

*Givers And Spenders: The Politics of Charity in Israel*, by Eliezer Jaffe. Ariel Publishers, Jerusalem and Cleveland. Available in North America, 3535 Bendemeer Rd., Cleveland Hts., Ohio 44118. 1985. \$7.00.

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One of the items on the agenda of the Jewish Agency Assembly which convened in Jerusalem recently was the Ethiopian *aliyah* and what has come to be called "Operation Moses". Invited were representatives of almost all ethnic groups in Israel to discuss *aliyah* and the rescue and relief operation that the Jewish Agency had engaged in during the past several years on behalf of Ethiopian Jewry. "Almost everyone" was there except any representation of the Ethiopian immigrant organizations.

A mistake? Or a traditional way of handling situations on behalf of an immigrant group, without always bothering to ask *them* what they were feeling ...?

Prof. Eliezer Jaffe, Social Work Professor at the Paul Baerwald School of Social Work of Hebrew University, thinks that the Jewish Agency and donors from abroad have forgotten basic lessons learned from Project Renewal. These principles of client involvement with Diaspora Jews could have been equally applied to work with and fundraising for Ethiopian Jews in Israel. Jaffe believes that the Jewish Agency is in need of reform. Over prior decades, the lack of checks and balances has grown, with the "funders" being kept in the dark as to the political trade-offs and interests influencing the disposition of their funds.

This is the subject matter of Jaffe's short reader. It is a subject that is so sensitive that little else has been written about it. There are some who fear that the tax exempt status afforded to American givers will be placed in jeopardy. There are others who fear a drop in support and funding for Israel. Still others in the professional world of Jewish community service and Zionist organizations fear that their generation-long effort to systematize fundraising through one efficient and well known channel will be in danger of change and challenge.

None of these fears deters Jaffe. He sees his role as educator and policy ana-

lyst whose task it is not only to administer, but also to ask questions about policy—essentially, about how the funds are used and as to whether this dichotomy of spenders and givers should continue to exist.

Jaffe sees the Jewish Agency as outside the reach of ordinary Israeli citizenry. It is also bound up with the World Zionist Organization, whose members are selected on the basis of political party. Jaffe therefore contends that the avenue for change at the Agency must lead to the donors and funders of the services, who play the sustaining role, in the same sense that taxpayers play towards government.

Jaffe does not see everything that the Jewish Agency does as wrong. It was the state-in-waiting before 1948. It mobilized the resources of the Jewish world to receive and absorb the *aliyah* that was three times the size of Israel at its inception.

Moreover, the Jewish Agency has not been lacking in its responsiveness to recent grass-roots initiatives in partnership and growth. Witness the case of Project Renewal, initiated in the late '70's with an idea of twinning neighborhood committees with Diaspora communities. The Jewish Agency acted as a catalyst in stimulating this connection, lending vigor to sagging communities. The spirit of partnership that a Diaspora community was able to provide, served also as their very own deep and personal link to sewing the gentle social fibre of Israeli society. Agency personnel and donors realized that the mistakes of the '50's might have led to dependency by not allowing responsible constituencies to develop self-help frameworks of their own and responsibility for their neighborhoods themselves. Project renewal was designed so that the outside help came not from above, but rather in a Jewish spirit of collective work and action.

#### BOOK REVIEWS

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The tragic thing that Jaffe emphasizes in *Givers and Spenders* is that the "Renewal Model" seems to have been a flash in the pan rather than a precedent for Agency policy.

According to Jaffe, the best example of effectiveness is Operation Moses. An independent channel was not created, nor was there a separate budget. Moreover, the highly sophisticated Ethiopian community was not involved with the allocation process, except on the receiving end. Meanwhile, the springing up of numerous indigenous Ethiopian immigrant groups lent the Jewish Agency and the thousands of Operation Moses donors the opportunity for direct contact and cooperation in community planning.

All this is a call for a reconceptualization of the Jewish Agency framework which has been so universally recognized and accepted in the organized Jewish world. Should the World Zionist Organization's political purposes continue to be joined with the Jewish Agency's philanthropic service goals? This problem and ways of solving it are clearly presented in this important book.

*Givers and Spenders* is a call to the international and especially the American Jewish community to introduce a concept of diversified funding as policy, with the Jewish Agency converted into a foundation-like avenue for Israel's development, devoid of direct manipulation by Israeli politics. Jaffe essentially warns his readers that if the organized Jewish world does not give official sanction to diversified funding, the trend of more Jewish communities giving outside of the established framework will occur anyway. More hospitals, social welfare institutions and other worthy areas of service are worthy of public aid, and in Jaffe's judgment, the Jewish Agency and private donors must take up the slack.

*Givers and Spenders* should be of significant interest to everyone interested in maximizing the effectiveness of philanthropic efforts assisting Israel and its hard-pressed citizens. The difficult questions raised by Jaffe's important book merit deliberation by communal workers and leaders.

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