

9 NATL. JEWISH ORGS. PROTEST U.S. FUNDS FOR PASSION PLAY

Jewish organizations have charged the United States Department of Commerce with authorizing federal expenditures that would "foster attendance at a manifestation of anti-Semitic bigotry."

Nine national Jewish organizations joined in the charge. They are the Am-

erican Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League, Jewish Labor Committee, Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A., National Council of Jewish Women, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America,

and United Synagogue of America.

In a letter written by Jordan C. Band, chairman of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, coordinating body of the nine national organizations and 82 local Jewish councils in cities throughout the United States, the organizations "urgently" asked Secretary of Commerce Maurice H. Stans to reverse the authorization.

At issue are funds for improvement of a road giving access to the site of a "Passion Play" and other "tourist attractions" offered by the Elna M. Smith Foundation in Eureka Springs, Arkansas.

The Passion Play "is a vicious antisemitic tract," the protesting Jewish organizations assert.

Elna Smith is the wife of Gerald L.K. Smith, long-time anti-Semitic publicist and propagandist. His "unmistakable stamp of bigotry" is on the Eureka Springs project, the Jewish organizations declare.

They note that use of federal funds to improve the road to the site is justified by the Commerce Department on the ground that facilitating access to the Passion Play and other "attractions" will improve the economically depressed condition of the Eureka Springs area, but that no justification is given for the use of tax-raised moneys "to facilitate the spreading of the virus of anti-Semitism."

It is "untenable," the Jewish organizations assert, for the Federal Government to take the position that "a project intended to and that in fact does foster hostility to Jews may be treated like and given the same benefits as ordinary tourist attractions."

Rejecting statements made by the Ozark Regional Commission and others in support of the authorization as "irrelevant" and "disingenuous," the Jewish groups say that some of the points made by supporters "appear to distort the facts" and to employ "grossly inflated" estimates of probable use of the road to be improved.

Copies of the letter to Secretary Stans were sent to President Nixon, and to Arkansas Governor Winthrop Rockefeller, Senators John L. McClellan and J.W. Fulbright and Congressman John P. Hammer-schmidt.

ED. NOTE: The Las Vegas Israelite urges all our readers to write protesting letters to Senators Alan Bible and Howard Cannon and Representative Walter Baring. They understand. They know. J.T.

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