

TWO PLANS FOR GROUP WORK IN PALESTINE AS A SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM OF DEVELOPING THE LAND.

By Louis Fischer.

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Jaffa.—In an interview published in the Palestine daily, "Haaretz," of December 15th, Dr. Chaim Weitzmann, among numerous important statements on current political and practical phases of the Zionist movement, touched on the proposal to transform "isolated points of settlement, so qualified, as Ben Shemen, Chulda, Dganye, Machnayim Merchavia, now worked by groups (K'voozot) of our workmen, into Workmen Settlements (Moosha-vez Ovdim.)"

"Could we do this," continues Dr. Weitzmann, "it would mean a great infusion of spirit the world over and here in Palestine. Through this transfusion we would feel that we had advanced from the stage of initiation and had entered into the real work of settlement. Also the income of the National Fund would increase. I have no doubt that if we bring about these small matters, and if we explain our action to the Jewish people by means of the necessary propaganda, the National Fund could collect a million pounds annually."

Further he says, "I believe that the methods of settlement are becoming clearer. The task of the 'Groups' will continue still, especially as preparatory schools for 'Chalutz' sections. But the groups are only transitional—a school created by life for the material which came to us from the Exile. Had the material been different, we might perhaps have needed other methods. The Canadian farmer has no need for the system of groups. He worked against nature for he has been accustomed to do so. That is his character and make-up. But in order to develop the Jewish farmer, collective society is required to lighten the battle of life and also to satisfy his cultural demands."

This is Dr. Weitzmann's contribution on a question on which no consensus of opinion has thus far been reached. Only last month, Eleazar Jaffe, a workman with a well-trained mind, published a pamphlet on "Workmen Settlements," championing this plan and detailing its advantages over that of "groups." According to Jaffe, who may be accepted as an authority on this subject, the essential features of the ideal Workmen Settlement are:

(1) Each worker will receive a limited portion of land for individual intensive labor. He may cultivate this alone or with the mutual assistance of neighbors, but no labor is to be employed for wages.

(2) The land is the property of the National Fund and remains so.

(3) "In addition to the land, each worker must be given the possibility to establish and completely equip his household in every respect, immediately upon the foundation of the settlement. We shall never succeed in developing a free, efficient worker if we place him from the beginning under conditions enslaving him to vain worries about his livelihood and the livelihood of his family. . . . Our Settlement has hitherto been rich in examples of this."

(4) The settler is to plant and raise all his necessities on his own plot. All his food is to be grown by him. Perhaps, also, even the raw material for his clothing. The author tends to ad-

vocate as far as possible a return to the primitive.

According to the ideal plan, each settlement is to have approximately fifty settlers, preferably no more. Each settler is to receive sixty dunam for cultivation, for which he is to pay an annual rental of 3 per cent of the estimated value, and in addition, ten dunam for house, stables, vegetable garden, etc. He is to have one horse, a cow, two sheep, ten head of fowl, five beehives, a wagon, a set of harness, a plough, a cultivator and various smaller agricultural tools, as well as house furnishings. For all these and for the building of home and stables, he requires an immediate loan of approximately \$1,800.

It is very likely that in practice these details will be changed. Dr. Weitzmann in his advocacy of the Workmen Settlement, as against the "group," prefaced it with the remark "if we had money." So, also, do the groups require fabulous sums. Granting that each settler in the Workmen Settlements will receive a loan of \$1,800 from the National Fund or from an agrarian bank, in order to settle 4,000 farmers, the sum of \$7,200,000 is required. For twenty thousand settlers, the amount necessary would be \$36,000,000. And this is exclusive of the cost of land, concerning which nothing definite can be said now.

Although Dr. Weitzmann has declared in favor of these settlements, there are in Palestine numerous supporters of the system of "K'voozot." No one can deny that it has created a new form of social life among the laborers of the land. It has been a step forward in the realization of the true socialistic ideals of living, and perhaps because it has been a long, radical step forward there have been difficulties. The group dwells in common buildings, eats at a common table, works together on one piece of soil, gathers in the crops as a unit, sells them as a unit, and then divides the profit (if there is any) equally among the members. It is an individual enlarged and multiplied. Beside the unavoidable practical hardships caused by lack of means, some disadvantages result in the form of social life. The married members of the group fail to find the sort of semi-seclusion which they would desire. In Dganye, there is a frequent complaint that the children are too sophisticated. They live too much with their elders and so hear talk that is not the best pabulum for young minds. Nor can the mother give them much of the endearing attention they require. But in Ben Shehem, on the other hand, each family lives and eats apart, while at the same time the husband works as a member of the group, as does the wife, when that is possible. Both receive wages.

Again, the objection is raised that the members of the group have no sense of personal responsibility. Individuals may shirk. Public opinion, however, works against this tendency. One shirker in twenty is soon discovered and either corrected or dismissed. The group organization makes provision for such dismissal.

In the case of the "group" plan, whose death sentence has been decreed by Dr. Weitzmann, the fundamental features are as follows:

A piece of National Fund land is given to a group of workmen for cultivation. The group receives money from the National Fund for the purchase of implements, stock, etc., and to build its houses, stables and other buildings. The National Fund asks that the implements and stock be paid

for in ten years and the buildings in a hundred years, on the assumption that these necessities can be used for the respective number of years. In some places, the figures vary slightly.

Each workman receives from \$25 to \$35 monthly for his labor, from the National Fund. After the harvest is sold, 50 per cent of the money obtained goes to the National Fund, and the remaining 50 per cent is to be distributed equally among the members of the group.

This is the ideal. In practice there is generally no profit, although Dr. Weitzmann mentioned some notable exceptions. After the sale of the harvest, the National Fund must bear the deficit, if any; advance loans, and pay the wages. These deficits, however, when considered fundamentally, do not constitute a deficit in the real sense of the term.

Groups have gone out to wild, unsettled regions where in many cases the first years were of necessity spent in contesting the right to the land, as in Karkur, for instance, at the present day. Years sometimes are taken up in draining swamps and planting them with trees; in laying roads, building stone hedges, digging wells, erecting houses, stables, etc. Besides, it must be kept in mind that no one group began with adequate equipments, or under favorable circumstances. There were no instructors or qualified agricultural advisers on the spot. Frequent mistakes were made in the kind of crop planted. People suffered from lack of medical attention. Living conditions were abominable. Even today workmen sleep on boards as beds, use stables for living quarters, are poorly clothed and shod. Under such conditions no group could be expected to return its maximum. Still, they have learned from experience. Dganye has become self-supporting and Ben Shemen is on the threshold of becoming so. Other groups are progressing to the same stage. The process is slow. Dr. Weitzmann has called the group a school. It is in fact a public school—and a public school never pays its own expenses.

Opposed as he is to the "group" system of future land development in Palestine, Eleazar Jaffe enumerates certain points in their favor, such as the possibility of guarding national principles by mutual co-operation; the development in the direction of public ownership; the safeguard against exploitation of one individual by another; improvement in the conditions and the honor of labor in the land; the possibility of making use of new and untrained men by the side of those more experienced; the feasibility of the plan as the only way of overcoming the natural difficulties of the country; greater ease in acquiring materials; the improvement in the condition of the women through the application of a co-operative plan of housework.

Eleazar Jaffe then proceeds to show how these same favorable points, and more, can be maintained for the system of Workmen Settlements, which he advocates and details in his pamphlet. His opposition to the group system is aimed principally against the group as a theory of social living, and at the practical features of its social life.

Time will prove the comparative value of the rival systems. What proves satisfactory as a school for pioneers may also be suited to the requirements of the graduates. The transitional group, used to conquer uninhabited regions, to till stony, san-

dy, barren stretches, may prove its right to a permanent place in Palestinian life

RUMOR JEWISH PRISONERS OF WAR TO BE SENT TO PALESTINE.

Jewish Russian prisoners of war, held in German concentration camps, are to be sent to Palestine as soon as possible, according to cable advices from Copenhagen.

The cable states that the German war department has ordered a registration of all Jewish Russian prisoners, who have repeatedly expressed the desire to live in Palestine, in order that plans may be put in motion for transporting them to the Holy Land.

It is estimated that between 30,000 and 40,000 Jewish Russian prisoners of war are still held in Germany. They have been existing under the most miserable conditions and many of them have died, according to reports coming from Germany.

The action of the German government comes as a relief of repeated demands from the German Zionist organization, which has been insisting that the plight of Jewish prisoners of war be relieved by transporting them to Palestine, it was pointed out by Zionist officials. The German Zionist organization is conducting agricultural schools in the camps, to acquaint the prisoners with conditions in Palestine.

Jewish prisoners in Siberian concentration camps are also organizing to emigrate to Palestine, as soon as the country opens up, according to reports received by the Zionist Organization of America. These prisoners are mostly professional men, numbered among the best families in Germany and Austria, and their presence in Palestine will be of vast economic and social importance to the country, Samuel Mason, Jewish relief worker in Siberia, emphasized in his recent report to the Zionist organization.

The official action of the German government in planning to transport its prisoners of war to Palestine, instead of sending them back to Russia, is considered as of the highest importance in the world-wide movement of Jewish mass-migration to the Holy Land.

Rehabilitation in Palestine will begin on a large scale to prepare for this mass-migration through the \$10,000,000 being raised throughout the United States this year for the Palestine Restoration Fund. Reconstruction work planned, it was pointed out, will make it comparatively easy for Palestine to absorb such large units of emigrants as the prisoners of war in Germany and Siberia.

JEWISH COMMUNITY ADOPTS REFORMS IN VOTING SYSTEM.

Posen, Poland (By I. J. P. B.)—The local Jewish Community has adopted a new procedure in its elections, which assures every Jew active as well as passive, and also indirect voting rights. Women are to have these rights equally with the men. At the same time, other general reforms were inaugurated to insure the carrying out of all processes in connection with elections on a thoroughly democratic basis.

It was announced at the same session that Dr. Kaempfer, the former president of the Community, expects to leave the city and settle in Berlin. Dr. Kaempfer was accorded the thanks of the Community for the good work he has done for the Jews of Posen.