

## And From Other Journals

Edited by HERBERT MILLMAN

"The Future of the Jewish Family: Personal and Communal Responsibility" by Norman Linzer. *Jewish Education*. Spring, 1984, pp. 10-15.

The stability of the family in American society is being threatened by several factors: the rising divorce rate resulting in a greater number of single-parent families, working mothers, the increased number of persons living alone and the number of unmarried persons living together. These facts are supported by demographic data.

In view of the acculturation of the Jew in American society, one may suspect that the Jewish family is following the same pattern. Trends indicate that this is occurring in the non-observant Jewish family and surprisingly in the traditional Jewish family as well.

Professionals and parents are asking valid questions regarding the role of traditional values in serving as a buffer against "the secular inroads of an open society." Historically, the traditional family, steeped in Jewish ritual and culture, was insulated from outside forces.

Linzer develops an interesting response to this troublesome question. He characterizes two approaches of traditional families with regard to "attitudes toward Jewish tradition": "first order" and "second order".

The "first order" approach is the one in which tradition is transmitted by authority, "because we've always done it this way"—no questions asked. This approach has been accepted by ultra-religious groups.

The "second order" approach posits the need to question, to understand tradition in its own context, and inter-

pret it in modern terminology, giving it a dynamic vitality." He applies the "second order" approach to delineate the personal and communal responsibilities for ensuring the continued existence of the Jewish family.

He demonstrates how the obligations which the Talmud imposes on parents, when translated in a modern idiom, are designed to transmit traditional values in a positive environment and prepare the child for life as a good Jew and a good person. Parents, however, may be unable to fulfill these obligations alone. It is the responsibility of the community to assist parents through educational programming, cultural and social experiences.

Linzer's purpose is not to predict the future of the Jewish family, but to suggest that the parent-community partnership may stay the further erosion of the Jewish family and ensure its continuity as a viable institution. He supports his position with cogent argument.

Ida Bobrowsky  
Board of Jewish  
Education of  
Greater New York

"Policy Weaknesses and Political Opportunities" by Donald E. Chambers. *Social Service Review*, March 1985, Vol. 59, No. 1, pp. 1 to 17.

The Social Security Disability Insurance program has several major areas of "policy weaknesses"—ambiguity in definitions, inadequate independence of administrative law judges who have to

## JOURNAL OF JEWISH COMMUNAL SERVICE

enforce policy and administrative non-responsiveness to Federal court decisions. Parties of various political persuasions have used these weaknesses to expand or contract the federal disability program at will. The particular record of the Reagan administration in contracting eligibility for the disability program is discussed.

Donald Feldstein  
Council of Jewish  
Federations  
New York

"The History of Irish-American Care of the Aged" by Seamus P. Metress. *Social Service Review*, March, 1985, Vol. 59, No. 1, pp. 18 to 31.

The Irish Americans are an ethnic group who have been in the United States in some numbers since the Colonial period. The methods and approaches to care of the aged used by this group is traced through various periods of American history. Initially, the Irish Americans tried to take care of their own, but like other ethnic groups, as their resources were overwhelmed, they had to turn to public sources. The history of these developments has lessons for other ethnic groups.

Donald Feldstein  
Council of Jewish  
Federations  
New York

"Orthodox Jews—From Passivity to Activism," by Jacob Katz (Professor Emeritus of Jewish social history at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem). *Commentary*, June, 1985, pp. 34-39.

This article is helpful for those who seek a better understanding of the role

of Orthodox institutions, historically and currently, in Zionism and Israel. The different emphases in Orthodoxy, in both religious and secular areas, are clarified. Of particular value is the analysis of the viewpoints and actions of the Orthodox community in Israel in relation to that country's political structure and problems. Of special interest is the discussion of the developing differences within the Orthodox community, as opposed to the traditional concept of rigid and unified viewpoints.

Charles Miller  
Community Consultant  
Philadelphia

"Searching for the Center in Israel," by Priit J. Vesilind. *National Geographic*, July, 1985, pp. 2-38.

This article is helpful to those who need to understand and to interpret Israel, with particular reference to its political, social and cultural aspects. Although the title refers primarily to the gradual political shift from liberalism to a more conservative stance, the material is clarifying in relation to developments of religious belief and practice, economic aspects, the influence of ecological conditions, the role of kibutzim and of settlements in the West Bank and cultural trends.

The article is of particular value because it is based on an informed and sophisticated appreciation of the people and the conditions under which they live, and the historical and other forces which have influenced the direction of events. There is a striking group of photographs by James L. Stanfield.

Charles Miller  
Community Consultant  
Philadelphia

"Welfare State in America—Trends and Prospects": Special Issue. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, May 1985, pp. 9–155.

"We live in a period of emerging single-issue politics and a plethora of social political issues. The fragmentation of politics makes it difficult to generate a

coalition to strengthen the welfare state, but also makes it difficult to dismantle it." Includes essays on social security, employee benefits, child support and deinstitutionalization.

From *Articles of Interest in Current Periodicals*  
American Jewish Committee

**Twenty-five Years Ago  
in this Journal**

I am proposing that the challenge is before us to develop new opportunities, new worthwhile volunteer projects to complement and supplement the work of the professional staff. We need the help of the many people who have an interest in our programs, who can become informed interpreters and supporters of our activities. At the same time we can give them a sense of fulfillment, a feeling of doing something worthwhile—yes, indeed, a sense of being wanted. Must we only concern ourselves with building up this feeling of being wanted and useful in those who come to us as clients?

We need the volunteer as much or more than the volunteer needs us. Yes, let us be selfish and helping at the same time. For our future is mutually dependent and intertwined.

HERMAN M. PEKARSKY  
Fall, 1960