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THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date April 20, 1972
to Names listed below
from Seymour Samet
subject National Black Political Convention

call Salys - Tues

I believe it is essential for us to consider the implications of inter-group relations of the Black Political Convention held in Gary last month. As you know it has been hailed by many black leaders as being one of the most significant developments in American-Black history. I also believe this to be so. For that reason I think it important that we meet in order to consider what kinds of programmatic responses we should be making.

A specific aspect of this concern is the continued anti-Israel position taken by the Steering Committee. A copy of their news release to this effect is attached. Add to this the need to evaluate the increased status which Baraka has been given despite his previous anti-Semitic writings.

We will meet for luncheon in Conference Room C on April 27th, at 12:15PM, to discuss the above. I do hope you can attend.

SS/so
Attmts

H. Bookbinder
M. Ellerin
M. Fine
H. Fleischman

B. Gold
S. Katz
W. Katz
S. Lachman

I. Laster
H. Lazere
M. Tanenbaum
I. Terman

STEERING COMMITTEE
NATIONAL BLACK POLITICAL CONVENTION

FROM: Co-Chairman Charles C. Diggs, Jr. (D-Mich.)
Co-Chairman Richard G. Hatcher, Mayor (Gary, Ind.)
Co-Chairman Imamu Baraka (Newark, N.J.)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAR 29 1972

WASHINGTON, D.C., March 28--A reaffirmation of unity was reached by the Steering Committee of the National Black Political Convention at an executive session held at Howard University on March 24, 1972.

Co-Chairmen Charles C. Diggs, Jr. (D-Mich.), Mayor Richard G. Hatcher of Gary, Ind. and Imamu A. Baraka of Newark, N.J. presided over the meeting of state chairmen and representatives of Black national organizations who were certified at the Gary Convention (March 10-12).

At the Washington meeting, a restatement and clarification was agreed upon by the Steering Committee on two controversial resolutions that were passed in Gary -- the Israeli resolution and bussing.

The resolution on Israel, adopted at the March 24 meeting, declared support of the Organization of African Unity as the official representative body which speaks for Africans on the continent and resolved that the position of the OAU and the UN Commission on Human Rights is valid and fair.

The Steering Committee went on record in agreement with the OAU positions calling for (1) condemnation of the Israeli government for her expansionists policy and forceful occupation of the sovereign territory of another state; (2) measures to be taken to alleviate the suffering and improve the position of the Palestinian people in Israel; (3) support for the struggle of Palestinian people for self determination and (4) calling for concurrence in the UN Commission on Human Rights position that Israel rescind and desist from all practice affecting the demographic structure or physical character of occupied Arab territories and the rights of their inhabitants.

Also, at the follow-up meeting in Washington, a resolution on bussing was adopted in which the body concurred that bussing is not the real issue in American education today. The resolution condemned the dishonesty of the Nixon Administration and other forces in making bussing an issue when, in fact, bussing has officially been used to maintain segregation for many years in many sections of the country. The real educational issue for the Black community is how to get supreme quality education for Black youngsters.

(more)

The newly adopted resolution was critical of the positions put forth by both Nixon and Wallace. It was resolved that Blacks would disassociate themselves from these positions and that they cannot have Blacks disintegrated out of political power achieved recently by (1) Nixon's plan to take us back to Plessy versus Ferguson; or (2) the courts disintegration of our children into white dominated school boards, budgets, curricula.

The resolution further stated: our politics is that we must have control of our own education with bussing, and any other tool which guarantees quality, as an option and also protects all rights guaranteed under the 14th Amendment.

In a continuing show of unity, the question of the Chairmanship of the Michigan delegation resulted in a stated willingness to cooperate by both State Senator Coleman Young, the certified Chairman of the Michigan delegation, and Riley Smith, Jr. who was voted chairman of the remaining Michigan delegation after the main body walked out of the Convention in Gary in protest. Senator Young was ill in Michigan and could not attend the Washington meeting.

Mr. Smith, who was at the meeting, offered the following recommendations: (1) that he be named as Co-Chairman of the Michigan delegation; (2) that the right to file a minority report dissenting or offering additional views to a report of the majority be guaranteed, and (3) that he and his group have the right to name one half of the Michigan members to the proposed new National Black Political Assembly which will be a continuing body of the National Black Political Convention.

The Steering Committee agreed to support these recommendations and the spirit of reconciliation which both sides appeared to offer. However, the Steering Committee's agreement was admittedly advisory in recognition of the fact that the final decision rests within a meeting of the full Michigan delegation.

The Honorable Walter E. Fauntroy, D.C. Delegate, submitted a report on the Platform Committee, and his recommendation was concurred in that any revisions from the various state delegations would have to be received by April 22. The final document, known as the Black Agenda, is to be ratified at a meeting of the Steering Committee in Greensboro, North Carolina on May 6, and will be released on May 19.

The Black Agenda is a statement defining those issues around which Blacks must rally in 1972 and beyond.

(more)

The proposed National Black Political Assembly will serve as a political structure to operate between conventions and implement its directives. Among the functions of the Assembly will be the endorsement and support of candidates, conduct of voter education and registration drives, lobbying for Black interests, both here and abroad, and making recommendations to the National Convention and to the Black community. It would be an issue-oriented focal point of Black politics. It would also be one of the chief components in dealing with other established political elements and institutions.

Four hundred twenty seven(427) representatives to the National Black Political Assembly will be named, taking into consideration representatives from all sections of the country and all segments of the Black community.

An eleven-member Commission was named to oversee election of these representatives. The Commission includes the three co-chairmen and regional and organizational representatives.

The day long meeting in Washington, provided further evidence that the National Black Political Convention, as an instrument for political empowerment of the nation's Blacks, is a growing reality.

(TEXT OF RESOLUTIONS ATTACHED)

FULL TEXT

(Resolutions adopted at Steering Committee meeting, March 24, 1972)

Bussing Resolution

Bussing is not the real issue in American education today, and we condemn the dishonesty of the Nixon Administration and other forces in making bussing an issue when, in fact, bussing has officially been used to maintain segregation for many years in many sections of the country.

The real educational issue for the Black community is how do we get supreme quality education for all our youngsters.

We condemn as false the notion that Black children are unable to learn unless they are in the same setting with white children; and further we disassociate ourselves from the positions put forth by Nixon or Wallace.

We cannot have Blacks disintegrated out of political power achieved recently by (1) Nixon's plan to take us back to Plessy versus Ferguson; or (2) the courts disintegration of our children into white dominated school boards, budgets, curricula.

Our politics is that we must have control of our own education with bussing, and any other tool which guarantees quality, as an option and also protects all rights guaranteed under the 14th Amendment.

Israeli Resolution

1. Whereas, as an African people we fully support the struggle of oppressed peoples against their oppressors, and
2. Whereas, we recognize that a crisis exists in the Middle East involving the oppressed people of North Africa, and
3. Whereas, we support the OAU as the representative body which speaks for our brothers on the continent and that the position of the OAU and the UN Commission on Human Rights is valid and fair, therefore, be it resolved that the convention go on record as being in agreement with the OAU positions that call for:

1. The Israeli government to be condemned for her expansionists policy and forceful occupation of the sovereign territory of another state

2. Measures to be taken to alleviate the suffering and improve the position of the Palestinian people in Israel

3. The NBPC should also resolve to support the struggle of Palestine for self determination

4. The NBPC concurs also with the UN position that Israel rescind and desist from all practice affecting the demographic structure or physical character of occupied Arab territories and the rights of their inhabitants.

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The Bulletin of the Chicago Board of Rabbis

Jews and Baptists: A Dialogue

Impressions of the Jewish-Baptist Scholars' Conference
in Louisville, Kentucky, August 18-20

By David Graubart

Presiding Rabbi of the Bet Din
of the Chicago Region of the Rabbinical Assembly

The famed Dialogue — the reference is to the institution as such — ought to be seen, to use the Spinoza phrase, *sub specie aeternitatis*, in the light of history. It will then be better understood, and, more, it will be viewed, we believe, more sympathetically.

It will be recalled that in the Middle Ages theological disputations were held between Jews and Christians, but Jews were forced to be participants in these debates. Nahmanides was such a participant at Barcelona in 1263, where Pablo Christiani, a baptized Jew, was his opponent. The Jews at that time were apprehensive of danger as the disputation progressed, but Nahmanides held his own, and was even dismissed by the King with a gift of three hundred *maravedis*. Pablo received permission from King James to renew his disputations with the Jews



throughout Aragon and the royal dominions beyond the Pyrenees, with the Jews being ordered to defray the expense out of the taxes due to the King, and to supply him with books.

A number of years ago, a volume of Heinrich Heine's Jewish poems, entitled *Confessio Judaica*, appeared under Dr. Hugo Bieber's editorship. In one of these poems called *Disputation*, I detected a peculiar error. Heine speaks of a religious debate between a Spanish rabbi and a

"L' Shanah Tovah"

The officers and staff of the Chicago Board of Rabbis extend sincerest Rosh Hashanah greetings to all members, praying that the New Year be a year of divine blessings and peace for them and their dear ones, for Israel and all humanity.

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Jews and Baptists: A Dialogue

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Capuchin monk. In the course of the discussion, the rabbi appeals to God for aid, and incidentally mentions *Taufosyomtow*, referring, of course, to Rabbi Yomtov Lipmann Heller Wallerstein, author of *Tosafot Yom Tob*, a commentary on the *Mishnah*. Heller was born in 1579 and died in 1654. It is, therefore, clear that the Sephardic rabbi could not have mentioned the author of *Tosafot Yom Tob* in the year 1200, when, according to Heine, the theological disputation between rabbi and monk took place.

In to-day's dialogue, no one is *compelled* to be a participant. The encounter is purely voluntary. But there is great opposition to this activity on the part of segments of Jewish leadership. In *A Thought of the Week*, a leaflet containing the opinions of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson (Vol. II, No. 44, August 15, 1969, 1 Elul, 5729, Brooklyn, N.Y.), the renowned Hasidic rabbi answers the question "What should be the Jewish attitude to 'interfaith dialogue'?" He writes: "Anyone with some knowledge of Jewish history knows with what reluctance Jews viewed religious debates with non-Jews. There were many good reasons for this attitude, in addition to the basic reason that Jews do not consider it their mission to convert Gentiles to their faith, nor do they wish to expose themselves to the missionary zeal of other faiths." And further: "... The concept of 'brotherhood' has been misconstrued to require members of one faith to explain their religious beliefs and practices to members of another faith, and in return to receive instruction in the religion of others. Far from clarifying matters, these interfaith activities have, at best, added to the confusion, and, at worst, have been used with missionary zeal by those religions which are committed to proselytizing members of other faiths."

The opponents of the Dialogue have a strange, perhaps 'historical-hysterical' image of this activity. They suffer from a kind of malady of total recall with respect to it. They conjure up a picture from the past, being unaware of the realities surrounding the contemporary dia-

logue which is an academic discussion in a setting of a modern conference of scholars of the two faiths. Proselytism is out of the question even on the part of mission-oriented Southern Baptists with whom we met in Louisville. As one of the Jewish participants put it, "I do not mind efforts of Baptists to convert me, because I have an eye on three Baptists right now..."

The Jewish-Baptist Scholars' Conference, sponsored by the American Jewish Committee and the Southern Baptist Convention, was a gathering of twenty-five Jewish scholars and a corresponding number of Southern Baptist scholars, the aim of which was to exchange views on the attitudes of Judaism and Christianity to major theological and social issues of our times. The object was the creation of better understanding between the two communities, a healthier intellectual and spiritual climate, and the possibility of cooperation on many levels. As one Christian speaker put it, "We must hang together, or we shall hang separately."

In small discussion groups set up by the Conference, there was complete candor in the approaches of the two communities. The Jewish spokesmen attempted to present an authentic picture of Judaism in our times and to remove all kinds of misunderstandings vis-a-vis the Jewish community.

Scholarly papers were read by a number of the men, on such subjects as "Jews in the South"; "The Meaning of Conversion in the Christian Faith"; "Prejudice and Social Justice"; "The Meaning of Conversion-Turning in Judaism"; "Church-State Relations"; "The Jew in Christian Thought and Practice"; "Christians, Racism and Anti-Semitism"; etc. The presentations stood on a high academic level and were most always liberal, yet authentic in their philosophy. The Southern Baptists were excellent scholars, of course. The Jews, likewise.

One very special paper, "The Meaning of Israel," presented by Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, Director of the Interreligious Affairs Department of the American Jewish Committee, in which he delineated the meaning of the State of Israel in religious terms, was an act of *Kiddush*

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Jews and Baptists: A Dialogue

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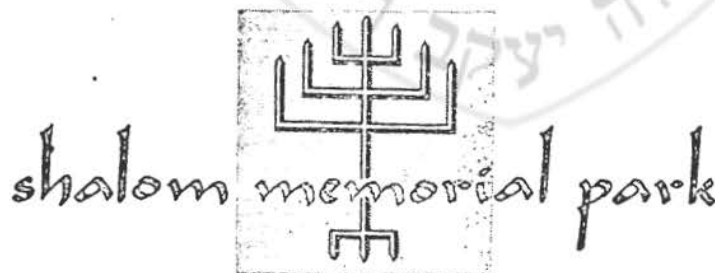
ha-Shem. If the Dialogue means such education and elucidation, then *Kol ha-Kavod* to the Dialogue! In passing — thanks to Rabbi Tanenbaum, and his able assistant, Rabbi A. James Rudin, for convening the Conference.

The Conference was permeated by a spirit of self-criticism on the part of the Baptists for failure to speak out during major crises affecting the Jewish and general community. A tone of *mea est culpa* was often felt, and the closing session impressed me with its *Neilah* mood. We sensed a new climate of cooperation in which Jews and Christians may move in the future. With regard to anti-Semitism, one speaker, Dr. Eric C. Rust, professor of Christian Apologetics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where the Conference took place, said that it was anti-Christian. Remember Maurice Samuel's *The Great Hatred*? Dr. Rust, at the conclusion of his learned paper, said the *Kaddish d'Rabbanan*, and ended with the words: "May He bring His kingdom to dominion within your lifetime and within your days and within

the lifetime of the whole house of Israel — shortly, within a brief time."

In the papers, one sensed an interesting rapprochement on the part of the Southern Baptists, a gradual acceptance of a Jewish *Weltanschauung*, and a kind of this-worldliness if not a 'secularism' so characteristic of Judaism. Someone said that Jews are, in their concern for the here and now — *hic et nunc*, optimistic pessimists, while Christians, with their other-worldly orientation, are pessimistic optimists.

The meeting was in many aspects historic, but mainly because it was a "first," for it was most unusual for the Southern Baptist Convention to be a participant in a dialogue with Jews. The Southern Baptists have a reputation for religious fundamentalism which is generally not a friendly climate, conducive to such an encounter (called in modern Hebrew *Immut*, from *ammit*, friend, which gives the encounter a friendly character). The fact that the Southern Baptist Convention accepted the American Jewish Committee's invitation to the Dialogue is most impressive. The partnership was a wonderful one, and both Rabbi Tanenbaum and Dr. Joseph R. Estes, Secretary of the Department of Work Related to Non-



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Jews and Baptists: A Dialogue

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Evangelicals, Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, co-chairmen of the Conference, did an outstanding job, and deserve the gratitude of both communities for this accomplishment.

The Jewish-Baptist Scholars' Conference, held at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary during the days of August 18-20, 1969 was, from this viewpoint, truly historic.

ATTENTION!

Statements for dues and synagogue contributions have been mailed to the membership. All are requested to remit the amounts due as soon as possible. Your cooperation in this matter will be appreciated, and will help to carry on the important schedule of activities of the Board.

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