

# Candid Comments

## Measuring Jewishness -- And Jewish Pride

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So, there are a number of different ways to initially measure the Jewishness of Jewish institutions: The Body Count Method (How many Jews are served? What proportion of Jews are served?); the Cost-Accounting Method (How many Jews are served per Jewish dollar contributed); the Unique-Service Method (Does the Jewish institution provide an important service to Jews which a non-Jewish institution could not provide?).

Statistically, San Francisco's major Jewish institutions seem to qualify on all these counts. However, these may finally not be the most important measurements. These are all "direct service" tests. Direct service measurement may be a necessary condition of institutional Jewishness, but it is not a sufficient condition.



Raab

It has been pointed out that there is also the element of Jewish content. Within the limits of the specific direct service provided by each institution, that institution can be more Jewish or less Jewish in program or in cultural and religious tone.

However, there is a larger matter which has nothing to do with direct services, but with the validity of the Jewish community itself. In the American society, in case you had not noticed, questions are now being raised about the validity of the Jewish community. "Why do you want your own institutions?" we are asked. "You are not a disadvantaged group."

In other words, for some, "ethnic pluralism" may apply only to economically disadvantaged groups — which will presumably then wither away when they are no longer disadvantaged. There is some hostility towards the American Jewish community because it is *not* withering away, although apparently not economically disadvantaged.

But whichever way America moves — whether towards a genuine ethnic pluralism or away from it — the establishment and assertion of ethnic pride and power will be essential to the effective participation by Jews in the American society. In other words, if we are going to exert any influence — in our own behalf, or generally — then people have to know that we are here, and what we stand for. Our roots are necessarily in the synagogues and in our religious commitment, but those roots flower, for the Jewish community, in an ongoing institutional life.

When American Jewry was approaching its own bicentennial in this country, a few years back, it puzzled over this question: what are the specific contributions which the Jewish community has made to America? One of the most cogent answers: the Jewish community, as such, has been at the vanguard of national advances in community health and welfare.

That is reflected in San Francisco's Jewish institutions. It is generally recognized, for example, that the Jewish Home for the Aged provides the model for the standards of care to which other institutions of its kind must aspire. A local union official said simply: "It's the best." It is generally recognized that Mt. Zion provides a model for medical standards of excellence in care, research and training, which touches everyone's life in this area. "It's a source of Jewish pride for me," said one doctor (95 percent of the patients in that hospital are brought there by Jewish doctors).

Jewish homes for the aged, community centers, hospitals, bureaus of education, each have a specific Jewish function; but, together, they have a common over-arching Jewish function: they give flesh to our communal traditions and values, they establish our communal presence, they are our expression of communal pride and identity. They say to us, to our youth, and to the rest of the world: "We are here, as Jews, and we intend to stay, as Jews."

It may be important for America, and for its genuine understanding of ethnic pluralism, that the Jews stubbornly maintain their communal institutions. It is certainly important for the American Jews, particularly at this time, that they do not timidly withdraw from the scene by allowing their institutions to crumble or diminish. It is critical for Israel, at this time, that the American Jewish community does not so withdraw.