

## SOCIAL WELFARE IN ISRAEL \*

by JONA M. ROSENFELD

*Paul Baerwald School of Social Work of Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel*

AND

ABRAHAM DORON

*Division of Social Insurance of the Ministry of Labour, Tel Aviv, Israel*

### Introduction

AMERICAN and American Jewish social workers have shown great interest in the development of Israeli social work and have also made their contribution to it. Therefore it is quite striking how little has been published about it in the United States. This may be due to an understandable reluctance to evaluate from afar developments which have been achieved with much struggle and under difficult circumstances. However, and as is well known, Israel has high aspirations for itself in all areas of life.

The purpose of this paper is to outline the particular needs for health, education and social welfare services in Israel, to describe the programs and provisions set up to meet these needs and, finally, to comment on some of the issues facing Israeli social workers today. The particular issues to be mentioned here mainly relate to the quality of these services rather than their comprehensiveness or adequacy. Such an approach

\* This paper was prepared while both authors were studying for their Ph.D. and M.A. degrees, respectively, at the University of Chicago. The authors wish to express their gratitude to Yoram Barzel, Ph.D.; Dolores Bernath, Eileen Blackey, Ph.D.; and Ezra G. Levin, LL.D., for their helpful comments.

seems justified on two grounds: first, it avoids the controversial issue of how much a new country can "afford," which has been ably argued by Philip Klein;<sup>1</sup> second, it addresses itself to a clearly non-controversial issue—the desirability of improving the quality of services.

The idea of providing adequate social security services<sup>2</sup> to the inhabitants of "The Jewish National Home in Palestine"<sup>3</sup> is not new. It has occupied the minds of the forerunners of the state of Israel, the Zionist movement and its leaders, whose concern to assure adequate provisions for all had its roots in the religious and social motivation of this movement. From the religious viewpoint, this concern was the desire to create a community operated on princi-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Klein's reports on Israel have not been published, as far as is known.

<sup>2</sup> Social security services represent here all services undertaken by national, municipal, or local authorities to provide health, education, employment, and various types of public assistance and social welfare programs to all citizens. The effects and nature of fiscal and economic policies will not be dealt with here. Because of the inadequacy of up-to-date material, child welfare aspects and housing programs will not be discussed.

<sup>3</sup> The specific and different social problems of the Arab population which presently constitutes 11 per cent of the total population, will not be covered.

ples of social justice as expounded by the prophets; from the social angle, to found a society in which the utopian elements of the socialist movements of late nineteenth-century Europe might be put into practice. While the Jewish community that lived in Palestine before the Zionist era, i.e., before the turn of the century, often had subsisted on donations from abroad, the Zionist settlers opposed this system and attempted to create institutions which would protect the individual from the exigencies of life in other ways. Indeed, the hard physical conditions that prevailed when the Zionist "pioneers" set out to create the "just" society, helped stimulate development of the cooperative movement in the country, and especially of the communal settlements. The communal settlement, or *kibbutz*, was the epitome of a socially secure society which meets all the needs of its members. Even though the percentage of the population in communal settlements has always been small (4 to 6 per cent today), this way of life and these ideals inspired and reflected the developments in all areas of social security throughout the country both before and after Israel became an independent state in 1948.

Until then most of the social security provisions of the country were not developed under the auspices of the governments ruling Palestine (which was a province of the Ottoman Empire until 1917, and a British mandate until 1948). They were organized by the voluntary, semi-official political authorities of the Jewish community. These so called "national institutions" and such voluntary organizations as the Federation of Labor administered many of the external and internal affairs of the Jewish community. Thus, in the days before the establishment of the state of Israel, voluntary associations and a few Jewish municipalities, rather than the legal gov-

ernments of the country, developed the school system, most of the health services, and the various child and social welfare services for the Jewish population. With the termination of the British mandatory rule the people of the new state were clearly eager to improve on the ways in which the social security needs of its members had been met before statehood was achieved.

### The Characteristic Needs for Social Security Services

#### A. Immigration

Within the first few years of the existence of the new state, the population more than doubled. Therefore a major task of the community and its government was to absorb the immigrants, i.e., to further their economic, social and cultural integration and, in that way, to increase the cohesion of the whole community. Since the immigrants were such a large group and had come mainly without financial resources, the active control and planning of the government have been extensive in all areas of government and not only in the area of social security services. In fact, since the foundation of the state, the immigrant problem has largely dominated the social, economic and political life in Israel.

#### B. Age

Another phenomenon typical of the country is the young age of its citizens. The median age<sup>4</sup> dropped from 27.7 in 1946 to 25.5 in 1953. As in many countries of immigration this is due to the large number of children per immigrant family. About 54 per cent of the immi-

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all figures obtained are from the following sources: *Statistical Abstracts of Israel*, 1954-1955 and 1957-1958 (Jerusalem, Israel Government Printer), and *Statistical Abstracts of the United States* 1960, (Washington, D. C., 1960).

grants to Israel between 1948-1957 came from Asia and Africa. This increased the number of people from the oriental communities, who even earlier constituted both the low income group of the country and the one with the highest fertility rate. Furthermore, the large number of children and youths who are parentless, either because their parents stayed behind or because they were killed during World War II in Europe contributed towards this trend. Finally another aspect of the age problem is that those immigrants who are middle-aged or old have their ordinary problems aggravated in Israel. Many of them are unaccompanied and chronically ill, and this in a country with a considerable degree of unemployment.

#### C. Family Life

This touches on the problem of family life. Because of the immigrant nature of the population and because of the results of World War II, there is in Israel an especially large number of people with no relatives in the country. Thus people in situations of need often cannot rely on voluntary, unofficial help offered by relatives. Furthermore, the building of a new society and establishing a new way of life have coincided with definite breaking down of traditional patterns of family ties, which causes estrangement between members of different generations.

#### D. Employment

There are problems both in the employability of large segments of the population and in the actual employment available. On the one hand the country suffers from an undersupply of skilled personnel and workers. On the other hand, non-employability is extensive because of the nature of the immigration. About 18 per cent of those who immigrated since 1948 were classified as la-

borers, as compared to 8.8 per cent for the others in the country. As a result, in 1958, 5.7 per cent of the civilian labor force was actually unemployed. (This is an improvement over 1954 when this figure was 8.6 per cent.) Another 15.9 per cent of the labor force was partially unemployed or employed in public works and in other income-maintenance employment projects. This situation is even more serious when one considers that people over 50 years do not register at the state employment offices. The highest concentration of unemployment was the new immigrant communities and settlements.

#### E. Education

It is noteworthy that about 20 per cent of the population is between five and fourteen years old (compared to 16 per cent in the United States). Primary schooling for the new immigrant group is especially important, as the school is a means of initiation of the newcomers into the new society. From the point of view of the receiving community, the children are considered the bridge for the adjustment and integration of their families to the new culture. The individual newcomer's chances of finding a better job are much increased by higher education, and especially, by vocational training. However, members of the oriental communities are often neither accustomed nor appropriately motivated to avail themselves of the facilities for vocational training and higher education. Therefore the educational authorities carry the burden of providing appropriate methods and conditions of instruction for people of very different backgrounds. This is a hard task since many of the new immigrants have been abruptly transplanted to an industrial society and their previous culture is not known to most of their educators.

#### F. Health

The specific concerns in the area of health are those of infant mortality and the various diseases and health habits of the newcomers. The immigrants came with a variety of diseases and inadequate health habits. Many of them also developed illnesses, such as tuberculosis, to which they had not been exposed in their countries of origin. Not all the immigrants who come to Israel were medically screened, and, even when screened, the sick and the invalid were often not barred from immigrating. This presented problems of reducing the disparity between the level of health and nutrition of the population of European origin and those from Middle Eastern countries, which are often problems of communication and of human relations.

#### Programs and Provisions to Meet Social Welfare Needs

Social security, in the sense of a society providing conditions and means for each person to lead a full life as a member of his community, may be ensured by both the general institutions and values of the society. The formal provisions of the welfare services are founded on these objectives, which are to be fulfilled both indirectly and directly: indirectly, by labor legislation, subsidies, and public work programs, and directly, by the education and health services, by social welfare, and by social insurance programs. All of these provisions will be discussed here insofar as they are offered under the auspices of the government or municipalities.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> No mention will be made of the service-kind and the immigrant settlement provisions which are offered to all newcomers during the first year, which are mainly provided by the Jewish Agency for Palestine, i.e., supported by World Jewry. It is estimated that the economic "absorption" of an immigrant costs between \$3,000 and \$5,000.

#### Indirect Social Security Provisions

The labor laws protect people against arbitrariness and exploitation and secure for them conditions of work that are not detrimental to their health and welfare. In view of the socialist tradition and the power of its labor movement, Israel has extensive and progressive fair employment legislation. There are laws that protect health, provide for workman's compensation, and regulate apprenticeship and vocational training. In fact, the control by the trade union, i.e., the Federation of Labor, is so extensive that cheap labor practices can be observed only in agriculture and small-scale enterprises. In industry the hiring and firing of a worker is determined essentially by his seniority rather than by his efficiency on the job. There is, indeed, a highly imperfect labor market, which has an effect on the high cost of labor and minimizes the self-regulating tendency of wages. In fact, wage negotiations between the Federation of Labor and the government largely determine the wage scale and the conditions of work in the country as a whole.

The unemployment described earlier, which is not met by the government's developmental projects in agriculture and industry, is largely met by *public works, employment projects, and building and housing programs*. It is not possible to give adequate figures on these projects. However, at no time between 1952-1954 was less than 3.5 per cent of the national income<sup>6</sup> used for public works and similar projects, which were initiated by the national government directly or by the municipal authorities. Actually the contribution of the government to the provision of employment is

<sup>6</sup> *Falk Project for Economic Research in Israel*—First Annual Report, (Jerusalem 1954). *Ibid.*,—Second Annual Report—1955. No reliable more recent figures were available.

very extensive since one quarter of the national income is spent by the government. These expenditures, however do not include much of the building and land reclamation work which is sponsored by the semi-official Jewish Agency and Jewish National Fund.<sup>7</sup>

These various work programs intend to introduce the new immigrants to work. For a long period of time the official policy was to provide a certain amount of work-days per month, their amount being determined by the number of dependents each worker had. These wages were 20 per cent lower than that of the general labor market. Unfortunately, this policy and often inadequately planned work projects could not prepare the work habits required in a modern society.

The cost of basic foods for the consumer has been kept down since the beginning of statehood by subsidies to farmers, imported goods, and surplus food purchase. Some years ago, clothing and utilities were also subsidized. Rents are controlled, although some changes are introduced from time to time. This policy has made possible until recently an average expenditure for food and rent as low as 38 per cent and 11 per cent, respectively, of the individual consumer's expenditure. (In the United States, where per capita national income is four times as high, the respective expenditure has been 28.3 per cent and 13 per cent for 1958.) There has been, however, a considerable decrease in the amount of subsidies during the last few years. The school lunch programs operate in most schools, and in the centers

where the new immigrants are concentrated they are not required to pay for the meals. However, no evidence on the adequacy of nutrition, either in terms of the quantity and distribution of vitamins or its consumption by individuals and groups, is available.

It is important to realize that if it were not for the subsidies, public work and emergency relief programs, Israel would not have been spared the manifestations of extreme poverty. Subsidies amounted to 110 million Israel pounds in 1954 to 1955, which was 7 per cent of the national income. Needless to say, these subsidies had a far-reaching effect not only on the under-employed group but on the economy of the country as a whole which, however, will not be evaluated here.

#### Direct Social Security Provisions and Services

##### 1. Education

In Israel, the government contributes in quite a comprehensive way to meet the educational needs of the community. Four years after the establishment of the state, parliament passed a compulsory education law under which free education is offered to all children between the ages of 5 and 14. Since then primary education has been financed by the central government and administered by the local authorities. In 1954 a further step towards centralization was taken: the teaching staff was no longer hired by local authorities, but by the Ministry of Education. This increase in centralization is a general problem to which reference will be made later.

The elementary school population has increased considerably, and it is officially claimed that primary school attendance is very high. Between 1948 and 1957 the number of institutions, teachers, and pupils tripled, due to both population

growth and increased school attendance. In 1953-1954, 95 per cent of the children in the twelve-year age group were officially registered in schools, with boys and girls comprising 98 per cent and 91 per cent respectively. These figures, however, do not represent the true state of affairs especially in the rural districts where many children of school age go to work.

The secondary school system, however, has not been taken over by the government. The vocational schools and most of the agricultural schools are under the jurisdiction of the government and a few secondary schools are operated by the municipalities. Although the bulk of the secondary schools are owned and operated by private organizations, they are inspected by the government and only very meagerly financed by it. In 1956 to 1957 only 34 per cent of the 14-17 year age group attended any school. This, and the inadequate number of students in institutions of higher learning, is largely due to high tuition costs and inadequate scholarship provisions. Only 11 per cent of the pupils attending secondary school received any kind of scholarship in 1956-1957.

It may be well to add that there is much activity in the field of adult education. There exists a network of semi-governmental and subsidized courses and schools for adults, mainly for learning the language. All recruits to the army, especially the illiterates among them, are taught Hebrew and given basic education during the period of compulsory national service. Furthermore, since 1955 the number of adults receiving vocational training has increased.

##### 2. Health

What is significant about health services in Israel is that they are to a great extent socialized and administered by the government, the municipalities, and

by the workers' sick fund of the Federation of Labor. Private physicians and hospitals are serving a relatively small segment of the population. The service at the relatively wide network of government and municipal outpatient departments and hospitals is at low cost and varies according to income. This sick fund, which is in the nature of a wage-determined, contributory insurance for all health services, serves 60 per cent of the population. Belonging to the sick fund is compulsory for all members of the Federation of Labor. Financially it is supported very extensively by the government.

Israel has the highest number of physicians per capita in the entire world. There were 457 patients per physician in Israel, in 1956-57, compared to 760 in the United States. In 1957 there were 3.1 hospital beds per thousand population in Israel and 4.5 per thousand in the United States. The achievements in terms of decrease in infant mortality and life expectancy are the most remarkable because of the influx of immigrants. Infant mortality in 1957, nine years after the great influx of immigration, was almost as low as in 1948, before statehood. By that time it had reached the level of 35.9 per thousand for the Jewish population. In the United States it was 26.0 per thousand in 1957. The expectation of life, in 1957, was 68 years for a male infant, 71.4 for a female. In the United States at the same time it was 67.1 and 73.5 respectively.

##### 3. Social Welfare

In contrast to the extensive legislation existing in the field of education, labor, and social insurance, practically no basic social welfare legislation has been passed by the Israel Parliament. So far the Ministry of Welfare has not applied the little legislation passed. Thus there is still no legal basis to the right for as-

<sup>7</sup> It is of interest that in a report on Social Welfare in Israel, Dorothy Kahn mentions that in Israel there is a tendency to "use wages for benefits." J. S. Simey and Dorothy Kahn, *Social Services in Israel*. Prepared for the Government of Israel, United Nations Technical Assistance Programs, 1954.

sistance. Still, the social welfare services rapidly expanded and were able, to a certain degree, to keep pace with the changing needs of a growing population.

At present Israel has a fairly comprehensive system of social welfare programs which reach into the smallest communities of the country. Every municipality or local authority maintains social services and the national government is contributing towards financing them. Supplementary services are provided directly by the national government, and at least the range of services given is wide and includes family and child welfare services, adoption and foster home services, institutional care for children, vocational guidance and probation services for juvenile delinquents. Furthermore the Ministry of Defense provides extensive medical, social and vocational rehabilitation services for disabled veterans and to families of soldiers killed in action. Indeed, the social services and the social workers in Israel truly shouldered the enormous task of accompanying the thousands of new immigrants in their first steps in the country.

Services for individuals who do not require immediate and concrete aid have been developing only recently in Israel. In line with the Jewish tradition there exists a network of relatively small philanthropic aid societies. However, there is no real tradition of social work under voluntary auspices. In 1954 only one-sixth of the registered social workers served voluntary agencies. The majority of the workers in the public agencies, except, perhaps, those with the established municipal departments, carry a tremendous burden. Much responsibility and initiative rests with individual, often inadequately trained social workers.

#### 4. Social Insurance

The social insurance schemes of Is-

rael are indeed quite extensive by any standard. In 1953 the National Insurance Law was passed by parliament. This law introduced a wide network of compulsory social insurance programs covering the entire population. Since April of 1954, old age and survivors' insurance, maternity insurance, and employment injury insurance have been in operation. In September, 1959, a family allowance scheme for large families (those with four or more children) was added. These programs are financed by a contributory system in which employers, employees, and the government participate.

The total program is administered by the National Insurance Institute, and an independent national agency under the supervision of the Minister of Labor. The operation of the Institute is also supervised by a statutory Public Advisory Council which represents the various interest groups such as organizations of employers, labor unions, industries, etc. The council exerts considerable influence on policy and the daily functioning of the Institute.

During its relatively short time of operation the National Insurance Institute clearly made some valuable contributions to the welfare of the community. In the field of old age insurance, after a short qualifying period, the Institute started to pay old age pensions in 1957. By the end of March, 1958, benefits were paid to 31,500 insured persons. This constitutes about 35 per cent<sup>8</sup> of the population 65 years old and over, and probably even more, since some of the dependents of the insured were also in this age group.

In the field of maternity insurance there are two programs in operation: child-birth grants and maternity allo-

<sup>8</sup> All figures on social insurance pertain to the total population.

cations. Both programs have contributed considerably to child and maternal health. The child-birth grants are paid to the whole population, on the condition that delivery takes place in a hospital. The grant covers all hospitalization expenses and first clothes of the infant. As a result of this program, in 1957, 98 per cent of the Jewish children were born in hospitals, as compared with 90.3 per cent in 1954. The maternity allocation program is providing payments of 75 per cent of the regular wages, salaries, or income, for a period of twelve weeks, to gainfully occupied women (employed or self-employed) during maternity leave. In 1957-1958, payments were made to twenty per cent of all mothers giving birth during this period.

The employment injury insurance program covers the whole working population. Coverage is also extended to the self-employed, a step very few countries have taken. The program provides liberal financial and medical benefits to the injured, and broad rehabilitation services are available to the disabled who are unable to return to their former employment.

The old age and survivors' pensions are very small. Although they are linked to the cost of living index, they are far from being adequate to provide even the minimum necessities of life. Although the existent provisions do not provide income maintenance security at an adequate level, they do offer financial assistance to a large group of the most needy part of the population. In these terms these programs are more than an initial step toward social security.

In addition to these compulsory social insurance programs, the Federation of Labor administers a wide network of semi-voluntary social insurance programs. These programs cover workers in agriculture, construction, and industry, and provide case benefits in time of ill-

ness, death and retirement. They fulfill a positive role in supplementing the benefits provided by the national insurance programs. However, they are rather small and duplicate some functions now performed by the national insurance programs.

#### Some Current Issues

With this information in mind one can now turn to make some general remarks about the provisions for social security. One is somewhat reluctant to voice them when one sees how significant the achievements have been. After all, Israel has achieved a level of service and programs which is very remarkable under any terms; and especially when compared with the rest of the Middle East. A report by the International Labor Office<sup>9</sup> says that "... in general, social statistics are highly correlated with the level of income, there are a few countries,—Israel among them—with a low income and ... (which have made) such progress as is usually associated with high income." (The other countries mentioned are Japan, Austria, and the Philippines.) The economic situation of Israel is typical for a country developing new resources. The country has a highly unfavorable balance of trade and depends heavily on foreign aid. In 1956 exports covered only 29.5 per cent of imports; the foreign donation and loans constitute one seventh of the national income. While there is obviously no optimum of expenditure on social welfare in terms of productivity, it may be worth mentioning that taxes are an unlikely source of financing more services. Taxes are not only quite high but they are also considered quite progressive.

Still, in view of what has been mentioned so far, there is obviously room

<sup>9</sup> *Khikrei Avoda*, Vols. V-VIII, 1951-1953 (Tel Aviv: Social Research Institute).

for improvement. Perhaps one might say that Israel has now entered the stage of consolidating what has been achieved so far. Indeed, the problem of the quality of the services, which could not be considered during the initial stages, is bound to get more and more attention. The fact that quite recently a School of Social Work has been set up at the Hebrew University augurs developments in that direction.

What then are some of the issues which one would hope would occupy the minds of the professional workers in the future?

#### 1. *The Problem of Centralization*

In Israel there exists a tendency towards centralization of services which is most apparent perhaps in the area of education though not only there. There is a tradition of excessive administrative control and of centralization in higher policy-making which, in contrast to the United States, would make one argue for more local autonomy. So far, all too frequently, dominant groups decide in Jerusalem what the "primitive" and "new" people in some remote spot ought to do. This may be quite inevitable with regard to military and even economic policy. But with regard to their social needs the people themselves must be helped to be masters of their fate, and should be encouraged or even taught to make more and more decisions on their own. More attention ought to be given to what people really want rather than to what they are presumed to need. Not to do this may have been inevitable at the beginning, but it is now appropriate that more listening take place, as well as more stimulation of local initiative and less reliance on the passivity of the recipients. The recent interest among social workers in community organization principles seems to be a move in the right direction.

#### 2. *Attitude towards the Old and the New*

The expectation which some of the vocal sections of the community have of all newcomers is that they have to change, accept the new values, and abandon the old habits and modes of thinking. What in the United States has been called the "melting pot" is in Israel the "pressure cooker." The prevalent expectation is that people who have only recently left countries with an entirely different level of economy and culture should, almost overnight, drop all these customs and acquire the values of new Israel, with its different modes and patterns of life. Only an enormous degree of self-denial will make people change that quickly. At least for some, this involves much human suffering, for all there exists the need for "time to become," as only then will they be really socially secure. This has implications for the need to individualize services and to seek understanding of the newcomers in the light of their past so that the present will be less overwhelming.

In Israel, as in any country undergoing rapid change, the problem of how to bridge the new and old requires some solution. As anywhere, the imminent danger is that the old is negated and destroyed before new values have been formed. As we have noted, the negation of the past has always been part of the Zionist ideology, a trend reinforced by the strong urge to forget and counteract the degradation and humiliation of Jewish existence which reached its peak in the Europe of the early nineteen forties.

This conflicted attitude towards old and new is reflected in many ways in Israel's social services. For instance, there is a trend to see parents as relics of the past and children as the hope for the future. This is disrupting the relationship between the generations by attaching symbolic justification to the in-

evitable growing-away of the younger generation.

Another aspect of this same phenomenon is the excessive amount of authoritarian handling of people by teachers, nurses, doctors and even social workers. Members of these professions are over-zealously representing the "new values." In this combat against the past we believe they do not differentiate between adaptive and non-adaptive patterns, so the former patterns are lost for building the necessary bridge between past and future. Indeed, this tendency among professionals to instruct and expect conformity offends not only democratic principles but principles of learning as well.

#### 3. *Effect of Services on Family Life*

It will be necessary to study quite carefully the effect of the current welfare programs on family life. One has the impression that the alienation between the generations within the family and between the individual and his family has been pressed more than is wise. There was even a time when the Settlement Department attempted to settle the various sub-families of one extended family system together with other ethnic groups. It was naïvely hoped that this would encourage integration. It was also an attempt abruptly to produce the kind of nuclear family known in western society. There still exists a trend toward separating the youths, especially those from oriental families, from their parents, and educating them in well-equipped and modern educational institutions. This indeed widens the inevitable distance between parents and children, which at times has depleted communities of the younger generation entirely. Recently attempts have been made to cease this practice and to offer further education by building regional day training centers which would obviate the need to

get training elsewhere, away from one's family.

#### 4. *The Individual and Services*

There is need to train more social workers and to develop research on the effectiveness and operation of services. The recognition of this need surely contributed to establishing the new School of Social Work. But arising out of the earlier discussion, it is encouraging to see that recently social workers increasingly identify more with the clients as people in need, rather than with the country which needs people. A more conscious acknowledgement of the positive values of individualism, which was for a long time perceived as antagonistic to a common ideology, is only slowly gaining ground. In light of this acknowledgement, the trust which social workers have in the rights of individuals needs constant reiteration lest they be swamped by the prevalent collective orientation. To some extent what many of the social workers in the United States have been faced with in the past exists in Israel today. While in the former it was the religious bodies which determined the ethical standards for the people they were serving, in Israel it is to some extent still the ideology of the utopian socialistic movements of the late nineteenth century which often dictates to the recipients of social security services the expectations of the government from him. Both tendencies offend principles of choice even if they adopt principles of social security. Some people claim that independence cannot be granted or offered to the individual as long as the economic and political independence of the country has not been more firmly established. But perhaps increased trust in the humanity of people and in their capacity to make the right decisions will free that human energy which could contribute towards

creating the economic, and perhaps even the spiritual, conditions which would enhance also the greater independence of the State.

#### 5. A Social Policy

Finally, and this has been mentioned especially by Professor Simey,<sup>10</sup> it is necessary to have some clear social policy and to set up a representative body invested with the task of formulating long-range and short-range social policy. This is not only important because of the necessity to coordinate the programs, which the recently appointed inter-ministerial committee will hopefully do. The State must play its part and create a widely representative policy-making body so that social security provisions may more and more become the expression of the democratic processes of the changing society. These provisions need constant re-evaluation in the light of the social changes and the experience accumulated. With a single national body devoted to the formulation of the long- and short-range social policy, new groups will concern themselves with the problems of social security, the old ideologies will have to be reviewed, and the professional groups engaged in the services will be able to offer their knowledge to a community that so clearly attempts to provide the kind of social security it wants.

Israel is a very socially conscious country. The idea of the welfare state is hardly controversial and is an integral part of the value system of the

country. A social worker looking at the social policy of Israel cannot but be struck by one of the meanings this policy has. On the one hand there exists extensive labor legislation, rather comprehensive social insurance schemes and fairly extensive financing of public services. On the other hand, the attitude towards social services per se is expressed by inadequate financing, by administrative shortcomings and by the low status of the Ministry of Welfare. All this cannot be explained by the kind of stigma which is attached to receiving social services. It does reflect an irrational belief in an utopian society which will be socially and economically secure and the notion that the development of a wider program of individualized help is only necessary because the society is not yet secure.

Recently emerging professional groups including sociologists, economists, public administrators, and social workers promise a more rational approach to these issues. They participate more actively in the planning and administration of government services. This development is bound to lessen the present disparity between social welfare ideology and practice, just as the training and development of high standards of professional practice in Israel should further contribute in the same direction. Hopefully, too, it increasingly will be recognized that the idea of the welfare state cannot be achieved by inordinate concentration on social insurance and labor legislation, and that there can be no social security in the absence of adequate social work programs and services.

## PROTECTION OF THE CHILD IN ISRAELI COURTS IN SEX ASSAULT CASES

by DAVID REIFEN

Judge, Juvenile Court, Tel Aviv, Israel

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The following article was a communication to the Journal from Judge Reifen. Readers of the Journal will be interested in its report of an enlightened law enforcement procedure involving children and the role given social work in that procedure. Perhaps of even more interest is the insight this report of an institutional innovation gives into the general orientation in Israel toward children and their mental health.*

#### Statement of Problem

A CHILD may be involved in a sex offense in three different ways—by committing such an offense, by being a victim of it, or by witnessing it. I wish to devote my paper to various aspects of the problem of children who become victims or witnesses to a sex offense, as dealt with in Israel in recent years.

The Israel law which protects children who were involved in a sex offense makes no distinction between victims and witness-victims and accords to both groups the same means of protection. This law was motivated by our realization that a child, witnessing a sex offense, whether committed by two adults, by an adult and a child, or by children alone, may be considered a victim proper, although no offense was actually committed

against him. Moreover, a witness—victim may, at times, suffer emotionally even more than an actual victim. For instances, a child who had witnessed a rape may be more harmed by what he saw, than a child who was the victim of an exhibitionist, or one who was fondled by a sex offender.

We all know, that public feelings run high when sex offenses, mainly those committed against children, are discovered, all the more when the children are of a tender age. Usually, however, these public feelings focus on the offender, namely, on ways and means of punishing him.

Naturally, the victim is in most cases the most important source of information leading to the offender, his apprehension, and subsequent trial. But frequently, these victims are of the tender age of under ten years, as are, for example 70 per cent of the children involved in sex offenses in Israel. These children are called upon to relate their experiences to the police and to elaborate on as many details as possible. The more details the investigator is able to get from the victim, the greater the likelihood of finding the offender and of bringing him to court.

On the other hand, apprehending sex offenders is greatly hindered, because victims are often afraid and ashamed to

<sup>10</sup> Simey and Kahn, *op. cit.*