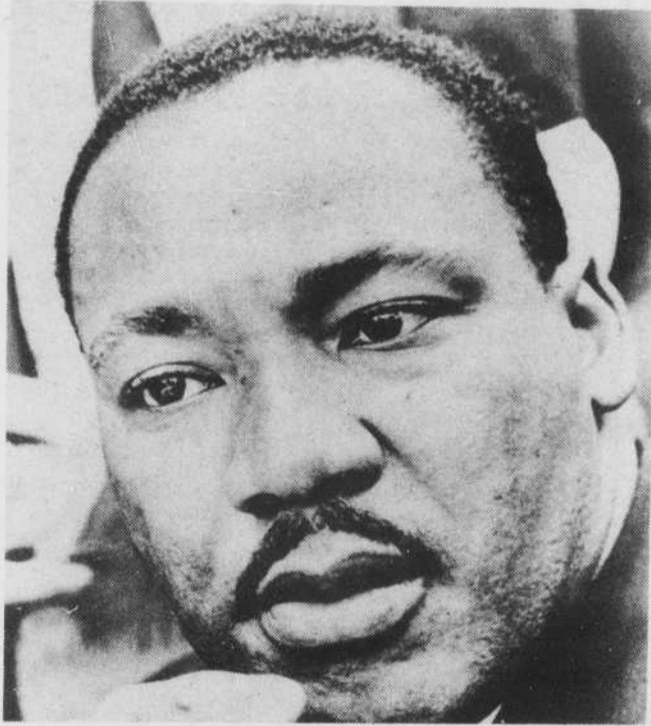


AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS PLEDGES SUPPORT FOR THE GOALS OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.



On the eve of what would have been the 50th birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. on January 15th, the American Jewish Congress this week issued a call for rededication to the goals of social and economic justice embraced by the fallen leader.

"It would be a fitting tribute to the life and work of a great American," said Howard M. Squadron, president of the Congress, "if we could achieve in 1979 the goals that Dr. King expressed so eloquently and fought for so courageously -- full employment, decent housing, good schools and true equal opportunity for Black Americans.

"That is why we endorsed and worked for the Humphry-Hawkins Full Employment Bill and are

most gratified by its passage.

"We supported the Full Employment Bill because of the harm done by chronic joblessness to the millions of individuals and families directly affected; because of unemployment's destructive impact on youth, minority groups and the inner cores of our great cities; because of the cost to government in various forms of relief and lost taxes; because of the harm done to our society by rotting cities, the increases danger of interracial strife and by the loss of what the unemployed would produce if they were put to work.

"We believe there is no reason why the American people must accept the cruel paradox of a society in which there are millions idle who are able to work while schools, housing, health facilities and other vital institutions need to be built and staffed, while necessary anti-pollution installations exist only as blueprints and while mass transportation steadily deteriorates.

"The time has come to put the unemployed to work at building the many public assets that our society has been denying itself."

Mr. Squadron recalled an address by Dr. King to an American Jewish Congress convention in Miami on May 15, 1958 -- the first time a Black leader had addressed a national organization in the still-segregated South. Dr. King said then:

"Every Negro leader is keenly aware that the segregationists make no fine distinctions between the Negro and Jew. The racists of America fly blindly at both of us caring not at all which of us falls. Their aim is to maintain, through crude segregation, groups whose uses as scapegoats can facilitate their political and social rule over all people.

"Our common fight is against these deadly enemies of democracy, and our glory is that we are chosen to prove that courage is a characteristic of oppressed people, however cynically and brutally they are denied full equality and freedom."

Mr. Squadron also recalled as "deeply prophetic" Dr. King's statement on the Jewish

people's commitment to Israel. Dr. King declared;

"When people criticize Zionists, they mean Jews..."

"Peace for Israel means security, and we must stand with all our might to protect its right to exist, its territorial integrity, and the right to use whatever sealanes it needs.

"Israel is one of the great outposts of democracy in the world and a marvelous example of brotherhood and democracy."

Dr. King Forest In Israel

Mr. Squadron also noted that American Jews and Israelis both honor the memory of Martin Luther King, Jr. On a hill in Biblical Galilee, near Nazareth, a forest has been dedicated to Dr. King's memory. Planted by the Jewish National Fund, the forest is sponsored by the Black and Jewish members of the United States Congress. U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young is also a sponsor.

"The forest was donated primarily by American Jews wishing to honor Dr. King." Mr. Squadron said. "There is great commitment among Jews to the Human rights principles Dr. King represented." He added that Alan Quille, an NAACP leader in Baltimore, will be leading a group of community leaders active in Israel Bonds to the forest for a tree-planting later this month.

The tree-planting is part of an ongoing effort by the Jewish National Fund to fill the once-barren hills of Israel with greenery. In the last 50 years, the Fund has planted more than 140 million trees in Israel. The King Forest is in the wook honoring what are known in Israel as "righteous Gentiles" committed to human rights and to Israel.

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