

## A Tribute to Nathan Bijur

WHEN the City of New York acquired the services of Nathan Bijur as a Justice of the Supreme Court, the Jewish community lost one of its best social workers. With that singleness of purpose which marked everything that he did, he surrendered all his communal activities to his judicial duties. Despite the arguments of friends that he could continue his work on the United Hebrew Charities (now the Jewish Social Service Association) without interfering with his work as a Judge, he was fully persuaded that the latter was entitled to and should receive his full time and thought. Of his distinguished service on the Bench, others more competent than I, can speak. Of his work in the charities probably nobody knows more than Dr. Lee K. Frankel and I.

At a time—more than thirty years ago—when organized charity was little understood and was sneered at as “scientific charity” whose money was untruthfully said to go largely to the payment of salaries, he was in the forefront of those who believed that there was vast scope for improvement in the matter of outdoor relief. Not only at the biennial Conference of Charities where he came in contact with all the leaders of charitable work throughout the country, but all the year around he was in consultation with such people as Devine, Tucker, Folks, Kingsbury, and Mary Richmond. His conference with Dr. Frankel and myself was practically a continuous one. Whenever we met, and that was not infrequently in those days, the conversation would presently turn to one or another of the problems confronting the U. H. C. and these were discussed from every possible angle. At that time, the U. H. C. was the clearing house of practically all the charitable activities of the city. He was among the pioneers of the boarding out system for orphans, being convinced that a child brought up in the atmosphere of a home had a better chance in life than one whose every act was regimented by the rules of an institution. When the great influx from Eastern Europe caused the congestion of large numbers of Jews in the rapidly growing Ghetto of New York he, together with the late Leo N. Levi and myself, drew up the plan under which we were willing to organize the Industrial Removal Office to be financed by the Jewish Colonization Association of Paris, and like the good lawyer that he was, he inserted in that plan a proviso that no immigrants should be aided to come to this country and that nothing should be done that was contrary to the law of the land.

In those days, much against our inclination, the matter of Immigration was left in the hands of the U. H. C. The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society was in its infancy and

while we gave it full credit for good intentions it itself admitted that so far as the larger problems of legislation were concerned, it was not competent to deal with them. On one occasion, Bijur was in Washington speaking before the Committee of Immigration and Naturalization of the House of Representatives and gave an illustration of his nimble wit and repartee. He was arguing that immigrants did the rough work of the country and said that the subways of New York were built by immigrant labor. One of the members of the committee interrupted to say that when they had built them they returned to their homes in Europe, whereon Bijur, quick as a flash, responded, “But they left the subway behind them.”

Nobody was more insistent upon the necessity of Federating the charitable institutions of New York than Nathan Bijur. He with the late Morris Loeb kept hammering away upon the subject always to an unresponsive and indifferent community. Those who were not indifferent, for the most part, were hostile. Eventually however the first step was taken in the organization of the Council of Communal Institutions which after demonstrating its futility finally gave way to Federation. That the New York Federation and that of Brooklyn should unite is another illustration of his far-sightedness. He was always of the opinion that there should not be a separate series of social service activities for two parts of the same city. Apropos of Federation, its present most efficient Executive Director owes his position, in part at least, to Nathan Bijur. In 1902, we were at Detroit (Bijur, Frankel and I) attending the National Conference. A man unknown to all of us got up to speak on some subject then under discussion, and spoke with such clarity and directness (not to say speed) that we instantly agreed that New York wanted him. He came on here in response to an offer from the U. H. C. (I think in the following year) and that he made good and that our opinion was sound the whole country knows. No one who knows or knows of Solomon Lowenstein will question the judgment made in Detroit in 1902.

This memorandum is written far from New York and without opportunity to check up my recollection. It probably fails to do justice to the subject. My personal attorney until he went on the Bench and my friend of nearly a lifetime—my sense of loss on hearing of his death was overwhelming. I can only say in words which he would have understood but many of this generation will not, “*Zecher Tsadik Libracha*. The memory of the righteous is a blessing.”

CYRUS L. SULZBERGER.

## A Message from the President of the Conference

By PHILIP L. SEMAN



PHILIP L. SEMAN  
President Nat. Conf. Jewish Social Service

I GLADLY take this opportunity of extending greetings to the members of the National Conference of Jewish Social Service, at this time, and to express my appreciation of the honor which they have conferred upon me in electing me President for the coming year. I am not unmindful of the responsibility that goes with it. I sincerely hope that with the whole-hearted cooperation of the membership of the Conference, the many duties imposed may be carried through with the greatest credit and satisfaction.

It would not be gracious on my part if I did not recognize at this time your trust in me to be rather symbolic of the regard that you hold for the branch of service which I happen to be a part of, namely the community center field. I am happy for this, for it indicates a trend in the field of Jewish social work, and more particularly in the field of the Jewish social worker, the country over, to acknowledge the importance of the Jewish community center in the general field of Jewish social service.

Then too, it is rather pleasant to have been elected President this year for another reason, namely that the Conference is to be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1931, the city where twenty-four years ago in 1907, I had the pleasure of attending my first meeting. I remember very distinctly what an impression this meeting had on me. Possibly it was because of the fact that I was twenty-four years younger, and also because our own fields and more especially the members of our own group were practically all newcomers in the work at that time.

As I think it over now, it is rather painful to note how few of those who attended the Conference in 1907 in Minneapolis are actively interested in the work today.

Among the Presidents of the Conference, Nathan Bijur, who passed to his last reward only a little over a month ago; Max Herzberg of Philadelphia who for many years and until the very end of his days of service and usefulness, was a staunch friend and admirer of the Conference; Dr. Lee K. Frankel, who in 1907 was very young in the Conference himself, but who was recognized and respected for his good judgment and understanding as he is today; Professor Jacob H. Hollander of Baltimore who was active with the

Conference for only a very short period, but who during the time when he was President, lent it scholarship and dignity at a time when the Conference needed such moral support; Judge Julian W. Mack; our good friend Max Senior, who for years and years never failed us and was at all times a fine type of personality to count in the group; Cyrus L. Sulzberger, who in the years past was active and helpful and gave tone and dignity not only to the group itself, but in connection with the meetings of the National Conference of Social Work, in those days known as the Conference of Charities and Correction, appeared on the programs of that Conference and took part in the discussion at the general and section meetings, and gave our own Jewish Conference a fine setting.

It is too bad that only so few of this splendid group are still with us. I mean with us as part and parcel, not only on our stationery, but really an active part of our organization.

As I look over these twenty-four years, I see before me the splendid characters of Louis H. Levin, for many years the Conference Secretary, the real backbone of the Conference; Professor Sabsovich, Dr. David Blaustein, Minnie F. Lowe; men and women who were among the pioneers in the field of Jewish social work