

THE EFFECT OF STAFF SHORTAGES ON QUALITY OF AGENCY SERVICES AND WORKER JOB ASSIGNMENTS *

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I. Introduction

ONE should be grateful for little favors—and indeed overwhelmed by significant ones. The committee responsible for developing the guides and outlines for this session did an outstanding job in describing the scope and exploring the implications. While in a sense this simplified our task, it also clarified the responsibility. Obviously, historical and reportorial treatment of this subject cannot suffice. It is clear that the charge can be met only by critical analysis of several variables, and if possible to clarify implications for their control.

II. The Situation Today

It would not be too helpful to consider the effect of shortages without presenting a brief description of the use of the term in this presentation. Actually, there is a qualitative as well as quantitative dimension to our problem. The quantitative aspect understandably shifts from month to month, from season to season, and year to year. While the figure of vacancies for the social welfare field is estimated in the tens of thousands, Jewish Centers this year are dealing with a hard core of around 160, although the

vacancy list has ranged from 159 in January to 211 in May. About three-fourths of this list is made up of positions that require social group workers. Physical education opportunities contribute about ten per cent. The balance consists of a variety of specializations. The number of vacancies today represents about fifteen per cent of the number of professional positions in the Jewish Community Center field.

Recent developments in the area of recruiting offer some promise that there can be some substantial reduction of the size of the problem. For the moment, however, the ratio of available staff to the unfilled positions is eleven to one. This creates a situation which provides the qualitative dimension. Communities and agencies tend to panic. There is anxiety about the quantity and quality of service that will be rendered without adequate staff. Professional leaders too join in this pattern of concern because the integrity of professional practice is being affected. It is within this context of figures and feeling that this discussion will proceed.

Experience in attempting to fill vacancies has not been too promising. Group workers, physical educators, adult educators, psychology and sociology majors, as well as others sought by recreational and informal education agencies, are not

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available in sufficient numbers to meet the requirements. Actually those not trained in the discipline of social work are mainly absorbed by educational systems of the country.

Social group workers are by no means limited in their interest to those organizations usually identified as "group work agencies," which have been growing in size and scope from year to year. Public programs as represented by Youth Commissions and recreation departments, the so-called special settings in hospitals and psychiatric agencies, have been growing and attracting trained group workers while the number of group work students enrolled in schools has either been static or declining.

III. The Profession's Reaction

Stimulated by the critical nature of the shortages, the field of social welfare has responded by organizing programs and approaches that hopefully would reduce the hiatus between supply and demand. The obvious approach was to develop a coordinated program for recruiting. This is now being carried out by the Council on Social Work Education and the National Association of Social Workers. The National Social Welfare Assembly, a coordinating and planning body consisting of national agencies, and appropriate U. S. government departments have concentrated on such items as job classifications, retention programs based on sound personnel practices and realistic salary plans. These efforts are reflected in local communities by the activities of councils of social agencies, the functional organizations such as centers, and professional organizations such as the N.A.S.W. Coordination of local social service recruiting projects has resulted in the establishment of recruitment agencies directed by full time paid staff. Cleveland, Boston, and New York are illustrations of this development. Other

communities, including Chicago, are in the process of planning the establishment of such agencies.

IV. Reaction of the Jewish Community Center Field

The Jewish Community Center movement reacted to the impact of shortages early and directly. Soon after World War II, it was apparent that the need for professional staff would increase in response to expanding facilities and programs. Recruiting efforts were introduced but by 1950 radical approaches to meet the immediate requirements of agencies were considered. One of these known as the "Group Work Aide Plan" was projected by the National Jewish Welfare Board for consideration by Jewish Community Centers. The plan provided for employment of individuals with a baccalaureate degree for a period not to exceed two years. By then the "aide" would have to determine whether or not he would matriculate in a school of social work for full professional training. Additional provisions which would insure an appropriate job description, compensation, and scholarship help were incorporated. The reaction to this program by the Centers was one of hesitancy. Although in part this was due to a feeling that there would not be sufficient return to warrant the investment, more significant was a feeling that such a plan would water down the professionalization of the Center field.

V. Role of Commitment to Social Group Work

This in a sense revealed the reality of the basis for incorporating in Article III of the Statement of Principles on Jewish Community Center Purposes, adopted by the National Council of JWB in this city just ten years ago, the following:

"The Jewish Center fulfills these functions (as described in the previous principles) through

(1) a dynamic flexible program of recreation and informal education for the entire Jewish Community, and (2) *the use of the group work method*. Professional leadership should be particularly trained to understand and meet the interests and needs of the Jewish individual, Jewish groups, and the Jewish community, there being a direct relationship between the objectives of the Jewish Center and the program, method, and personnel required to give it effect."

The following and final article provides that the articles that make up the Statement of Principles "be subscribed to prior to admission as part of the objectives and standards by any new constituent or associate or provisional society seeking admission to full membership."

Certainly by 1948 it was clear that Jewish Community Centers were not only committed to utilizing the group work method but were actually acting out this role by employment practices and selection of staff when choices were available. The host discipline in Jewish Community Centers was clearly identified as social group work. There was an unreadiness to compromise. In 1950 the Centers apparently had some hope that the distortion and imbalance between supply and demand would be corrected by time. The insights into the problem that bedeviled the efforts to recruit for the social work field as a whole was still four or five years from being articulated by Alex Rosen and others. We were tending to blame difficulties on a variety of factors covering philosophy, function and practice.

The commitment to social group work practice persists. About three years ago Sanford Solender in a statement entitled "Unique Functions of the Jewish Community Center" reiterated the function of group work practice, in the Center. Actually such clearly defined association of a movement with a specific method is not to be found elsewhere. One might assume that such a develop-

ment is professionally inspired but it is significant that lay men have supported and enhanced this commitment. Based upon their experience with professional staff, again and again they have made choices which gave preference to those people trained as social group workers. This trend continues. It can be said of the Jewish Community Center, more than of any other movement, that it is a group work agency in the sense that it prefers and more often than not requires trained social group workers to direct, supervise and serve its program.

When the problem of shortages in Centers is approached, the status of professional training and the commitment to method loom as substantial factors. The energy displayed by Centers in providing scholarships for social work training within the past four years is evidence of involvement. Following this same thread of concern is the unfolding of interest in participating in work study projects. Paired with such overt evidence is the continued resistance to the employment of persons from other disciplines for those positions that require responsibility for supervision of full time staff, and responsibility for policy formulation and key administration. This is the background for the increasing participation by Centers in recruiting programs locally, regionally, and nationally.

VI. Program Dealing with Shortages

The character of the shortages affecting Jewish Centers in 1958 has some interesting facets. Although the field has been growing, the hard core of unfilled jobs has tended to remain static. The factual basis for this phenomenon is not difficult to determine. The reasons are to be found first in retention programs, and secondly in the ability to resist the trend toward the reduction of students in schools of social work potentially interested in Jewish Community

Center work. Another factor discernible within the past year is the movement of professionals employed in other settings where group work is practiced, such as institutions and non-sectarian Centers, into the Center.

It may be well to analyze these items a bit further. The retention programs on the whole have consisted of salary increases, the broadening of salary ranges, increment adjustments, and clarification of the programs of advancement. These retention programs have succeeded (1) in creating for the Center field a salary level that is attractive when compared with other settings; (2) in developing salary ranges whereby practitioners can consider an extended period of service within an agency; and (3) sound conditions of employment reflected in personnel practices and codes. The net results are that fewer people are leaving the field than in the past and turnover within agencies is reduced.

In relation to the total number of students training for social group work in the United States and Canada, the number of Jewish students enrolled reveals the exceptional involvement of Jewish Community Centers with the commitment already considered. The number of students potentially interested in Jewish Community Center work graduating from 1954 to 1958 ranged from a low of 51 in 1955 to a high of 67 in 1954. It is estimated that the 1958 class will graduate about 60, while in 1959 it is estimated that the figure will be close to 90. The percentage of Jewish graduates majoring in social group work ranged from 30 per cent in 1955 to 33 per cent in 1957. There is reason to believe that this figure will be even higher in 1958 and 1959. Another fact that highlights the impact of the recruiting program conducted on behalf of Centers that grew out of a conviction, stems from the estimate that while the total social work school population, in-

cluding casework, group work and other sequences, increased by 9 per cent this year, there is reason to believe that the number of students training for group work declined considerably. Yet the number of Jewish students in this category increased 50 per cent. It is estimated that about two-thirds of those group work students graduating, as in the past, will actually enter the Jewish Center field.

While the program represented by retention and recruiting for training efforts appears up to this time to just about hold the line, they account only in part for the absorption of the expansion of the field. Some of the growth is apparently being served by persons who are not fully trained and usually are being engaged on plans limiting their tenure. Several of the larger agencies have well defined programs which resemble the group work aide plan previously mentioned. Others are engaged for specific openings with an understanding that their opportunities for advancement are limited. Within the past year about fifteen individuals in this category of not fully trained have been employed by Centers. Their jobs ranged from direct leadership as represented by work with the aged to that of program director in a two-man agency.

Work study programs, while basically designed to provide professional education, also offered relief to many agencies. During the current program year twenty-six students are giving a modicum of services to Jewish Community Centers. The extent of assistance possible from this source is restricted by location of schools of social work and the kind of work lead that can be developed that would serve both the needs of the agency and the educational objectives.

Several students are committed to begin professional training after two years of experience. However, those openings that required specialists on a

full-time basis, such as physical education and nursery workers, when filled in all but a couple of instances attracted personnel trained for the calling.

Taking into consideration drop-outs and expansion, about ninety new workers should be attracted to the field each year. Within the past two years just about that number have been introduced by the projects described. This accounts for the inability to reduce the accumulated figure now identified as the hard core. There is some promise that by 1959 a significant increase of new recruits will be recorded. This will result in some reduction of unfilled vacancies.

VII. Impact on Centers

The shortage has affected agencies in several ways. Such items as size of agency, geographic location, and alleged professional status affect the ability to obtain, retain and replace staff. Thus, for example, the Metropolitan New York area has had comparatively less difficulty in filling positions than southern communities. Similarly, agencies with multiple staff in sizeable Jewish communities have less difficulty than do the one or two man agencies, located in communities with a Jewish population of 1000 to 4000. Agencies with poor reputations as to professional and personnel standards have more difficulty than those with a good reputation. Obviously the shortage aggravates the problem for the agencies in the less favorable position, since professionals under the circumstances have choices and understandably they veer most often in the direction of the agency with favorable status, location and potential. In practice this means that the small communities go along for years without a program worker. Since these agencies usually employ an executive and a program director, the demand is for someone with experience. The group worker

as he moves from a division head role seeks an experience in supervision of full-time staff. This is usually not available in the kind of agency described. The result is that the candidates introduced shy away from these openings and move toward the agency with the larger staff.

The difference in salary at one time was quite significant. The small community was prepared to pay about \$1000 more than the larger agency for people with the same background and experience. However, within the past five years the difference has been overcome and this attraction is eliminated. The problem in meeting the personnel requirements is not the absence of standards or the inadequacy of direction. There is little the small community agency can do to place itself professionally in a more favorable condition. It has to contend with the absence of a readiness on the part of trained people to move away from the more highly structured situation. It treats with a competitive situation where the odds are overwhelmingly stacked against the small community. This outlook not only affects the readiness of program staff to give consideration to openings in the small community, but also influences executive personnel. Comparatively fewer professionals make themselves available for executive jobs in one or two man agencies. While at times an unfavorable salary differential may exist, this is not usually the item that deters initial interest. The effect on the service of the agency in the small community can be and has been devastating. Several agencies found that they had to employ executives trained and experienced in settings which have no group work orientation. While these executives are prepared to accommodate themselves to the requirements of the community and the objectives of the practice of Center work, there is usually

an absence of group work practice. This is reflected in the quality of service and the pattern of program. The tendency in these instances is to focus on activities rather than service to members. Additional complications ensue when additional full time staff is required, for the professional worker avoids a situation where he will not be supervised by a trained worker. In many instances agencies have not been able to obtain staff other than an executive. When this happens the program has to be curtailed and modified to a point where the integrity of the operation is in jeopardy. Pressure for modification of objectives develops, since it is not possible in many instances to provide even adequate local part-time staff. Some communities have found that the Jewish purpose of the agency is threatened because they cannot obtain any Jewish program staff. It appears, to quote: "the extent and quality of the Center program and the purpose, uniqueness and support of the agency are seriously impaired."

VIII. Adjustments in the Larger Agencies

The intermediate and larger communities are weathering the impact of shortages with greater equanimity. However, agencies have had to carry the program at times with only about fifty per cent of the required staff available. There are very few Centers in this class that have not had unfilled jobs for the entire year. Geography, professional status, plus the nearness to schools of social work, determine the relative difference in the experience of agencies. The factor of the field's commitment to the social group work orientation is of major influence. The adjustment to shortages has not been of a dramatic nature. On the whole the issue has been considered a temporary one and the arrangements made to accommodate the operation to

the fact of the absence of a complete staff reflects this approach. Staff reorganization, therefore, has taken on for the most part the characteristics of reassignment until a staff member is obtained to fill in the vacancy. There have been postponements of launching of new projects until a staff member becomes available. Probably the most bizarre experience was the opening of a new building last year with five unfilled professional jobs. In a number of instances arrangements have been made to fill in vacancies with untrained but experienced workers.

The work-study program referred to enabled agencies to utilize pre-professional staff in limited responsibilities with a feeling that indeed they were not watering down the profession. Although such workers were assigned at times to some administrative responsibility, every effort was made to focus on the direct leadership role for them. The agency objectives and the understanding of the role of the professional worker has not been undermined. As a matter of fact, the professional function of the Center worker seems to be better understood today by lay leaders since it became necessary to evaluate and interpret the various projects required to help in meeting the implications of the shortage. An interesting by-product of the preoccupation with agency staff recruiting, retention and organization is the layman's readiness to assess executive stature and effectiveness in terms of the agency's capacity to attract and retain professional staff.

In Metropolitan Centers an approach to retain professional competence in key posts has taken on the form of seeking to employ on a part-time basis fully trained workers, usually women who are rearing a family. This has met with limited success.

IX. Impact on Job Load

No organized expression of concern about job load because of absence of staff has developed. However, there is growing evidence on the part of supervisory staff, such as program directors, directors of the smaller agencies and branch directors, that they have absorbed a good deal of the pressure created by the absence of staff. They have apparently protected the practitioner from the full impact of the situation. While as has been noted, there is an unreadiness to modify the program by curtailing or reducing its quality within the past few months a growing demand for analysis of staff structure in relation to agency program and objectives is in evidence. Whether this is an outgrowth of protracted shortages or the impact of the depression, or the combination of both, is not yet clear.

There also has been a growing interest in time studies. The several agencies now engaged in such analyses indicate that the focus is on the desire to assign realistic loads rather than to add to a job load in order to absorb the work uncovered because of the absence of staff. There seems to be reason to believe that the professional discipline and union organization in some of the larger cities reduce the possibility of overloading the practitioner. On the other hand, the administrative and supervisory staff carries either as large a load as in the past, or larger.

There are some interesting developments in the job description assigned to trained workers as well as those untrained. It is difficult to place sole responsibility for these on the staff shortage, although there undoubtedly is a relationship. First, there is the elimination of the full-time group leader. The professional group leader in this sense has almost disappeared. While in the middle forties there ap-

peared to be a growing readiness to utilize professionally trained workers for this role, today there are practically no leaders of this type. Actually the development at no time reached statistical significance. It did appear however that there was a trend. Certainly the growing shortage of workers affected this development. However, the question of cost also entered into the picture. From the beginning, this approach to use of staff was challenged on the grounds of economy and efficiency. There is some question as to the soundness of using staff in this manner except in treatment situations.

The second development to be considered flows in a sense from the first. More and more graduates from schools of social work with a group work sequence are assigned to supervisory positions as they enter upon their first job, even though the schools placed primary emphasis on content relevant to direct leadership of primary face to face groups. This conclusion is supported by a study conducted by the Agencies-Schools Committee of the Council on Social Work Education that is being released this week, as well as by the doctoral thesis prepared by Charles Levy. It is again difficult to say that this development is due to shortage only.

The fact is that before the shortage became acute the role of supervisor for a division was the common assignment. In settings of group-work practice such as Girl Scouts and Settlements, jobs described as Program Directors and Executives were assigned to graduating students. While such placements were not noted in Centers, the division head post became the one that a professional was assigned to upon graduation.

The third development records an experience that appears to be contrary to logic. The shortage, it would seem, should create a situation whereby persons would be advanced rapidly—at

times too rapidly. Actually this is not the case. The true shortage is at the entrance level to the profession—the group work practitioner, the division head. Only in the instance of the small community would the situation be otherwise, and while the problem in these small communities is critical, the number of vacancies involved is no more than 10 per cent of the total picture. Returning then to an examination of the kind of demands made upon workers and their readiness for the responsibilities they are given, it should be recognized that the trained worker upon entering professional practice will have to carry some supervisory load. While there is some question as to whether or not he is adequately prepared for this role, schools now recognize that they have some responsibility for providing such education. From the point of view of the Center, it seeks to retain the division head in that role as long as possible knowing that should he move up or out there will be difficulty in obtaining a replacement. This is the key to rationale for broadening salary ranges. In practice this has actually had the effect of slowing down advancement. Indeed there appears to be a retardation of professional development in a number of instances, as the result of a tendency to keep the worker limited to the professional function. An example is the teenage worker who has been serving in that capacity for some four years. While he has developed skills and sharpened insights his activity is precisely the same as it was when he was placed upon graduation. The agency's needs in this instance have outweighed the considerations involved in staff development and what is equally significant, the obligation to the Center field. The worker recently sought counsel as to his future and became quite concerned when he discovered that the absence of some kind

of supervisory experience restricted his capacity to advance.

The current situation obviously offers opportunities to those workers who are prepared for increased responsibility and a qualitative shift in role. It is obvious that sooner or later those workers who feel that their professional growth is to be restricted will explore potential opportunities even though their tendency is to remain on a job if practices affecting compensation and security are judged to be good and advantageous. But the practice of broadening salary ranges makes it difficult for a worker to change even when both the agency and worker agree that such action is desirable. The overlapping of salary ranges from one category to another makes it difficult for a group worker with division responsibilities for a four-year period to assume a program director position for which he might be qualified. As often as not the advanced position would provide him with less compensation than the assignment he now holds.

On the other hand there are some agencies that are involved in practices that would tend to attract persons unprepared for the proffered jobs. Exaggerated salaries and promises of pie in the sky prevail. However these approaches have met with comparatively little response, since in a growing number of instances agencies employing a worker are prepared to match the offer of a new employer.

The fact is that the job changes and staff turnover for the current program year will show some reduction. The accelerated movement of staff up the administrative escalator, so obvious several years ago, has lost momentum.

X. Use of Staff

These characteristics of the present situation do not however eliminate the interest that has been displayed in many instances in developing patterns of the

job assignments which would extend coverage and heighten efficiency. In the intermediate and large size agency these efforts have been specific and therefore identifiable. In the smaller operations the shortages have arrested trends towards use of multiple staff. The more advanced operations represented in the first group have undertaken time studies for the purpose of analyzing the use of the professional with the intent of determining whether he cannot extend his professional role by dropping some of the non-professional load. There have also been attempts to modify job descriptions based upon analysis of professional function with the utilization of untrained personnel. This pattern restricted to the larger agencies has depended upon the assumption that trained staff could be limited to professional functions, such as diagnosis, supervision, staff education and training.

All attempts at modification of work load and role appear to be governed by two factors—the professional development of Center practice and the personnel practices developed by the field. For instance, there is little prospect either in the small or large community that coverage of activities and administrative responsibility will be accomplished by the stretch out. Practices accepted by the Center today limit hours except for the executive and others on the administrative echelon. Similarly, unusual demands of a position such as evening and week-end work are governed by code or generally accepted "good" practice. There is no indication that such standards are being abandoned. On the contrary, they are being affirmed in a perverse way, since each person negotiating for employment within the shortage Gestalt insists, and usually obtains, the most advanced conditions prevalent in the field. Similarly, the professional *alter ego* affects a large measure of control over the standards

affecting practice. There is noted throughout the recitation of motivation and experience a continuous thread of professional concern. As an example, recall the approach to job modification: the major interest revealed in these efforts is to protect the professionals' role. It certainly appears as though the surrogate of the profession of social work is established in the operation of Centers. Moving away from the standards and expectancies is a self-conscious, awkward maneuver, attended by guilt covered with rationalization. Again the shortages tend to reinforce professional self-consciousness, since every step pertaining to staff and program adjustment calls for professional judgment and action relating to decisions flowing from it.

XI. Standards of Work

Identification with the profession has built into Center practice elements which tend to protect the standards of the profession. Indeed, the pathology described in staff shortages seems to have developed anti-bodies which in instances strengthen the body of Center operation.

However, the ravages of illness take a toll. This is quite true in the Center field. The stronger agencies appear to have become stronger, while the weaker ones tend to suffer from erosion and attrition. Evidence of the latter was introduced in the discussion of the plight of the smaller agency. There is ample proof that many agencies have strengthened their professional role during the past few years. However, it is questionable if they will be able to retain this direction much longer in face of continuing growth of program on one hand and the comparative absence of qualified staff on the other.

Certainly the phenomenon of shortages exaggerates the tendencies already incorporated within it. Thus we find that the imperfections are more discernible while aspects of positive character also

come to the fore. Communities which have had experience of working with what can be described as sound professional experience have reacted to the shortage by seeking to eliminate it. This observation is supported by the intense lay interest in recruiting projects including readiness to provide funds for scholarships and similar programs. On the whole, communities are prepared to maintain standards of service. It may be that this is unrealistic in the light of the facts. Yet there is validity to this approach, since the communities' intense involvement in the implications of the shortage and attempts to resolve the problem are of comparatively recent date.

The outgrowth of this state of affairs has some negative attributes. Agencies grow panicky when staff vacancies develop and in many instances perform in a selfish, and as they put it, in a practical manner. Agencies in a favored position, because of status and location, introduce practices which have the effect of pirating from less fortunate Centers. There is an unreadiness on the part of some of the satisfied agencies to act from enlightened self-interest. Such practices as unstructured salary adjustments geared to establish a price required to obtain a staff member have been introduced. The reaction on the part of agencies that find themselves at a disadvantage in this kind of competition at times reaches a pitch that could be described as violent. Some communities have attempted to retain staff by introducing policies which make it difficult for workers to consider opportunities in the field without jeopardizing their status. Perhaps the most direct attack on problems brought on by the shortages is reflected by a growing determination to protect communities from loss of staff. Personnel practices designed to do this have already been discussed. Recently demands have been

made that policies be introduced which would limit the Bureau's approach to staff members that may be considered for available opportunities and to restrict the period of job changes.

XII. Impact on the Professional Worker

In view of the shortages, what has been the effect on the professional worker? His behavior on the whole is supportive of the retention efforts of the community. He finds it possible and often does remain on for an extended period in a community. These characteristics give support to positive aspects of use of professional self. There is a greater readiness to serve in relation to professional capacity, on one hand, and the needs of clientele and the community on the other. However, he tends to place emphasis on his personal needs. Such items as location and family concerns loom very high in determining job choice and stability. There is a growing tendency to stay in or near the "home" city. Like most Americans, he prefers a suburban type community. Unlike the pattern of the recent past, today's professional seeks to identify himself and his family with community life. The desire for personal anonymity while being professionally involved is fast fading. The pressures and quandries described by Reisman in "The Lonely Crowd" and Whyte in "The Organization Man" certainly affect many a Center worker. He likes the comfort and security that is in part becoming anchored as a by-product of the shortage. Evidence leads us to conclude that only few are prepared to move to the less secure, pioneering situations. It should not be surprising to discover that these characteristics also apply to social workers in other settings.

Obviously, shortages must effect the extent of service but need not necessarily invade the quality of the professional services rendered. It is the

latter aspect that many Centers have stressed with considerable measure of success. However, the impact of the inadequate coverage on the quality of service to a community is considerable. Alex Rosen in a statement on "Consequences of the Shortage of Qualified Social Workers," in the December 1957 issue of *Social Work Education*, points this out with a series of excerpts from communications with a variety of agencies. The shortage, it was pointed out, is responsible for the curtailment of service to clients, restriction of projects required to meet needs and the possible watering down of quality.

Social service agencies on the whole seek to protect the quality of service by limiting intake and restricting the tasks to be undertaken when either funds or personnel or both are not available in sufficient quantity to assume responsibility for the total job. One can predict, however, that communities will not endlessly support agencies which cannot meet a substantial proportion of the responsibility which they undertook. Jewish Community Centers are particularly vulnerable in this squeeze play between quality and service commitment in a time of staff shortage. The Jewish Community Center cannot realistically limit intake in terms other than absence or inadequacy of facilities. Once these are provided, the agency is committed to their full use. It is significant that Levine and Vinik in a paper presented at the Conference of Executives of Large Centers a year ago reasoned that the absence of qualified staff in appropriate quantity affects the kind of practice carried on in Centers, and thenceforth proceeded in a scintillating manner to explore ways and means of protecting the integrity of group work practice, but did not suggest the curtailment of service as one of the means of accomplishing this end.

Again, Howard Adelstein in a paper

prepared for presentation to the same group this year deals with the question of meeting the shortage in terms of providing service and coverage by more efficient use of staff, and here again there is no question but that the agency must meet its full commitment to the community. He puts it quite succinctly in one of the six premises introducing his postulation: "Temporary solutions other than reduction of services must be found and may be sought in the way we now use our professional staff."

It is significant to note that other community services, such as casework agencies under private auspices, find it possible to limit intake and even modify function and thus accommodate themselves to the absence of staff. Of equal interest is the fact that public agencies such as schools and welfare departments cannot restrict the services which they are charged to render. This line of exploration can lead to a conclusion that the Jewish Community Center is the chosen instrument of the community to provide defined services; that within the assigned responsibility there is an obligation to meet the needs of all who qualify as members of participants. Such a judgment will place upon the professional serving the Center field a tremendous responsibility for maintaining standards of service and professional function. It appears from the manner in which we have been handling the problem of the shortage that both laymen and professionals have wittingly or unwittingly accepted this rationale.

It is clear that Centers have to some extent become more aware of the role the professional plays in serving the community and participants. In a sense this has led agencies to become more demanding of those qualities which are considered desirable in a worker and more frustrated when such attributes are not attainable because of the shortage.

As was indicated earlier the struggle with the implications of the shortage, for coverage, for service, for salaries for personnel practices, has led Centers to also become more aware of their responsibility to the community including standards of performance. Visits to communities, small and large, sectional and national conferences, validate this judgment.

XII. The Present Personnel Shortage

The critical shortage of social work and educational personnel, both of which affect Center operation, is a continuing not a temporary problem. In part this condition is with us because the birth rate was low during the thirties and as a result the number of graduates from colleges is comparatively low. It is not anticipated that this aspect of the situation will improve until after 1965. But this is only one of several parts of the problem. The birth rate, which has gone up during the forties and fifties, created an ever-growing demand for other services rendered by social work, educational, and other helping professions, such as nurses, doctors and dentists. At the same time there is a growing awareness of applicability of services and so we are confronted with a greater proportion of the population seeking involvement in a variety of projects. In a sense this growth in scope of service has affected adversely the ratio of professionals to need. And finally we are faced with a new threat—the unreal competition that has developed for competent college youth as a result of the shortage in the engineering and physical sciences. Tying the drive to national defense and salaries related to cost plus pricing practices, the engineering industry has been attracting a significant proportion of the college population. Needless to say, *Sputnik* gave a substantial push to the continued emphasis on the sciences. However, the kind of pressure

that developed since *Sputnik* has led to a reaction which at least provides for an opportunity to review the function and purpose of education, as well as to look at what kind of manpower is required to serve a nation and the world. Certainly a new status was assigned to the teacher, literally over night. It can be assumed that this self-analysis will serve the other service professions well. In the meantime, however, the impact of the drive for participation in the sciences has contributed to the woes of other fields.

XIII. Prospects for Jewish Community Centers

Certainly the picture for social welfare as well as other professions, with few exceptions, is a bleak one. Yet the Center segment of the scene is not nearly as dismal. The reason for this phenomenon is related to numbers. Within the past three years there has been demonstrated a capacity to recruit in sufficient numbers to not only hold the line but also to take care of the constant growth of the Center field. The recruiting effort will in 1959 begin to attack the hard core of vacancies. It would not take too long a period to reduce the figure to a manageable item. The fact is that the size of the hard core of Center vacancies is comparatively too small to be affected in substance by the statistical implications of the manpower picture in the nation.

XIV. Implications for Quality

However, the qualitative elements cannot be viewed with the same optimism. While a substantial number of individuals have evinced interest in Center work and many of these actually have been accepted, there is reason to believe that the recruiting net is too fine. The tendency in the instance of group work prospects is for both the school and agency to accept almost every person

who makes himself available. One does not have to dwell on the implications of such a condition. When we turn to the physical educator, the plight of the field is most serious. Since the physical educator is trained for practice in school systems, the number interested in the Center setting is exceedingly limited. As a result there is practically no selection possible. The advantages that Centers had over the past years in attracting the physical educator by offering a higher salary has dwindled as teacher salaries and status have gone up. Unless our recruiting and training techniques for this kind of staff are substantially modified the quality of recruits is bound to deteriorate.

XV. Conclusions and Implications

As one reviews the situation, the following conclusions emerge:

1. The shortage has required of both professional and lay leadership an analytical evaluation of purpose and function of agency to determine purpose and function of staff.

2. Many agencies have approached this problem in a somewhat organized fashion, while others have reacted instinctively, guided by personal and professional commitments.

3. As of today the Center field is definitely committed to the social group work orientation in its practice, and what is of equal importance is that the philosophy that flows from social work is a surrogate.

4. Weaknesses and strengths in professional operation of agencies are exaggerated.

5. Similarly, the imperfections of the profession are open to stress and strain. This will become more apparent if the personnel crisis continues. For instance, uncertainty as to efficacy of practice and other unresolved problems in the area of social group work practice tends the raise questions as to whether or not

the Jewish Community Center field's commitment is appropriate to its requirements, in view of the absence of trained people.

6. The small communities and the professionally unsophisticated settings are being affected adversely, reducing standards of service.

7. There is no trend toward limiting of service and expansion because of the unavailability of staff, although there is a growing understanding on the part of many communities that as new projects are envisioned planning for staff must commence.

8. Standards including personnel practices and salaries are being raised in response to the need to recruit and retain staff. The rate of the upward movement of salaries within the past two years has not been relatively as great as other private and public programs employing social group workers, thus closing the gap which from time to time has caused local controversy.

9. There are no helpful studies to reveal exactly what changes have taken place in the professional work load. Observation leads to the conclusion that there has been some increase, but on the whole concern about professional practice has dominated to the extent of not overloading the worker. However, there has been a tendency to utilize untrained people to some extent for jobs that require professional competence.

10. Attempts to reorganize job loads in face of shortage of staff usually end up with a structure that protects the professional role, while providing a more efficient operation. Often it is said: "We should be doing this even if we had all the staff required."

11. Professional staff tend to be more selective in the jobs they will accept. Personal as compared to professional factors loom as determinants in more and more instances.

12. When the personal factor is

eliminated, the quality of practice and status of agency are major influences in choice.

13. Continued difficulty in obtaining staff will build up a quality of frustration that will affect the kind of practice sought.

14. The prospects for obtaining sufficient recruits are good even in face of competing interests. There are several keys to this happy prospect:

a. an all-out recruiting program supported by financial aid projects.

b. appropriate personnel and salary standards.

c. clarification of what constitutes the professional dimension of practice in Jewish Community Centers.

d. above all, sound professional commitments and practice.

This is an agenda that requires not only our attention but dedicated participation. What is at stake is the integrity of service and professional function.