AMI SOCIAL ACTION 1988
Keep

Margo etc's

OR AMI-ans

revised/ signed 4/29
If I can, I will ask Mr. Jenkin Lloyd Jones' permission to quote — in toto — his editorial in the Enquirer of 3-28-66, titled "We're Rearing a Generation of Little Old Children" and use it as a starter for talking about this matter of how to rear — or "grow" — children. Because I think he is very much on the right track, and because I believe that we badly need to start much lively discussion — pro and con — in just this vein.

In fact, I'd like to start it right now! all our deep concern for and about our children and our adolescents. What is it about? — where does it lead us? — what can we do? Mr. Jones' three-year-old, behind the plastic steering wheel in his father's car reminded me of the 6-month-old I once saw propped up in his stroller, clutching a blue plastic toy gun. He could not sit up on his own yet, but he could hold a gun! "What are guns for?" he is bound to ask before long. "To shoot and kill presidents when I am old enough, and mad enough at my—"
self and the world?!

"Or to kill myself? -- because who really cares?" I am thinking back to the mother of a five-year-old I knew, an intelligent woman, educated, double my size, who, coming to the rescue of her
ailing son who had fallen off his bike, turned to me and said: "I don't like his riding his bike in the street any-
how, but what can you do?" "That can you do!! "Beat the daylights out of him" sell his bike; lock him up -- anything to get the message through to him; "loud and clear" that you love and cherish him enough, and that you have the power, to keep him alive and unharmed. In fact, and in real life, of course, such drastic, cruel, and "Punishment" measures and the rolling--
out of such "big guns" are rarely if ever needed if we know how to use the "small
ammunition." I am reminded of an experience I shall never forget and one I cherish very
specially, out of many similar ones from a lifetime of living with children. This
was about 8 years old at the time who had had all the trimmings of an afternoon
and evening of babysitting: stories, singing, snack, trips to the bathroom -- the works!
and who insisted on bouncing around in her bed and keeping the baby wide awake, with a twinkling in her eye and voice. I said: "Ain't my patience getting that small?" showing her about a quarter of an inch with my thumb and index finger. She twinkled back: "May I do one more wrong thing?" Answer: "I wouldn't chance it," with which she turned toward the wall while I tucked the baby in and was soundly asleep before I was ready to turn off the lights.

Mr. Jones is so right: confusion is the key word. We have it and we produce it (or don't believe it) in our children. The TV-commercial mother, and the real one, who get angry and yell at their noisy children, but who get quite worried and anxious when they children are quiet for a while: "What is he up to?" "A penny for your thoughts." The whole matter of education and learning, and of excelling, but when you do excell you enter competition and "people don't like you." And how are the adults around children, using their own education? Do they treasure it, does it make their lives good and rich, do they treasure and enjoy it? — or do they "soft-pedal" it, deny it, hide it? does it
Es war als hätte der Himmel die Erde still geküsst, 
dass sie im Schatten stünde, von ihm nur Traumes. 
Macht die Luft ging durch die Felder, 
und die Ähren noch einmal scheint, 
so schüttet alles herunter, 
und merkt die Leute spätestens 
als sie auf sieh nach Haus.

Kochendorf

Hans Fischer-Deitzen
Robert Schumann
I-26-88 OR AMI - Social Action Committee

I. Organization
1) Vice President in charge: Lee Arzt
2) Committee Chairman: David Sack

3) Assess Congregation’s Interest in “Social Issues.”
   a) General survey, or specific survey re: social issues?
   b) Which “social issues”?

4) Approaches to evaluating congregations interest in
   (I would prefer: “concern about”) social issues.

5) Write up 4-5 “assumed important” or “urgent, issues”:
   a) Short-time, or urgent issues;
   b) Long-term, or planning issues.
6. Lists of interested OR AMI Members
   a) Members who have overtly expressed interest in
      - social interests as such;
      - being personally involved in actions and/or activities;
      - representing congregations’ interest and involvement (OR AMI “image”)

   b) Members who can be assumed to have interest in social issues on the basis of their
      - education;
      - current or past activities;
      - personal backgrounds.
The Social Action Committee of OR AMI: My Thoughts
and Questions.

"Social Action" as concern and activity of a
Jewish Reform congregation.

The existence and importance of socially
motivated concerns and activities
were upmost factors in my decision
to choose OR AMI as my congregation
when I moved to Richmond.

The basic tenets of my religious belief are

  - "God is One." It means to me: There is
    a God; and since He is One, or: there is
    only one, He is everyone's God; He has
    created everything and everyone; and
    He cares about everyone.

I find this most clearly and most
deeply expressed in the Sayings:

  - "If you save (or help) one individual,
    it is as though you save (or help) all of
    humanity (or the universe);
    if you destroy one individual, it is as
    though you destroy humanity (or the universe)."

And
If I am not for myself, who will be? If I am only for myself, who am I? And if not now—then?

These expressions—age-old and traditional—of the Jewish faith make (to me) the existence of social-concern actions and activities within a congregation logical, necessary, perhaps even obligatory.

In order to define, explore, and reactivate social-concern actions and activities within OR AMI, I would like to explore with members who originated the congregation, what the religious, philosophical, social, and organizational background were on which the Social Action Committee was initially organized.

Is this committee mentioned in the constitution?

Is there additional written material about it?

*"Obligatory" only in its existence—not in terms of membership participation, of course."
What was the original definition of "social action" in terms of an OR AM committee?

What activities have been carried out? What were their results? What was the congregation's reaction?
Activities for OR AM
Social Action Committee

Possible or feasible involvements and activities for the committee at this time.

1) Childcare (family) in the broadest sense.
2) Interfaith relations and activities incl. interracial relationships
3) Caring about refugees already in the Richmond area (of any country) and
4) Concern with and planning for refugees coming to this area
5) Concern about and care for the elderly in institutions, etc.
6) Refugees and Soviet Jews coming to this country.

I envision all of these activities to be carried out with already functioning community organisations and agencies.
National:

- Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism
- Interreligious Committee
- The Religious Action Center
- American Friends Service Committee

Local:

- Anti-Defamation League
- Interfaith Center for Public Policy
- Freedom House and Daily Planet
- Richmond Human Rights Coalition
- Union of Councils for Soviet Jews
- Office of Refugee Resettlement
- Shepherd Center
August 9, 1988

Speaking For Ourselves - About Social Action.

An article on the front page of the Richmond Times Dispatch of Sunday, August 7th, 1988 aroused my deep concern, and feelings close to anger. The heading reads: "Homeless at 18, she feels no stigma." I will not address this particular situation which seems to have a number of aspects that cannot be generally applied to "The Homeless." Several sentences within the text, however do; it says there: "In 1987, 1,752 people aged 17 and younger, received services at area shelters. Of that number, 457 were five years old, and younger.... Today, there are nearly three million homeless people nationwide...."
By 2003, the number of homeless people is projected to swell as high as 19 million."

(Emphasis is mine.)

Do I—don't—have to accept such a prediction "sitting down", helplessly, hopelessly?

With its Social Action Committee and the Sustenance Fund, Congregation OR AM is addressing itself—voluntarily, but officially—to the existence, and the problems of the Homeless and the Hungry in our city. Contributions to the Sustenance Fund are being made, and a considerable number of individual members are working—either in their professional lives, or as volunteers—with the various agencies that work with hungry and homeless people in Richmond.

Ms. Sheila Crowley, who is in charge of
"The Street Center" and "The Daily Center" - and OR AMI member Mrs. Ann Lane who founded "The Daily Planet" as a walk-in center 18 years ago - spoke most interestingly to the Adult Education meeting at OR AMI in the spring of this year. Their morning's speeches gave us valuable information for our future "social action" activities. It also resulted in OR AMI's Richard Tarbet's painting "The Street Center II" - which it had urgently needed!

Another Social Action Committee activity of the recent past was an announced committee meeting held at OR AMI on May 29th, attended by the rabbi and the chairman of the committee, and ten congregants who were - at that time - appointed Social Action Committee members. There were several smaller
Follow-up get-togethers of committee members, sharing and clarifying ideas for the committee's future road to travel. A second general meeting of the Social Action Committee will be held on August 21st, at 10:00 a.m. at ORAMI — with the hope that a representative number of members will attend, and offer ideas and specific services — either to the homeless or other suggested areas of urgent social concern in our area.

I need to get back to the projected 19 million homeless in 2003 — a mere 15 years from now — and Richmond's 457 homeless children under the age of five. By then, all these children should be well housed and well fed; they should be in college, or otherwise learning skills to support their future lives.
Is there really no nationwide intelligence, compassion, psychological and sociological understanding, medical knowledge, financial know-how, 20th century technology, and spiritual guidance available, to prevent such disastrous doom? All of these "knowings", of course, will have to be put into action, by human beings — by us. Our religion says: "When you help one person, (or save one soul) it is as though you help, (or save) the Universe." And we are only asked to help, (or save) 19 million!

We set a deadline for landing on the moon. Can 2003 become the year for the permanent end of hunger and homelessness in the U.S.A.? Why not?
Sunday, October 2, 1988

The Sukkoth Service — and Social Action

"At Least One Item."

At the close of last night’s wonderful Sukkoth Service that the 7th grade and Miss Scanlan, their teacher, had conducted, Rabbi Koplin expressed his pleasure, and his appreciation, to the congregation of new and old members of OR AMI. He thanked us for the way we had responded to his suggestion, in the Bulletin, that we bring with us to this year’s Yom Kippur service a token gift — “at least one item” as a symbol for our caring about the homeless in Richmond. "Literally hundreds of items were left", the rabbi said; and I sensed a bit of
pride in his voice. It made me feel good too to have this evidence that we have come a good long way since Rabbi Koplin suggested, at the Yom Kippur service a year ago, that the congregation acknowledge their caring about homeless and hungry people by establishing a "Sustenance Fund" through contributions of 3% of expenses from such religious family-life events as Bar-Bat mitzvahs, weddings, etc. The Sustenance Fund is now an integral part of OR AMI's contributions, and it has been used for worthwhile activities—such as Rick Tarbet's painting of one of the shelters—toward improving the lives of the homeless however little!

With the donations of useful needed
items this Yom Kippur, I feel that we have further committed ourselves to putting our caring into meaningful action. I am now suggesting that we might go yet another step forward in that direction. Could we—all of us, or some of us—leave "at least one item" whenever we come to that beautiful new temple of ours—for a service, adult education, any other meeting, or religious school.

To me this would mean that we are prepared to transform that first "token" or "symbol" gift into ongoing response to the great and real needs that exist in our city. With several or AMI members now actively engaged in the work of some of the shelters—either as staff or
as volunteers—we can more precisely keep informed of the specific needs at any one time—and respond to them with appropriate donations or services.

My own suggestion—in addition to providing some badly needed practical items—is that we might add a little joy and happiness by bringing to services, or meetings, or religious school, an "outgrown" children's book, a toy, some drawing paper and a few crayons—or anything pleasurable for children and their mothers that our imagination suggests.

As AMI is growing in numbers; it seems that our understanding of Hillel's words that "caring
for one person means caring for all humankind.

is growing too.

W.H.
Our Festival of the Trees - TuBeshvat.

At the Friday night service on January 20, 1987, we celebrated Shabbat, and TuBeshvat, the Festival of the Trees. In the service we read that in Israel this is the occasion of the planting of trees, and the ideal time for it. In Richmond, we have yet to see the first real snow and ice of the winter of 1988/89 — and we cannot plant our trees on TuBeshvat, even though we will certainly be planting trees on our lovely lot, especially since a recent storm broke one tree and damaged others. (The falling tree just barely missed the Rabbi’s car!)

In his interpretation of this Jewish holiday, Rabbi Kaplin suggested that there are other kinds of “trees” that we can plant, and grow, to beautify and enrich our congregation — trees of our mind, suggestions
of things we could do, and actions we could take for such enrichment. Three such "trees" were "planted" that Shabbat night of TuBeshvat:

Arthur Tordes reported that volunteers are greatly needed by the Richmond AIDS Ministry, a local organization that is trying to help victims of AIDS. Arthur can be approached for information.

Margarete Hirsch— as a member of the Refugees Subcommittee of the Social Action Committee of OR AMI—shared with members at the Shabbat service that a seven-member Vietnamese family, with one Amerasian adult young man among them, will arrive in Richmond, from a refugee camp in the Philippines, quite shortly. They will be officially settled by the staff of the Office of Refugee Resettlement of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond. Members of OR AMI have offered to
act as volunteer sponsors—and more are needed and will be welcome. Marilyn Breslow—who is director of the Refugee Resettlement Agencies in Northern Virginia—will be the liaison between ORAM and the ORA, and will answer questions and give all information.

"Sponsoring" by ORAM of an Amerasian family will mean providing, as long as it is needed, the basic things needed for furnishing a house, like furniture, linen, clothing, transportation to such essential places as Social Security office, clinics, school enrollment—as well as individual human interest and caring during the stressful period of arrival and adjustment.

Rabbi Koplin himself suggested another "tree": the Tree of Interfaith Understanding and Cooperation, such as the recent Interfaith Service on the occasion of this year's
opening of the Virginia General Assembly, hopefully to be followed by other personal and
group interfaith activities and learning
situations.

These three "trees", planted on Tisha-
B'Av, could become blooming and fruit-
bearing growths of OR AMI - nor, and years
from now.  

Margaret Hirsch
August 9, 1988

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OTHER INSTRUCTIONS

The hosts are responsible for providing:

1. Decaf coffee for brewing
2. Coffee creamer
3. Baked goods, fruit, cheese and crackers, etc. (30-45 people)
4. Cold drinks (soda, juice, lemonade, etc.)
5. Please no powdered drinks or Kahlua. They stain the carpet.

Challah

Arrive at Temple 25 - 30 minutes early to set up as follows:

1. Use 3 tables next to the kitchen. One should be placed near the kitchen for the drinks. The other two should be placed at some distance from the drink table.
   a. Cover the tables with the paper tablecloth from the roll on the floor next to the refrigerator in the box.
   b. On top of the paper tablecloth put on the lace tablecloths.

2. Set out:
   - paper plates
   - plastic spoons
   - napkins
   - cold cups
   - tea bags
   - sugar
   - sugar substitute
   - fill cream pitchers

   These will be found in the kitchen.

   a. 36 cups is usually enough for 30, but make more as needed for greater numbers.
   b. Instructions are inside the cupboard door to the left of the sink.
   c. Feel free to use the silver coffee service stored in the Rabbi's office.

4. Set out china coffee cups. The cups will be in the dishwasher or the upper cabinet near the refrigerator.

5. Heat water for tea in the Morsico Automatic Drip coffee maker.

6. Set food and drinks on tables.
   a. Set baked goods on trays found in the cupboards.
   b. Put the Challah on the Challah board with a knife and Challah cover.

7. Fill the large Kiddush cup with wine and the small glass and silver cups with grape juice.
   a. Put these cups on the silver tray.
   b. Put the tray on the round table on the left side of the Sama as you face the ark.

8. Put Sabbath candles in the candle holders. Put the candles and the matches on a silver tray on the round table on the right side of the Sama as you face the Ark.

9. Set out several trash cans. Place one near the coffee.

10. After the service, put ice from the freezer in the glass and silver ice bucket with tongs.

11. Clean up.
   a. Stack coffee cups in top rack.
   b. Turn on the dishwasher. Do not put silver or silverplated items in the dishwasher.
   c. Put the candles in the sink if still burning.
   d. Check all tables for food and plates left by people.

If you have any questions, feel free to call me. Vicki Riley 8329-4857
Margaret,

Here is a copy of the Onez Instructions. I'm sorry that I will not be able to host the Onez with you and your sister. I hope to see you soon.  

Rita Penlon

1/16/91
We are hoping to be able to introduce such a program to some of the families which the ORR is settling. I would greatly appreciate it if you could put me in touch with a person of NCJW who is familiar with the program - if possible in an official capacity - and with whom I could correspond, and receive the necessary initial information, with the goal of putting a HIPPY program in effect here as soon as possible (since such help is urgently needed). My writing to you is a first step.

I am much looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely, and with best wishes for Rosh Hashanah, Margarete A. Hirsch.

P.S. (important) Would you be kind enough to correct my name in your record to exactly the way I have written it in the top right hand corner of this letter. There is another NCJW member in Richmond with almost the same name (Mrs. Margaret L. Hirsch) and our mail and magazines get mixed up frequently. Thank you.