

Joint Program Plan

By Morton J. Gaba

In many respects there is no national or local organized Jewish community. Agencies, organizations, synagogues, temples, numbering in the thousands, like as not, go their own separate independent ways. Sometimes they compete. Sometimes they cooperate. Too often are they oblivious of the fact that other groups within the Jewish community have identical objectives and that there is truth to the adage "in union there is strength."

In one highly important area, however, there is a collective national judgment about "what is good for the Jews" and how to go about achieving it.

Annually, the one hundred and ten national and local agencies comprising the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council compile their collective judgment about major developments affecting Jewish communal relations and the best ways of dealing with these problems.

These collective judgments make up the annual NJCRAC Joint Program Plan. This plan has become the "Bible" of the cooperating mem-

ber agencies and has become the framework for national and local community relations programming for the coming year.

The 1979 Joint Program Plan covers twenty six major problem areas, details its findings on each subject and then makes specific recommendations on ways to implement them.

The subjects range from subjects of specifically Jewish concern such as Israel and the Middle East, Arab economic warfare, and Soviet Jewry, to such tangential subjects as crime control, amnesty for war resisters and school desegregation.

While one would imagine that many Jewish groups hold differing positions on these and other potentially explosive subjects, practically all of the Joint Program Plan is adopted each year by consensus vote with but few meager agencies calling for "Abstentions, Dissents and/or Exceptions."

The American Jewish Committee did abstain on the recommendation regarding urban-suburban school desegregation and on the item calling for the unconditional amnesty of war resisters.

The Jewish War Veterans dissented on the same amnesty recommendation and also voted that it had taken no stand on the subject of silent meditation in public school classrooms (which the Plan disapproved).

The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith disapproved of the consensus motion on the current status anti-Semitism, finding that it was too "reassuring!" Further, the ADL would have the Plan advocate intervention in the Bakke (reverse discrimination) case before the Supreme Court.

On this matter, the Plan recommended that the national and local member agencies support affirmative action but oppose quotas stressing compensatory programs and target goals to correct imbalance resulting from past discrimination.

The only other disagreement came from the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations which dissented from the Plan's consensus opposition to tax aid for religiously operated schools, from opposition to silent meditation in the schools; as well as from the Plan's endorsement of the Equal Rights Amendment.

In addition to the above national organizations, the national agency members of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council consists of the American Jewish Congress, the National Council of Jewish Women, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (Reform), and the United Synagogue of America.

The NJCRAC also contains local community representatives, most of them Federation committees, from thirty states representing one hundred and one local communities. It constitutes an impressive array.

On the other hand, it should be pointed out that the Joint Program Plan of the NJCRAC is a paper plan. Even though it is adopted by consensus, with remarkable few exceptions, it is

not a binding document on anyone. In fact, after it is published, it could be received and filed by its member agencies with no action, or even counter action, taken. For the "A" in NJCRAC stands for "Advisory" and that provision is jealously watched over by all of its members, particularly the competing national agencies.

In reality, though, the Joint Program Plan, though voluntary and with no binding obligations places upon its signers, does reflect the basis of whatever action is carried out nationally and locally. While some might prefer that there be more binding commitments to the recommendations, the voluntary and diverse nature of the American Jewish Community makes that objective improbable and unrealistic.

The present nature of our community is such that the Joint Program Plan, and its sponsor, the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, goes about as far as it can and still obtain the unity so necessary if results are to be achieved.

Mormons and Israel

By Rabbi Samuel Silver

The City of Jerusalem will, in the future, be enhanced by a lovely park built by the Latter Day Saints of America.

The park will memorialize Orson Hyde, a Mormon, who back in 1841, on an assignment from Joseph Smith, visited the Holy City and predicted its ultimate resettlement by the Jews.

The story of Orson Hyde was vividly narrated last spring in a ringing oration by Ezra Taft Benson, one-time Cabinet member and a leader of the Mormon Church, in Calgary, Alberta, before an audience of almost 3000, including many Jews.

Mr. Benson expressed his sympathy with the cause of Zionism. He told of his conversations with the late David Ben Gurion, with Golda Meir, with Moshe Dayan. He brought the throng to tears with his account of his visit to concentration camps in Europe.

He spoke of the affinity between the Latter Day Saints and the Jews.

He told the story of Orson Hyde and how the Israeli government invited the Mormons to build the park and how the park will contain the prayer spoken by Hyde on behalf of a Jewish return to the Land of Promise.

In Calgary, the catalytic agent between the the Mormon community and the Jews is a remarkable Orthodox rabbi, Rabbi Lewis Ginsburg, who is one of the city's most beloved citizens for his ecumenical labors. Rabbi Ginsburg was recently cited by the Province of Alberta for his efforts on behalf of brotherhood.

With Zionism facing so many enemies, it is good to know that the huge Mormon church is simpatico.

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