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NEW YORK ASSOCIATION FOR NEW AMERICANS, INC.
15 Park Row New York 7, N. Y.

June 30, 1950

Mr. Ralph E. Samuel, President
Federation of Jewish Philanthropies
71 West 47th Street
New York 19, New York

Dear Ralph:

I have studied the report and recommendations of the Distribution Committee on the relationship of NYANA with Federation and its agencies with mixed reactions. On the plus side, I was gratified by the decision to accept NYANA's interpretation of its basic function; namely, to assist the immigrant in his integration into the community with a minimum of duplication of the functions of other established agencies, and to see him through his period of jeopardy. At least I interpret as acceptance the decision that the agencies are free to exercise their own judgment in dealing with the question, albeit with no extra budgetary allotment from Federation. I consider this a broad and positive step, taken with as much dispatch as time and the Federation calendar could possibly allow.

On the minus side, I am rather concerned by inferences that may be drawn from certain portions of the report itself. While the report leading up to the Committee's recommendations is generally factually correct, the language in which it is couched indicates an attitude, I sincerely hope as one devoted to Federation, the agencies will not share. Let me quote and comment upon some of the details that contribute toward this impression. To facilitate reference, I am attaching a copy of Mr. Bennett's letter to Dr. Hexter outlining the factors we consider pertinent in the NYANA-Federation relationship.

That "the policies were precipitated by insufficient funds" is too broadly stated. It is true that we closed cases at a faster rate than we would have liked due to the need to tighten our budget. The facts, however, remain that the historic policy of serving immigrants through the apparent period of jeopardy still prevails. Circumstances which Mr. Bennett fully explained in his letter of April 13th to Dr. Hexter justifies us, we believe, in redefining the time concept of jeopardy. Our decision to limit support to one year, except for continued jeopardy cases, was made only after thorough study by legal experts in the field, the best thinking of our staff and thorough discussion by our board. This was a decision made without any kind of pressure, other than our desire to fulfill the mandate which brought NYANA into being.

The fact that these policies were "promulgated without prior consultation with Federation agencies" infers that NYANA, in assuming for itself responsibility for interpreting the period of jeopardy, has preempted a responsibility either that did not properly flow to NYANA or that should have been shared with Federation. Is not that decision clearly NYANA's responsibility? We are not issuing a decree that refugees not in jeopardy are Federation's responsibility -- we are only trying to persuade Federation to help close the gap.

In case anyone gains the impression that NYANA may be refusing to pay more than City rate for its clients in need of special services, I hasten to correct it. NYANA will continue to provide all the essential services the client

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must have, to the extent of the means and resources available to us. We would not be true to our trust if we paid more for those services than we are obliged to pay, looking not just to Federation's agencies but to the total resources of New York, public and private. It is our sincere belief that NYANA should be given the same "break" in cost that the City receives; it is our sincere hope that in this City, whose private philanthropy is set up along sectarian lines, these newcomers can find the security of a place alongside their coreligionists in the social welfare pattern, instead of our being obliged to take advantage of the generosity of non-Jewish institutions.

Our presentation was also misunderstood if we were actually believed to be proposing that "immigrants require only a brief period of time to make an adequate adjustment so as not to need further help" (the underlining is mine). Our studies indicate that with a reasonably small number of exceptions, these newcomers make a fairly adequate adjustment within a year in respect to those aspects of life in the community that pertain to immigrant status. But like all members of the community, these newcomers will always be subject to the same circumstances and vicissitudes that have brought Federation and its agencies into being, regardless of how many years may elapse since their arrival.

And last in this recital of illustrations of unfortunate inferences -- the fact that NYANA's board is "newly constituted" really has no bearing on the propriety of its decisions. Both the board and the agency are only one year old but we are proud of the progress we have made in that short period, in the face of great obstacles, toward fulfillment of our mission. In that single first year of operation we have housed, clothed, fed and provided essential services for 30,000 persons, with all their problems as immigrants and all our problems as a new agency, -- a record unequalled, I believe, in the history of American private social welfare. Furthermore, if you will study the membership of our board, I hope you will agree with me that it represents a most fortunate cross-section of social welfare leadership of New York's Jewish community. You will also recognize a substantial representation of men and women who need yield to no one in experience and deep-rooted interest in Federation itself and many of its agencies, most closely related to NYANA's problems. Surely, those Federation stalwarts, together with those on the board who are representative of the community's other interests, are adequately qualified to take the responsibility for the kinds of decisions that NYANA has been called upon to make on behalf of the community, regardless of the fact that the board as such has only been operating for one year.

Taken as a whole, the section of the Distribution Committee's report on NYANA breathes a spirit that I am confident does not represent the attitude of either organization. I think I know Federation, and I do know that the entire board and staff of NYANA are unanimous in our desire to carry out our mandate to pull all elements of the community together in the accomplishment of a difficult task. I know of no form of broad communal planning in which Federation could indulge that would be as beneficial to Federation, its agencies and the community in general, as a sincere attempt to sit on the same side of the table with NYANA in facing the problems involved in the integration of the newcomers into the New York community.

With kind personal regards,

/s/ Arnold S. Askin, President

P. S. Inasmuch as the interested agencies have been supplied with copies of the Distribution Committee's report, I am taking the liberty of sending them copies of this letter as well, so that they may be kept up-to-date on our mutual problems.