responsibility

to clarify with the Board the extent to which Board members' contact with residents in the Home may be carried out. No Board member should visit the residents to give them a feeling that their visit is patronage or direct charity.

This presentation was prepared with the help of my Board of Directors. I am grateful to each member for his help.

One of my Board members suggests that "The Board of Directors of a Home for the Aged should not be a social club. Members of the Board should not be selected because they belong to a certain club. They should be chosen because they are interested in providing adequate care for the aged in the Home and in the whole community. They should have something worthwhile to offer!"

Another Board member wrote, "I might go a step further and tread upon dangerous ground. If an Executive Director does not have the respect and confidence of his Board, he is not doing an efficient job. He, of course, must prove himself to his Board. He must be able to quickly recognize his problems, both social and administrative, but more important, must know the solution to these problems. He must have sufficient judgment to intelligently determine when to consult his Board members and when to go ahead without them. Matters of judgment are the result of a complete and thorough understanding of what the Board expects of its Executive Director as well as what the Executive Director expects of his Board."

It is my firm belief that good relationships between the Board and Executive Director and staff do not happen by accident. Mutual understanding and helpfulness can be secured only through careful planning and when all concerned have a strong belief that we are working toward a common goal—to provide better care for those aged people with whom we work and serve.

¹ "Standard of Structure and Responsibilities of Board of Trustees" Division on Care of Aged—Health & Welfare Council—Phila. Sept. 1947.