

May 13, 1994

Tzedakah



Jaffe, standing, confers with associate at Israel Free Loan Society.

ELIEZER JAFFE: 'This plan is a winner'

Eliezer Jaffe is dedicated to his work with the Israel Free Loan Society. In his small, modern office, he arranges monthly loans for as many as 200 families and individuals, mostly recent immigrants. One mark of the society's success is that 98 percent of the parties make good on paying back the loans. "This plan is a winner," Jaffe says.

A long-time advocate of direct giving and a critic of the Jewish fund-raising establishment, Jaffe has mellowed in recent years. "I advise people to pay their dues (in terms of contributing to the establishment)," he says, "but over and above that, give to a project that touches you."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FREE LOAN ASSOCIATION

Sir, - Shlomo Wexler's letter of October 5 is to be commended for its appeal for a more sane policy in regard to loans to citizens. I am not yet certain about the role of government, but I am privy to the essential role of the "many fine free-loan societies in Israel" which Wexler recognizes but depreciates.

Wexler claims that private free-loan societies are "clearly not meeting the needs... The amounts they lend are limited ... and guarantor requirements are severe." These free-loan societies meet needs no government agency can possibly deal with alone, certainly not at the low cost that free-loan societies manage their fine work. The Israel Free Loan Association has numerous dedicated and generous volunteers on its board, committees, staff and administration. Certainly, the association's requirement of two guarantors is far from "severe" for an organization dependent on a high level of repayments to continue to serve others in need. The association, *without* government support, must limit the amounts of loans to its applicants.

Dependent on private sources for its funding, the Ifla calls out for the generosity of Israelis at home and from Jews abroad, to build the resources needed by it to go beyond the \$1.5 million in circulating loans and its present limit on loan amounts. A role for government would be to increase incentives for its citizens to be encouraged to make generous tax-deductible gifts to organizations like Ifla.

Ifla, located in Jerusalem, is proud of the aid it has given to thousands of applicants from all over the country. This and other such private free-loan enterprises deserve generous grants from business and commercial organizations, from foundations and from each of us citizens to expand the help and to build resources for the frequent emergencies too great for immigrants and other citizens alike.

I am proud to be one of the volunteers of Ifla.

SOLOMON H. GREEN

Jerusalem.