

REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION

(The following Report was delivered by Mrs. Judith Epstein, Chairman of the Department, before a meeting of the Executive Committee of the American Zionist Council on October 30, 1962.)

Mrs. Epstein prefaced her Report by pointing out that the work of the Department, under her Chairmanship, was continuing along the lines established over the years ever since the formation of the American Zionist Emergency Council in 1939 at the outbreak of World War II. At that time, there was the desperate need to influence public opinion on behalf, first, of the open door policy of Palestine to receive the refugees from Hitler, and then, to pursue the fight for the Jewish State and the recognition of the right of the Jewish people to reconstitute themselves as a nation in Palestine. After the establishment of the State, our organization, under the name of the American Zionist Council, continued in the public relations field, helping to create a favorable climate of opinion for the new State and to mobilize Jewish and non-Jewish support for Israel.

At that time, the Department had a budget of \$750,000. Today the budget is \$175,450 with an obligation to carry on a comprehensive, diverse and complex project which demands personnel and funds. However, she pointed out that part of the work of the original Council had now been taken over by the Keren Committee which was charged with political action, formerly in the province of the American Zionist Council. All approaches to the Hill, to the political parties, etc., are now the responsibility of the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee whose funds are not tax exempt. Thus, greater emphasis is now put on the more subtle approach, which, through positive presentation of Israel's accomplishments, aims and purpose - and by counter-attack of the many enemies of Israel and the Zionist movement - helps to create a favorable image of Israel and the Zionist movement.

There have been two new developments in the Department in the last two years.

1) The intensification of our public relations work within the local communities and the strengthening of the movement at grass-roots level, and
2) the establishment of committees of volunteers on the National level. We now have six such committees made up of men and women who are highly skilled and trained professionals in their respective fields and who volunteer their services because of a deep interest in Israel and a concern for its welfare. Although few are committed Zionists in the traditional sense of the word, they are happy to function under the aegis of a Zionist body such as ours.

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STAFF WORK

Our work is implemented on two levels: staff and volunteer. Let me first take the work of the staff. We are fortunate in having a devoted, highly skilled team, inadequate in numbers to the enormity of the project, but which nevertheless carries on without cease. Unquestionably, if we could afford a larger staff, we could do a more effective job.

I. Monitoring and counteraction of printed materials -- The office staff monitors the daily press, the Negro press, the Protestant and the Catholic Church press, the academic press, magazines of all kinds and books. When hostile attacks on Israel or the Zionist movement appear anywhere, material is prepared and sent, either directly to the editor or from the office as draft material to our friends and groups throughout the country who might have better access to the particular publication involved. The advantage of having local Zionist Councils is that we are immediately informed by them of any unfriendly attack on Israel from any part of the United States, either directly from the communities or via our Field Offices.

Because of our extensive monitoring service, the routine job of preparing replies to hostile material goes on constantly. In one recent week, for example, we were forced to research and prepare communications in reply to three extremely inimical articles appearing in the Columbia University (Quarterly) Forum, Cosmopolitan Magazine, and Editor and Publisher; all three were handled with dispatch and it is hoped the replies will shortly appear. In any case the publications are alerted to the fact that we are prepared to answer any unwarranted attacks of this kind. In an average month, about 25 letters to newspapers and magazines are written or sent, either directly from the National Office or through our Field Offices or by our community contacts after consultation with our National Office.

I do not want to give the impression that all communications we stimulate or send to editors are of a negative nature. Where circumstances warrant - and fortunately much of the U.S. press is now generally favorable to Israel on Middle East issues - commendatory notes are sent off to editors. An important aspect of our work are the meetings we hold with editors - and those held by community leaders with local editors - in order to bring them up to date on the changing Middle East scene. Also, features and special materials are prepared and sent to editors around the country.

The Zionist movement in this country faces enemies of awesome proportions who operate with large budgets; the Arab States with their numerous embassies and consulates, the Arab Information Office, the American Friends of the Middle East, and the American Council for Judaism. While we follow their activities very closely, it is difficult to keep track of all of the action, projects, speeches, and pressures of these bodies. This is why it is very important that local Councils be strengthened throughout the country so that we may be kept informed of anti-Israel activities and help to educate, through all media of communications, the positive role of Israel and the Zionist movement, and from a negative point of view, be able to react to the attacks of these hostile bodies.

Much of the anti-Israel propaganda is of a subtle nature and not necessarily implemented under the imprimatur of the above-mentioned organizations. For example, the Middle East Institute in Washington, while appearing as an objective

and scholarly organization, has actually lent itself to the anti-Israel cause. Its annual conference in Washington two years ago, attended by our Dr. Joseph Schechtman was definitely and clearly prejudicial to Israel's case. We asked Dr. Schechtman to write an article dealing with the "objectivity" of the Middle East Institute, which he did, and then arranged to have it published in a well-known publication devoted to Israel's cause. Reprints were made and distributed widely to interested persons. It is noteworthy that at the Conference of the Middle East Institute the following year Israel was treated with more respect and Israel's case given a fairer hearing. We can only assume in this particular case that the exposure we initiated had a beneficial effect.

II. The Speakers Bureau -- There is a very well organized Speakers Bureau which, with an absurdly small staff, does an amazing job. Last year, 2,240 engagements were made through the Speakers Bureau; this does not mean 2,240 speakers, but rather 2,240 engagements. In addition to our own roster of speakers, we utilize speakers engaged by commercial bureaus, (booking them in those cities to which they are travelling for their own bureaus, or in a city enroute) as well as speakers based in the local communities, in order to save on transportation costs. When we send speakers out, we don't send them for a single appearance. Our speakers average from 4 to 7 appearances in a single day. In a typical community, a speaker may talk to a Rotary Club, a World Affairs Council, a church group, a high school assembly or college group, a woman's club, a TV or Radio appearance, a background session with a local editor or commentator, etc. (We believe a speaker should do p.r. work in addition to making public appearances, and many of them are capable of doing this type of job.) Speakers often remain in a community for several days.

The largest part of these engagements is before non-Jewish groups, although at times a request from a Jewish group is serviced at a nominal fee. Where do we get the speakers? The representatives of the Israel Government, visitors from Israel, American men and women - Jews and Christians - who have been to Israel on organized tours, or through personal visits, specially-equipped Israelis who are invited here to attend some international conference and whose presence in this country is utilized by our Bureau for addresses before meetings arranged by us. Here again, the local Councils are essential for the success of these programs. (I have here a letter from a professor at a University in Buffalo where Mr. Argov, an Israeli Consul, is to speak. The professor learned through the local Zionist Council that Mr. Argov would be in the community and he, therefore, arranged to have him appear at the University before both faculty and students. This is quite typical.)

III. Research Bureau -- We have an excellent Research Bureau - again, inadequately staffed from the point of view of quantity though not of quality. We cannot expect every Zionist organization to have available the kind of material which is called for at every moment to answer attacks, to give information, to send materials to friends and potential friends. For instance, Dr. Sidney Marks, Executive Director of the ZOA, had a letter from one of its leaders in Houston asking urgently for information in four specific areas in order to help him prepare an answer to the attack made upon Israel and the Zionist movement in his community. Dr. Marks turned to us and we were able to get the material to Houston in a matter of hours. In addition to our own extensive files, we draw upon a number of other sources equipped to provide the factual information or statistics required. Under the Research Bureau, all this material is gathered, assessed and classified and made ready for distribution when needed.

The Research Bureau also analyzes books and articles which deal with Israel or the Middle East. When the book is favorable, it is recommended. When it is unfavorable, it is analyzed and distortions are pointed up by providing the factual data required, so that our local Councils will be prepared to react to the impact which these books make on the communities. We also stimulate book presentations to libraries, both community and university libraries. When a book like "A Nation of Lions... Chained" by Mehdi appears which attacks Israel and American Jews savagely, we bring the book to the attention of our local Councils, to the Jewish Community Councils, and other friends throughout the country, showing the inaccuracies and distortions. Very often, we are successful in righting the distorted impression which these books make.

The Research Bureau also services and works closely with our volunteer committees. For instance, the Inter-University Committee has been preparing text book material as a guide to social science teachers in the junior and senior high schools on the subject of Israel. It would be impossible for these busy academicians to do the painstaking research required. We are grateful that they have organized the material, are seeking the publisher and will seek proper channels through which to get its acceptance into the school systems throughout the country. Our Research Bureau also services requests for all types of information coming from organizations and individuals around the country. While some require only routine attention, others call for extensive research. In an average month, we service about 125 requests for information from Christians and Jews.

IV. Visitors to Israel -- Firmly convinced that an experience in Israel gives the visitor an understanding and appreciation of the problems and progress of that country for which there is no substitute, a good part of staff time is devoted to stimulating visits to Israel on the part of public opinion molders, either as individuals or groups. In some cases, subsidy is involved. We have gained many firm and lasting friends for Israel through this aspect of our program, especially in the area of clergy, academic people, and in the communications field.

V. Special Issues, Projects -- Our Department also has the responsibility for the preparation of memoranda and for informing the local Zionist Council leaders and Jewish community leadership as to our recommended position and steps for action on issues such as the Arab refugee problem, the Soblen case, the Jordan water dispute, etc. Similarly, we distribute material and advisories for special occasions such as the celebration of Israel's Anniversary, the tenth anniversary of Weizmann's passing, etc.

VOLUNTEER COMMITTEES

I. The Commission on Inter-Religious Affairs which is responsible for our effort in gaining friends in the Protestant and Catholic religious communities operates under the chairmanship of Dr. Judah Nadich. Dr. Nadich has been successful in bringing together an important group of rabbis, representing all shades of religious opinion - Orthodox, Conservative and Reform. Interestingly enough, Dr. Nadich now feels it necessary to add more Orthodox rabbis since the Reform and Conservative are preponderant on the Committee. Most of the member rabbis have close relationships with their national religious institutions as well as with Christian clergymen and, therefore, are in a position to help us advance our work in many communities which we try to reach.

The work of this Committee concerns itself with: monitoring the Christian church press, stimulating articles presenting Israel and Zionist ideology, answering the hostile attacks very often found in the publications of the Protestant and Catholic Church, as well as cultivating key religious leaders and editors.

Seminars for Christian Clergy. This has been an extremely successful project. There have been ten seminars during the past year, held in important communities throughout the United States. In Boston, Cardinal Cushing cooperated by seeing to it that 50 Catholic priests attended. These seminars are generally held under religious auspices. In Boston, for example, the seminar was held under the aegis of the Massachusetts Board of Rabbis which provided the right kind of umbrella for the kind of dialogue which took place, concerned with theological thought, Judaism and Israel, etc. Two excellent speakers, Rabbi Herbert Weiner and Dr. Cyrus Gordon of Brandeis University were the speakers and were very well received. The Commission is encouraged by its experience in this field and will continue the work of the seminars; towards this end it has produced a Manual for Rabbis giving the know-how of establishing these seminars, the steps to be taken, the scope of subject matter, approach, etc. This is a very active Committee and one that has great possibilities for the future, since one cannot underestimate the impact of public opinion of churchmen in this country.

II. Inter-University Committee on Israel -- This is a fairly new Committee, just now beginning to expand. The membership of this Committee had been limited previously to the New York area. (As stated above, it has worked during this past year and a half to produce a Unit on Israel for social studies teachers.) The Committee has now taken the first steps towards transforming itself into a National Committee. Letters have gone out to university professors on campuses throughout the country. At this point, (a letter went out only a short time ago to a small select list), 52 academicians have accepted membership. The names of those who have accepted are highly respected social and political scientists, economists, physicists, historians, etc. It is too early to know how effectively the Committee can exploit this new membership. There is need of a Newsletter which will give information on academic life in Israel, problems facing the Israel universities, Arab-Israel problems, etc. There should be reports on the work of visiting professors from Israel and to Israel. There will be an attempt to secure one or two articles a year in the leading academic publications in this country. All of this calls for great effort and, I am afraid, additional budget, if it is to be effective.

The Inter-University Study Tour of Israel -- A very successful tour has just been completed, made up of 49 participants who for the most part paid their own way. Two Negro participants were sponsored by the B'nai B'rith and the Anti-Defamation League. Although the tour was under the aegis of the Inter-University Committee, only one-third of the participants came from the universities; two-thirds represented Christian clergy, of 11 denominations. The group came from 19 states. We have learned a great deal from this experience. We are now preparing for the next tour on the basis of achievements as well as problems encountered. We are hopeful that we can secure more academic people this year and if we have a sufficient number, we will divide the tour into two sections when it arrives in Israel since the interest of the clergy and the academic people do not always coincide. This was a true seminar - 28 days spent in Israel - with a one-week seminar sponsored by the Hebrew University, with an attempt to present all phases of Israel life in depth. The tour members covered the whole country, met important personages, and came back not only with enthusiasm but

with knowledge. These people have already proved helpful to us on their return. A Seminar on Israel is being sponsored by St. Louis University (Catholic) and Webster College. It was initiated by Dr. Clement Mihanovich, Chairman of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at St. Louis University who was a member of the tour and came back with a desire to spread knowledge and understanding of Israel, its problems and its achievements. Other seminars are being planned. Many more could be set up if the budget allowed. We have very enthusiastic reports from the communities from which these tour members came. They have appeared on platforms, have written articles. They have spread reports of Israel and their experiences, which are enhancing Israel's image on the American scene.

III. Magazine Committee -- This is a very important Committee, chaired by a man who holds a key position on the editorial level in the magazine business. He knows everyone in the trade, has important contacts and exploits them on behalf of Israel. He has just returned from his first visit to Israel where he had an opportunity to discuss the work of his Committee with the men in Israel who are concerned with good public relations for Israel in this country. The Committee itself is composed of 15 writers and editors who are eminent in their respective fields, has built up a "Bank of Ideas" for free lance writers who go to Israel in search of articles and has provided the Israelis with a better idea of the kind of material which is acceptable to the American reading public and magazine editors. We cannot pinpoint all that has already been accomplished by this Committee except to say that it has been responsible for the writing and placement of articles on Israel in some of America's leading magazines.

Writers planning a European visit are invited to sessions of the Committee and encouraged or helped to go to Israel. There is a discussion of the kind of story they should look for, one which may likely bring forth an article in a magazine with which the writer has contact. It also holds sessions with writers who have returned from Israel. The important thing is that an ever-growing group of professional writers, editors, etc. are thinking about and talking about Israel, a process which will inevitably make an impact and help our work in the future.

IV. TV-Radio Committee -- This Committee is composed of professionals in this field, primarily producers and writers. Its chairman until this October was a professional public relations woman who is unable to continue in that capacity. As her successor, we have been fortunate in securing the services of the director of creative projects of an important TV chain. We are hopeful that through his contacts in the profession, we shall be able to expand the influence and work of the Committee even beyond what we have accomplished in the past year.

The Committee arranges for talks and interviews on radio and TV; submits ideas for possible programs to stations and networks so as to give a better and more sympathetic understanding of Israel to the viewing American public; and takes steps to counteract hostile propaganda in these media. In view of the many millions of Americans who daily watch TV and radio, this is one of the more important media in which we must expand our work.

V. Committee on Community Relations -- This Committee, under the chairmanship of Mr. Bernard Harkavy, has developed into a very interesting and useful instrumentality. It concerns itself with the Negro community, a most complex community where we have many problems. Because of the work which Israel carries on in many new nations of Africa, however, there is a growing sympathetic response from the

Negro community to Israel's role. Last year, Eliahu Elath, then in charge of the Afro-Asian Institute for Labor Studies, came to this country; we sponsored a reception for him at the Israel Consulate to which were invited the outstanding members of the Negro community in New York. So favorable was the impact of these men and women that we were told by the Jewish groups concerned with better inter-racial relationships that this effort helped them greatly in their own important work. Four staff people from those Jewish groups have joined our Committee which has already spread a better understanding of the impact that Israel has made on the African nations, the help which it is giving, and the bond of friendship which is growing up between the Africans, for whom the Negroes feel a strong affinity, and Israel. Special mailings have gone to the Negro press; speakers and films have been placed before Negro groups, etc.

VI. Public Relations Advisory Council -- This is our newest Committee which has had only its first meeting and, therefore, it is difficult to know how it will develop. One of the more important public relations men in this city was invited by the Government of Israel to introduce a course on public relations at the University of Tel Aviv and to help the Government map out better procedures for its own public relations effort. Israel was delighted with the contribution which this man made, and he, in turn, came back excited and deeply interested in Israel and everything for which it stood. We were asked to approach him to build up a committee of public relations men who could be called on when and if problems arose which needed the technical know-how and assistance which only such people could give. Mrs. Epstein approached him, found him most responsive. He sent out a letter and last week 15 of the outstanding public relations men of this city sat around this table to consider how they could be of help in presenting a positive picture of Israel in the U.S.

The first meeting was inconclusive, inevitably. We were not prepared to tackle specific problems. There was a varied degree of knowledge and understanding of Israel among the men, but there was a real interest on the part of all. A second meeting is being called for which we will be much better prepared. We are hopeful that out of it will come a group to whom we can turn and from whom we can get the kind of advice that will prevent us from groping, blindly seeking for the proper approach to our public relations problems.

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The Role of the Communities

One word about our effort to transplant this work at the grass roots level, without which its final impact is lost. Mr. Katzman will report at a later date for the Organization Department, but I want here only to add a note. From the minutes of meetings held in such cities as Baltimore, Philadelphia, Boston and Detroit, we get the strong feeling that some of that which is being done in New York is being transmitted and rooted in the communities. In Baltimore, for instance, there will be a Seminar for Christian Clergy under the aegis of a Johns Hopkins University professor. Our effort to bring in men and women whose services will be available to Israel and to the Zionist movement can best be carried to a successful conclusion through

the local Zionist Councils, provided they draw into their work the best talents in their own communities.

However, we are only at the beginning of development in this field, both nationally and locally. The prospects for spreading a real understanding of Israel and of the Zionist movement among Jews and Christians in this country are bright. I am convinced that it can be done. The mechanism is here - what is needed is a willingness and enthusiasm of Jews and Zionists throughout the country to mobilize their strengths, to function as a unified group, and to seize the initiative in presenting the kind of picture of Israel and our Zionist movement which we are trying to build.

One last word. From our experience with our volunteer Committees, we have learned that we can attract into our fold men and women who have no present Zionist affiliation, no definite understanding of what Zionism is - but who have an excited interest in Israel and a willingness to help. Out of their work on the Committees comes a stronger sense of identification, not only with Israel but with Jewish problems and with the Jewish community. Some of them are beginning to understand the meaning of Jewish peoplehood. If we know how to exploit this willingness to become a more integral part of the Jewish people, we can begin to meet our Zionist responsibility, which is an overwhelming one. We must find the tasks, the approach, and the *raison d'etre* for Jews all over this country, who, through the channel of the American Zionist Council effort and the wide program of activity it offers, will find their place in Jewish life and will strengthen our American Jewish community for our own sake as American Jews, and for the cause of Israel.

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