

Reaganomics and American Jews

BY ROBERT E. SEGAL

The American Jewish Committee did an outstanding service recently when it brought together folks with varying opinions about Reaganomics and related matters for an honest ventilation of views.

Not surprisingly, some of the participants urged continuing trust in and support for the Reagan programs. Supply side economics appeals to them. The formulas of the past haven't worked. People who keep stretching out their hands to Washington for sustenance are addicted to such dependency. Their initiative is zilch.

This line of thought is in direct contrast to conclusions reached by one spokesman for the Council of Jewish Federations. In position to receive reports on the financing by Jewish social work systems the country over, he referred to the overall impact of Washington's cuts in human services as a disaster. This was back in October when the gains of 50 years in compassionate treatment of the needy by our federal government were beginning to face destruction. The bitter part was yet to come, he said, as he projected a loss of 300 to 500 million dollars to clients of the Jewish social service network.

Accepting this as the voice of the Jewish establishment, let us try to essay a little opinion ventilating which we believe reflects the views of the great majority of American Jews.

Ten years ago, it was reliably indicated that between 500,000 and 900,000 American Jews were in households with incomes of \$3,000 or less. At that time the Census Bureau set the subsistence level for a family of four at \$3,743. Ensuing ravages of inflation have upped this figure to \$8,300. May we not reasonably conclude that the Jewish poor are today all too numerous among America's total of approximately 25 million? And are we not imaginative enough to realize that (1) the elderly are especially hard hit, and (2) the current war on the poor is only the bottom line of the deepening struggle against inflation hitting the huge middle class?

Let those who uphold the return to 19th century economics in Washington where government

in technicolor delights ultra-conservatives give more careful thought to the revolt of Republicans as well as Democrats in Congress against the projected budget. Let them recall that President Reagan's key domestic advisor, Martin Anderson, had as one of his qualifications for that high office the philosophy he set forth in his book, "Welfare." Therein, he pontificated that the war on poverty that began in 1964 has been won.

Franklin Roosevelt, despite a heap of errors, misjudgments, and lapses of callousness, said something suitable for these sorry times: "Dante tells us that divine justice weighs the sins of the cold-blooded and the sins of the warm-hearted on a different scale. Better the occasional faults of a government living in the spirit of charity than the consistent omissions of a government frozen in the ice of indifference." He saved capitalism when we had unemployment rolls three times the size of the nine million currently jobless.

When we enter forums dealing in part with our responsibility to the poor, we do well to take Jeremiah with us: "If one practices justice and righteousness, if one champions the cause of the poor, then it is well with one. This indeed is to know me, says God."

President Reagan has stated that the power to tax must not be used to bring about social change. This pronouncement now faces a potent corollary: Failure to tax sufficiently may bring about social disaster. A recent quick inventory revealed at least 83 "people's programs" are being cut. School lunches, college loans, health care, fuel assistance, scientific research, immunization against childhood diseases -- the list goes on and on. And this distress comes at a time when the clock is being turned back insofar as civil rights and civil liberties are concerned.

We are called upon by the Administration to adjust to injustice. A more certain trumpet calls for us to eliminate injustice, including the rape of the impoverished.

ISRAEL AND EGYPT WORK TOGETHER

JERUSALEM (WNS) -- Israel and Egypt continued to resolve their differences on boundaries and other matters before Israel completes its withdrawal from Sinai April 25th.

President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt dispatched a top personal aide, Osama el-Baz, to Israel apparently to continue efforts begun earlier by Egyptian Foreign Minister Kamal Hassan Ali to ease the strained relations that have developed between the two countries. El-Baz brought

Premier Menachem Begin a personal message from Mu-barak. After a two-hour meeting with Begin, he told reporters that he believed the Premier was "quite satisfied with the talks and exchanges of messages and (felt) that all outstanding issues will be solved."

Several points along the 143-mile boundary between Israel and Sinai are in dispute. The most serious difference is centered on the Tabca coastal region near the Israeli Red Sea port of Eilat. Although

it involves less than a kilometer of territory, the problem is whether an Israeli-built luxury resort hotel will be on the Israeli or Egyptian side of the line.

Bringing Passover to Jewish Homes

BY NATE FREEMAN

In Rumania, 34,000 Jews, many aged and infirm survivors of the Holocaust living in 122 far flung Jewish communities will celebrate Passover with matza from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC).

In Tunisia the Jewish community of just over 5,000 will bake desert cakes with matza meal from the JDC, selling some to members of the community to raise needed funds and donating the rest to schools, old age homes and other communal institutions.

In Afghanistan the 17 remaining Jewish families in Kabul and Herat will be sitting down to Seder services with matza provided by JDC.

The quote from the Haggadah reads, "May all who are hungry come and eat." It is an injunction that JDC, acting in behalf of the American Jewish community, takes seriously.

A total of more than 200 tons of matza and over 28,000 bottles of sacramental wine has been provided by JDC in 1982 as part of its annual attempt to bring Passover into the home of every Jew no matter how distant from the population centers of our people, no matter how poor.

In nearly every one of the 30 nations where JDC is at work it is actively involved in Passover programs in one form or another. By far the largest of these programs is that of Passover cash grants to the needy. In most nations around the world Passover supplies are available and bringing Passover into the homes of needy Jews means providing them with the financial means to obtain it.

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