

CHILD WELFARE IN ISRAEL by Eliezer David Jaffe, New York Praeger, 286 pp.

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THIS IS not only a well organized, readable and informative textbook, but a history of Israel told through the development of the country's social services.

Because of the author's deep commitment and unabashed idealism, it is also a public relations manual which describes the innovative, even heroic ways in which Israel tackles its social problems and thereby makes a pitch for aliya.

Jaffe connects Jewish concern for children throughout the generations and during the Diaspora with the nation's basic ethical values and commitment to the survival of the young under all circumstances.

The services, he stresses, are not imitations of American responses, but have their roots in the Jewish religious, historical and communal experiences during the long dispersion and pre-state years.

Very few records are available concerning social work during the country's formative years. The people involved were too busy doing what was being done during the Mandate and the early years of the state. In order to recreate the establishment of child welfare in its early period, we must rely on letters, minutes of meetings, reminiscences of retired social workers and other indirect documentation.

The ideological struggle between the old Yishuv and the new led to two welfare services with two distinct approaches. The pioneering agrarian new Yishuv "moved in the direction of socialist, but elitist welfare statism, while the old, urban, religious Yishuv moved on to enlarge its traditional self-help programme based on yeshivot and religious orphan homes."

A unique outgrowth of the second and third Aliya, for example, was the children's villages established for dependent youngsters which propounded the philosophy of the pioneer A.D. Gordon and Recha Freier, the founder of Youth Aliya, that "life on the land recreates the individual and that physical labour rebuilds the soul as well as the land."

Both systems, incidentally, are still in existence, if not predominant, and it would be interesting to test empirically which is considered more effective among its client population.

DUE TO the war and mass immigration, Jaffe writes, "Child welfare became essentially a child placing service" because of the need to save children. The author feels that during this formative stage, social workers tended to rely too much on institutions and not pay enough attention to the repercussions on those who spent time there. The new orientation brought in by professionals from England and America stressed keeping the child in its natural family as much as possible.

In most of the pre-state programmes described, the name of Henrietta Szold crops up continually. Youth Aliya did a tremendous job, saving Jewish children against great odds in the Second World War. In the end their efforts "added up to a drop in the ocean of tears of the Nazi Final Solution."

Not only new arrivals were the focus of child welfare services. Already in 1942 disadvantaged children were accepted in kibbut-

zim. Institutes for delinquent, handicapped or neglected children were founded and school hot meal programmes, originally financed by volunteer women's organizations like WIZO and Hadassah, became the biggest item on the pre-state welfare department's budget. These hot lunches probably dissuaded many parents under stress from removing their children from school or placing them in institutions.

Cooperation with schools in the form of school social workers became one of the prime support services for maintaining children in their homes. It has also emerged as a preventive system which, like street-corner society workers, is based on a reach-out approach.

The principle of keeping children in the home and giving support to their nuclear families rather than placing them in institutions, saved the State money and, more important, saved many family units. The cooperation between welfare and educational workers was to their mutual benefit.

Another enlightening chapter connected with support of children in the home is called Family Income Maintenance. Recalling the Jewish maxim "If there is no flour there is no Torah" the author stresses the importance of basic income.

The chapter contains a clear, concise guide to all the grants, benefits, supplements and insurances provided by the National Insurance Institute (*Bituah Leumi*), the municipalities and the

various ministries. It describes in detail the intricacies of work accident insurances, old age benefits and subsistence grants.

One can learn of some remarkably forwardlooking and imaginative social benefits — e.g. legal aid to persons prosecuting the NII; rights of employees who work for firms that have gone bankrupt; and alimony payments where husbands disappear or refuse to make such payments.

"The tying of welfare payments to the average wage was an extremely important development," claims Jaffe "and very advanced for such a young, developing country." This ensures that welfare clients will always have their income increased automatically with the cost-of-living index. Ever since the Ministries of Labour and Social Welfare merged, welfare subsistence or income maintenance (which is a more positive term) has gradually become the function of the National Insurance Institute rather than the Department of Social Work.

The municipal social workers still maintain some 100 special need funds for items such as laundry service, convalescence, home-maker expenses, house repairs and medical insurance for special low-income cases, but more and more their task becomes counselling and therapy. Jaffe very aptly calls income maintenance a safety net for citizens in need of protection.

YET PROFESSIONAL social workers and the academic schools which train them tend to look down on this aspect so central in the care of clients. It is therefore gratifying to see money given its proper place of attention in a book on child welfare. There is even reference to a study which proves something social workers have always suspected: that 71 per cent of the child welfare worker's time (and 67 per cent of the family worker's time) goes on "brokerage services" — i.e. technical arrangements (registration for day care centres, for example, or attaining subsidies) instead of psychological treatment and counselling for which they have

been trained. No courses in these brokerage services are taught at the schools of social work.

For the child who cannot stay in his home, or has no home, several alternatives are available. Jaffe discusses the development of adoption services in Israel and describes the need for better techniques to screen and support adoptive parents.

Another preferred alternative to dormitory placement is foster home care, not developed sufficiently or supervised enough in the past. One follow-up study in Tel Aviv showed 52 per cent of the children placed in a foster home for temporary care were in placement six years and 20 per cent were in placement for more than 11 years. While this provides permanence for the child, it is disturbing to remember that foster care is supposed to be a temporary form of care only. Thus "the finding indicates serious overstay."

In a highly interesting, realistic chapter on child welfare in the West Bank and Gaza, the author describes the un-coordinated services available which have grown since 1967, especially for orphans and dependent youth. Most social services are supported by volunteer charitable organizations. Some are fuelled by enmity towards Israel.

Israel is still young enough that one can trace the individuals behind every trend and turn in child welfare who helped shape those policies. Indeed, the book may become somewhat dated due to the thumbnail biographies which describe the leading innovators in the field. None of the present social services sprang up by chance and every one of them has a fascinating life history interwoven with the history of Israel.

The author, who quotes extensively from professional literature, invariably refers to a study or article by a chap called Jaffe in almost every chapter. This is because Eliezer Jaffe himself has been involved in most aspects of social welfare since his aliya three decades ago, in his capacity either as Director of Family and Community Services for Jerusalem, as a senior lecturer at the Baerwald School of Social Work, as a leading member of councils and planning commissions and as a frequent emissary abroad. He is in a position to both monitor and affect the fields that interest him, child welfare included. □