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Discussion of Dr. Hexter's paper, "Evolutionary Tendencies in the
Jewish Federation Movement", 1926.

1. Key few under - not in nature of barrack address.
or dissertation on specific subject. I can
stand to receive the unit. to meet with you - ~~that~~ ^{glad}
bec. it affords me an opportunity to say a few
words in a direct & instructive way touching
the an. movement - the movement for which you
are now preparing your efforts - and in which
I have already spent nearly 12 ^{or nearly thirty} years.

2. I mean of you, the things that ^{you like} ~~you~~ ^{have} ~~you~~ ^{then} ~~you~~ ^{are} in
your mind, for I know you know, you are
now, and those student doubts and perplex-
are ^{referred} ^{to} ^{you} ^{as} ^{you} ^{are} ^{from} ^{time} ^{to} ^{time}
in ^{connection} ^{with} ^{you} ^{and} ^{your} ^{work}
from time to time.

3. A third. What is a clearing house
for most things - and you will hear
certain things about certain men in the
movement - hear their worth in your
eyes - and in ^{that} ^{reading} ^{general} ^{character}.
of youth - you may be prompted to
peruse your. conclusions - about the
quality & character, you know the Gen. Ralston.
Please do not do it. I know many
men in movement who fall short, the work
on you do - and perhaps more - and
yet 12 yrs. of constant man. taught
me to respect & admire them as
a people - they are earnest, hard-working

may of them inspired their sacred men.
- the equal of any community. I know
the few readers in the pulpit - the
sketch artists, who camouflage vulgarity
with overstatement fact - that I
am sure you - They are the rare exception.
- and the camp - of men whom, as
well I now say you - is a splendid,
and stimulating -

4. You have but 2 ways of judging -
the contributor. The quality of a Rabbi - his
scholarly contribution. & his pulpit ability.
As I have indicated in my recent
letter by a few quick notes as articles -
Why!... ^{under present conditions} there ~~can~~ be ^{no} pretence but little
obj. scholar. among Rabbis any aged sh.
and pulpit ability is not the only
or the highest test of a man's value as
a person. There are men who
are known for sch. achievement & are acclaimed
for creat. progress - who are nevertheless
tending the vineyard, the field - working
cheerfully & with the way that they
should be - producing more & more than
the Jewish people of their time - inspiring
by an example. Life others to follow

and joyful partakes in the life civic
& national life, the common there
are hundreds, such - and they are
the substance to strengthen your country.

5. We have perhaps - in imitation of Protest.
practices - said too much concerning
on preaching - now preaching is a rare
privilege - and the enthusiasm needed is
a great price for paid in society. We
have a great preaching tract. & we are
from the people's claim - But we
have experienced it to a degree where it
was ^{a weary, grueling task} ~~unheard of~~ ^{as hard as a fight} ~~for the~~
we were ~~widely~~ ^{widely} ~~spread~~ ^{spread} ~~for the~~
rate, our keen interest, in a nation
we must turn about for subjects
which to provide for subjects -
and when worship has become an all day
second - and study & labor an ornament.

I hope to live to see the day when
the Am. Sch. will proceed not 2 or 3 times,
but once a month, when he will
teach twice and three a week -
and when he will be in position
to study and learn - 1 day a week.

① no true satisf. Study prev.

I was informed some three months ago, that I was to discuss this paper, but I received the paper three days ago. In reviewing it, therefore, I am reminded of the critic who was asked by the author of the book which he had just reviewed, whether he had read the book and the critic said, "Why no, certainly not. I wanted to be absolutely impartial".

Frankly, neither the time allotted for the perusal of this paper, nor my own previous acquaintance with the intimate problems of the Jewish Federation movement in the United States qualify me to discuss with any degree of adequacy this very fine and comprehensive paper of Dr. Hexter.

In a note which accompanied the paper which Dr. Hexter sent me, he asked of me to deal kindly with him, reminding me that charity begins at home. I am sure that it is not the writer, whose paper this evening evidenced such a thoroughness of grasp and such a clarity of exposition, but the reviewer of the paper who possesses but a minimum of both, who is the fit object of compassion.

In his discussion of the thesis "Evolutionary Tendencies in the Jewish Federation Movement", Dr. Hexter correctly divided his subject into two departments ^{parts}: the internal relations, that is those existing between the Federation and its constituent agencies, or the community at large, and the external relations, those existing between the Federation and the non-Jewish agencies, or the non-Jewish community.

The first of these he again subdivided into two classifications, the formal relations and, as he called it, the evolutionary relations.

Under the formal relations which exist between the Federation, the constituent agencies and the community at large, Dr. Hexter notes, first of all, a growing tendency toward the centralization of power in the Federation, as a result of the control which the Federation exercises over the budget. Concurrently he notes a decided effort which is now being made on the part of Federations to decentralize

X what we may call loyalty, to make the individual, institution or agency of the special interest group, the unit of attractiveness for the lay participators.

He also calls attention to the fact that there is developing in our Federations a greater tolerance toward the non-affiliated agencies which are gradually being drawn into the Federation, and a greater readiness to welcome the newcomer or the representatives of those other than the original group into the controlling boards of the Federation.

He does not indicate the causes which are making for this greater tolerance and this greater friendliness, whether it is due to the growing social vision on the part of the older group, or whether it is due to the growth in number and influence, and consequently also in power, of the newer group or East European group, or whether it is due to the executives themselves and the social workers, many of whom can trace their antecedents both cultural and physical to the self-same newer group, or whether it is due to all three causes combined. I suppose it isn't really very important to single out the cause. Suffice it to record the gratifying fact that a greater democracy and a finer catholicity of spirit is beginning to invade, if it does not persuade the controlling councils of our Federations.

X He calls attention, in passing, to a phenomenon frequently observed, that as soon as an Orthodox Jew is elected to the Board of a Federation he at once loses the confidence of the Orthodox Community. ^{it} If begins to be suspicious of him. It fears that his 100% orthodox zeal is suffering abatement in that unwholesome environment. I think, however, that this is largely the case when the orthodox individual is selected at random by the Federation and drafted on to its board without consulting the orthodox community or the orthodox institution? When the orthodox institution sends as a delegate and representative one of its own to the Federation Board, that suspicion vanishes. The power of control which it can exercise over that individual tends to allay fears and suspicions.

There is one thing which to my mind is quite serious, and to which

Dr. Hexter referred only in passing, and that is the practical absence of the working man and the representatives of Jewish labor from the boards of our Federations.

I regard this as extremely lamentable. For what matter the absence of the Jewish working man from the boards of our synagogues and our temples and our centers and our community homes is one of the most discouraging and disheartening facts in American Jewish life. Where is the Jewish workingman? Have we no place for him in our schemes of social service except as a possible beneficiary, as a possible recipient of aid? Has he nothing to give to us? I submit to you, men and women of this Conference, that Jewish social service is in danger of becoming as utterly bourgeois as the Jewish religion has become in the United States.

Dr. Hexter, in ^{tracing} ~~taking~~ some of the evolutionary tendencies of the Jewish Federation, calls attention to the fact that it is beginning progressively to take more interest in industrial problems, and that it is beginning to participate in industrial disputes. Basing his inferences upon the achievements of a few individuals - and some very marked achievements - he draws the conclusion that the achievements of the Federation in this connection have been highly successful. If this trend is real and distinctive, it is to my mind one to inspire as much misgiving as gratification.

Putting aside for the moment the practical considerations involved, such as the possibility of embroiling a Federation of Jewish Charities in an industrial dispute concerning which there may be a legitimate difference of opinion, with the possible danger of the alienation of a whole section of the community, a decrease in support, a curtailment of activities, and a possible disruption, and at worst, a possible disruption of the whole scheme of Federation, I say, putting aside these practical considerations, the theoretic problem presents itself: is a Federation which derives its authority from its constituent agencies, whose programs are pretty well defined, and in none of which is the adjudication of industrial disputes an item, - I say, is a Federation justified in participating in such enterprises? And again: is the Board of such a Federation equipped, technically equipped in knowledge and in economic understanding,

to adjudicate properly those economic disputes which involve today more and more detail and intimate economic facts, concerning which only the man possessing authoritative knowledge can speak with wisdom and justice? And again: can such a Board, which in very few instances, if any, represents a true cross-section of the economic composition of the community, is such a Board competent to speak with absolute impartiality in an industrial dispute? If our strictures are valid, the question arises, how far can an executive of a Federation proceed in this albeit very commendable work, without endangering the Federation?

To my mind there should be, if there does not exist already in the community, other agencies for this most important service.

Dr. Hexter raises the question of lay leadership, concerning which Dr. Cahn spoke with such force and such helpfulness this evening.

If I had heard Dr. Cahn's address, or if I had read it prior to this meeting, I would not now be dwelling upon it myself. I think that the question of Jewish lay leadership in the work of organized philanthropy is one of the most profound and important ones. There is no question in my mind, and there can be no question in the mind of any thinking man, that a professional personnel is absolutely essential in modern social service. There is no doubt but what trained social workers, endowed with knowledge and with vision, are necessary to guide the community in its social thinking, and in its social planning. But it is equally certain in my mind, that it would be a disastrous thing to the whole scheme of a progressive social program if the layman were crowded out, or if he were reduced to the role of a mere collector of funds, if he were not permitted to participate actively and creatively in the full social program of the community.

In the first place some of the greatest social movements in our day originated, not with the professional, but with the amateur social worker. In the second place, we haven't enough professional social workers to make lay leadership superfluous; and in the third place, a layman can bring to the problems an experience and a knowledge gained in the work-a-day world which the professionally trained

social worker may not possess.

I am afraid that you are in danger of making the same mistake, if I may be permitted to say it, which the Reform Jewish Rabbinate made a few years ago. We inadvertently permitted the serious problems of the synagogue to become the sole concern of the professionally trained rabbi. The layman was quite content to have it so. The layman was quite content to discharge his full obligations to the synagogue by means of financial support. He was not charged with the responsibility of working out the tremendous ethical and moral problems of the synagogue. They were permitted to become mere contributors. This has reacted unfavorably upon the ministry and disastrously upon the Jewish laity. We are now making desperate efforts to regain the layman as a working unit within the synagogue. The Torah was not given to the rabbi and the synagogue was not the creation of the rabbi, but the creation of the Jewish laity.

Don't you make the same mistake. You must not only tolerate the layman in your work, but you must cultivate him and stimulate him to take full responsibility in the theory and in the practice of social work. He must not be permitted to discharge his full social obligations with a check. Our tradition is against it. You well know that in Jewish thought, gemiluth chesedim - personal service - is far superior to zedaka - charity; and personal service is not only the service of one man to another man, but the service of one man to his community, to the state. It is incumbent upon every man to try to wrestle, to the best of his ability, with the vital and perplexing social problems which his community presents to him, and you must compel him to take on his full share of this obligation.

This brings me to my last comment. In speaking of the external relations of the Federation - its relations to the non-Jewish agencies, Dr. Hexter makes some very telling criticisms of the Community Chest. He says that as a result of the community chest, Jewish Federations somehow lose their prestige, which, in many instances was won as the result of this ~~successful~~ of their successful money-raising

efforts. He notes too that the Jewish community is deprived of the emotional by-product of periodic campaigns for Jewish causes. He points out that in many instances the community chest tends to encourage smaller giving on the part of the Jews, thereby making perhaps for an increase of anti-Semitism and prejudice, rather than for a decrease, which it was maintained the community chest would bring about.

And lastly, he points out that the Community Chest has a tendency to standardize social effort, congeal it as it were, so that the progressive movements toward ever developing social programs, which have been features of Jewish philanthropy, will be thwarted and checked.

With much of this criticism I am in complete agreement. I might add even this further criticism: the Community Chest tends to destroy lay leadership in the Jewish Community. When the Federation finds itself faced every year, every day of the year with the problem of educating the Jewish community to more generous giving in order to meet advancing social programs; and when it is annually confronted with the problem of launching a great campaign in the community, it is compelled to cultivate a group, and in some instances a very large group, of the best men and women in the community, upon whom it saddles the full responsibility for that work. These men and women are compelled, because of the task which has been assigned to them, to inform themselves about the community, to study the Jewish community, its contours, its problems, its peculiarities, and through this study their understanding deepens, their power increases, and thereby also, their influence. They are trained in leadership in the community through the necessity which the Jewish community faces, so that when an emergency presents itself, national or international, or when a new cause arises, the Jewish community has ready at hand a unit, a nucleus of Jewish leaders to call upon.

This does not happen in a Community Chest city. There the capable Jews are drafted into the service of the Community Chest for a week or two weeks or three weeks during the year; they are assigned cards of Jews and non-Jews; they

perform their services to the best of their ability, and the thing ends there. They are called into the service as individuals. They are not kept together as a group, so that when the Jewish community faces an emergency or a new cause, it is compelled each time to build up a new organization, from the ground up, and to rekindle group loyalty and enthusiasm.

I am, therefore, aware of the criticisms which can be made against the Community Chest. Yet it would not be just or wise, if alongside of these criticisms the positive good which the Community Chest yields were not also placed. There is an unmistakable and quite definite good which the Community Chest accomplishes. It must be clear to any thinking man or woman that a great annual civic demonstration of cooperation and goodwill, not a demonstration in word, but a demonstration in deed and service, cannot but be productive of good. It must be clear to anyone that out of a fraternity of service, based upon mutual respect and regard for group integrity, there must emerge a greater measure of goodwill and understanding, that suspicions must in some degree abate, and antipathies must in some degree decrease. And I maintain that the task of establishing goodwill and a better understanding between Jew and non-Jew is just as great, and just as important a task confronting the Jewish community as that of consolidating or strengthening its Federation. Both Jews and non-Jews must, to my mind, welcome this tremendous opportunity, and mind you in many cities it is the only opportunity for getting better acquainted, for exchanging ideas, for merging in a great, socially stimulating and unifying enterprise.

But the criticisms are nevertheless valid and they can be met. The criticisms can be met, not by destroying the Community Chest where it now exists, or by opposing it where it is being proposed, but by supplementing it.

If the Federation feels that its prestige is decreasing as the result of the money raising task being taken out of its hands and turned over to a general community agency, then it must discover for itself other tasks equally as important

which will win for it prestige and devotion in the community. It must become the thinking and the planning mind of the community.

If we find that there is a tendency towards smaller giving on the part of some members of our community to the Community Chest, then it is the business of the Federation to supplement the work of the Community Fund campaign by creating a committee of its own to cultivate those individuals whose givings are apparently inadequate, in order to protect the Jewish community against the charge of exploiting the Chest.

If there is a movement towards standardization within the Board controlling the Community Chest, then it is the duty, and to my mind the supreme privilege of the Federation, not to leave that Board, but to stay there and aggressively to assume leadership in pointing the way toward a standardization upward, instead of a standardization downward. If you think, men and women, that you have a finer tradition, that you have developed in some regards a better technique, then you owe it to your community to give it the benefit of your tradition and the benefit of your technique. If this means, as it probably does in some instances, a retardation of your progress, then you must be content to retard your progress a bit in order to enable your friends to catch up with you. . . .

And lastly, if the Community Chest does not enable us to develop a group of Jewish lay leaders who will function in the community for Jews, then the Federation must foster a new program, an exclusively Jewish program, so big, so challenging, so emotionally appealing, as will elicit the creative leadership of the best minds in the community. Such a program is at hand, and on such a program some of your Federations have already embarked. I speak of the program of Jewish Education.

I maintain, friends, that there is no problem facing American Israel today, so real, so fraught on the one hand with marvelous promise, and on the other hand with serious menace, as this problem of educating 600,000 Jewish boys and girls of school age, who are today receiving absolutely no moral guidance or religious training.

I maintain that the problem is sufficiently big, sufficiently important - why the financial problem alone in that of Jewish Education is bigger than the problem involved in all the Jewish philanthropies in any one community combined - to warrant its assuming the place of primacy in Jewish Community life.

You may say that you cannot get your people enthused about Jewish education as they are by that of the raw appeal for relief? There was a time in Jewish life when education was just as potent a rallying cry, and just as dear to the heart of the Jew as charity, and that time may come again. You can stimulate the interest in the subject which will result in a great emotional affection for it. In this task, then, of Jewish Education, I find the opportunity and scope for Jewish leadership, and I find there also that focusing and integrating motif in Jewish community life which we are all seeking.

I thank you.

