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AS WE SEE IT

IN THE JEWISH SOCIAL SERVICE BUREAU

PROGRAM

ANNUAL MEETING - FEBRUARY 12, 1941

GREETINGS - STANLEY J. KANN, PRESIDENT

ADDRESS - DR. OSCAR B. MARKEY

"THIS THING CALLED CASEWORK"

ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

WHAT WE DO AND HOW WE DO IT

While many of our leaders today are trying to give new and vital meaning to the basic principle of democracy, people interested in the promotion of social welfare are every day making it possible for members in the community to use its fuller benefits. All our efforts have been predicated upon the idea that such social welfare service is fundamental to a happy and healthy community. The development and work of the Jewish Social Service Bureau during the past and present years, has been directed toward this end. The goals which we set for ourselves are contained in the very By-Laws which govern our organization:

ARTICLE II. OBJECTS OF THE JEWISH SOCIAL SERVICE BUREAU

Section 1: To initiate and carry out a unified program of social case work among Jews in Allegheny County.

Section 2: To aid and assist Jewish families, children, young men and women, and immigrants, who may be in need of material or other assistance or advice, with a view of promoting and conserving individual and family life, and improving standards of living.

Let us take this constitutional language then and see what it means as it comes to life in the reality of our day to day service in the community.

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Seen through the eyes of our daily efforts, the ultimate purpose of our agency becomes one of preserving and creating sound family life. Our emphasis, however, is not merely the problems of family life that affect the individual's own welfare, but also the individual whose problem affects that of the family. We are aware that in the family each member is influenced and affected by the attitudes and behavior of the other members.

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WHAT WE DO AND HOW WE DO IT



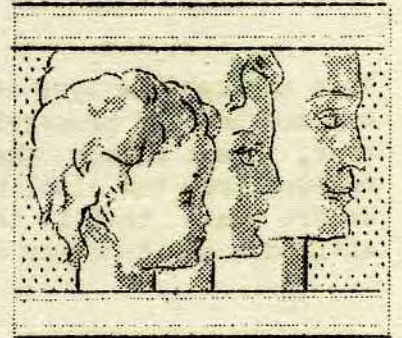
The objects of our by-laws, however, are concerned not only with what we do, but also how we do it. Let us consider together some outstanding kinds of difficulties for which families and individuals seek the assistance of our agency and the ways in which we attempt to help these people to cope more successfully with their own problems. We know that each family presents its own complexities of difficulties and feelings about them. Each family needs individual understanding and treatment; there is no single prescription which can help each one. For example, even the problem of how much help to give is an ever changing one, applicable differently to each new situation and each new person the case worker meets in her

daily work. We have learned that to give more help than is necessary is to rob the client of the use of his own initiative, to make poor use of the constructive energy that lies within him.

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Often the family when coming to us for help has no specific plan and is completely overwhelmed and confused, seeing no solution to its problem. The Adler* family, for example, suddenly found itself overwhelmed with so many difficulties that both Mr. and Mrs. Adler expressed fear of their marriage being a failure. Mr. Adler, formerly a good provider, was unemployed, and the rent was unpaid, electricity was shut off, and the family was faced with eviction - to be thrown out of their home was just the "last straw" for Mrs. Adler. In desperation her husband had turned to the numbers racket, and Mrs. Adler seemed shamed and upset as she indicated that he had already been arrested once. Her unhappiness and desperation was revealed as she saw no way out of her difficulties. She had reached the breaking point - needed someone to help in sharing her burden with her. She was so overwhelmed by her immediate needs that she could not think clearly about the entire situation. The resulting loss of self respect on the part of Mr. Adler was a further threat to this family's continuing together.

When things had become so unbearable for this family that they had to turn to an agency for assistance, how important it was to have them come to someone who would not criticize or condemn them for their problems. Rather they needed someone who would try to help them work out a plan, if possible, to enable them to continue together. It required someone who could understand what coming to an outsider for help meant to them, who could meet their



*All names used in this report are fictitious

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immediate needs without paralyzing the initiative the family had for going on and working out a satisfying adjustment for themselves.

Only when the immediate emergency with which they were faced could be put behind them, could this family view its problem in its proper perspective. Only as they overcame their tenseness, panic and anxiety could each of them consider what they could do to help themselves. Only when they felt someone sharing a total problem that had become too big for them, could Mr. Adler go out and get a job for himself and regain his former adequacy; could Mrs. Adler consider leaving her present apartment, for one whose rental was within the family's income bracket. In its essence, this is the casework which our community set up in its by-laws as our purpose - this is the work of helping a family help itself - mobilize its own strengths and capabilities to recreate sound family life again.

The same individualized skillful help of the case workers is needed not only in assisting those previously established as regular members of our community, but also the newcomers who need help in the many problems created by their recent immigration from other countries.

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In the above situation we saw how a satisfying family life was achieved by keeping a family unit together. Sometimes, though, a separation of one member of the family is needed to achieve the proper and desirable balance.

Mrs. Berman, a widow, for example, came to us quite frightened and under great strain. In spite of economic security, she was obviously quite unhappy, revealing her family life as one with an atmosphere of tension, fear, and quarrels. Because of her anxious state, resulting from her inability to cope with the problem presented by one of her daughters, she was unable to properly administer her job or bear the constant blame that the other children put on her.



However, her problem was by no means an easy one - the question of deciding whether or not to place her mentally ill daughter in an institution. In continuing to keep this daughter at home, Mrs. Berman placed herself and the family in constant physical danger - and yet sending her daughter away presented many natural fears. If she took this important step would she be criticized as a "bad" mother - could she face the shame that she felt it held for herself and the family - would she have less peace of mind than she had even now. Mrs. Berman had to make a decision herself, and yet we realized that she could not do this without help. When things had become so critical for this woman and family, how necessary it was for her to overcome these fears, to make the final decision herself without being pushed into something before she was really ready for it. It required someone who could understand her feelings of fear and shame - who could help her see a mental illness as something to be treated just as a physical illness - who could reassure her that she was not a "bad" mother - that to effect this institutional placement would help not only the daughter, but the entire family in achieving a better-balanced family life again.

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Occasionally, though, we meet situations where the problem is presented not only by the child, but by one or both parents. Here, too, sound family life is promoted through enabling one or more members to live separately for a time until they can establish a home together on a firmer basis than that which existed before. Mrs. Cohen's physical illness, for instance, required her being completely relieved of household duties and going to a hospital and convalescent home for quite a number of months. However, the recommendation of the physician was not sufficient for Mrs. Cohen to agree to such a plan, as it would require placing her child, a shy and withdrawn boy. Her husband, a traveling salesman, was away most of each week and could not care for the boy at home. She was afraid of facing her son's pleas to remain at home, as well as fearful lest this step break up the home which she had struggled to keep together. It became necessary for the case worker to share the problem with Mrs. Cohen, to relieve her of many of the fears that she had imagined about placement, to clarify what actually would be involved in a temporary foster home placement. It also enabled her to participate in the choice of a foster home and foster parents. Even when a desirable foster home was found there remained the problem of helping the child to make a constructive adjustment to this separation from his parents - to leave the only little security he had known thus far.



As it happened, when Mrs. Cohen returned from the convalescent home she was much improved. However, she was fearful of assuming the full burden of the household immediately. Temporary assistance in the form of a housekeeper was arranged and Mrs. Cohen soon found herself well and strong enough to take up where she left off previous to her coming to us for placement of her child - now, though better equipped to meet her responsibilities as a mother and wife.

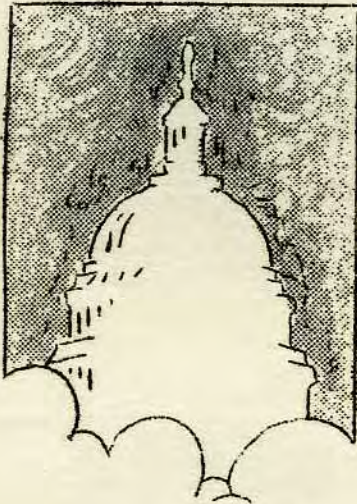
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We have seen from these illustrations how familial or individual breakdown requires the skilled services of the case workers. Only through understanding how each breakdown occurs and the kind of service that each individual or family needs most can help be more effective. These special skills are increasingly evident not only in helping families in financial need, but also those whose difficulty is not primarily financial. In each area of difficulty help is needed and given in a different manner. The child presenting behavior problems at home needs help focused around the particular conditions which circumscribe his living - and so does the new immigrant. The transient presents his unique areas of need, and the prisoner in a correctional institution presents his. Then, too, there are the aged, whose familial and individual relationships are equally as meaningful to them as any other part of our population. Our increased efforts on

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this part of our program have been based upon the conviction that these members of our community are and must continue to be helped in being useful to themselves and others - that they can develop or revive new or old interests - that life can continue to be purposeful.

An intelligent casework program for the aged can grow only out of a real and meaningful understanding by the case worker of the problems and needs that the aged present, as well as active participation by the lay community in carrying out parts of the program along with the professional staff. Such a program requires the same individual variation as in any other part of our program, as well as sufficient opportunity for continued initiative on the part of the individuals being helped. How we help this group of our community, then, must necessarily include not only satisfying their purely physical needs - adequate food, housing and medical care - but also meeting their emotional and social needs through individual guidance and organized leisure time recreational facilities.



The Jewish Social Service Bureau has attempted, during the year 1940, to meet the continuing and changing needs of our community. This has partly been accomplished through a staff equipped by professional training and experience to help troubled individuals and families in such a way that they become better able to help themselves achieve the goal of satisfying lives. The continued, untiring support which the lay community is giving makes it possible for the program of the Jewish Social Service Bureau to go on - to maintain and further the social and emotional well-being of Jewish persons in Allegheny County - to enable them to enjoy increasingly the benefits of our democratic way of life.

ANNUAL MEETING COMMITTEE

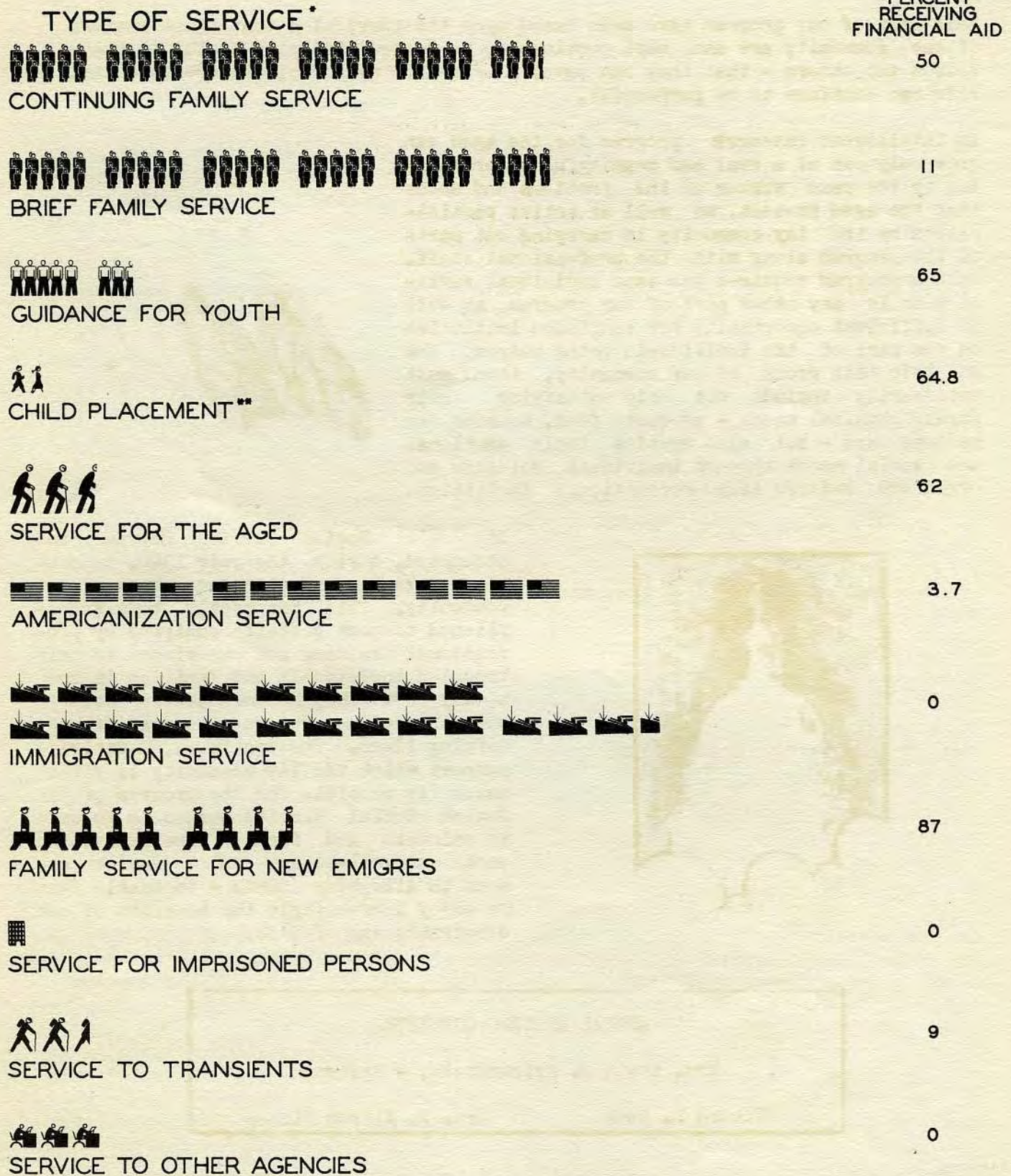
Mrs. Louis J. Reizenstein, - Chairman

Richard S. Rauh

Mrs. J. Alfred Wilner

FACTS ABOUT FIGURES

IN 1940, THE JEWISH SOCIAL SERVICE BUREAU GAVE SERVICE TO 2464 CASES INVOLVING 6164 PERSONS



EACH SYMBOL REPRESENTS 50 PERSONS

* UNDUPLICATED COUNT; PERSONS CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO MAJOR EMPHASIS OF SERVICE

** IN ADDITION TO THESE CHILDREN CARED FOR, 47 STUDIES OF FOSTER HOMES WERE MADE

SYMBOLS BY: PICTORIAL STATISTICS INC. NEW YORK CITY