Communal Problem Solving: The Winnipeg *VA'AD HA-IR* 1946[1]

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Résumé

Dans cette étude faite par le Dr. M.S. Stern, l'auteur tentera de faire une évaluation en trois temps des événements et des facteurs qui menèrent en 1946, à la formation du Conseil Unifié de la Ville (c'est-à-dire: le *Va'ad Ha-ir*). Cette agence communautaire est responsable de la gestion de la surveillance du personnel ainsi que de l'entretien et de la certification de normes honnêtes concernant la cacheroute.

De fait, un des aspects les plus épineux de l'activité communautaire juive de Winnipeg, a résidé dans l'approvisionnement d'alimentation religieusement reconnue (c'est-à-dire cachère). Les connaissances techniques conformes à la Halacha en vue de conserver des normes appropriées conformes aux nombreuses étapes de la préparation des aliments — particulièrement la viande cachère — exigent des aptitudes professionnelles. Ces professionnels ont par tradition oeuvré comme travailleurs communautaires ou comme des employés.

Malgré cela, la surveillance de la production et de l'approvisionnement en aliments cachers à Winnipeg, a été discutée de manière constante et suivie tant par le secteur commercial que par le secteur communautaire ou privé. La confrontation de ces deux groupes d'intérêts divergents a donné depuis le début du siècle, une poussée à une tension presque continue et à des tentatives fréquentes de compromis sans succès.

Un rapide examen des raisons des échecs subis au cours des premiers essais visent à créer une atmosphère d'assurance communautaire pendant que l'encouragement au développement d'une certaine harmonie entre les intérêts des secteurs privé et public fournira des critères utiles afin de mieux servir la nature et le but de la structure du *Va'ad*.

En dernier point, l'auteur, dans son étude, alors qu'il se réfère aux structures utilisées et mises en place à des époques antécédentes de la vie juive communautaire, cherche à donner un aperçu très fin et pénétrant du

processus de résolution d'un problème de la communauté juive dans un contexte canadien.

This paper will attempt to explore the events and factors which led, in 1946, to the formation of the United City Council (*Va'ad Ha-ir*), a communal agency charged with the administration of clerical supervision and the maintenance and certification of honest standards of Kashruth.[2]

Indeed, one of the most fragile aspects of Jewish communal activity in Winnipeg has been the provision of religiously sanctioned (i.e. *kosher*) food. The halakhic expertise essential to maintain appropriate standards at the many stages of food preparation, especially in the provision of kosher meat, requires professional involvement. These professionals have traditionally functioned as communal workers/officials. Yet, the control of the production and provision of kosher foods in Winnipeg has consistently been disputed by both the communal and private commercial sectors. The confrontation of these two interest groups has, since the early years of this century, given rise to almost continuous tension and frequent unsuccessful attempts at resolution.

An examination of the reasons for the failure of earlier attempts at creating an atmosphere of communal assurance while fostering harmony between private and public interests will provide some useful criteria for understanding the nature and purpose of the *Va'ad* structure. Finally, by reference to structures developed and used in earlier periods of Jewish communal life, the paper will seek some insight into the process of Jewish communal problem solving in the Canadian context.

I

In May of 1946 a group of three rabbis, executive members of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada, were invited to Winnipeg to seek a settlement of the long standing community division in the area of Kashrut supervision and certification.[3] At that time there existed two major groups providing meat or meat products to the Jewish community. There were butchers who were organized under the *Kehilla* Committee whose *Makhshir** authority was exercised by a board con-

*The responsibility for overseeing the entire processing of kosher meat or other foodstuffs, testing and certifying the qualifications of the personnel, and making authoritative halakhic determinations belongs to the certifying rabbi (*Makhshir*). This may be an individual or a rabbinic board, a private rabbinic citizen or a community appointed official.

sisting of Rabbi's Horowitz and Herson. There also existed a Retail Kosher Butchers Association who, together with the Chicago Kosher Sausage Company, were providing meat under Rabbi M. Schwartzman as *Makhshir*. These two groups were not merely business competitors, however; each sought, through condemnation of the other, to be viewed as the sole moral authority of the community.[4]

There is no lack of potential abuses in the system upon which to focus questions of integrity. The *Shohet** for example, must not only be qualified when initially engaged but must also maintain a high degree of physical dexterity. As he gets older it may prove progressively more difficult to do a proper job. Yet, at a time when pension and retirement plans were unknown there would be a natural tendency to protect one's livelihood and cover up any deficiencies in the slaughter. Similar situations could arise, to one degree or another, with other functionaries. Further, all of the professionals involved in the processing of kosher meat were totally dependent, for their wages, on the purveyors of the meat. Not even the supervising rabbis were drawing a regular and living wage from any communal body nor did they have the prospect of any retirement wage.[5]

On the commercial side, moreover, there exists even greater potentialities for abuse. Kosher meat must, of necessity, be priced higher than non-kosher meat of the same quality. This cost factor is generated by a number of causes. There is, first of all, the cost of the extra personnel. The presence of a *bodeq*** for example, is not required for non-kosher kill. The slaughter itself is much slower for kosher production. Jewish law does not allow prior stunning of the animal, a device that enables non-kosher slaughterers to handle a few animals at once. The *shohet* must deal with one animal at a time. The nature of the cutting stroke, as required by Halakha, reduces the amount and quality of hide that can be sold later.

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*Jewish law requires that animals intended for kosher use must be slaughtered in a very specific fashion. The *shohet* (ritual slaughterer) needs be a God-fearing man who, thoroughly versed in that part of the halakhic literature which pertains to *shehita* (ritual slaughter), has been licensed by a competent rabbinic authority.

**After slaughter it is necessary to examine the animal for internal or external blemish or injury which would, within a one year period, have proven fatal to the animal. If such a defect is uncovered the meat of the animal is forbidden. Certain organs which are most often affected by such injuries (e.g. the lungs) must be checked in each case. This post-slaughter examination, which obviously requires a basic knowledge of the animal's anatomy and pathology, is done by a *bodeq* (examiner). This function is often combined with that of the *shohet*.

Further, many animals that are killed in this manner, at a higher production cost, are found to be blemished in such a manner as to preclude their use for kosher consumption. These rejected animals, if not also rejected by the government inspector, are then sold to the non-kosher wholesaler at a price equal to the regular slaughter. This extra production cost must be absorbed by the meat that does meet the standard. Finally, even if the slaughter is thoroughly proper, and the animal is cleared of any blemish or injury, the hindquarters are not used for kosher consumption. As in the case of the rejected animal, the hindquarters are sold on the non-kosher market and the production costs are added to the cost of the front quarters.[6]

These cost factors are an obvious justification for a cost differential. The inherent temptation, however, is to use, to whatever extent, meat that is not up to standard. This sub-standard meat, priced then at the kosher level, would greatly increase the margin of profit.

There are no recorded instances of such abuses being proven in 1946. There were, however, constant accusations. The average layman was not in a position to judge whether the integrity of Kashrut had indeed been violated, or by whom. He was able, none the less, to question a system which seemed to be "a sordid source of personal petty mercenary politics".[7] Many Winnipeg Jews felt that the organized community structure owed them the protection of an impartial, untainted supervision.[8]

It was within this context that Winnipeg's two broadly based, generally secular, communal organizations, the Jewish Welfare Fund and the Western Division of the Canadian Jewish Congress, extended an invitation to the rabbinical Union to dispatch an impartial panel to investigate and suggest a resolution.[9] The Union dispatched three of its distinguished leaders: Rabbis Seltzer (New York), Rosen (Passaic, New Jersey), and Rif (Camden, New Jersey). On May 28, after a week of meetings with all the concerned parties, the panel issued a document outlining a resolution which was, in general terms, acceptable to all factions.[10] This document, the contents of which were never made a matter of public record, can shed light on the issues, at least as seen by these outside observers.

After acknowledging the invitation which brought them, and citing the principals involved, the document asserted that the basic precondition of any workable resolution to the conflict was the attainment of a united rabbinate. They recommended, therefore, the establishment of a United Rabbinical Council, to consist of Rabbis Horowitz, Herson, and Schwartzman. Rabbi Horowitz would serve as Chief Rabbi, having com-

plete jurisdiction on the issuance of all Jewish divorce decrees. In the area of Kashruth, however, the three rabbis would participate together and decisions of importance would require agreement of all three. Were the rabbis unable to come to a consensus, the matter under contention would be referred to the Kashruth Council (*Va'ad Ha-Kashrut*).

The Kashruth Council would be the lay body charged with the administration of Kashruth. The composition and selection of this group was not spelled out. The intention seems to have been a broadly based group drawn from the city's religiously oriented organizations and institutions. This lay body would then elect an executive committee which would carry the operational responsibility for the structure. The semi-clerical functionaries, (e.g. the *shohet*) engaged in the production and processing of Kosher meat would be in the employ of the Kashruth Council and under the joint supervision of the Kashruth Council and the Rabbinate.

The financial administration of this structure, including a one cent tax on each pound of Kosher meat and on the payroll of all professional personnel, would be the responsibility of a Finance Committee composed of three members appointed by the old *Kehilla*, one member appointed by the management of the Chicago Kosher Company, two members from the Canadian Jewish Congress, two from the Welfare Fund, and two from the Retail Kosher Butchers Association. The industry would thus play a key role in the day to day operation of the structure. The Finance Committee would, according to the document, be responsible and answerable to the Kashruth Council Executive.

The main body of the document ends with the acknowledgement of Mr. Averbach's (i.e. Chicago Kosher Sausage Co.) undertakings to place his firm completely under the supervision of the Kashruth Council and the united rabbinate, and not to establish or support, as had been the situation in the past, any rival authority. The reference is the invitation, in response to which Rabbi Schwartzman came to Winnipeg to undertake duties as a Makhshir, which, following a disagreement with the then Chief Rabbi L. L. Kahanovitch, was extended by a group in which Mr. Averbach was a leading member.[11]

There is an appendix following the main text. Most of it relates to operational standards which, as is evident from their appearance here, were not prior policy in one or both of the separate operations. (a) There were to be two *shohetim* present on the killing floor when the slaughtering is done. Each *shohet* was to check his blade after each animal. After each seven or eight animals the *shohet* must check and sharpen his blade and

have it inspected by his partner. Thus there will be constant supervision of the propriety of the kill*. (b) If there was need of an additional *shohet*, the Makhshir should not, except in the most exceptional and temporary circumstances, undertake that role. The reason behind this clause is unclear, since Jewish tradition does not prohibit such an arrangement. Its purpose might have been to protect the security of the *shohet* or to avoid a confrontation between the members of the rabbinical council. (c) All meat which came from the abattoir after being properly slaughtered and examined had to carry the stamp of the United Rabbinical Council. Similarly, all fowl that had been processed and approved for kosher consumption had to carry the rabbinical stamp. This procedure allowed for identification of the product after it arrived and was stocked in either the retail establishment or processed meat factory. (d) Any retail meat dealer whose establishment was open and operating on the Sabbath must, without exception, be denied Kashruth certification. Similarly, the community in general, and the Welfare Fund in particular, were assigned the obligation of preventing the delivery of meat from the abattoirs to the retail establishments on the Sabbath. In those years the butchers did not have more than ice coolers and would want, therefore, to take delivery of Friday's kill for sale after the Sabbath (i.e. Saturday night). This instence on Sabbath observance as part of Kashruth regulation is consistent with the traditional identification of public non-observance of the Sabbath as a clear indication of a person's lack of reliability in all matters of Jewish ritual.[12] (e) The salaries of all professional personnel (rabbis, *shohetim*, etc.) were to be paid by the Finance Committee. The salaries of the rabbis were set, in the document, at two hundred dollars a month for each. Rabbi Schwartzman was to receive an additional one hundred dollars each month as before, for which he would have extra supervisory responsibilities. The evidence would seem to indicate that an agreement was reached whereby Rabbi Schwartzman would continue to carry out the day to day supervision of the Chicago Kosher Sausage operation as he had since coming to Winnipeg. The other members of the Council would have access for inspections and share the titular responsibility.

Finally, the last clause of the appendix, and perhaps the most important one, assigned to the Canadian Jewish Congress and the Welfare Fund the responsibility for execution and maintenance of this system. Those

*The Makhshir is required from time to time, to check the *shohet*'s blade but he need not be present whenever the shohet is working.

organizations which had initiated the process of resolution were called upon to take an active and continuing role in its perpetration.

After the rabbinic panel had left, the Welfare Fund and Congress convened a meeting of the various factions at which the agreement in principle was transformed into a workable reality.[13] The result was a United Rabbinic Council (*Va'ad Ha-Rabbanim*) as outlined above, and a single lay board to be called the City Council (*Va'ad Ha'ir*). The lay group would consist of members appointed by or elected from the Welfare Fund, the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Retail Kosher Butchers Association, The *Kehilla*, and the Chicago Kosher Sausage Company. Leaders of major Jewish organizations, other than those already involved, and synagogues were not officially represented.

On the first of July, 1946 the Va'ad Ha'ir began operation with the following members:

Y. Averbach (Chicago Kosher Sausage Co. Ltd.)

M. Buchalter (*Kehilla*)

J. Dveris (Retail Kosher Butchers Association)

S. Kanee (Canadian Jewish Congress)

R. J. Kimmel (Welfare Fund)

B. Sheps (Canadian Jewish Congress)

J. Shochet (*Kehilla*)

D. Slater (Welfare Fund)

J. Wolinsky (*Kehilla*)

M. Zipursky (Retail Kosher Butchers Association)

David Slater, president of the Welfare Fund, was elected Chairman and served in that capacity for more than a decade.[14]

II

Communal controversy in the area of kashruth did not first arise in the forties, nor was the formation of the *Va'ad Ha-ir* in 1946 the first attempt at its resolution. As soon as the number of settlers permitted, the Jewish communities of Western Canada made vigorous efforts to engage the personnel required to satisfy the basic religious needs of its members.[15] Among these functionaries were those required to provide Kosher meat, first and foremost the *shohet*. By the end of the first decade of this century dissatisfaction and agitation, in this area, had become manifest.

While a great number of the early Jewish settlers in Winnipeg were observant, many to the point of being prepared to endure much economic hardship, few were well educated in Judaic literature.[16] This low level of Jewish literacy also characterized many of the religious functionaries of that era. A picture of this situation is clearly drawn in a letter from Calgary published in Winnipeg's *Canadian Israelite* on 3 November 1911. The writer describes the state of that Western community's religious leadership. The rabbi supplements his income by selling real-estate on the Sabbath and is even deficient in his knowledge of basic liturgical forms. The *shohet*, he asserts, does not know the rudimentary laws of proper ritual slaughter. Confirmation of this man's observations is given in another letter, written by Rabbi Cohen of Montreal, in which it is suggested that the *shohtim* in small communities should be placed under the supervision of the nearest competent rabbi.[17]

In Winnipeg there was a competent orthodox rabbi, I. I. Kahanovitch. Having been ordained at the great rabbinical academy of Slabodka (Lithuania) he was brought to Winnipeg in 1906 to undertake the religious leadership of the orthodox community.[18] One of his earliest efforts was the organization and supervision of the processing of meat for kosher consumption. In 1911, however, a butcher, having made arrangements with one of the abattoirs, instituted an operation independent of the earlier established *Va'ad Ha-Shehita* (Ritual Slaughter Committee). Rabbi Kahanovitch invited the *shohet*, who had been engaged for this operation, to present his blades for inspection (i.e. to place himself under the rabbi's jurisdiction for certification and supervision). When the *shohet* refused to answer this invitation the rabbi placed his slaughter under a ban. This triggered the first of Winnipeg's major kashruth conflicts.

There were some in the community who were unhappy with Rabbi Kahanovitch's vigorous drive for centralized control of the religious apparatus and with what they considered to be the inflated price of kosher meat. When the dispute over the independent meat operation became a matter of public knowledge these people joined in and claimed that Rabbi Kahanovitch had acted unjustly. In an attempt to end the controversy before it got out of hand, a group of concerned citizens formed the *Hezqath Yahaduth* (Society for the Strengthening of Judaism) and with funds raised for this purpose, invited Rabbi A. Ashinsky of Petersburg to come to Winnipeg, investigate the situation and render an impartial rabbinic judgment.

After an intensive period of investigation Rabbi Ashinsky found that Rabbi Kahanovitch had acted in a most proper manner and that all elements of the community should submit to his judgment in matters pertaining to supervision and certification of kashruth. He also recommended that a *Kehilla* (community council) structure be formed by the law community which would, together with the rabbinate, oversee and coordinate the entire range of organized communal activity. Aside from the efficiency such a system might engender, the support of the rabbinate by a broadly based and involved lay body would do much to prevent the disruption and acrimony of communal strife.[19]

The judgment and the recommendation were not accepted by the opposition. Led by some executive members of the *Hevra Mishnayoth* congregation, the opposition initiated a campaign to challenge Rabbi Kahanovitch's authority. They invited a number of rabbis to come to Winnipeg to serve as their leader. Finally, in October of 1912 they announced the arrival of Rabbi Y. Y. Gorodsky of Russia. After being formally charged as rabbi of the Sephardic rite Synagogues* in November, 1912, Rabbi Gorodsky became the figure around which Rabbi Kahanovitch's opponents rallied.[20]

The dispute raged, with ever increasing accusations and recriminations, about the inflated prices of meat and inadequate supervision, until a settlement was finally achieved in September of 1915. As the Jewish population increased and became more economically secure it became clear that the Orthodox Community could, in any case, no longer be served by one rabbi. Rabbi Kahanovitch was awarded the title of Chief Rabbi and, together with the other rabbis, attempted to fulfill his duties while maintaining communal unity.[21]

A lay structure was developed to administer the supervision and certification of kashruth. This body, called the *Va'ad Ha-ir*, operated until 1933, providing clerical resources and financial administration. Its formation and operation did not, however, resolve the underlying conflict. It is not surprising, therefore, that, by the late twenties, the community had again factionalized.

A group of dissident laymen organized a rival supervisory body which they called the *City Committee*. They processed their own meat and at-

*The true Sephardic rite is that of Jews whose origins are traced to medieval Spain. In this case, however, the Sephardic rite relates to that liturgical custom prevalent in those sections of Eastern Europe whose Jewish population identified with the hasidic movement.

tracted a few retail butchers. The *Va'ad Ha-ir* operated with the sanction of a rabbinical board consisting of Rabbis Kahanovitch (chief rabbi), Horowitz and Zilberstein. The City Committee invited a series of rabbis to come to Winnipeg as their *Makhshir*. While, for reasons that remain shrouded, most of these rabbis did not long remain in Winnipeg, the City Committee finally engaged Rabbi Chayyim Herson to serve in that capacity. Rabbi Herson arrived in 1930 and, with the City Committee's having legitimized itself with the authority of a *Makhshir*, the kashruth controversy became, once again, a highly charged cause of communal disruption.[22]

On December 8, 1930 a meeting was called in the Jewish community to discuss the financial crisis of the *Talmud Torah**. It was suggested that some financial relief for Jewish education might be derived from a tax on kosher meat. The controversy between the two kashruth factions was so charged, however, that it became, with the mention of kosher meat, the prime topic of debate at this meeting. The meeting formed a committee of fifteen, and charged them to find a means of resolving the contest while also examining the possibilities of deriving financial aid for the school from a levy on kosher meat.[23]

The Committee of Fifteen, chaired by one of Winnipeg's leading Jewish citizens, M. J. Finkelstein, examined the kashruth situation in a series of meetings over a four week period. Mr. Finkelstein then called for the organizational and institutional delegates of the initial meeting to reconvene on January 7, 1931, to receive the committee's report. The meeting, however, had to be postponed. When the delegates arrived at the *Talmud Torah* building they found an outpouring of over two thousand people whose interest in the kashruth situation was so great that they insisted on being present to hear the committee's report. Many of the delegates, as well as private citizens, could not even gain entry into the building. The committee decided, however, that, while postponing the official delivery of the report, they should, nonetheless, share their findings with those present.[24]

In reading and explaining the report, the chairman indicated that the Committee had held seven sessions during which they interviewed the rabbis, as well as representatives of the *Va'ad Ha-ir*, the City Committee, the

*The *Talmud Torah*, the Winnipeg Hebrew School, was an institution that provided, in the afternoon, a program of traditional parochial education as a supplement to the city's secular public school education.

ladies' auxiliary of the City Committee, the abattoirs, the Jewish wholesale meat dealers, the retail butchers of the *Va'ad Ha-ir*, the retail butchers of the City Committee, and the Talmud Torah. After hearing the testimony and considering the evidence they formulated a report which was unanimously approved by all members with the exception of the Committee's vice-chairman, Dr. B. J. Ginsburg, and Mr. A. Rosenbaum who were absent from the Committee's last session.

The report begins with findings of fact concerning the finances, both income and expenditure, of the current kashruth structure and a projection of possible surplus income should the duplication of two separate bodies be eliminated. They also found that "the regrettable dispute now pending between the *Va'ad Ha-ir* and the City Committee has reached such a bitter stage that it is absolutely impossible to establish any *shalom* (peace) between the parties or arrange for their amalgamation or induce either to withdraw in order that the other might function alone".

Based on these findings the Committee recommended that "an entirely new and authoritative body be established in the Jewish community" to take charge of kosher meat, and that both existing structures be disbanded. Further, this new body should be a standing committee of a permanent conference established to direct and/or coordinate all general community affairs. This community council, membership on which would be based on representation of all communal societies and institutions, would serve to eliminate waste and inefficiency, be the spokesman for the local community, and foster an atmosphere of communal unity. Its standing committees, aside from the one dealing with Kashruth, would handle such matters as the endorsation and supervision of charity fund raising and, should such be agreed upon, the formation and supervision of a federated communal budget. The new council would be in Jewish communal life what "a parliament is in a nation or the city council is in a municipality".[25]

The report of the Committee of Fifteen evoked great interest in all segments of the Jewish community and beyond. In the press the reaction was focused on the implications of a central community structure. The *Manitoba Free Press*, for example, reported the January ninth meeting under the headline, "Jewish People of City Planning to Have Parliament".[26] The editorial comments in the Jewish press were intense but mixed. While part of the community was intrigued by the idea and supported its immediate implementation, there were many who were afraid that it was both inappropriate for a Jewish community in a country

like Canada and potentially destructive to the independence and integrity of existing organizations and institutions.[27]

The idea was not to die. The realities of Jewish communal life in Winnipeg fostered its development, in stages, until the formation of the Jewish Community Council of Winnipeg in the seventies. Clearly, however, it was not, as some had hoped, capable of quick realization. Meanwhile, the kashruth problem remained unresolved.

While the community was debating the merits of community reorganization Dr. B. J. Ginsberg, vice-chairman of the Committee of Fifteen, issued a public dissent from the Committee's recommendations. He noted his feeling that the Committee went beyond its mandate and, furthermore, did not adequately examine the claims and counterclaims of the two kashruth factions. The cause of communal unity, he asserted, would not be served by the introduction of yet a third faction. He recommended, therefore, that a 'Peace Committee' be struck to negotiate a settlement between the current contestants.[28]

Dr. Ginsberg then hosted a meeting attended by some of the leaders of the two factions. Motivated, perhaps, by a desire to see a settlement reached within the existing structures, the leaders in attendance agreed to a point-by-point settlement. The *Va'ad Ha-ir* ratified the agreement and the City Committee announced that it would present the terms for ratification at a forthcoming meeting of its constituents.[29] Following shortly after the City Committee's agreement, Rabbis Kahanovitch, Horowitz and Zilberstein issued a public statement in which they indicated their willingness to work with any lay body so long as it was broadly accepted by the Jewish community. They also stated that, given the destructiveness of the present controversy and the long period of time required to set up a comprehensive community structure, they could not support the Community Council plan.[30] It was with the apparent concurrence of all factions, therefore, that the delegates of the original December 1930 conference reconvened on the ninth of February 1931 and formed a composite kashruth body which they named 'the Jewish City Committee'. Suprisingly, however, the immediate result was renewed dissention, opposition and accusations of partisanship. The Jewish City Committee was stillborn and the two factions continued to function as before.[31]

Finally, in May of 1933, M. J. Finkelstein undertook to chair a 'Peace Committee' consisting of general community leaders and partisans of both the *Va'ad Ha-ir* and the City Committee. Realizing that the com-

munity could not tolerate the increased hostility much longer and that many young people were reluctant to undertake positions of communal responsibility in such an atmosphere, the various parties agreed to a settlement.[32] Jewish organizations and institutions were invited to appoint delegates to a "peace" conference to be held on June seventh.[33]

When the "peace" conference was convened on June 7, 1933, there were one hundred and nineteen delegates in attendance. Thirteen were members of the 'Peace Committee' including leaders of both the *Va-ad Ha-ir* and the City Committee; twelve delegates represented the community at large and had been elected at a mass meeting the week before; and two delegates came from each of seventeen synagogues and thirty Jewish organizations. Mr. M. J. Finkelstein presided.

This delegate assembly ratified the agreement worked out by the "Peace Committee" and established thereby a new kashruth agency to replace both the *Va'ad Ha-ir* and the City Committee. The new agency was entitled *Kehilla d'ir Winnipeg* (Community Council of Winnipeg*) and was to consist of two delegates from each synagogue; two delegates from each local Jewish organization having at least twenty-five members and having been in existence for at least one year; twelve delegates at large to be elected at a public meeting called for that purpose; and, finally, the thirteen members of the Peace Committee. This permanent conference, the *Kehilla*, would be run by an executive of thirty-seven members, thirteen of whom would be the members of the Peace Committee.[3]

The mandate given the *Kehilla* was that it would, "among other things", have jurisdiction over kosher meat. The first *Kehilla* meeting took place on the seventh of July. The rabbinical sanction was established. The *Makhshir* function would be the responsibility of a board consisting of Rabbis Kahanovitch, Herson, Horowitz and Zilberstein. Rabbi Kahanovitch would be recognized as the Chief Rabbi. The day to day operations would be the responsibility of a *Va'ad Ha-Kashrut* (Kashruth Board) consisting of all the rabbis and a group of laymen. The chairman was not to be from among the rabbis. All certification cards and fees therefrom were to belong exclusively to the *Kehilla*. Rabbi Kahanovitch, however, could retain his certification fee from the Warsaw Sausage factory for a one year period, after which it too would belong to the *Kehilla*.

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*So as not to confuse this body with the community wide organization of the seventies, all references in this paper will cite it as the *Kehilla*.

The *Kehilla* also established, at this meeting, the rabbis' salaries. Rabbi Kahanovitch, as Chief Rabbi, was to receive, a monthly stipend of one hundred and thirty-five dollars ($135). The other rabbis would each receive seventy-five dollars ($75) monthly. This was, incidentally, a sacrifice on the part of the rabbis. According to the information given by the *Va'ad Ha-ir* officials to the Committee of Fifteen in 1931, Rabbi Kahanovitch was receiving a monthly salary of three hundred dollars ($300) and Rabbis Horowitz and Zilberstein each received two hundred dollars ($200). The *Kehilla* did state, however, that in all areas of rabbinical service other than Kashruth the rabbis were free agents.[35]

In July of 1933, therefore, the *Va'ad Ha-ir* and the City Committee did, in fact, cease operation, ceding their jurisdictions to the *Kehilla*. The Jewish community, beginning to fear for their European brethren, looked forward to a new era of communal harmony. This, however, was not to be. By 1937 some of the retail butchers, along with the management of the Chicago Kosher Sausage Company, had founded the Beth Judah Congregation (popularly known as the 'butchers' synagogue) and, shortly thereafter, invited Rabbi Meyer Schwartzman to Winnipeg to serve as their *Makhshir*.[36] In this manner was the scene staged for the events of 1946.

III

From the first, each attempt to resolve the kashruth problem prior to 1946 evoked, from some, the view that such a resolution could only be effected as part of the organization and structuring of a central community body which would direct and/or coordinate all aspects of Jewish communal life. This view, the best articulation of which was in the report of the Committee of Fifteen (1931), used as its model the Eastern European communities whence most Winnipeg Jews came.

The Jewish communities of Eastern Europe had a long history of communal autonomy. The tendency of governments to deal with Jews corporately encouraged, at times necessitated, the development of an extensively organized and powerfully sanctioned communal authority. Such community structures, on a local or regional level, became so important to the internal life of the Jewish populations that they survived, in great measure, the removal of external sanction in the nineteenth century.[37]

As for kashruth, in the decades preceding the mass emmigration of eastern European Jews to North America the communal authorities exercised an almost monopolistic control over all ritual slaughter and, by ex-

tension, sale of kosher meat. The first records of organized communal control over *shehita* come from tenth century Palestine and Egypt.[38] Nonetheless, it remained a basically domestic affair which was, like all else in medieval Jewish life, under varying degrees of general communal supervision. There exist, in fact, both medieval and early modern records of Christian butchers who employed *shohetim*, under communal supervision, to prepare meat for Jewish customers. In some communities, as late as 1789, slaughtering rights were purchased from a local community and the *shohet* operated as a semi-private businessman. As the medieval period gave way to the early modern, however, there was a marked tendency for the *shohet* to become a public official, appointed and paid by the organized community. The *shohet* had to be licensed by one or more rabbis after a careful examination, theoretical and practical. This practice, however, became ever more regulated by explicit communal statute. The Lithuanian Council, for example, prescribed annual examinations with renewal of licenses triennially and examination of the *shohet*'s knives at least weekly. Even with these controls there did erupt, from time to time, disputes between the local rabbi and the *shohet* and between two rabbinical examiners and their lay supporters. Such incidents have to be expected in the context of institutionalized ritual, especially where financial overtones are present. There was, nonetheless, an overall control over the process exercised by law officials.[39]

The overall leadership of the community remained in lay hands. The community rabbis of eastern Europe had almost uncontested authority in purely ritualistic areas and, through the nineteenth century, enjoyed a social standing not matched by anyone in the community. Yet they were still salaried officials of the community, and those areas of kashruth which were not purely ritualistic were indeed subject to the control of lay officials. In Cracow, for example, a large sized Polish community, there were four supervisors responsible for trade in ritual meat and wine. In Leszno, a medium sized community, there were two elected supervisors.[40]

The area of meat process and sale was most stringently controlled by communal authorities for good reason. By the eighteenth century the tax on kosher meat had become the main source of communal funding (as well as one of the most effective means used by the Russian authorities to tax the Jews).[41] Any kashruth dispute that went unchecked would have resulted in a disruption of communal income. Such a disruption could well have undermined the entire fiscal integrity of the community resulting in a breakdown of educational and charitable services. Close communal con-

trol on kashruth, then, assured the consumer that halakhic standards would be met while providing, in the form of indirect taxation, for the fiscal resources required to maintain educational and social services.

It was reasonable, then, that those in Winnipeg who sought the resolution of the bitter kashruth disputes in such a manner as to assure some communal control, proper standards and community peace should turn to such a model. This is especially so in view of the need, increasingly felt, to provide greater and more reliable financial resources to support community services. This aspect is best shown in the origin and mandate of the Committee of Fifteen.[42] Why, then, was this model only partially followed? The *Kehilla*, for example, attempted to draw from as broad a base as possible but its mandate was nevertheless almost entirely limited to the area of kashruth. And, to pursue the question to its original subject, why has the 1946 structure survived intact after more than thirty years while the *Kehilla* attempt failed to survive even a decade?

Consideration must be given to the environmental perception of the Jewish immigrants. The strong and centralized communal structure of eastern Europe was a survival mechanism whose negative, that is defensive, function was as important as its positive one. The pioneer Jews of Western Canada hoped to build a life that would not require such insulation. In fact, many were motivated, in their actions and opinions, by a sense of fear lest the hope for a 'new life' prove illusory. Winnipeg's pioneer identification and commitment involved values and concerns in whose interest they were prepared to act, as a community. This unity of action was, for the most part, limited to the particular concern addressed. The structures created to speak to these concerns tended to break down when the interest or motivation behind it ran its course. The united community functioned, therefore, as a means and not, as it had become in Europe, as an end, valued in and for itself. Broad sections of the community might involve themselves in finding a way to deal with the crisis in kashruth. They were not prepared, however, to maintain and widen that involvement beyond the immediate concern.[43]

Winnipeg Jewry did, in fact, move in the direction of a centrally structured community. The process progressed very slowly, a serious start being made only in 1933. It has yet to reach a stable and complete form. It was to a large extent brought about by the force of circumstances rather than by deliberate choice. As elsewhere in North America, the central community has drawn its leadership and organizational structure from that sector whose responsibility had at one time been limited to fund rais-

ing. The ever increasing costs of running the services and institutions important to Winnipeg Jewry has forced the financial sector into the area of coordination, supervision and policy decision.[44]

It is not without importance, in this regard, that the partisans of central structure were led by men who had achieved some measure of security in their identity as Canadians. The most eminent figure in the early years of community development was M. J. Finkelstein. Aside from an illustrious leadership career in Jewish organizations, he was very active in Liberal politics. The second Jew to be called to the Manitoba Bar, he was an energetic and respected figure in Winnipeg legal circles. A similar figure was the president of the Jewish Welfare Fund, David Slater, who in 1946, undertook the presidency of the *Va'ad Ha-ir*.[45]

A second and most crucial factor needs to be considered. Many modern European Jews, increasingly exposed to and involved in the mainstream of Western culture, felt a growing estrangement from the ideas and/or forms of traditional Jewish life. For those of the alienated who could not or would not resign from their Jewish identity, there began a search to find meaning in Jewishness outside traditional parameters. Some found such meaning in new theologies and religious forms. Many turned to one or another secular ideology, as, for example, Zionism, Diaspora Nationalism, or Jewish Socialism. Yet, so long as the long established communal structures retained some power they opposed, indeed often obstructed, the expression of these ideologies.[46]

Winnipeg, where the Jewish settlers valued Western Canadian society's encouragement of freedom of expression and allowance for individualism, had a mixed representation of these European currents. Many Jewish settlers were orthodox. Yet, as mentioned above, few were well versed in the traditional ideology. Ritual observance does not necessarily imply support for the elitist ideological underpinnings of that ritual. The earliest religious congregations were, to one degree or other, 'liberal', forerunners of today's Conservative and Reform congregations. Some of the early settlers, especially after 1905, were Yiddishists.* Indeed, Winnipeg boasts the first Yiddishist day school in North America, which was founded in 1920. Zionists of all shades and leanings were also plentiful in Winnipeg. It seems obvious that there was little to recommend an attempt at

*Yiddishism was a secular Jewish movement. Consisting of members of various diaspora-nationalist and socialist ideologies, it was devoted to secular Jewish culture in the Yiddish language.

centralizing community policy and funding. The stage by stage advances in communal centralization that took place through the years came only with the progressive secularization and ideological homogenization of Winnipeg's Jews.[47]

The kashruth disputes prior to 1946 were settled only when the community, or a large part of it, indicated that they found the situation intolerable. With some third party help, the resolution came from the existing contestants. After the crisis atmosphere dissipated, the kashruth structures were left by the community at large to police themselves. The suggestions made to make the kashruth agency a part of an ongoing central community council were premature. In 1946, however, the central structures, namely the Jewish Welfare Fund and the Canadian Jewish Congress, were sufficiently developed to themselves initiate, and later police, the settlement. Being secular agencies without a partisan ideological stance their intervention into the religious apparatus was not perceived as a threat to any particular section of the community. By inviting the aid of the rabbinical Union, moreover, they were also able to prevent any suggestion, on the part of the Orthodox, that they were compromising religious norms. They were represented on the *Va'ad Ha-ir* and, as their control on general community policy and budget expanded, they were in an increasingly better position to prevent a breakdown in the system. The prime illustration of this capability, highlighting the difference between the 1946 settlement and those that preceded, is the Chicago Kosher dispute of 1948-50.

Late in 1948, Rabbi Horowitz, the Chief Rabbi, found some irregularities in the meat processing plant of the Chicago Kosher Sausage Company. He indicated his intention to withdraw his authorization for that company's kashruth certification. Rabbi Schwartzman, the man responsible for the supervision at that plant, disputed this course. In an earlier time this disagreement would surely have resulted in a new division. Instead, Rabbi Eliezer Silver, a most prominent American rabbi who was involved in authenticating the company's kashruth certification so as to permit its products' export to Israel, was immediately brought to Winnipeg to arbitrate the dispute. After some remedial measures were effected and assurances offered that such irregularities would not recur, Rabbi Horowitz agreed to continue the certification.

Some months later Rabbi Horowitz alleged further violations and did, in fact, withdraw his certification. Rabbi Schwartzman again disagreed and insisted that the certification remain in force. In this case, however,

the leaders of the Jewish Welfare Fund intervened. They were by no means prepared to see the community split into factions at a time when post-war relief efforts and the needs of the nascent State of Israel necessitated maximum united effort. After intensive discussions, which were conducted in strictest privacy, Rabbi Horowitz withdrew and, after a short time, announced his retirement to Israel. Rabbi Horowitz was treated with respect: he was the first community rabbi in Winnipeg to retire with a pension, and this pension, which was faithfully paid by the *Va'ad Ha-ir* until the rabbi's recent death, was the moral undertaking of David Slater. Yet, this was the first time in the history of Winnipeg's Jewish community that a major internal dispute within the kashruth structure was resolved without its becoming a source of public controversy. It's having been resolved, moreover, without regard to the substantive halakhic issues, is indicative of the kind of problem solving that was to become characteristic of the Winnipeg community.

Over its entire history the Winnipeg Jewish community had slowly evolved central communal structures. These structures would then set priorities based on an assessment of that which was common to the entire community. The community would then act to solve its problem according to these priorities, using the central agencies as the instrumentalities to effect the solution. Where a conflict existed between the central priorities and the principles or desires of one or more particular segments of the community, the particular would have to yield to the commonality.

FOOTNOTES

1. The author is indebted to many for their assistance in the research of this subject. Mr. Nathan Lockshin, indefatigable communal worker and president of the *Va'ad Ha-ir*, was most helpful in providing access to key documents and giving, generously, of his time and recollection. Messrs. Phillip Kravetsky and Meyer Silver, native Winnipegers and prominent community leaders, gave unstintingly of their time and effort to shed light on otherwise obscure incidents. Finally, the author is most appreciative of the friendly and efficient cooperation extended by the Inter-Library Loan Department of the University of Manitoba's Elizabeth Dafoe Library, the librarian at Winnipeg's Jewish Public Library and the editor and publisher of the *Jewish Post*.

2. For an excellent survey of the Kashruth regulations and their theological grounding, see I. Grunfeld, *The Jewish Dietary Laws* (Surrey, 1972), 2 vol.
3. *Israelite Press*, May 31, 1946.
4. Arthur A. Chiel, *The Jews in Manitoba: A Social History* (Toronto, 1961), p. 89.
5. *Israelite Press*, June 28, 1946.
6. I. Grunfeld, *The Jewish Dietary Laws*, vol. 1, pp. 57f., 60ff., 91-98.
7. *Israelite Press*, June 28, 1946.
8. *Israelite Press*, May 31, 1946; June 28, 1946; July 9, 1946.

9. Arthur A. Chiel, *Jews in Manitoba*, pp. 147-149.
10. *Israelite Press*, May 31, 1946.
11. Arthur A. Chiel, *Jews in Manitoba*, p. 89.
12. *Hullin* 5a.
13. *Israelite Press*, May 31, 1946.
14. *Israelite Press*, June 25, 1946; Arthur A. Chiel, *Jews in Manitoba*, p. 89.
15. Arthur A. Chiel, *Jews in Manitoba*, pp. 45f., 54, 56.
16. Ibid., p. 38.
17. *Canadian Israelite*, November 17, 1911. Cf. Arthur A. Chiel, *Jewish Experiences in Early Manitoba* (Winnipeg, 1955), pp. 99f.
18. Arthur A. Chiel, *Jews in Manitoba*, p. 86.
19. *Canadian Israelite*, August 1, 1912.
20. Ibid.; *The Israelite*, October 10, 17, 1912; November 7, 1912.
21. *The Israelite*, November 28, 1912; H. H. Herstein, *The Growth of the Winnipeg Jewish Community and the Evolution of its Educational Institutions* (unpublished master's thesis, University of Manitoba, 1964), pp. 30f.
22. Arthur A. Chiel, *Jews in Manitoba*, pp. 88f.
23. *Jewish Post*, December 12, 1930.
24. *Israelite Press*, January 8, 1931.
25. *Jewish Post*, January 9, 1931.
26. *Manitoba Free Press*, January 10, 1931.
27. *Israelite Press*, January 12, 13, 1931; *Jewish Post*, January 16, 1931.
28. *Israelite Press*, January 12, 1931.
29. *Israelite Press*, January 13, 14, 15, 1931.
30. *Israelite Press*, January 23, 1931.
31. *Israelite Press*, February 10, 1931.
32. *Israelite Press*, May 19, 1933; *Jewish Post*, June 15, 1933.
33. *Israelite Press*, May 26, 1933.
34. *Israelite Press*, June 9, 1933; *Jewish Post*, June 15, 1933.
35. *Israelite Press*, July 7, 1933. Cf. *Jewish Post*, January 9, 1931.
36. H. H. Herstein, *Winnipeg Jewish Community*, p. 31. Herstein gives 1932 as the year of *Beth Judah* Congregation's establishment. Official records of the City of Winnipeg, however, show that the synagogue opened in 1937.
37. H. M. Sachar, *The Course of Modern Jewish History* (New York, 1977), pp. 25-35.
38. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. shehitah.
39. S. W. Baron, *The Jewish Community; Its History and Structure to the American Revolution* (Philadelphia, 1948), vol. 2, pp. 107-110.
40. Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 63, 66, 68, 73, 81, 89, 92, 120.
41. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. shehitah; korobka; S. W. Baron, *The Jewish Community*, vol. 2, pp. 107, 256, 258.
42. *Jewish Post*, December 12, 1930.
43. *Jewish Post*, January 9, 1931. Cf. S. D. Isaacs, *Jews and American Politics* (New York, 1974).
44. *Manitoba Free Press*, June 23, 1933; July 10, 1933; Arthur A. Chiel, *Jews in Manitoba*, pp. 147-149.
45. Arthur A. Chiel, *Jews in Manitoba*, pp. 89, 142, 144, 149, 157, 160, 172, 188.

46. H. M. Sachar, *Modern Jewish History,* pp. 139-159, 199-220, 261-304. Cf. David Rudavsky, *Modern Jewish Religious Movements; A History of Emancipation and Adjustment* (New York, 1967).
47. Arthur A. Chiel, *Jews in Manitoba,* pp. 68, 74, 82, 103, 105, 184; Arthur A. Chiel, *Jewish Experiences*, p. 99; Charles S. Liebman, "The Religion of American Jews", in *Understanding American Judaism* (New York, 1975), edited by Jacob Neusner, vol. 1, pp. 25-63.