

600 jobs open for social workers in Israel! Urgent appeal issued

By ELENORE LESTER

An urgent invitation to social workers to come to Israel to participate actively in social improvements in depressed neighborhoods was issued on Sunday, April 1, in Boston at the New England Conference on Social Work in Israel.

"More than 600 positions are now available," reports Prof. Eliezer Jaffe, who chaired the conference and gave the keynote address on "Fostering Social Change in Israel." Jaffe, former welfare director of the Jerusalem Municipality and senior lecturer at the Paul Barwood School of Social Work at Hebrew University, said in New York recently that the need for social workers was so acute that Israel was prepared to provide the necessary Hebrew teaching and orientation for graduate social workers who come with the intention of giving only a year or two of work.

"We can produce only 350 social workers a year in Israel and, of those, only half will remain in the field for ten years," he explained. "You see, 85 per cent of our social work students are women and they tend to drop out to raise their families. When they come back into the field most of them want to do only part time work."

The new program under which social workers who are not planning *aliyah* may get the necessary training is part of a larger concept, which is intended to encourage American Jews to play a partnership role in Israel.

"This is a chance for professionals from outside of Israel to follow their money down to the other end of the pipe," said Prof. Jaffe, who was born and educated in Cleveland, Ohio, and made *aliyah* 20 years ago. He said he was concerned about what he feels has been "hit and run American philanthropy," and about the desperate need for social improvements in Israel.

"Project Renewal is just a beginning," he said. "It's a very nice start, but the fact is that it is designed for only 160 neighborhoods. I can give you 300 more neighbor-

hoods in need of help."

One of the prime purposes of the conference, which is sponsored by the Israel Aliyah Center, the National Association of Social Workers Massachusetts Chapter and the Israel Association of Social Workers, is to expose to American social workers, the many career possibilities in Israel in all areas of specialization and in all parts of the country. Individual employment counseling was available at the conference.

"Social work in Israel has become thoroughly professionalized today," said Jaffe. "That wasn't true in the past. It was done on a voluntary basis." He said that a social worker with a bachelor's degree and four or five years experience could earn \$7,790 base pay and one with a master's degree would receive \$8,180 base pay — "enough to live comfortably, Israeli style."

Under Project Renewal a billion and a quarter dollars will be raised outside of Israel, mostly in the United States, over the next five years. Jaffe, who helped plan the program, said that he hoped the result of the participation of American professionals in planning neighborhood improvements, a sense of solidarity with the residents of those neighborhoods would be fostered, thus strengthening the bond between Jews in Israel and Jews abroad.

An important element in the program is that the fact that residents of the depressed neighborhoods will participate in the planning and implementation of the programs. In the past they have been excluded because the government feared that the poor would hinder development programs with unreasonable and impossible demands. This exclusion led to what Jaffe terms "the schroder relationship," in which the people who are helped can only passively receive.

Under the new plans the residents of specific neighborhoods will be responsible for mapping out the improvements they want and for executing the projects. Ideally, each neighborhood will be "twinning" with an American Jewish neighborhood,

which will be responsible for seeing that its money is going into specific developments. The involvement of American professionals in the project is additional assurance of a vital ongoing interchange between the two communities.

"We chose the term 'twinning' deliberately," said Jaffe. "It's not 'adoption.' That implies something other than partnership. Partnership is what we want, not lazy philanthropy in which you give your money and forget it."

Jaffe is also a founding member of Zahavi — the Israel Association for the Rights of Large Families, a group which has 18,000 member families, each with at least four children. Jaffe says that the Israeli government has been "schizophrenic" about large families, viewing them at once as a burden and a resource.

"Nine per cent of Israel's families are raising 40 per cent of Israel's children," points out Jaffe. "It's time that we recognized what a tremendous contribution these large families are making to the country. Jews have done enough for zero population growth."

He said that Zahavi was both a lobbying and a self-help group, which asks for equal opportunity, not handouts. The organization has managed to get from the government a major reduction in calculating water bills for large families. The group is also fighting for honor, rights and privileges for mothers of many children. At present they do not have the same social insurance benefits granted working women. Zahavi also seeks tax, education and housing benefits.

In terms of self-help, the organization is planning a furniture bank or lending library of good quality household items, a scholarship fund and legal aid and family counselling services.

Jaffe pointed out that contrary to the widely-held American concept that "large families" in Israel run to a dozen or more, as few as 420 families in all of Israel have

that many children. Of those 420, only 120 are Jewish. The others are Arab. He said that Sephardic Jews in Israel today are rapidly following the Ashkenazic small family pattern. The average Ashkenazi family has 2.1 children and the average Sephardic family has 3.4. The average Arab family has 8.0. If the pattern continues Israeli Jews will be outnumbered by Israeli Arabs by the year 2020. Today the Egyptians alone outnumber the Israelis 10 to one.

The "large family" in Israel today has four to six children, according to Jaffe. Every other soldier in the Israeli Army comes from a large family, but less than 12 per cent of all Israeli university students come from large families and only two per cent of those earn doctoral degrees.

Jaffe, who is himself the father of a large family of four children, says that the 18,000 members of Zahavi cut across political, cultural and economic lines. The group functions in 14 Israeli towns, staffed by volunteers and parents.

Jaffe calls attention to the fact that the acronym Zahavi means "My Gold" in Hebrew, and that the Hebrew words for the initials refer to parents "blessed by many children." He believes it is time for the Israeli government and Jews over the world to recognize that children represent the Jewish people's real wealth.

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