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Young Leadership Cabinet. 1976-1977.

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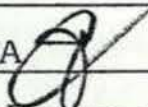
Inter-Office Correspondence

MAINE RUBBER INTERNATIONAL

WESTBROOK, MAINE 04092 USA



To: DNA

From: IJA 

Subject: HAF requests

Date: 22 February 1977

Confirming our telephone conversation of last night, HAF would appreciate the following:

- (1) Leonard Fein tape re Warsaw, Auschwitz, etc.
- (2) Leonard Fein tape from Palm Springs (Sunday A.M.).
- (3) IJA and LEA tape from Palm Springs
- (4) He would like to be added to our mailing list.
- (5) He would like to talk about the Jerusalem Academy as a YLC-IEF project at our next Annual Seminar.

mrh
cc: HAF/Israel ✓



MAINE RUBBER INTERNATIONAL

WESTBROOK, MAINE 04092, U.S.A.

I. JOEL ABROMSON
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

March 3, 1977

Herbert Friedman
15 Ibn Gabirol St.
Jerusalem, Israel

Dear Herb,

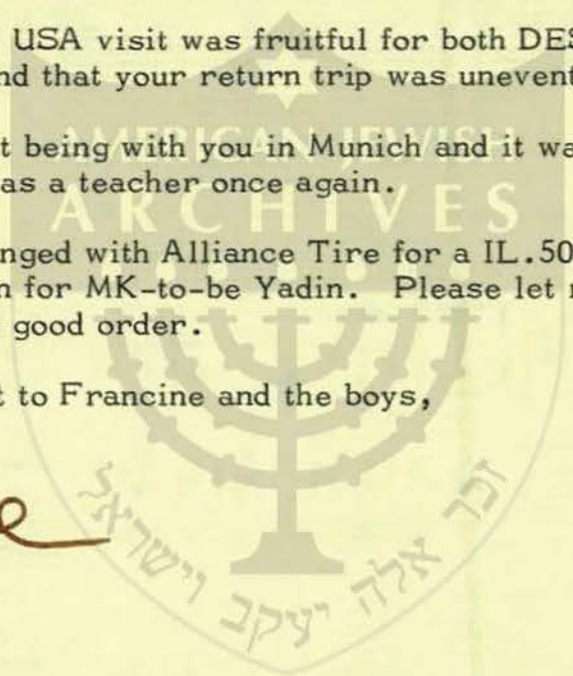
I hope your USA visit was fruitful for both DESH and the Academy and that your return trip was uneventful.

It was great being with you in Munich and it was a privilege having you as a teacher once again.

I have arranged with Alliance Tire for a IL.5000 contribution for MK-to-be Yadin. Please let me know if it is received in good order.

All the best to Francine and the boys,

Joel



MAINE RUBBER INTERNATIONAL

WESTBROOK, MAINE 04092, U.S.A.

*Young
Leadership*

I. JOEL ABROMSON
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

June 15, 1977

Herbert A. Friedman
15 Ibn Gabirol Street
Jerusalem 92430
ISRAEL

Shalom Herb,

I am really pleased that you and David Adler had an opportunity to "shmooze" after our Mission left. I think it can only be beneficial for all concerned.

This morning I read the transcript of your remarks to our Mission. Needless to say, it was just what the doctor ordered. Perhaps you'll never know just how much so:

You talked about the role American Jews have to play--and how important that role is. One of the guys in your audience, Allan Waxman of Phoenix, had been on a tremendous guilt trip about not having made aliyah. It was tearing him up inside and causing problems in his family. You relieved him of that guilt and set him in a direction that he prepared to follow when he came home. I know this because he said so in a tape recording he made for his wife as she wasn't with him. Allan died at a hospital near JFK airport shortly after we returned from Israel.

Herb, I am enclosing a copy of a letter I wrote before and during the European Young Leadership Conference. It occurred to me that after all the sharing you have done with us, I never shared with you some of my thoughts about that weekend.

Drishat shalom to Francine and the boys,

Joel

enclosure

Shalom Chaverim,

12 Midnight February 16 77

Some of you have dropped me a note, others have personally told me that you appreciate my keeping you up to date as I wander hither and yon as your representative. So, with your encouragement, I continue: the European Young Leadership Conference.

Maybe this time it is not just your encouragement I'll draw on, but also your strength. You see, I haven't been too excited about this trip from the beginning. Why? Munich--not Germany--Munich. And from here I have to go to Paris on business. The Paris of Dreyfus, Vichy, and Daoud. And you should know--it ain't easy getting there without flying Air France.

What is it about Munich that makes me feel this way? I was even repulsed when I arrived a few hours ago at the airport and saw MUNCHEN in green neon over the international arrivals building. I took a cab to my hotel, the Holiday Inn OLYMPIC. I said to myself that it has to get better. Some things never change--except it was Zvi Raviv (Director of Keren Hayesod Young Leadership) instead of David Adler sitting in the restaurant. Zvi introduced me to Josef something (I'll never learn to remember those foreign names) and Sonya something else. Both are young leaders in the Munich Jewish community. Sonya asked me what I thought of Munich and, unfortunately, I told her. She thinks I am very unfair to base an opinion on a 20 mark cab ride. I agreed that it was unfair but that I couldn't help it. I think her new mission in life is to make me change my mind--she was born here and loves this city. I would guess she was born in 1951 or 1952 (sigh); I guess that would tell part of the story.

At any rate I'll try to keep an open mind. But for the time being I just can't wait to get back home. Munchen-Olympic. Why did the young leaders have to pick this city, this hotel? Why do I have to go to Paris from here? Why? Why? Isn't that the question we've been asking for 2000 years, and 35 years, and 5 years, and 3 months? Why?

Thursday Morning 2/17/77

Just as I got into bed last night--a siren outside my window. Not one of those fire truck things--but one of those...I can't describe it but you've heard it in WWII movies.

As I reread the above, I hope that you don't think me melodramatic. Chaverim, I am not trying to evoke any kind of feeling from you--but I am trying to share mine. Thanks for being there and letting me.

Thursday night (very late)

Now I know "why Munich?" And I am ashamed that I asked because the answer should have been obvious to a guy who participated in the first Young Leadership Cabinet mission to Poland, who laid a wreath on behalf of 343 young leaders in Mauthausen, and who will bring another 80 young leaders to Auschwitz and Babi Yar in May.

How did I spend my day? First, I slept late--until 10:15 AM and, boy, did I need it. Then I went with Josef to the flughaven to pick up scholar-in-residence Herb Friedman. (Herb, some of you will remember, founded the Young Leadership Cabinet in 1960 while he was serving as Executive Vice-Chairman of the UJA; he has since moved to Israel). Tomorrow morning Herb is taking the group physically and emotionally through the Hitler period. Today, in order to check out the timing, we did a dry run--from the beer hall where Hitler started in 1923 to the sight of the Great Synagogue, the victim of Kristallnacht, November 1938. Josef, a lifelong resident of Munich, age 32, listened in amazement and kept saying "I've never been here." "Josef," I said to myself, "we've all been here." Josef's first inclination was to pooh-pooh the whole idea of a Munich tour and to rationalize the lack of mention of the Nazi era. But at the end of the ride, back to the hotel, he was trying to convince all the Munichers that tomorrow's "tour" is ultra-important. And tomorrow we add Dachau to what we did today.

This evening I made two more runs out to the airport. One to greet Peter Levy, the European Young Leadership Chairman, and the second to greet Liliana Ghitis from Milan. Liliana will be remembered by Bert Trobman, Ira Kellman, and Albie Hornblass who were with her during the Jewish Agency Assembly last summer. This is one of the great things about this whole young leader's "international Zionist conspiracy"--the great friendships you make and renew over the years. Those of you who have fulfilled your Cabinet obligation regarding Missions, should give very serious consideration to joining Neil this July for the International Mission. If you don't see one new thing in Israel, I think you'll find it a fascinating and broadening experience.

Friday

As advertised. From the beer hall to Dachau. A very interesting, even frightening, thing happened at the beer hall. The establishment is broken up into many sections. The large, very large, room where Hitler first announced his intentions is generally locked and is only opened on special occasions--like SS reunions. We talked our way in by promising to buy drinks on the way out. The older woman (Nazi era) who admitted us to the large hall absolutely forbade the taking of photographs. Yes, I got my photo; I stood behind Man Mountain Raviv who shielded me from the frau's watchful eye and sharp tongue.

From the beer hall to the bridge where Hitler's career could have ended in 1923 had only one policeman fired one well-aimed bullet, to the platz where Hitler suffered his first defeat, to his home (now the office of the Bavarian State Lottery), to the building where Chamberlain gave away Czechoslovakia, to the platz where the Fuhrer held many hypnotic rallies, to the sight of the Great Synagogue, to the one small monument erected to the victims of Nazism (ironically located on a small patch of grass opposite the Jordanian consulate), and on to Dachau.

"Here I am again," I thought, "entering still another gas chamber". (The Nazis claimed that this one was never used.) Auschwitz in 1973, Mauthausen in 1976, Dachau in 1977. Still more ovens (they were used), barracks, memorials, museums. Whenever you think you've seen it all, there is yet another place.

I am not going to try to describe Dachau except to say that 206,000 souls were registered here between 1933 and 1945. There is not really much left of the place and much of what stands was either reconstructed or erected since the war. The guidebook to Dachau is published in many different languages including Greek and Croatian, but not Hebrew or Yiddish. While I don't believe there is a conscious effort to rewrite history as in the USSR and Poland, I didn't notice any affirmative action either.

Unlike Mauthausen with its many "country" monuments, Dachau has three major memorials, Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish. Inside the Jewish memorial I was asked to lead the group in Kaddish. I did so reading from a siddur which had been issued by Zahal and left in the memorial by a thoughtful Israeli. Kaddish at Dachau recited from a Zahal siddur. Think about it.

Herb Friedman made history come alive...or dead...for us all. Warsaw and Auschwitz with Leonard Fein, Mauthausen with David Adler, Munich and Dachau with Herb Friedman. It's hard to believe that a willing-to-learn Jew from Portland, Maine could have amassed such a faculty.

Got to run. I must get ready for Kabbalat Shabbat.

Saturday night

This morning I was privileged to receive a very authoritative insight into the Munich Olympic massacre. One of the Keren Hayesod officials here in Germany, an Israeli, was the Israeli team's liason with the Jewish communities of Germany. It was his responsibility, for instance, to look after kosher food, synagogue facilities, etc. etc. He asked that I not identify him and I will respect his wishes--but for the purposes of this letter I'll call him Motti. Motti is a graduate of, and was an instructor in, the Wingate School of Physical Education. He also was one of the coaches who prepared the Israeli soccer team for the Mexican Olympics.

This morning I gathered up enough nerve to ask Motti if he would take me to Olympic park and explain to me what happened there and his part in it. Others had asked him to take the whole group and he refused--I don't know if it was because of the pain he felt might return or if it was because of his poor English. My gut feeling was that it was the former, he had not been back to the apartment at Connollystrasse 31 since the Yiskor service in September 1973. I gambled. I asked him and he said OK if Zvi would come with us to translate.

Obviously, I can't begin to tell you all that he told me--this letter would turn into a book. One story, however, Motti cannot figure out why the terrorists didn't come after him, too. He was in apartment #4; the terrorists invaded apartments #1, #2, and #3. He thinks it may be because he has a German sounding family name and his name was on his door. At any rate, when he finally left his apartment, during the drama, he went to Olympic headquarters. He was in such a state of shock that when he entered he started speaking to the head clerk in Hebrew. She answered in Hebrew. That girl, Susanna, is not Jewish but had lived on a kibbutz for six months. That girl is here this weekend--an employee of Keren Hayesod, working with Motti. I only wish there were more Jews with her love and devotion for Israel and the Jewish people.

This afternoon Herb Friedman began what will turn out to be an abbreviated version of his famous 18 hour speech on modern Jewish history. Today he brought us from pre-Herzl Zionism to 1921, the year of the first large scale riots against the Jews in the Yishuv. Yesterday he brought us from 1923 to 1945. We then broke for a little snack and Havdalah. Then back to post war history as told by a guy who lived it. Herb considers three years, 1945-1948, the most important years in all of Jewish history. More important than the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai--and he makes a convincing case. He closed that session with a few paragraphs from the Israel Declaration of Independence. If you have not read it, make it your business to do so.

We then piled into our bus (62 seats--I wonder if Israel has any on order) and went to the Munich Jewish community building where we were hosted by the Munich Young Leadership group. It was a fun evening consisting of welcoming remarks, a buffet, a multi-media presentation (for recruiting participants for the International Young Leadership mission in July) and Israeli entertainment. If even half of the people who told me they are going on that mission do indeed go, our American participants are going to meet some really super people.

On behalf of the Young Leadership Cabinet I accepted a beautiful calendar on which are photographs of many pre-war German synagogues. This calendar was the gift of the Munich Jewish community. You can't begin to imagine what it means to this community, which has literally been rebuilt by a small remnant, to host this European Young Leadership Conference. Another answer, equally valid, to my question of "Why Munich?"

It is now 1 AM and I have to be packed and ready to move out at 8 o'clock. At 8 I am having breakfast with a fellow who is attending this seminar only because somebody asked him to come. He has had zero involvement in things Jewish but the Europeans are hoping he'll jump in with both feet. It's my job to help him with that quantum leap. After breakfast Herb gives his 1948-present wrap-up.

Sunday

Herb finished with 1948 to the present...and beyond, then he showed the very strong 1965 Xerox film, Let My People Go. I believe a print is still available from the UJA library. It is a fantastic first or second leadership development program or wrap-up for a Retreat.

I then took my leave of the Conference to catch my plane to Paris. I could have stayed for the plenary session this afternoon but it would have meant flying to Paris on Air France. If I wasn't keen on flying AF before I came, let me just tell you that my visit to Connolystrasse 31 clinched it. I never thought I would ever choose Lufthansa over Air France--but then who would have thought France wouldn't release Abu Daoud to Germany.

Chevra, thanks for listening.

I hope to see you soon.

L'hitraot,

I. Joel Abromson

Irving Bernstein

10.6.77

HERB

You will enjoy the attached.

You will also be interested to learn
that at the H.U.C. graduation
at Temple Square - Frank
Lauterbach was honored w. M. A.

Doctorate & his address linked

Stephen Wise & HAF for their
major contributions to the

Jewish people

IRB

GARY ROSENBLATT

THE YOUNGERS OF ZION

UJA'S YOUNG LEADERSHIP CABINET AND HOW IT GOT THAT WAY

Look! Up in the sky! It's a bird!
No, it's a plane! Yes, it is a
plane! An El Al plane, filled with
Super Jews! Able to write huge
checks in a single motion! Able
to solicit millions without losing
their cool! Able to visit Israel at
the drop of a hint, to lead Jewish
organizations without breaking
their stride, to say "yes" to new
tasks with narry a flinch.

Do not think of them as Green
Berets, or as the Palmach; dis-
guised as young businessmen and
professionals, perfectly conven-
tional in manner and appearance,
their secret is more startling:
they are the Youngers of Zion.
Their protocol is unwritten, but
its mandate is clear: commit to
Jewish survival and to Jewish
life; raise money, raise Jews.
Too dramatic? Perhaps. But
while the 223 members of the all-

volunteer Young Leadership
Cabinet of the United Jewish Ap-
peal are not precisely Super
Jews, they do come closer to
earning that sobriquet than any
other group in American Jewish
life (with the possible exception
of the Lubavitch missionaries).

Consider: a group of high-
powered men between the ages
of 25 and 40, hand chosen for
their leadership potential, travel-
ing extensively across the U.S.
not only to solicit contributions
for UJA but also to educate "the
masses." Indeed their goal, ac-
cording to their manual, is noth-
ing less than "assuring the sur-
vival of Judaism—the meaningful
physical and cultural survival of
the Jewish people and the devel-
opment of Israel."

A lofty objective, but not as
pretentious as one might think.

For despite various criticisms of
the Young Leadership Cabinet—
that it is elitist, sexist, too in-
volved with egos and the al-
mighty dollar—few would dis-
agree that this 15-year-old organi-
zation is one of the most dynam-
ic and imaginative exercises in
the history of American Jewish
philanthropy.

The Cabinet sees itself, and is
seen by the community, as the
vanguard of Jewish leadership.
Hundreds of men have "graduat-
ed" from the program since it be-
gan, and an estimated 80 percent
have gone on to assume major
leadership positions in their com-
munities and in national organiza-
tions.

Among its many achievements,
the Cabinet is credited with being
an early leader in:

- establishing "missions" to Is-

rael, and, more recently, Eastern Europe:

- providing the UJA with an "army" of trained speakers and solicitors for its annual campaign;
- initiating scores of community leadership development programs, involving thousands of men and women;
- conducting numerous regional retreats, conferences, and seminars, reaching young leaders throughout the country; and
- establishing a far-reaching program for the Jewish self-education of its members, ranging from book-of-the-month offerings to retreat seminars to complete curricula for self-study.

Alan Rudy, a former Cabinet chairman from Houston, sees the Cabinet as perhaps the only American Jewish organization which can afford to experiment, to take chances and not be afraid of failing. "The Cabinet is really the risk-taking arm of American Jewry," he says. "The beauty of the Cabinet is that it is a relatively small, highly responsive group of motivated, creative people. We can get away with trying things that other organizations cannot." He noted that the Cabinet itself has served as a prototype for all other Young Leadership-type organizations created within the American Jewish community.

Rudy and others stress that the Cabinet was originally envisioned as a bold experiment—an organization set up to provide an alternative to the existing dollars-and-cents mentality of Jewish fund raising.

That vision belonged to Rabbi Herbert Friedman, who, when he conceived the Cabinet in 1962, was executive vice chairman of UJA. The story goes that Rabbi Friedman (who now lives in Israel) was struck by the fact that nearly all of the major contributors to UJA were middle-aged and older. Worried over the fu-

Gary Rosenblatt is the editor of the Baltimore Jewish Times.

ture of national Jewish leadership, he sent telegrams to the sons of the top contributors, calling them to New York for an urgent meeting. At that meeting, so the story goes, Rabbi Friedman told the young men: You are the next generation of Jewish leaders.

And so the Cabinet was born.

Whether or not the story is apocryphal, it is known that in its early years the Cabinet was composed primarily of the sons of generous UJA contributors and was geared almost exclusively towards fund raising.

"The methods Rabbi Friedman used were brilliant," one veteran Cabinet member recalled. "He created an elitist group and he appealed to the members' egos. He told them they were special and he made them feel special by taking them on missions to Israel to meet with top government leaders. It's heady stuff for a 30-year-old guy to meet a Golda Meir, a Moshe Dayan, to visit secret military bases for briefings. It was a real ego trip. And it worked."

It still does. Over the years the Cabinet has grown from 40 members to more than 200; it has broadened its vision and attracted young men from a broad spectrum of religious and professional backgrounds; and most significant, it has put an increasing emphasis on "doing Jewish." But its image and style have remained intact and the type of individual who is drawn into—and sought by—the Cabinet is still basically the same: an influential (usually wealthy) community leader who displays national leadership potential and a willingness to work hard.

The members themselves use such adjectives as "hard-driving," "successful," "upwardly mobile," "aggressive" and even "compulsive" in describing their common traits. And they usually admit to having substantial ego needs—needs which they say the Cabinet is able to fulfill in a socially acceptable way.

But they do differ, at least to a degree, on what they perceive the Cabinet's primary objective to be: whether it is to provide UJA with future national leaders, to train leaders for the local communities, to spread Jewish identity and awareness to the masses, or merely to raise funds. It is to do all of those things, they say. But which should come first?

While most members today would agree that fund-raising is the "bottom line," in the early years of the Cabinet, fund-raising was virtually the only line. Still there were a few members who argued that Jewish content should be an essential element of the Cabinet. Arden Shenker, an attorney in Portland, Oregon, who has probably been a member of the Cabinet longer than anyone, was a leader of the minority. "In the early years," he recalled, "there were some members who shared Herb Friedman's vision" of a fund raising organization deeply committed to promoting self-awareness and Jewish experience. "But in those days, it was an aspiration. Now it's a standard."

The change came slowly, though. "In the mid and late 1960's, the Cabinet was totally into fund raising and leadership development," said Michael Pelavjin of Flint, Michigan, who was Cabinet chairman in 1973. "There was no Jewishness involved at all. But this was true of UJA and virtually every other major American Jewish organization prior to the Six Day War," he hastened to add. "I think it was around 1970 that the Cabinet began to accept the idea that we're not just solicitors, we're educators."

The major programs of the Cabinet in the early years were leadership development, missions to Israel, seminars, and solicitation training. It was in the early 1970's that the Judaica program was added. The idea behind it was that no one can be considered qualified for Jewish leadership in the community without

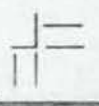
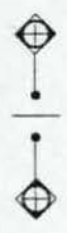


*David Adler
Neil Cooper
Donald Gould*

*Michael Pelavin
Gary Rubin
Richard Manekin*

*I. Joel Abramson
Herbert Friedman
Neil Norry*

*R. Alan Rudy
Alvin Katz
Arden Shenker*



some knowledge of, and pride in, the Jewish people and their heritage.

The Judaica program involves sending the Cabinet members books each month on Jewish history, philosophy, art, literature and holiday observances. In the past year, for example, the members received such works as *A History of Zionism* by Walter Laquer, *Why I Am A Jew* by Edmond Fleg, *Destruction of the European Jews* by Raul Hilberg, and Elie Wiesel's *Messengers of God*. As to whether or not the books are read, the Cabinet manual notes that "it is not the responsibility of the Cabinet to determine criteria for the level of Judaic knowledge. It is the Cabinet's responsibility, however, to make avenues open for Cabinet members to explore substantive Judaica for themselves."

It was also in the early 1970's that the Cabinet felt a responsibility to reach out beyond the very wealthy for its members. A deliberate attempt was made to upgrade the intellectual and perhaps spiritual level of the Cabinet by adding to its ranks a small number of rabbis and academicians. These men were expected to have the same responsibilities as everyone else and to contribute a significant percentage of their incomes to UJA. (In fact, one academician was reportedly told in no uncertain terms to increase his pledge or resign from the Cabinet. He upped his pledge.) The percentage of professors and rabbis in the Cabinet has increased over the years but still remains small and some observers continue to view them as "fan dancers," as the token "thoughtful" Jews mixed in with the businessmen.

Yet, in a way, the fund raisers and the educators are not incompatible. They build on each other. For what motivates a successful fund raiser—or contributor—more than his sense of Jewish heritage? Or, in the cliché of the business world, "a good salesman is one who believes in

his product."

Dr. David Rosenberg, a pediatrician and former Cabinet member from Vineland, New Jersey, explained, "I feel you can't raise money without emotion. And it is hard to have emotion without having a feeling for Yiddishkeit. To be an effective fund raiser, you must be an effective Jew."

One thing is certain. The Cabinet members are effective, and they take their roles seriously. (They contributed about \$4 million to UJA this past year, averaging slightly under \$20,000 each.)

Cabinet membership is demanding, and it requires a sacrifice clearly beyond that of the normally "involved" Jewish leader. Members are expected to work outside of their local communities, to solicit and speak anywhere in the country—and to pay for their own travel expenses. It is not unusual for members to be called upon to speak three or four times a month.

In addition, a Cabinet member must be prepared to participate on the boards of local and national Jewish organizations, to organize and supervise local leadership development programs, to fill leadership roles at regional and national conferences, and to attend the UJA National and Regional Conferences, the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds General Assemblies, regional Cabinet meetings, the annual Cabinet retreat (which is closed to wives and children) and at least one Cabinet mission to Israel in the first year. (Again, all at their own expense.)

All of this travel and responsibility can take a toll on a member's family life. Linda Abromson, whose husband Joel, the current Cabinet chairman, has been away from home more than 80 days in the last year on Cabinet business, acknowledged, "It can be tough on family life. But it's a matter of priorities and it depends on the attitude of the wife and the family." Richard

Manekin of Baltimore said his being on the Cabinet has had "no negative effect" on his family life, but he added that "for some there is a strain," and he wondered how many Cabinet members are divorced or separated.

No such statistics are kept, but, given the "workaholic" nature of many members, it would not be surprising to find that a number of them are no longer married. Alvin Katz, a Cabinet member from Baltimore who is separated from his wife, remarked, "I would say that I have neglected my family over the years. Maybe subconsciously I sought this kind of Jewish organizational involvement because my marriage was unhappy."

Volunteering time and energy may put a strain on some, but the toughest requirement of all on Cabinet members is to "give a good gift" to the UJA. This is insured by a unique—some would say harrowing—technique used within the Cabinet and known as "total disclosure."

Each Cabinet member must be completely candid with his peers in discussing his finances. At the annual retreat, when it is time for the pledges for the year to be made, the entire Cabinet splits up into groups of six to nine people. The senior member of each group starts off the session by disclosing his complete financial situation, from income to expected inheritance, and then announces what his planned pledge for the year will be. The others in the room are free to question him, to urge him to increase his pledge or, on rare occasions, to caution him to decrease his contribution. Not until everyone in the room agrees upon the figure is the man's final pledge determined. Then, it is the next man's turn, and the process is repeated until everyone in the room has made a pledge, sanctioned by the others.

"It's extremely successful financially, but personally I don't

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YOUNGERS

continued from page 40

like it," says Richard Manekin. "I think it makes the new members scared and uncomfortable. People at that level know how much they can give."

Even Joel Abromson acknowledged that "there is a tremendous amount of pressure to give a big gift, but much of it you put on yourself."

Mervin Verbit, a Cabinet member and sociologist, calls the total disclosure policy the closest thing American Jewry has to self-imposed taxation.

Others referred to the policy as self-immolation, a kind of "can you top this?" for self-sacrifice and financial martyrdom.

According to David Adler, who as director of the Cabinet is its top professional, the members' gifts range from "three-figure to six-figure." He and others emphasized that it is not the quantity of the contribution as much as the quality that really counts, depending on who is giving and how much he can afford. "I've seen cases where someone who upped his pledge \$300 has been praised as much as someone else who upped his pledge \$25,000," one member said.

Chairman Abromson said that as a general rule, members are asked to contribute five percent of their first \$25,000 in income and ten percent of what comes after that.

"I think it's generally agreed that they're the toughest fund raisers in the world," says Donald Gould, a former Cabinet chairman from Albany, New York. "They're more diplomatic with others, but when it comes to giving, they're very hard on themselves."

What motivates a young man to volunteer so much of his time, energy and income to the Cabinet? Each member has his own

story to tell, of course, but many are remarkably similar. They often involve a young man from a nominally observant home who has given little or no thought to Jewish philanthropy or observance. And then something happens to him. Something that, in his words, "turned me on." For some it was the Six Day War. For others it was the Yom Kippur War. For most it was attending a UJA convention or participating in a mission to Israel.

Linda Abromson recalled, "When my mother approached Joel and me in 1961 for a \$25 pledge to UJA, we turned her down. We just weren't involved." But through a series of coincidences, she and her husband attended a National UJA convention in New York several years later. "At first we wondered why such bright, with-it people would want to be involved in Jewish life," she said. "But we were very impressed by the quality of the people. And we just fell in love with it. We jumped in with both feet."

The Abromsons' experience was not uncommon. Michael Pelavin had to be literally dragged to a UJA leadership conference by the executive director of his local federation. "I had been active in Hillel when I went to college, but then I dropped out," he said. "Attending that conference changed my life. Afterwards, I decided to go to Israel with my wife. We went for three weeks in 1966 and were impressed by the country and the caliber of the people on our trip. My theory now is: get a young man to visit Israel and you've got him for life."

Donald Gould said that he was first approached to join the Cabinet "because I was my father's son. I wasn't too intrigued, but I went to Israel, half as a lark and half serious. I came back with the realization that I had to do more, that being a Jew today is a serious business."

And Cabinet involvement has often led to intensified religious

awareness among the members. A number have become more observant in their homes and have enrolled their children in Jewish day schools. Says Gould, "My being on the Cabinet has changed my life and my family's life entirely. When I was a boy, I went to *cheder*, had my bar mitzvah, and then they never saw me again. But through the Cabinet experience, after 16 years of marriage, my wife and I decided to keep kosher, to observe Shabbat. And we intend to make *aliyah*. All this from someone who didn't know where the Suez Canal was a few years ago."

"That's the intriguing part of what the Cabinet is," he continued. "Some people think of it as a group that has the idea: 'let's go get the money from people and get out.' But it's so much more than that. It's a major vehicle for the rebirth and regeneration of Judaism. It opens you up to thinking 'what's the thread of Jewish survival?'"

"We have an obligation to understand Jewish values, and the Cabinet has heightened my Jewish awareness. You put 'Jewish' on the table and people will take from it."

Gould also noted that the peer group aspect of the Cabinet is a key to its success. "It is very difficult for a bright, successful young man to come to terms with the fact that on one level—Jewishly—he's ignorant. It's too embarrassing for him to deal with, so he would never bother to explore his Jewishness alone. What the Cabinet does is take a whole group of these bright young guys and help them learn together. It removes the stigma of ignorance."

Perhaps the most rewarding aspect of the Cabinet experience for most members has been the close friendships they have established. All of the men I spoke with mentioned it, and some noted that their closest friends in the world were those they met through the Cabinet. They told of helping each other to make cross-

country moves, of vacationing with each other's families. "One of the greatest benefits of the Cabinet experience," said Neil Norry of Rochester, New York, "is the relationship with peers and the friendships that grew out of it."

Like lifelong friendships established in college or in the army, these are based on shared, intensely emotional experiences. Like missions to Israel—the singing, dancing and praying at the Western Wall. Missions to Auschwitz—facing the stark reality of the Holocaust. The annual retreats—bearing one's financial soul.

Is the Cabinet, then, a kind of super Jewish fraternity? Some bristle at the description while others confirm it. "Fraternity implies great social interaction," said Alan Rudy, "and though the Cabinet has it, it is not the group's primary purpose and so the description is misleading."

But Chairman Joel Abromson termed it "a valid assessment." He said there is a strong sense of camaraderie within the group.

"When I travel across the country," he offered, "if I'm in a city where I don't know anyone, I'll check my Cabinet directory and contact a local member. More than once I've gotten invited to dinner and had a great evening with a member I'd never met before."

No group as powerful or as prominent as the Cabinet is without its critics. One common complaint is that it is elitist by nature (geared toward the wealthy), and undemocratic in its operation and in its selection of members and officers.

Membership is described in the Cabinet manual as a three-step process. First, the candidate must be recommended by his Executive Director or National UJA representative and one Cabinet member. Next, the candidate is interviewed by a Cabinet member, following which he may be asked to submit a formal application. A decision is then made by

the Cabinet's Membership Committee. The term of membership is one year (members may serve four consecutive terms, officers a maximum of seven) and members must be between the ages of 25 and 40. According to one member, about 75 percent of the new members are chosen through the "cousins club," or informal, word-of-mouth recommendations from current members, and about 25 percent are chosen through the more formal process.

Neil Norry, a former Cabinet member who resigned two years ago for personal reasons, says he still doesn't know how a chairman is chosen. (According to a UJA professional, the Cabinet chairman is not elected but is selected by the executive and membership committees.) Still, Norry defended the Cabinet's *modus operandi*. "The Cabinet is definitely an elitist group and it lacks democracy," he said. "There's never been an attempt to have it otherwise. UJA is a big business and if you ran a business, you'd pick people the same way. I don't believe in democracy when it comes to fund raising."

And David Adler responded, "If excellence is elitism, then God bless elitism. And if quality is elitism, then God bless elitism."

Another serious area of criticism involves the Cabinet's policy towards women. Last August, the executive committee voted nine-to-eight to open membership to women. Although the decision was supposed to be final, it seemed to intensify rather than halt discussion.

The issue can be viewed on several different levels. Psychologically, there are those who say that the men are fearful women would control the group, or that the men are not used to working with assertive, independent women as opposed to wives, mothers and secretaries.

From a feminist perspective, Amy Stone, writing on the subject in *Lilith*, charged that the Cabinet "has been an obvious

and glaring illustration of the fact the UJA looks only to men for its top leadership."

Others point to a more practical consideration regarding the Cabinet's "men only" policy. They note that a coed Cabinet would have a devastating effect on the existing UJA Women's Division. The Women's Division was created for the purpose of "plus giving"—to collect that extra amount of income a wife contributes on her own after her husband has already given to the general campaign. The Woman's Division raised about \$70 million last year but is fearful that if its dynamic and successful young women were able to join the Cabinet, a serious leadership gap would jeopardize Women's Division's future success.

So the Women's Division strongly opposed the idea of a coed Cabinet. As for the men now on the Cabinet, some said they didn't care who belonged, as long as the members could meet the taxing requirements. Michael Pelavin, a leading advocate for accepting women, asserted that many young women today would not be satisfied to join the existing Women's Division, which they see as an organization for their mothers and grandmothers. "The Women's Division is fine for those women who feel comfortable in it, but it won't attract independent young women who work and make their own decisions."

Most of the members who opposed a coed Cabinet say they did so because they felt that, with women, the Cabinet would lose its *esprit de corps* and turn into a social club. Said one member, "There is absolutely no justification for excluding women, but if they are accepted, it will destroy the Cabinet. Our success is dependent on our sense of fraternity."

In May, after much discussion and debate, the issue was resolved when the UJA announced the formation of a new, parallel-but-separate Young Woman's

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Leadership Cabinet. Its director, Barbara Fask (who plans to give up her position as assistant director of the men's Cabinet) said the new group will be geared towards independent women and will have fewer than 50 members. She asserted that the new Cabinet will work with, but not under, the UJA Women's Division and that "one's husband's position will have no bearing on membership."

Advocates of a coed Cabinet remain dissatisfied, but Arden Shenker called the creation of the Women's Cabinet "a realistic solution, given the structure of the American Jewish community," while Neil Cooper, the Cabinet's chairman-designate, said it was "a happy compromise—maybe we'll be ready for integration in four of five years, and in the meantime this gives us some flexibility."

Another on-going area of tension is the inherent competition between the Cabinet and the various Young Leadership programs operating on the local levels under the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds. One Cabinet member acknowledged that, after he had been asked to join the Cabinet, he was urged by his local federation to put off joining the Cabinet until he had completed his term with the local Young Leadership program.

"But I felt I needed more than what I was getting locally so I accepted Cabinet membership." As expected, the local federation was not pleased. "They felt bucked," he said. "They feel the local community comes first and UJA comes second."

The conflict is evident in every major city, but according to Alan Rudy, the federations are viewing the situation too narrowly. "They feel the Cabinet is stealing their best people. But we're not stealing them—we're just borrowing them and training them so that when they go back to their communities they'll be top-rate leaders."

But going back to one's local

community after spending several heady years in the national limelight is a difficult transition to make. "I think that's the toughest part of all," said one former Cabinet member, "and it's especially hard for guys from small communities. It's 'How You gonna Keep 'Em Down on the Farm After They've Seen Parea.'"

Donald Gould stressed the importance of the Cabinet having a high and constant turnover rate so that it can continually renew itself, but added, "going off can be a real downer, a disaster for some people." Dr. David Rosenberg says that "turning members out to pasture is the Cabinet's biggest problem," and he feels some type of on-going group should be set up to make the come-down easier.

There is much to be said for a group whose members find it so painfully difficult to leave. The Cabinet is obviously filling a vacuum in the American Jewish community by involving and inspiring bright young men who cannot duplicate the emotional high of the Cabinet experience in any other organization.

Perhaps the Cabinet's success in turning on these men to their Jewishness is indicative of a spiritual hunger that many American Jews have. For the Cabinet has taken a select group of people, many of whom had been too busy to ever stop and think about their Jewish identity, and gotten them totally involved. When one thinks about how many other lost souls there are who are not being reached, the inevitable conclusion is that similar programs are needed on a much wider scale.

In the meantime, it is the Cabinet that continues to train our future leaders. As David Adler noted, "I like to think of the Cabinet members as if they were a battalion on the front lines. They must always be alert and prepared. After all, who knows how much of the future of the American Jewish community will be in their hands." *

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November 22, 1976

Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman
Director of Planning & Development
World Education Center for Progressive Judaism
Hebrew Union College
13 King David Street
Jerusalem, Israel

Dear Herb,

Now that some of the dust has settled following TYIJ, I would like to drop you this quick note to thank you for your contribution to the success of the Young Leadership component.

In addition, I had promised to let you know when the full Cabinet would be meeting again. Our dates are now firm: AIPAC is meeting April 24, 25, 26 so we have scheduled April 26, 27, 28. We are going to try to work our a seminar on foreign affairs such as the Cabinet last had in February of 1967. If you will be in the USA at that time, I think a repetition of your "Hebrew Roots of American Democracy" would certainly be appropriate. The Q & A that follows might include a well-placed question about the Jerusalem Academy.

I understand that you will be here through the Palm Springs and Houston Regional conferences; Linda and I plan to be at both and we hope to see you then.

Kol tuv,

Joel

I. Joel Abromson

cc: DNA

