

Foreign Volunteers in the Kibbutz: The Dilemma of Ideology vs. The Work Force

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FROM ITS BEGINNINGS IN 1910, the Israeli kibbutz movement intended to establish small communities of between 250-1000 members¹ which would be based upon the principles of Zionism, direct democracy, voluntarism, informality, and face-to-face interaction.² The economic structure of the kibbutz was to be based on member ownership of the means of production and "self labor," the idea that all work on the kibbutz must be done by the members themselves. The last of these principles served to legitimize member ownership while preventing the creation of an exploitive economic system in which members would profit from the surplus value created by their employees' labor.

Today there are over 275 kibbutzim in Israel with approximately 100,000 residents.³ Residents include members, membership candidates (often including an army platoon), parents of members and volunteers. Each kibbutz is a self-contained unit in which all the basic functions of human life—"Production, consumption, work, child rearing, culture and education, celebration, neighborly relations and health care"⁴—take

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1. Blasi notes that the smallest new kibbutzim have 25-50 members, the largest kibbutzim have almost 2000 and that "most middle-aged kibbutzim founded in the period 1920-1940 have 500-800 members." Joseph R. Blasi, "Generational Differences in the Sense of Community Among Kibbutz Members," paper presented to the American Psychological Association Convention, Toronto, Summer 1987, mimeographed.

2. Naphali Golom and Daniel Katz, *The Kibbutzim as Open Social Systems*, (Emeq Hefer, Israel: Ruppim Agricultural Institute, undated, circa 1969), mimeographed, p. 2.

3. *Map of Kibbutzim in Israel*, (Tel Aviv, Israel: Federation of the Kibbutz Movements, Department of Documentation and Information, 1983).

4. Joseph R. Blasi, "Generational Differences in the Sense of Community Among Kibbutz Members," p. 1.

place within its borders. There are no wages, but members are provided housing, health and child care and are guaranteed employment according to their abilities and their needs. In addition, members received budgeted accounts for clothing, cultural events, spending money, travel and vacations. The basic principles upon which the kibbutz movement was founded are very much a part of the lives and aspirations of members of this society today.

It is estimated that 25,000 foreign volunteers visit and work in kibbutzim each year⁵ and that they contribute 7.3% of the total work hours done in the kibbutzim.⁶ But the volunteers are anomalous within the kibbutz on many levels. They exist as a largely non-Jewish⁷ work force in a society that views itself as an expression of Jewish nationalism; they are, more often than not, ideologically uncommitted to any of the ideals of the kibbutz movement; and they are temporary residents, most staying two or three months in a community which sees itself as a place of permanent residence for its members. Thus, as Bowes points out, they are strangers in a closed society, conforming, in spite of individual transiency, to Simmel's description of this social type, i.e., a functioning or organic part of the kibbutz while "... being inorganically appended to it."⁸ The position of the volunteers as outsiders is evidenced by the fact that they have been largely ignored by the many scholars who have conducted research on the kibbutz. Of the 353 studies of the kibbutz on record in the Social Scisearch data base for 1972-1987, only one, by Bowes, was about foreign volunteers. Researchers visiting the kibbutz simply did not see or ignored the volunteers in much the same way that the kibbutz members do.

This paper is based on six months of participant observation on a kibbutz, and on informal but extensive interviews with volunteers and with kibbutz members. It is also based on articles and letters to the editor in *The Jerusalem Post*, an English language daily newspaper published in Israel⁹ which is available to many English-speaking volunteers.

A central question of this paper is why the kibbutz movement would create permanent encampments of transitory volunteers within its communities. Most volunteers do not speak Hebrew, are not committed to the kibbutz, have not been socialized to understand the kibbutz as a social

5. *The Jerusalem Post*, April 1, 1986.

6. Alison M. Bowes, "Strangers in the Kibbutz: Volunteer Workers in an Israeli Community," *Man: The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 15 (1980), p. 680.

7. Personal Communication, Shoshana Phillips, Federation of Kibbutz Artzi Kibbutzim.

8. George Simmel, "The Stranger." In *The Sociology of George Simmel*, edited and translated by K.H. Wolff, (New York: The Free Press, 1950), p. 108.

9. *Shdemot*, a journal of kibbutz thought, politics and culture, has also published a series of letters on this topic. See volume 20, 1983; 21-22, winter 1984; 23, 1984.

system and are not Jewish. An answer to this question will be attempted from the perspective of exchange theory. Exchange theory makes it possible to analyze a single, internally directed policy decision, i.e., the integration of the labor of foreign volunteers, from the perspective of larger structural forces which kibbutz society faces.

Social exchange theory rests on the assumption that individuals enter into reciprocal interactions because they expect to profit from their association.¹⁰ People choose between alternative potential associates or courses of action by evaluating these experiences¹¹ and by trying to make the best deal possible. It should be noted that these deals may be limited by existing social commitments as well as by incomplete access to information. When these limitations occur, reevaluation of the relationship is in order. One party may indeed find it advantageous, as Parsons notes, "to get along without the other."¹² Exchange theory in brief, suggest that for a reciprocal relationship to maintain equilibrium and therefore vitality, both participants must feel that they gain something and both must pay a price.¹³ This paper examines the rewards and costs to the kibbutz and to the foreign volunteers of this program.

The highly coordinated, agricultural-industrial based kibbutz economy has always required that a large proportion of its work force be engaged in unskilled and semi-skilled occupations. In a study conducted in 1950, Schwartz¹⁴ documented the morale problems which resulted from the inability of the kibbutz to provide opportunities for upward mobility to its workers. He also noted that most kibbutz workers perceived themselves as working under the supervision of others rather than working independently. Unlike today, when much of this work is done by outsiders (hired laborers and foreign volunteers), the problem then was contained within the membership of the kibbutzim and within groups of trainees preparing to become members.

The problem generated by the need for less than skilled labor was historically resolved by job rotation, by increased mechanization, and by the absorption of large numbers of unskilled immigrants. This obligated the highly skilled and managerially oriented workers to symbolically participate in common labor. More importantly, it also permitted them to leave their own kibbutzim in order to form new kibbutzim and to take leadership positions there. Schwartz found that unsatisfied workers or

10. Peter M. Blau, *Exchange and Power in Social Life* (New York: Wiley, 1964), p. 128.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

14. Richard D. Schwartz, "Functional Alternatives to Inequality," *American Sociological Review* 20(1955), 424-430.

workers who wanted more freedom in their jobs left the kibbutz. The problem was also resolved by an ideology which placed high value on physical labor and by a stratification system which awarded members prestige for non-work-related activities such as scholarship or excellence in art.

The need for unskilled labor reached crisis proportions during Israel's 1973 war. The kibbutz movement faced a critical labor shortage, as 40% of its labor force had been mobilized into the military. In addition, kibbutz members were killed and wounded at a rate five times the national average because of their tendency to join elite army units. At that time fifty thousand young people from all over the world volunteered to come to Israel, and representatives of the kibbutz movement selected the most suitable of these to serve as temporary workers.¹⁵

These volunteers were ideologically motivated, sympathetic to Israel, and provided the kibbutz movement with an ideologically consistent rationale for hosting them. A letter to the editor of *The Jerusalem Post*, written by a kibbutz secretary (the equivalent of the mayor of a municipality), noted that volunteers added

a constant flow of color and variety to an otherwise closed society... [the kibbutz provides] young people from abroad the opportunity to experience a new way of life... [it contributes] to the absorption of new immigrants... [and] provides a solution to an agricultural society's problem of temporary manpower shortage.¹⁶

This quotation sets up the conditions of exchange as envisioned and initially experienced by kibbutz members. The kibbutz was offering a new experience and the opportunity to stay, in exchange for added color and labor.

Much has happened in the last 15 years to alter both the sense of what Israel represents in the international community and the role of kibbutz society in Israel. Israel is increasingly being called to task for its hard line in regard to territories claimed by the Palestinians. In addition, the kibbutz is a communal society in a country that is increasingly moving toward the right. Thus by 1977 the characteristics of the foreign volunteer population had changed. Fewer volunteers came specifically to help the kibbutz in its development. Fewer were interested in the social structure which defines the kibbutz as a unique intentional community, and fewer were Jewish. More and more foreign volunteers were working class North European young people who stopped off in Israel in their travels through Southern Europe.¹⁷ Yet the needs of the kibbutzim for labor, especially

15. *The Jerusalem Post*, December 27, 1973.

16. *Ibid.*, July 14, 1974.

17. The numbers of socialist and radical young people visiting the kibbutz to witness and participate in its lifestyle was greatly reduced when the perception of Israel changed in the

non-skilled labor, continued unabated, and the kibbutzim continued to invite these non-ideologically motivated foreign volunteers to come live and work in their midst. This, in spite of the fact that neither the kibbutzim nor the volunteers could benefit fully from the exchange as it was originally envisioned. The reasons for the continuing shortage of labor lie in the nature of the kibbutz, its economic needs, and its place in Israeli society.

The kibbutz was originally envisioned as a labor intensive agricultural community. But as the members of the kibbutz grew older, it became increasingly difficult to maintain their productivity. Members therefore looked to their children to replace them. Their expectations, though, were complicated by the following conditions:

1. The development of technologically complex production methods attracts both older and younger members to the managerial and technologically sophisticated jobs. This reduces the number of "hands" available for manual and agricultural labor. Since economic rewards on the kibbutz are separated from the economic functions of its members, and since there is no class of poor people, the kibbutz cannot force its members to do undesirable tasks.

2. The universal conscription for military duty effectively removes almost all of the young men from the work force for a period of three years and the women for two years. Soldiers who become officers, as well as soldiers on special duty such as pilots, stay in the military for a longer period of time. This occurs at a time when they would be most productive manual workers.

This problem is compounded by the fact that military duty is often preceded by a year of national service and is, almost universally, followed by a full year of vacation, often spent travelling abroad. Many veterans then go on to four years of college. Kibbutz-born young adults are therefore likely to be away from home for eight or nine years. Not only is their labor missed but they themselves are at a period of development where critical life decisions about marriage and careers are made. The result is that 40% -50% of these young adults do not become members of their kibbutzim.¹⁸

3. The fact that new kibbutzim are not being established as rapidly

liberal left-wing communities of America and Europe. This exacerbated the sense of isolation of the kibbutz movement, which is a segment of the Israeli left, and may have indirectly contributed to the impatience of kibbutz members with their volunteers.

18. Uri Leviatan, *Factors That Determine Attachment of the Kibbutz-Born to Kibbutz Life and Reason for Their Departure*, (Haifa, Israel: The Kibbutz University Center, The Institute for Study and Research of the Kibbutz and the Cooperative Idea, Publication no. 33, University of Haifa, 1975), p. 11.

as in the past reduces the opportunities for highly skilled management-oriented members to aspire to more creative positions within the kibbutz movement. The resulting ratio of high skilled to unskilled labor in the older kibbutzim creates additional pressures on ambitious young kibbutz members to leave, further reducing the number of workers in the kibbutz.

4. The high standard of living enjoyed by kibbutz members as reflected in their housing, food and recreational and cultural resources necessitates a high level of economic productivity.

Kibbutzim responded to their need for additional workers by reluctantly hiring laborers from neighboring towns and villages. Members recognize this practice as a serious and complex value dilemma; yet the practice of hiring workers is an almost universal phenomenon among kibbutzim, and resolutions condemning the use of hired labor on the kibbutz have been passed by all kibbutz federations. For example, Kibbutz Artzi, one of these federations, resolved at its convention on The Goals of Kibbutz Industry, held in 1976, that "... the factory be planned... on the basis of the kibbutz' own manpower. Factories that... employ hired labor must eliminate it within a few years."¹⁹

Voluntary temporary workers seemed to be an ideal response by the kibbutzim to both their work force problem and to the ideological contradiction inherent in employing workers for wages. The kibbutzim offered an educational experience and an opportunity to contribute to an ongoing experiment in communal living in exchange for labor. The kibbutz movement designed a system for implementing this plan which it believed would be non-exploitive, consistent with its own high regard for the value of manual labor, and responsive to the foreign volunteers' desires to enjoy the experience and to travel in Israel.

As the characteristics of the volunteers changed, their expressed disaffection grew. One volunteer complained, in a letter to the editor of *The Jerusalem Post*, that volunteers "felt like serfs on a plantation." He insisted further that "kibbutzim must understand that offering shelter, work clothes and food is not enough."²⁰

The initial response of kibbutz members and of some volunteers to attacks on the program was defensive. Letters to *The Jerusalem Post* indicated that the kibbutz movement was in fact providing a good experience for the volunteers and that some volunteers were still of the "old school" who came to help and to learn. The housemother to the volunteers in one kibbutz wrote a letter to the editor stating in part that "we are grateful for the work done by our temporary work force and we try

19. Uri Leviatan, "Hired Labor in the Kibbutz," (Haifa, Israel: The Institute for Research of the Kibbutz, University of Haifa, March 1979), mimeographed, p. 4.

20. *The Jerusalem Post*, December 5, 1977.

to make them feel at home."²¹ Significantly, this newspaper published a letter from a volunteer who stayed at that same kibbutz complaining of "alienation... [and] lack of involvement due to language, age and cultural differences." This volunteer noted that his friends were "... leaving the kibbutz with unfavorable impressions of the kibbutz and of Israel."²²

By 1981 it was possible to discern a sense of impatience on the part of kibbutz members with the volunteers. Kibbutz members saw the volunteers as having bad work habits as evidenced by their lack of discipline and constant need of supervision. More importantly they accused the volunteers of introducing such deviant patterns as sexual promiscuity, drinking, and drug abuse to the adolescents in the kibbutz. Very significantly, kibbutz members also began to worry about intermarriage between the foreign volunteers and their children.

In a lengthy article about foreign volunteers on the kibbutz, *The Jerusalem Post* quoted a member who complained that the volunteers "don't care about the kibbutz or understand our way of life." As if to confirm this opinion, *The Post* quotes a volunteer from England, who explained that "I come for the 'birds,' for naughty Danish girls like these." Another kibbutz member who is in charge of the volunteers reflected that:

It was different 10 years ago. People volunteered then out of idealism. Now we get as many non-Jews as Jews, and they all come either looking for a cheap holiday or a shelter where they needn't worry about where the next meal is coming from... We take them because we need their help. We're not running a holiday camp. We house, feed and clothe them and pay them monthly pocket money.²³

The terms of the original exchange agreement had by this time been revised considerably. Many foreign volunteers now viewed their stay in the kibbutz as a convenient stop-over on a working and traveling vacation through Italy, Greece and Israel. Indeed kibbutz recruitment brochures make note of the availability of swimming pools, rathskellers, and recreational facilities on their premises. It is thus no accident that a widely distributed English language guide for kibbutz volunteers is published by a company in Great Britain called Vacation Work Publishers²⁴

21. *Ibid.*, January 15, 1978.

22. *Ibid.*, February 13, 1978.

23. *Ibid.*, September 22, 1981.

24. John Bedford, *Kibbutz Movement* (Great Britain: Vacation Work Publishers, 1980, 2nd ed.). The Bedford book is an English language manual for potential kibbutz volunteers published by a private publisher in Great Britain. The book lists 231 kibbutzim with the names of contact person and a description of specific living and working conditions for foreign volunteers in 166 of them. The manual provides information on the condition of dormitories, the kinds of work that are available for volunteers, whether or not the kibbutz has a swimming pool, and other recreational information. The manual also lists the number

While reassessing the social costs of hosting foreign volunteers the kibbutzim do try to accommodate to their needs and expectations. The volunteers work a six hour day alongside and under the supervision of kibbutz members who work eight hours. The volunteers work at tasks that do not require technical skills in the factory, kitchen, dining room, and laundry of the kibbutz or they may be engaged in agricultural tasks. A volunteer, for example, might report to work picking oranges at 7:00 A.M. Picking will go on until 8:30 A.M., when everyone goes to the dining room for breakfast, which lasts around half an hour. Volunteers and kibbutz members assigned to this task will return to work until 12:00 P.M. This work period is interrupted by a mid-morning break for coffee and biscuits. At 12:00 P.M. there is an hour break for lunch, and the volunteers will then work until 2:00 P.M. Volunteers are then free from work until the next morning. Volunteers typically watch television, swim, eat dinner, organize parties, talk and visit nearby towns before going to bed. The volunteers are provided with their own recreational facilities and, in many kibbutzim, share those of the kibbutz members as well. They are housed in dormitories, fed in the kibbutz dining room, and they are clothed and provided with pocket money while they stay on the kibbutz. In return, they are expected to work, to stay out of fights, and to maintain "reasonable decorum." Relations between the volunteers and members are marked by a sort of distant cordiality. Volunteers, for example, are rarely found after work socializing with members in the intimate space of their apartments. Volunteers tend to carve a space for themselves in the dining room and tend to eat together. Yet they and kibbutz members are well integrated into the low skill work force.

My own observations and interviews in 1984 confirm the alienation and lack of involvement of the foreign volunteers. One volunteer who had been on a kibbutz for about a month told me that he was a socialist at home in England. I suggested that his experience in kibbutz, a socialist society, must be especially meaningful to him. He countered that he had not been aware until that moment that the kibbutz was a socialist society and asked in what ways it was socialist. He was surprised to learn from me about member ownership of the means of production. He was even more surprised to learn that the kibbutz proscribed the exploitation of labor.

On another occasion a volunteer complained that members of the kibbutz were unsympathetic to the national aspirations of Palestinians. He was not aware of a petition on the kibbutz bulletin board being signed

of volunteers each kibbutz can accommodate. At any given time there are spaces available for about 7,000 volunteers. This is 7% of the roughly 100,000 permanent residents in kibbutz.

by members at that time, protesting a speech by an Israeli general that was disparaging of Palestinians. The petition was in Hebrew, the volunteer was Irish.

Two incidents which occurred during my recent kibbutz stay further illustrate the estrangement of kibbutz members and volunteers. Some preteenagers on the kibbutz were assigned a work task in the kitchen that they found onerous. During the discussion about the work, the children demanded that the work be assigned to volunteers. Kibbutz members, who are not insensitive to the meaning of their children's assumptions, recognized that their children intuitively accepted a class structure in the kibbutz which adult members did not want to acknowledge.

The celebration of the holiday of Purim is a light-hearted affair in which there is singing, dancing, wine for the adults and ice cream for the children, and everyone dresses up in costumes. There are also skits and other musical and theatrical performances contributed by members. The volunteers on the kibbutz I visited undertook to present a mock beauty contest, the reenactment of the Biblical story of the selection of Queen Esther. In their presentation, the volunteers had their young men dress in women's swim suits and prance provocatively around the stage. Kibbutz members were offended. Many left the dining room. Others called angrily for the performance to stop. The event left a bad taste in everyone's mouth and served to reinforce estrangement on both sides. The volunteers, having picked up what they thought to be the holiday's carnival spirit, could not understand the members' "stodgy" reaction to their performance. The members, for their part, were offended by what they saw as a vulgar desecration of their celebration.

Exchange theory asserts that "individuals associate with one another because they all profit from the association."²⁵ It is clear that by 1984 both the kibbutzim that host volunteers and the volunteers themselves still profited from their association. The kibbutzim had their needed supply of unskilled labor and the volunteers had a place to temporarily stay and work in Israel. It is the perception of profit, as the characteristics of the volunteers changed, that created the mutual hostility and impatience described above. Both groups sensed that they were being exploited by the other.

In their frustration and anger, volunteers, having no recourse to formal decision-making processes, simply complained to each other. These complaints often took the form of sarcastic comments about specific members who were perceived to be intolerant of volunteers. Kibbutz members responded to their new perception of the exchange by attempting to reinforce the boundaries between themselves and their

25. Blau, *Exchange and Power in Social Life*, p. 15.

volunteers. This separation was done informally by discouraging cross-group socialization, and formally by housing the volunteers in a separate section of the kibbutz, and in some kibbutzim, though not in the one I studied, by not permitting the volunteers access to the members' coffee house, an after-dinner gathering and socializing space. Additionally, volunteers are strongly discouraged from staying on a kibbutz for more than six months.²⁶ The limitation on the volunteers' length of stay is designed to prevent them from establishing personal influence in the kibbutz through contact developed with members over time. Finally, informal barriers based on ethnicity were erected. One member told me that he had no intention, after deliberately leaving the diaspora and immigrating to Israel, of seeing his children marry non-Jews. While this view is not universal among members, it touches on the specifically Zionist aspect of kibbutz society. Yet the barriers are not impermeable. A recent survey by Avnet, et al²⁷ of 137 kibbutzim revealed that 739 mixed marriages were consummated on these kibbutzim and that there were 1200 children born to these couples. About 66% of the couples stayed in the kibbutzim surveyed, about 25% left the country, and the rest, about 9%, settled outside of the kibbutz framework in Israel.

The establishment of more rigid boundaries between members and volunteers served to increase the intolerance of any real or imagined violation of these boundaries. In an interview on this subject a kibbutz secretary was quoted as saying:

the volunteers have become the dominant factor in the children's education and social life. The volunteers' attitude is "live for today for tomorrow may never come." ... Our children weren't mature enough, in the worldly sense, to handle that type of attitude... It was making them forget their roots and the Zionist ideology which is the keystone of the kibbutz Movement and the State.²⁸

The volunteers argued that member intolerance for their lifestyle extended to having to take the blame for the misdeeds of the young adult children of kibbutz members. An important issue at the time was the use of hashish. Volunteers claimed that they were falsely accused of introducing drugs and other undesirable behavior patterns to the young people on the kibbutz. They claimed that young kibbutz members had ample opportunity in the military to learn about and to acquire drugs

26. Some volunteers extend their stay in Israel by spending time on more than one kibbutz. These volunteers play an important role in creating a community of discourse among volunteers. It is through them that kibbutzim are comparatively evaluated and that other folk knowledge about the meaning of the kibbutz experience is spread and shared.

27. Alexander Avnet, Uri Leviatan and David Mittelberg, "Kibbutz Survey," for the Institute for Study and Research of the Kibbutz and the Cooperative Idea, Haifa University, reported in *Hashavua*, March 28, 1986.

28. *The Jerusalem Post*, March 23, 1986.

and other bad habits.²⁹ In addition, volunteers claimed that they were being scapegoated because the kibbutz does not have or is reluctant to use methods of identifying and punishing wrongdoers in their own society.

The volunteers lack the cohesion to make anything but individual evaluations and decisions as to their experience in kibbutz. As temporary young workers they will continue moving through the kibbutz as long as the opportunity to do so remains. On the other hand, the kibbutz movement is faced with the task of making a policy decision. As of April 1986, three kibbutzim had announced that they are terminating their foreign volunteer programs because the social costs of their maintenance do not equal the economic benefits they provide. This sentiment is clearly shared by many members of kibbutzim.

Alternative solutions to the foreign volunteer dilemma are being discussed and implemented within the kibbutz movement in the hope that the program may be continued. For example, an improved screening program which selects volunteers with a higher level of education is being implemented in the applicants' countries of origin. In addition, one kibbutz federation, Kibbutz Artzi, is sending its volunteers to a kibbutz seminar center for short introductory educational programs, to help them adjust to kibbutz life.³⁰

Another factor which will undoubtedly reduce the need for volunteers in the future is the growing use of robotics in kibbutz industry. Kibbutz industrial planners are moving away from Taylorism and moving toward providing industrial workers with tasks that require skills and craftsmanship.³¹ This is in part a response to a socio-economic system which separates the type of work one does from the economic rewards one receives. Without poverty, it is difficult, as Gans³² and Piven and Cloward³³ point out, to coerce people into doing unpleasant work. As the work that kibbutz members will not do is reduced by the use of robots, so will the need for foreign volunteers be reduced in the industrial branches of the kibbutz economy.

29. A byproduct of the 1982-1984 Israel-Lebanon war was easy access to Israeli troops of illicit drugs. Drugs were brought back into Israel from Lebanon, creating a drug abuse problem there.

30. Personal communication, Mordecai Kafri, member, Kibbutz Gal On.

31. Menachem Rosner, "Trends Toward Post-Industrial Society and the Kibbutz Experience," talk before the Study Group for Kibbutz Research, Harvard University, May 18, 1987.

32. Herbert J. Gans, "The Uses of Poverty: The Poor Pay All," *Social Policy* 2 (1971), 20 - 24.

33. Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward. *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare*. New York: Vintage Books, 1971.

Because the kibbutz is an intentional society it is, as Nozick³⁴ has pointed out, engaged in a two-fold experiment which asks the following questions: (1) To what extent is it possible to create a society that realizes Utopian goals? (2) Will people actually elect to live in such a society? After eighty years of existence, the kibbutz movement is still discovering itself as its technology and its relationship to the State evolve. The manner in which the kibbutz movement approaches the issue of foreign volunteers is but one episode in a larger and more complex process of adjustment and change.

Conclusion

Kibbutzim in Israel have experimented with the use of foreign volunteers both at a time of crises and as a solution to a chronic shortage of unskilled labor. Initially, during the 1973 War, this practice seemed ideal. Ideologically motivated young people flocked to kibbutzim where, in exchange for their labor, they were permitted to participate in a pastoral equalitarian society with Utopian overtones. Kibbutzim benefited from ideologically motivated unskilled labor while enjoying the prestige of being served by a large international contingent of volunteers. In addition, the kibbutz benefited from the idea that it was serving an educational and good will function for both the state of Israel and for its own brand of social organization.

Foreign volunteers turned out to be a less than satisfactory solution to long-term labor problems in the kibbutz movement. And how could they have been? Labor problems in the kibbutz are structural. They are caused by an aging population, changing aspirations among the young, the disappearance of sources for large scale immigration, and the changing image of Israel in the Western world. The volunteers, though numerous, are just young people travelling and working their way through Southern Europe and the Middle East. The kibbutz movement must decide whether these are truly volunteer workers or whether they are really temporary workers functioning in a society that proscribes the exploitation of labor and an economic class system. It must also decide if it can, in the short run, manage without them.

Exchange theory suggests that social interaction takes place when both sides perceive that it is to their advantage to engage in an interaction or exchange. As time went on, and the characteristics of the volunteers changed, the advantages to the kibbutz of hosting these volunteers became clouded. On the one hand, volunteers do provide

34. Robert Nozick, "Philosophical Implications," Paper read at conference on The State of Kibbutz Utopian Aspirations, held at Harvard University, March 17, 1987.

unskilled labor to communities that need it and that cannot, through poverty or a system of wages, coerce their own members to perform these tasks. On the other hand, the social costs of hosting these volunteers is very high. They introduce foreign values into a self-contained ideologically motivated society, they marry members, calling into question the essentially Jewish character of the kibbutz movement, and they are in fact more like transient laborers than they are like volunteers.

Foreign volunteers are but one example of the policy decisions that kibbutz society must make in order to resolve the tensions which must perforce exist in a social system which intends to maintain itself as egalitarian and pioneering but which exists within a larger society which is competitive and which places high value on social mobility and the acquisition of wealth. Examination, from the perspective of exchange theory, of the ongoing effort by kibbutz members to resolve their foreign volunteer dilemma leads to a broader understanding of the kibbutz and of the problems it must solve if it is to survive as a social and organizational entity.