

JEWISH AFFAIRS

JAN - FEB 1981
Supplement

As a public service we reprint below the resolutions voted upon at the Conference for a New Jewish Agenda held in Washington, D.C., Dec. 1980

New Jewish Agenda Unity Statement and Resolutions

UNITY STATEMENT

(Approved—70% for; 23% opposed)

We are Jews from a variety of backgrounds, affiliations, and personal outlooks who share a vision of the meaning and purpose of Jewish life. We have come together to explore and articulate that vision, to learn from one another, and to begin to translate our commitment into concrete action. We are convinced that Jewish experience and teachings can address the social, economic and political issues of our time. Our Jewish conviction requires that we give serious and consistent attention to the Jewish mandate of "tikun olam," the repair and moral improvement of our world.

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

(Approved by a vote of 80%)

The U.S. Jewish community must make strenuous efforts to welcome, involve and empower disaffected and unaffiliated Jews, as well as working class Jews, women, the young and elderly, poor, disabled, single and single-parents, geographically isolated, gay and Lesbian Jews, and recent Jewish immigrants. Elitist and unresponsive Jewish leadership should be replaced by a representative and pluralistic one, accountable to our community and reflecting the diversity of the Jewish population.

Basic to a positive Jewish identity is knowledge of our history, religion and culture. We assert that every Jew has a right to a free and adequate Jewish

education. Our community also needs open and vigorous discussion of values and policies. An independent, active and responsive Jewish press is necessary.

The obligation of "tzedaka" is incumbent on every Jew, rich or poor. The size of one's contribution should not determine influence in the community. Rather, the practice of "tzedaka" should be used to promote social change benefitting everyone.

ISRAEL AND THE MIDDLE EAST

(Approved by a vote of 70%)

We are committed to the State of Israel as an ethical, democratic and peaceful country in which Arabs and Jews, Sephardim and Ashkenazim, women and men, secular and religious people of all persuasions can cooperate and contribute fully and equally.

We believe peace and justice between Israel and the Arab nations, especially the Palestinian Arab, is a prerequisite for Israeli survival.

We must work to educate the American Jewish community to support the forces in Israel working for these ideals.

Israel's security can never exist while the Palestinian people remain disenfranchised of basic human, political and national rights.

We believe Israel cannot rule over the Palestinian Arabs of the West Bank and Gaza as an occupying force without compromising its moral purpose. Israel's settlements in the occupied territories endanger the peace process and must be opposed.

We believe that it is to Israel's advantage to negotiate with a representative Palestinian group that is

willing to engage in negotiations. We believe that peace can be obtained through direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. The current use of violence is not a solution to this conflict.

We support a peace based on mutual acceptance, recognition and security for Jewish national self-determination within the State of Israel and the Palestinians' right to national self-determination, including the right to create a Palestinian State.

In support of this basic vision of an Israel of peace and justice, Agenda will express both in the U.S. and in relations with groups in Israel a broad spectrum of progressive Jewish opinion on these issues.

U.S. DOMESTIC SCENE

(Approved by a vote of 90%)

We want to see an economically just America, in which democratic control of resources and concern for human needs replace concentrations of corporate power, oppression and exploitation. The U.S. needs good health care, adequate housing, full employment, safe neighborhoods, a protected and healthy living and working environment and decent education for all its citizens.

The decline of the cities in which we live is a major problem. The destruction of social services, and increase in crime, the gentrification of neighborhoods and the resultant displacement of poor people, including poor Jews, has yielded fear, racism, and anti-Semitism. We intend to confront the issues through an emphasis on inter-group dialogue and community control of essential resources; in general, by taking responsibility for our own communities.

The right to organize, now currently under attack, must be guaranteed to all workers. We support affirmative action programs to redress past inequities, and oppose the repeal of civil rights statutes.

ENERGY

(Approved by a vote of 85%)

Many of the U.S. economic and ecological problems are connected to energy, and as Jews we have a special concern with the influence of multi-national energy corporations and cartels. Based on the Torah policy of "Bal Tashchit"—not to waste or unnecessarily destroy anything of value—we believe that conservation and more efficient use of energy should be the cornerstone of U.S. energy policy. We encourage the development of non-nuclear energy

sources which are safe, renewable and decentralized.

WAR AND PEACE

(Adopted by a vote of 70%)

New alternatives for peace and progress need to be found to break the cycle of military spending, preparation and war. Arms, especially nuclear weapons, must be fought. U.S. foreign policy should be based on support for human rights and human dignity everywhere in the world, on achieving a new world order which provides all people with economic and political rights, on eliminating oppression and exploitation by governments and corporations and wiping out war, hunger and despair.

JEWISH SECURITY JEWISH MEN AND WOMEN

(Approved by a vote of 90%)

We affirm the nurturance of life and the continuity of Jewish generations. It is important for us to affirm "Shalom Bayit"—peace in the household—living arrangements that nurture a sense of fulfillment and extend outward into the community. We understand that the structure of work in our society makes "Shalom Bayit" very difficult. Nevertheless, we believe "Shalom Bayit" must be the task of men as well as women.

We strongly endorse the struggle to transform the historically unequal relationship between men and women. Women should be included in every area of Jewish communal activity, including all leadership positions. We support the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. We are committed to ending the physically and psychologically violent manifestation of sexism.

Our commitment to Jewish continuity—both physically and qualitatively—requires our support for the reproductive rights for women. This includes our affirmation and support of: (1) the right of men and women to express themselves sexually outside of reproduction; (2) safe, available, low-cost contraception for men and women; (3) quality community-controlled child care; (4) sex and parenting education; (5) an end to sterilization abuse; (6) improvement and extension of adoption services; and (7) the recognition that there are complex moral and religious issues involved in the woman's decision to have an abortion; nevertheless, in certain cases abortion may be the best available alternative. We

support the right of a woman to choose to have safe, legal, affordable abortion.

We reject the current federal policy which deprives poor women of a choice which wealthier women are permitted. In addition, we strongly oppose the so-called Human Life Amendment or any other law which would limit women's rights to contraception and abortion.

Finally, we are committed to eliminating Lesbian and gay oppression and homophobia. Women, Lesbians and gays are most directly hurt by these, but we also recognize the damaging effects of all of us both in Jewish communal life and in the wider culture. We support the establishment of laws eliminating discrimination and harassment on the basis of sexual preference.

RIGHTS OF JEWS

(Approved by a vote of 85%)

"Kol Yirsoel Areivim"; we all share responsibility for the fate and situation of Jews everywhere in the world. We will work for freedom, safety and unrestricted Jewish expression for Jews in the Soviet Union, Ethiopia, Argentina, Iran, France and in every other Jewish community.

RACISM AND ANTI-SEMITISM

(Approved by a vote of 75%)

The present economic crisis has brought a dramatic rise of anti-Semitism and racism. Agenda will firmly oppose all forms of anti-Semitism and racism and right-wing terror whether they come from the Ku Klux Klan or the Nazis and whether these occur with or without government complicity. In doing so we seek to unite with a broad-based anti-racist coalition including Blacks, Hispanics, Asian-Americans, native Americans, ethnic minority groups as well as labor, left and other progressive political organizations. In building these coalitions we will seek to end Jewish isolation and challenge any anti-Jewish attitudes that arise. We are especially committed to recreating a relationship with the Black community in which we recognize our similarities and differences and work for common goals. An atmosphere in which racist ideology is pervasive directly threatens Jewish well-being.

Combatting anti-Semitism requires that we understand its political, economic, religious and psychological causes and forms. We must also seek to free ourselves from the ways in which we have

internalized our oppression.

Our response to the Holocaust—the ultimate act of anti-Semitism—must include the education of ourselves and others, mourning in the most meaningful way we know by trying to understand the causes of the Holocaust and applying the lessons we learn without sensationalizing, trivializing, profit-making or political exploitation in order that such a tragedy might never again be known by our people or any other.

ETHIOPIAN JEWRY

(Approved by a voice vote)

In view of the conditions of Ethiopian Jewry, we strongly urge the Israeli government and other responsible Jewish agencies make the rescue of this community a high priority and we deplore the neglect of our fellow Jews.

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