

Church Council Butts In

BY MARC H. TANENBAUM

There was good news and bad news a few weeks ago out of Indianapolis where the National Council of Churches held its Governing Board meeting. Following a recent two-week fact-finding mission to Arab countries and to Israel, the NCC's Middle East Panel made public a detailed report on Middle East issues some of which was heartening, and some of which was deeply distressing.

The good news was found in several vital affirmations. For the first time, the National Council Panel, which had met with Yasir Arafat and other PLO leaders, publicly called on the PLO to make "a public commitment to cease all acts of violence and renounce its rejection of the existence of Israel."

The Panel also firmly declared for the first time that "the unwillingness of the Arab states and the Palestinian Arabs to recognize Israel's right to self-determination as a Jewish state which reserves the respect of the entire family of nations" was a major obstacle to peace. The Panel also expressed "its absolute support

of the right of the State of Israel to exist as a Jewish state in peace with its neighbors," and insisted that a single standard of judgment be applied to all countries regarding human rights.

The bad news was that the Panel called on the U.S. Government to engage in dialogue with the PLO without any preconditions and without the PLO's first renouncing terrorism. Regrettably, the Panel also described the Camp David agreements as "fundamentally flawed" thereby weakening confidence in this breakthrough peace process.

Altogether, the National Council's report must be regarded as a serious effort, and will provide the basis for future creative dialogue.

APPROVE WOMEN AS RABBIS

KIAMESHA LAKE, N.Y. (WNS) -- An endorsement for the ordaining of women as Conservative rabbis was approved here by a 155 - 115 vote at the 80th annual convention of the Rabbinical Assembly, the association of Conservative rabbis. The endorsement, the first time the RA had approved

called on the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, the Conservative movement's seminary, to act on a resolution approving the admission of women as candidates for the rabbinate.

The school's Faculty Senate had tabled such a resolution last December which was viewed as killing the proposal.

Rabbi Seymour Siegel, Ralph Simon, Professor of Ethics and Theology at the Seminary and chairman of the RA's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, hailed the convention's decision. "This vote will certainly in-

fluence the members of the faculty senate to reverse the decision of last year and approve the admission of women to the program of ordination," he said.

However, immediately after the convention decision, some 100 rabbis attending the confab formed a Halachic Fellowship of the Rabbinical Assembly aimed at opposing the ordination of women. The new group asked that a nine-member panel be formed to "study and evaluate the rules and procedures of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards."

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