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MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series E: General Alphabetical Files. 1960-1992

Box 77, Folder 6, American Jewish Congress / American Jewish
Committee merger, 1975.

From the desk of:

M. Bernard Resnikoff

February 17th, 1975.

To: Marc Tanenbaum

I thought you would like to see the attached article by Sraya Shapiro appearing in the February 14th issue of the Jerusalem Post.

It will give you, as it gave me, some comfort to see in print, finally, some recognition of the fact that the World Jewish Congress was not the only Jewish organization that played a part in the Vatican's mid-course correction. Contradicting Dr. Goldmann, she believes that it was the American Jewish Committee, and not the World Jewish Congress, that made the initial contacts with Cardinal Bea.

I know you were wounded, Marc, and while this article doesn't heal the wound, it does reduce the swelling.

encl.

c.c. Morris Fine
MBR/sad



Memorandum from ...

17 Copy
AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS
15 East 84th St., New York, N. Y. 10028 • TR 9-4500

MAR 8 1975

February 25, 1975

TO: Federations and Welfare Funds
CRC's

FROM: Naomi Levine

As you may know, the American Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Committee have begun conversations on a possible merger or consolidation of these two national organizations. The conversations between the organizations are at a preliminary stage. But because of the historic significance of these conversations--whether they result in a merger or not--we thought it important that you be kept informed. To this end, the AJCongress has prepared the enclosed report which traces chronologically how and why these conversations began and the problems and issues involved in any possible merger.

Encl.

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

CONFIDENTIAL

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

For consideration
at the Board of
Governors Institute
Palm Beach, Florida
February, 1975

PROPOSED MERGER BETWEEN AJCOMMITTEE AND AJCONGRESS

An Analysis of Possible Benefits and Risks

"The Pros and Cons"

Interim report to The American Jewish Committee's
Board of Governors by The Special Study Committee
on the Relationship between The American Jewish
Committee and The American Jewish Congress

Board of Governors Institute

Palm Beach, Florida--February 6-9, 1975

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THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE
PROPOSED MERGER BETWEEN
THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE and THE AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS

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The prospect of merger with AJCongress, which was suggested to us by the Congress, has been under intensive study for many months. At this stage of its deliberations, the Special Study Committee on the Relationship Between the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress believes that the possibility contains a number of positive elements as well as some serious risks for the American Jewish Committee and for the general Jewish community.

In weighing both the possible benefits and the possible risks, the Special Study Committee has proceeded on the following assumptions which, however, remain to be negotiated with the AJCongress in the event we decide to go forward:

- 1) The AJCommittee would be the surviving entity;
- 2) The name of the merged organization would be The American Jewish Committee;
- 3) AJCongress would have minority, but fair, representation on all of our governing boards, commissions and committees;
- 4) AJCongress' field offices would be either closed or absorbed into AJCommittee's field offices; its chapters and units would be absorbed into AJCommittee's chapters and units;
- 5) AJCommittee (the newly merged organization) would not join the World Jewish Congress with which the

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American Jewish Congress is presently affiliated, because of our conviction (among other reasons) that no one voice can or should speak for Jews throughout the world.

Among the more important positive benefits of merger which our Special Study Committee has identified, are the following:

- 1) A merger of the two agencies (although still representing a very small percentage of the total American Jewish population) would be a move toward a larger, more broadly based and more representative organization, possibly with greater financial stability.
- 2) The larger membership and the extent to which that larger membership would enable us to expand our programs, would give us a stronger presence in the communities, and greater influence nationally, as well as internationally.
- 3) A merger would certainly be welcomed by some segments of the Jewish community as a major step in the direction of needed consolidation and economies.
- 4) The merged organization could become the most important and influential membership organization in American Jewish life.

However, the Special Study Committee also recognizes that these potential benefits could be realized only if the following can be achieved:

- 1) AJCommittee is able to preserve its name, its structure, its style and its reputation for excellence and quality performance;

- 2) AJCommittee is able to maintain an independent posture in relation to a number of umbrella organizations, particularly the World Jewish Congress. With respect to the latter, in addition to our opposition on philosophic grounds as stated earlier, joining the World Jewish Congress could seriously affect our overseas operations and important aspects of our interreligious activities as well;
- 3) The different personalities of the two agencies-- i.e., differences in style, substance and "chemistry" --can be melded without disruptive conflict (some conflict, however, could be creative);
- 4) AJCommittee suffers no severe financial loss as a result of the merger;
- 5) The merged organization does not have the end result of depriving the Jewish community of healthy diversity and effective reinforcement of points of view.
- 6) The AJCommittee does not suffer important setbacks in its relationships with the non-Jewish world, particularly where it has built unique and valuable relationships as, for example, within the Catholic religious community, influentials in government, the mass media, etc.

The following are some of the benefits and risks that have been examined and confronted by the Special Study Committee:

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The Financial Picture: Taking the most optimistic view of several major variables, the merged organization could possibly achieve a budget savings of one million dollars. On the other hand, the budget of the merged organization could conceivably exceed by one million dollars the present budgets of both organizations. The factors that lead the Special Study Committee to this conclusion are the following:

Income for the merged organization will depend upon:

- 1) The loss or gain in aggregate fund raising potential;
- 2) The loss or gain in potential aggregate membership income;
- 3) The willingness of Welfare Federations to guarantee support equivalent to that given both organizations for a stated number of years;
- 4) The disposition or successful retention of AJCongress' travel program. (Here, consideration must be given to the possibility that AJCommittee might inherit certain tax liabilities associated with the travel program and that the outlook for the travel business today is very poor. Moreover, while the AJCommittee recognizes the value and importance of tourism to

Israel, not all of AJCongress' tours include Israel. Thus, the question of its appropriateness for AJCommittee must be considered.)

In assessing the possible benefits, the Study Committee has proceeded on the assumption that AJCommittee would not lose the bulk of its major gifts. It is also counting on the possibility that within Congress' leadership, there is real fundraising potential which has never been properly developed. Congress' standards of giving are low and financial contributions and/or participation in fundraising are not among the criteria for leadership in the AJCongress.

As to the potential financial risks, there are both short- and long-range considerations.

Short-range: There would be the initial expenses of launching the merger, such as absorbing Congress' liabilities, if any. There will also be the costs of terminating personnel, closing AJCongress' field offices, absorbing staff pensions, possibly refurbishing AJCongress' building which will have to be used, equalizing salaries and, in general, meeting union demands related to all these matters.

Long-range: With the shrinking economy and escalation of Israel's needs, there is a real possibility that Federations will reduce their allocations or, more likely, fail to increase them to keep up with inflationary costs--if not immediately,

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then in the near future--their "promises" notwithstanding. The fact is that Federations are hailing the possibility of merger because they see it as an economy move. However, if AJCommittee is to get the funds it will require to support its expanded overhead and expanded programs, the savings to the community may be minimal.

As indicated above, while the Special Study Committee does not anticipate any important losses in AJCommittee's major gifts or in its membership, in the event of merger, it must anticipate the possibility that there will be some losses from supporters of both organizations who, for one reason or another, would not find the new agency congenial and/or responsive to their communal needs and would become disaffected and disaffiliated.

Since the Congress' tour program provides a significant portion of its income (currently approximately 1/4 million out of a 2-1/2 million dollar budget), should AJCommittee decide, for whatever reason, that the tour program is not viable or desirable, there would be a substantial reduction in income, not only from the travel program itself but from membership income as well, since a portion of Congress' membership is attributable to the tour program. (We have not yet been able to determine precisely

what portion, but in order to participate in a Congress tour, one must become a member of AJCongress for at least one year.)

There could also be problems associated with the fact that the level of giving by Congress' leaders and members is considerably below AJCommittee's levels, both nationally and in the communities. Thus, when Congress' leaders and members become integrated into the Committee's structure, they might well be unwilling or unable to meet AJCommittee's levels of giving and/or they might be resistant to the character and expectations of AJC's fund raising events.

On balance, then, as was pointed out earlier, while the net gain to the merged organization could conceivably be as much as one million dollars, the net loss could conceivably also be as much as one million.

Therefore, while "financial savings" is seen by many as the major reason for favoring merger, a responsible approach to the question should proceed on the assumption that, for the merged organization as well as for the Jewish community, there may be a financial gain, but there also may be a financial loss. Thus, at this point, the Special Study Committee is proceeding on the assumption that the net effect of the merger on the AJCommittee's financial situation and on the community, would likely be close to a "stand-off."

However, the Special Study Committee believes strongly that there are considerations more important than financial that warrant examination.

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Merger from the Point of View of the Jewish Community

As indicated earlier, there is no doubt that AJCommittee would earn the gratitude of Jewish communal leaders who, correctly or incorrectly, see the move as an important economy at a time when economies are crucial--both in terms of our domestic needs and the continually escalating needs of Israel.

The act of merger would likely be regarded in the total organized Jewish community as a thoughtful, constructive step in the direction of providing the community with a more effective, more economical, national community relations agency. Since many in the Jewish and the general community see AJCommittee and AJCongress activities as quite similar (even to frequently mistaking one for the other), the move would likely be held as a logical and a timely one, eliminating unnecessary duplication.

There are, however, certain risks involved for the Jewish community as the Special Study Committee sees it--some of which may not be apparent to those Jewish communal leaders outside the American Jewish Committee who are urging merger. These are:

- 1) An important community relations agency (namely, the American Jewish Congress) with a particular constituency and point of view would disappear from the communal scene. Should a merger take place, it must be assumed that some AJCongress leaders as well as some rank and file members would not feel "at home" and might become totally disaffiliated.

- 2) The Jewish community is--and always has been-- particularly sensitive to ideological nuances. Would the Jewish community have more to lose than to gain by "homogenizing" Jewish community relations--i.e., eliminating actual differences in points of view, styles of advocacy, subtle differences in emphasis, etc.?
- 3) Some maintain that alleged "duplication" should in fact be viewed as essential reinforcement-- and this would be lost in the event of merger.
- 4) A merged organization, which would necessarily embrace widely disparate views, outlooks and philosophies with respect to American Jewish life and issues affecting American and world Jewry, may well have to settle for the "least common denominator" in arriving at positions on important issues. Such internal conflicts, moreover, could even immobilize the agency and severely impair its effectiveness as an advocate on behalf of the Jewish community.
- 5) Some communal leaders, including some Federation executives, have cautioned as to the possible loss to the community of the AJCommittee's unique and special contribution.

The Character and Structure of the New Organization

Beneficially, if the proper meld were obtained, we would present an image of a much more broadly based membership and thus have greater credibility in the Jewish and general community. In

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communities around the country, we might acquire new, younger, more active and committed leaders and additional talented professionals as well. AJCommittee's image in the Jewish community as the "rich, elite organization" could be improved and the new organization could attract many who have much to contribute to the program and the objectives of the American Jewish Committee.

The risks here are that AJCommittee could lose its reputation as a prestigious organization, a reputation based on high quality performance and excellence.

There is the possibility of "institutionalizing conflict" --i.e., some who are in fundamental disagreement with AJCommittee's philosophy may be absorbed into AJCommittee's leadership and membership ranks, nationally and in the communities. Also, merging AJCongress' reputed militant style and stridency with AJCommittee's more deliberative approach and processes could be a potential source of conflict which might impair the new organization's effectiveness.

We do know that in some communities, AJCommittee and AJCongress members differ sharply in point of view as well as in economic and social background. However, a more profound evaluation of this must await input from AJCommittee chapters which the Special Study Committee expects to receive within the next few weeks.

Another area of risk is in Congress' Women's Division. This Division represents 40% of Congress' present membership and is autonomous in structure. Its integration in the AJCommittee chapter structure is not considered likely. If the Women's Division of Congress is to be phased out as the Special Study Committee

proposes, Congress' women members would, of course, be invited to join the merged organization. This could, however, present problems to our chapters as well as to Congress' women for AJCommittee's ongoing chapter programs are quite different from those carried on by the chapters and units of Congress' Women's Division.

The Impact of the New Organization

Beneficially:

- 1) In the general community, we could have greater influence and impact as the membership organization in the Jewish community. In certain circles we might even gain credit for eliminating an "abrasive" force--i.e., AJCongress. (This might apply to the Catholic community and possibly also to key government officials as well, where experience with the AJCongress has not been salutary.)
- 2) In New York City, where the largest number and most influential of Congress' members reside, we could become a major power base with considerable "clout" on a whole variety of issues and concerns. The additional staff and lay constituency we would acquire could greatly enhance our effectiveness. While AJCommittee's constituency in New York City comes largely from Manhattan, Congress has an important constituency in the other boroughs--the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens--which could be important in carrying forward the New York Chapter program.

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3) In the broader Jewish community, and particularly within the domestic umbrella organizations, we could have much greater strength and influence.

Similarly, in the communities we could become a stronger force in the battle against centralism.

*Centralize for
Anti-Centree
- quality of
leaders*

4) On the international scene, we could become a more effective voice in support of Israel and even, perhaps, in constructive dialogues with Israel. Moreover, if we can maintain our position outside the World Jewish Congress, we might become a more effective spokesman on behalf of the rights of Jews in other countries, particularly in Europe and South America.

The risks involved are:

- 1) Our present constructive relationships in the Catholic and Protestant communities carefully nurtured over a period of time could be severely impaired. The AJCongress, in these communities, has been a consistent and often insensitive adversary on many issues of importance to these religious communities.
- 2) Our present clout and credibility with "influentials" in various other circles (i.e., government, industry, universities, etc.), could be impaired.
- 3) In New York City, AJCommittee members would be considerably outnumbered and differences in attitude, approach and philosophy between AJCongress and

AJCommittee could result in Congress' viewpoints prevailing. We could end up with a greatly strengthened AJCongress position and a greatly weakened AJCommittee position in the crucial New York area.

- 4) Within domestic umbrella organizations where AJCommittee and AJCongress frequently reinforce one another, we might find ourselves less influential as one organization.
- 5) Federations and NJCRAC might be encouraged to expect further consolidation of the national agencies, as part of their long-range campaign to centralize the local communities under their own umbrellas.

The Impact on Staff

Beneficially, our national staff and field staff in some communities might be significantly enhanced by the absorption of competent members of the Congress staff. (The Special Study Committee is proceeding on the assumption that AJCommittee could determine for itself those members of the Congress staff it would want to absorb.) For example, additions to our Social Action and Legal staffs, our Jewish Communal, Foreign Affairs and Urban Affairs staffs, as well as the New York Chapter staff--all could strengthen AJCommittee's programs in these areas.

The risks involved include:

- 1) The possible loss through voluntary resignation of some AJCommittee staff nationally and in the field.

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- 2) Problems in integrating both the national and local staffs considering the personalities involved, the different conceptions of their roles, the difficulties in adjusting to differences in approach--e.g., methods of working, relationships with volunteers, degree of agency visibility, etc.
- 3) AJCommittee may not be able to choose the staff we wish to absorb. The Special Study Committee has been informed that the union will probably make certain demands in this area.
- 4) Tensions could arise around the problem of equalization of salaries, placement in the organizational hierarchy, etc.

Evaluations from Chapters

Simultaneous with this Board Institute, Chapter and Unit Chairmen have been sent this document, the Fact Sheet and a series of questions designed to elicit Chapter and Unit experience with--and attitudes toward--AJCongress. We have requested Chapter and Unit evaluations of the impact of merger--or non-merger--on their respective communities, on the AJCommittee in their communities, on AJCommittee nationally and on the Jewish community overall.

We have asked to be notified if and when Chapter discussions on this subject are to be held and, to the extent possible, a member of this Special Study Committee will be available to attend such meetings if they are invited to do so.

The reports of all these sessions will then be carefully reviewed by the Special Study Committee.

In examining AJCommittee's future relationship with AJCongress, three possible courses of action seem to the Special Study Committee to emerge: (1) the benefits will seem to outweigh the risks and the proposal for merger will be viewed positively provided our terms on specifics can be met; (2) the risks will seem to outweigh the benefits and the proposal for merger will be rejected; (3) we could decide to undertake cooperative planning and programming in selected areas, plus a series of other inter-organizational steps involving national and chapter activities. This might be viewed as a "testing period"--i.e., "getting to know one another"--after which we might decide to (a) move toward merger; (b) pursue our separate ways; (c) agree that the cooperative planning and programming is working well and is as far as we want to go.

At this point in its studies, the Special Study Committee seeks guidance and direction from the Board of Governors, although not a firm decision. After further study, contemplation, meetings, input from Chapters and talks with AJCongress, the Special Study Committee will come back to the Board of Governors with a recommendation and a request for a firm decision which, in due course, will be presented to the National Executive Council for final AJCommittee approval.

1/27/75

75-100-17

Tannenbaum
memorandum

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

FEB 21 1975
date February 12, 1975
to Morris Fine
from M. Bernard Resnikoff
subject World Jewish Congress Sixth Plenary Assembly

It is no easy matter to summarize an eight-day Assembly that included sixteen plenary sessions, seven workshops, four commissions at which there were thirty-two formal speeches. Instead, I have tried faithfully to assemble all news releases and statement summaries which are on their way to the Department, via George Gruen. I also offer to answer any questions raised. Here, I will only share with you a series of impressions that are detailed below in no particular order.

1. In retrospect, it was a good thing that AJC was represented at the Congress. Such participation, officially confirmed in a January 24 letter from Gerhart Riegner, was made prominent by an assigned table with an identifying sign. There was some good-natured ribbing about our attendance but there was also obvious satisfaction. Dr. Riegner was said to have made reference to AJC participation in his formal report. The role of the Israel Office was mentioned in the speech by Professor Uri Tal. And Sergio reports that, at a Latin-American caucus, Goldman spoke about growing cooperation with international organizations, citing the AJC by name.

2. There wasn't anything sufficiently noetic at the plenary sessions worth recording here. As happens in such congresses, what was said on the dais wasn't always as important as what happened over coffee in the lobby. The babel of tongues from sixty-five different countries, the Jew from Bombay speaking to the youth delegate from Gibraltar, the lone representative from San Salvador conferring in Yiddish with a Yugoslavian -- this drove away the feeling of aloneness on the part of the smaller Jewish communities and dramatized the indivisibility of the Jewish People, our unity even as we are scattered. All told, there were more than six hundred accredited delegates from sixty-five different countries.

3. A major structural change taken was when the Board of Deputies of British Jews was formally admitted to the Congress. Simultaneous with this action, the British section of the WJC was disbanded. This action, which was greeted with much hoopla by Goldman and others, required a constitutional change eliminating any reference to "affiliation" with the Congress.

4. Another significant structural change was an addition to the bylaws providing for a small, executive committee which will be conducting the day-to-day activities of the WJC. Clearly, it was established to act as a buffer against Goldman and to help curb some of his unilateral announcements which deeply upset many members of the Israeli section.

5. Perhaps more significant was the addition of another purpose of the organization as spelled out in article number two which reads, "to intensify the bonds of world Jewry with Israel as the central creative force in Jewish life, and strengthen the ties of solidarity among Jewish communities everywhere." This is the first time that a WJC constitution makes such a specific reference to Israel, as a central force to boot, and is all the more striking when it is recalled that the Congress embraces all shades of opinion.

6. Adding grist to Marc Tanenbaum's mill (as reflected in his January 21 memo to Bert Gold), much was made of the WJC role in interfaith relations, with the inference that the WJC is the voice of world Jewry in relating to Rome and Geneva. A special news release was put out on guests Pierre de Contenson (who did not show up), and Dr. von Hammerstein (who did). The latter was given much personal attention by Riegner and others throughout the assembly. The same thrust was emphasized in a number of speeches as one of the chief contributions of WJC in recent years.

7. Institutionally, it was very gratifying to receive many and unsolicited compliments about our colleagues in the Department. Sergio, who was very much in evidence throughout the assembly, was highly praised by delegates from Mexico, Latin American and South American countries. And representatives from a number of European countries came to my desk just to let me know that they work with and think highly of Abe Karlikow.

8. The Zionist goal of a Jewish state was supposed to bring "normalcy" to the Jewish People. One could see the grim stare of first-timers as they submitted to the Israeli "normalcy" of body checks by security forces at the entrance of the Convention Hall. These checks, intensified at the session addressed by the Prime Minister, drove home a sobering message to the visitors.

9. Paradox. Israeli speakers, who don't need Hebrew to express their Jewishness and as an act of courtesy to the plurality, spoke in English. Fluent foreigners, making pious introductions about the sacred tongue in the Holy Land, spoke in Hebrew.

10. As might have been expected at a WJC assembly, much attention was given to the subject of Israel-Diaspora relationships. This was a recurring theme in many plenary sessions, even though a special workshop was devoted to the subject, which was addressed by David Polish and Uri Tal. These two presentations plus twenty-nine respondents from eleven countries were sufficiently absorbing to warrant my asking Dr. Nathan Lerner about the possibility of getting transcripts of this session for distribution both in English and in Hebrew for careful study. Rabbi Polish, who seemed to be very much on target, called for an "American Jewish Assembly" that would draft an "Alliance of Mutuality and Accountability" between Israel and the U.S. Jewish community. While cheerfully acknowledging the unique role for Israel, he insisted that the Diaspora must enjoy its own special area of ^{autonomy} ~~economy~~ including respect for its own political wisdom. He also presented a rationale for diasporic input in decision-making by Israel on those issues which affect the status and dignity of Jews the world over. In this, he seconded Dr. Goldman's call for a framework by which Diaspora Jews could participate with the people of Israel in arriving at decisions affecting the status and dignity of the Jewish People throughout the world. A significant variation on this theme was expressed by one American who warned against the view that Israel was the central factor in Jewish existence and that Jews outside Israel depended on the State for their sense of Jewish pride and identity. And, in an unscheduled address, Menachem Begin called for a world assembly consisting of sixty Knesset members and sixty Diaspora leaders as a kind of supreme body in policy formulation. This suggestion did not win much approval.

11. Delegates were concerned, serious, attentive. Plenary sessions and workshops were filled with animated discussion. This, then, is unnecessary confirmation that Jews take their voluntary associations seriously.
12. In the only electrifying session, Goldman was re-elected President by a large majority, after an impassioned appeal by a Herut representative (Klarman) not to vote for him because of his alleged anti-Israel statements. This, even though there was no alternate candidate. In his acceptance speech, Goldman let it be known that he may not complete his term of office, against which possibility the bylaws were amended to provide for a mid-term replacement. Newspaper accounts that Goldman's re-election was railroaded by arbitrary and capricious actions on the part of the Chairman is not true. The affirmative vote for Goldman was more overwhelming than was suggested in some news reports, and I believe that the negative impression was caused by the vocality of a cantankerous minority.
13. At this election session, the delegates were treated to democracy, Israeli style. Shouting, interruptions, frivolous points of order and heckling led to near chaos. The difference in meeting methods between East and West was made even clearer when the Chair was shared by an American and an Israeli. In the case of the former, there were rulings by the Chair, clarification of bylaws and insistence on quiet and order. In the case of the latter, shout was matched by shout, and appeals by the Chair for order were reduced to an ad hominem basis. One may speculate about the impact of such group behavior on the staid Englishman, attending his first congress. Damage may have been done to the romantic, sentimental image of the Israeli.
14. The assembly was buffeted about by the pressures of special interest groups. Associations of Soviet Immigrants demanded more effective absorption procedures. The Black Panthers got a promise that the social-gap problem would be dealt with. Youth circles demanded a greater voice in Congress affairs. Maki put in an appearance and a number of orderly demonstrations were conducted outside of the Binyanei Haoumah.
15. Nachum Goldman, still spry at eighty-plus, thought that the non-Jewish world has gotten rid of its guilt about the Jewish People and that we will now have to fight all the harder to preserve the survival and security of Israel.
16. With this assembly, WZO enters into a new relationship with the WJC. Formerly enjoying an "observer" status, the WJC may now enter into special relationships with major Jewish organizations -- a clause intended to pave the way for the pact which has already been worked out in principle between these two bodies.
17. Having caught most of the plenary sessions, and having touched base with nearly every workshop and commission meeting, the overriding impression, as I dragged my tired gluteus maximus back to the more orderly routine of office work, was -- talk, talk, talk.
18. Under the leering eye of the TV camera, delegated watched WJC officers trying to seduce B'nai Brith with the champagne of flattery. B'nai Brith may yet join the WJC.

MBR/eb
cc: George Gruen





THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

Institute of Human Relations • 165 East 56 Street, New York, N.Y. 10022 • 212/751-4000 • Cable Wishcom, N.Y.

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum

February 25, 1975

Please note below

To: Members of the Liaison Committee of the Special Study Committee

Dr. Morton K. Blaustein, Chairman
Philip E. Hoffman
Theodore Ellenoff
Richard Maass
Mrs. Emily W. Sunstein
Bertram H. Gold

3/5

cc: All Members of the Special Study Committee

From: Selma Hirsh

- REMINDEES:
1. NEXT MEETING WITH AJCONGRESS
Wednesday - March 5th
 2. NEXT MEETING OF OUR OWN
SPECIAL STUDY COMMITTEE
Thursday - March 6th

As indicated in our memorandum to you of February 10th, our Liaison Committee will be meeting with the members of the Liaison Committee of the AJCongress on the evening of March 5th, beginning at 5:30 P.M., at the offices of AJCongress, 15 East 84th Street, New York City. As you have been informed by telephone, our Liaison Committee will meet at our offices at 3:30 P.M. that afternoon to prepare for the evening meeting.

Since a major subject of discussion will be the World Jewish Congress, Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum will be joining the group for this meeting. Also, inasmuch as we hope to discuss the future of the Women's Division of AJCongress, Ruth Goddard will be joining us, substituting for Phil Hoffman, who will not yet have returned from Geneva.

Abe Karlikow's memorandum on the World Jewish Congress should prove helpful as background for our discussion. Also, the reprint from the American Jewish Year Book, "Jewish Multi-Country Associations," which was sent to you on January 20th, does provide important factual information concerning the World Jewish Congress.

ANOTHER REMINDER: Our own Special Study Committee will meet on Thursday, March 6th, beginning at 12:00 Noon and will remain in session until approximately 4:30 P.M.

75-100-40

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

FEB 21 1975

date February 12, 1975
to Morris Fine
from M. Bernard Resnikoff
subject World Jewish Congress Sixth Plenary Assembly

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4. Another significant structural change was an addition to the bylaws providing for a small, executive committee which will be conducting the day-to-day activities of the WJC. Clearly, it was established to act as a buffer against Goldman and to help curb some of his unilateral announcements which deeply upset many members of the Israeli section.

5. Perhaps more significant was the addition of another purpose of the organization as spelled out in article number two which reads, "to intensify the bonds of world Jewry with Israel as the central creative force in Jewish life, and strengthen the ties of solidarity among Jewish communities everywhere." This is the first time that a WJC constitution makes such a specific reference to Israel, as a central force to boot, and is all the more striking when it is recalled that the Congress embraces all shades of opinion.
6. Adding grist to Marc Tanenbaum's mill (as reflected in his January 21 memo to Bert Gold), much was made of the WJC role in interfaith relations, with the inference that the WJC is the voice of world Jewry in relating to Rome and Geneva. A special news release was put out on guests Pierre de Contenson (who did not show up), and Dr. von Hammerstein (who did). The latter was given much personal attention by Riegner and others throughout the assembly. The same thrust was emphasized in a number of speeches as one of the chief contributions of WJC in recent years.
7. Institutionally, it was very gratifying to receive many and unsolicited compliments about our colleagues in the Department. Sergio, who was very much in evidence throughout the assembly, was highly praised by delegates from Mexico, Latin American and South American countries. And representatives from a number of European countries came to my desk just to let me know that they work with and think highly of Abe Karlikow.
8. The Zionist goal of a Jewish state was supposed to bring "normalcy" to the Jewish People. One could see the grim stare of first-timers as they submitted to the Israel "normalcy" of body checks by security forces at the entrance of the Convention Hall. These checks, intensified at the session addressed by the Prime Minister, drove home a sobering message to the visitors.
9. Paradox. Israeli speakers, who don't need Hebrew to express their Jewishness and as an act of courtesy to the plurality, spoke in English. Fluent foreigners, making pious introductions about the sacred tongue in the Holy Land, spoke in Hebrew.
10. As might have been expected at a WJC assembly, much attention was given to the subject of Israel-Diaspora relationships. This was a recurring theme in many plenary sessions, even though a special workshop was devoted to the subject, which was addressed by David Polish and Uri Tal. These two presentations plus twenty-nine respondents from eleven countries were sufficiently absorbing to warrant my asking Dr. Nathan Lerner about the possibility of getting transcripts of this session for distribution both in English and in Hebrew for careful study. Rabbi Polish, who seemed to be very much on target, called for an "American Jewish Assembly" that would draft an "Alliance of Mutuality and Accountability" between Israel and the U.S. Jewish community. While cheerfully acknowledging the unique role for Israel, he insisted that the Diaspora must enjoy its own special area of economy, including respect for its own political wisdom. He also presented a rationale for diasporic input in decision-making by Israel on those issues which affect the status and dignity of Jews the world over. In this, he seconded Dr. Goldman's call for a framework by which Diaspora Jews could participate with the people of Israel in arriving at decisions affecting the status and dignity of the Jewish People throughout the world. A significant variation on this theme was expressed by one American who warned against the view that Israel was the central factor in Jewish existence and that Jews outside Israel depended on the State for their sense of Jewish pride and identity. And, in an unscheduled address, Menachem Begin called for a world assembly consisting of sixty Knesset members and sixty Diaspora leaders as a kind of supreme body in policy formulation. This suggestion did not win much approval.

11. Delegates were concerned, serious, attentive. Plenary sessions and workshops were filled with animated discussion. This, then, is unnecessary confirmation that Jews take their voluntary associations seriously.

12. In the only electrifying session, Goldman was re-elected President by a large majority, after an impassioned appeal by a Herut representative (Klarman) not to vote for him because of his alleged anti-Israel statements. This, even though there was no alternate candidate. In his acceptance speech, Goldman let it be known that he may not complete his term of office, against which possibility the bylaws were amended to provide for a mid-term replacement. Newspaper accounts that Goldman's re-election was railroaded by arbitrary and capricious actions on the part of the Chairman is not true. The affirmative vote for Goldman was more overwhelming than was suggested in some news reports, and I believe that the negative impression was caused by the vocality of a cantankerous minority.

13. At this election session, the delegates were treated to democracy, Israeli style. Shouting, interruptions, frivolous points of order and heckling led to near chaos. The difference in meeting methods between East and West was made even clearer when the Chair was shared by an American and an Israeli. In the case of the former, there were rulings by the Chair, clarification of bylaws and insistence on quiet and order. In the case of the latter, shout was matched by shout, and appeals by the Chair for order were reduced to an ad hominem basis. One may speculate about the impact of such group behavior on the staid Englishman, attending his first congress. Damage may have been done to the romantic, sentimental image of the Israeli.

14. The assembly was buffeted about by the pressures of special interest groups. Associations of Soviet Immigrants demanded more effective absorption procedures. The Black Panthers got a promise that the social-gap problem would be dealt with. Youth circles demanded a greater voice in Congress affairs. Maki put in an appearance and a number of orderly demonstrations were conducted outside of the Binyanei Haoumah.

15. Nachum Goldman, still spry at eighty-plus, thought that the non-Jewish world has gotten rid of its guilt about the Jewish People and that we will now have to fight all the harder to preserve the survival and security of Israel.

16. With this assembly, WZO enters into a new relationship with the WJC. Formerly enjoying an "observer" status, the WJC may now enter into special relationships with major Jewish organizations -- a clause intended to pave the way for the pact which has already been worked out in principle between these two bodies.

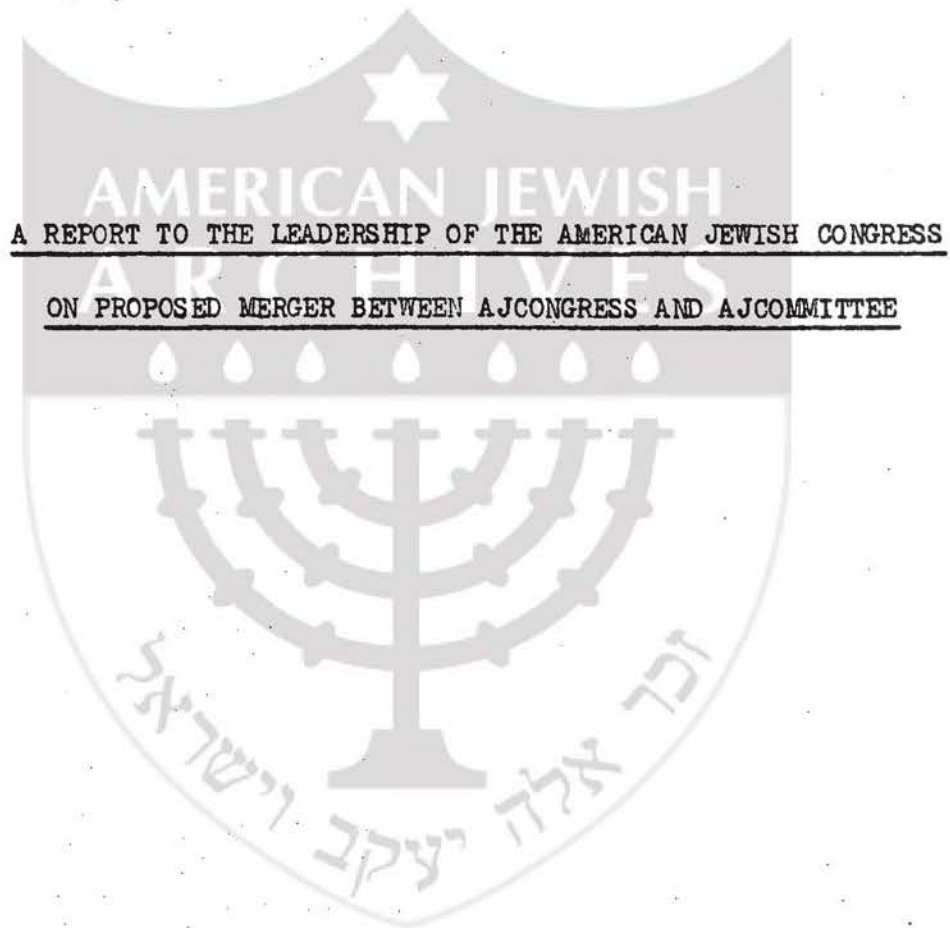
17. Having caught most of the plenary sessions, and having touched base with nearly every workshop and commission meeting, the overriding impression, as I dragged my tired gluteus maximus back to the more orderly routine of office work, was -- talk, talk, talk.

18. Under the leering eye of the TV camera, delegated watched WJC officers trying to seduce B'nai Brith with the champagne of flattery. B'nai Brith may yet join the WJC.

MBR/eb
cc: George Gruen



C O N F I D E N T I A L



A REPORT TO THE LEADERSHIP OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS
ON PROPOSED MERGER BETWEEN AJCONGRESS AND AJCOMMITTEE

Submitted by:
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February 1975

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Introduction

It is now 16 months since top leadership and staff of the American Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Committee began preliminary conversations on possible merger between these two major national Jewish community relations agencies.

Since these conversations are now moving ahead toward an important stage, we believe it is important that you have a full report on how and why these negotiations began, the pros and cons of such possible merger, what the real issues are in these conversations, what progress has been made and what positions the AJCongress Merger Committee has taken on some of the key issues at stake.

Since these conversations, irrespective of their outcome, are historic, it is to be expected that they will engender a great deal of community discussion, misinformation and rumor. We submit this report to you, therefore, in the hope that it will present the situation fully and accurately not merely for the membership of the Congress but for the rest of the Jewish community.

The Beginning

The subject of possible merger between the AJCongress and the AJCommittee was first raised by Naomi Levine, national executive director of the Congress, in conversations with Bertram H. Gold, national executive vice

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president of the Committee, in October 1973 in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War. It was prompted by a long standing belief of AJCongress that the Jewish community of the United States, with its limited resources and with its increasing obligations at home and abroad, could ill afford duplication. It is this belief that prompted the Congress to support the MacIver Report as far back as 1949. It is this belief that has made the Congress especially sensitive to the need for cooperation and consultation within the Jewish community and has made Congress willing frequently to subordinate its own organizational image in coordinated coalitions which it has helped found and in which it plays a prominent role.

As simple as it may seem, that belief--in the circumstances of October 1973--was the only reason for the initiation of the merger conversations between the AJCongress and the AJCommittee.

The Circumstances of October 1973

In the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War the need for reexamination of American Jewish organizational life became evident. The war demonstrated the great dependence of Israel on America and the American Jewish community. It demonstrated the need to marshal in the most effective manner the resources of the American Jewish community to project Israel's image positively and effectively to the American public. It demonstrated, too, an almost universal support for Israel in the Jewish community. Every major national Jewish organization, including the Congress and the Committee, stand firmly behind Israel--determined to marshal all community efforts on behalf of her right to exist with secure borders, in peace.

While 30 years ago the Jewish community was split ideologically on the question of Israel, today that split has ceased to exist.

Just as support for Israel has become a priority concern of every major national Jewish organization, on most domestic matters the ideological differences of yesterday between Congress and Committee were becoming less and less sharp. On other international issues, such as Soviet Jewry, Syrian Jewry, etc., both organizations were also in accord. The time and circumstances seemed propitious, therefore, for a serious exploration of the possibilities of getting together.

Note
Congress

Preliminary Meetings Between Staff and Officers of Congress

These observations and their implications for organized Jewish life in the U.S. were the principal subjects of discussion at the first meetings between the two executive heads of the Congress and the Committee (October 8, 21, 1973). It was the conclusion of both that in view of these developments in Jewish life and the changing priorities of the Jewish agenda, the idea of merger was sufficiently important for it to be pursued further with the top officers and the governing bodies of both organizations.

Throughout the months of November, December, January, February, March and April 1973-74 this subject was discussed informally by the officers of the AJCongress. (Similar meetings were held by the AJCommittee.) The officers were acutely aware of the enormous problems involved in possible merger. The officers felt however that the subject was of such historic

importance that it warranted discussion by the National Executive Committee of the AJCongress.

Executive Committee Meeting (May 12, 1973)

On May 12 this issue was brought to the Executive Committee of the Congress. Part of the minutes of that meeting warrant inclusion in this report.

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Naomi Levine reported that the problem of duplication of efforts by Jewish organizations had long troubled the Jewish community and there were growing doubts that we could continue to afford this luxury. At the meeting of the Large Cities Budgeting Conferences (LCBC) in 1973, even though the national organizations in their presentations emphasized their uniqueness, they were pressed with questions about duplication. They were reminded that their policy resolutions and their programs are often similar. Among the organizations active in community relations, AJCommittee has a budget of \$8.5-million, ADL \$7.5-million, and AJCongress \$2.5-million. Further funds are spent on community relations by the NJCRAC and the local CRC's. Funding of these operations is becoming increasingly difficult in view of the needs of Israel and Jewish education. The national agencies have agreed that they would increase their efforts to avoid duplication and more effectively coordinate their activities. Such efforts are under way among all the major national Jewish community relations organizations.

Mrs. Levine said that, at a recent meeting with Bertram Gold, executive vice president of the AJCommittee, the discussion which revealed extensive duplication moved from coordination to other forms of relationships, including merger. Mrs. Levine then started consulting with the top officers of AJCongress who agreed that such conversations should continue. Accordingly, she was asking approval by the Executive Committee of the establishment of a committee to continue such conversations on a more formal basis with a similar committee of AJCommittee. She concluded by saying that she could make no predictions as to whether anything would come from such discussions but she felt that the current needs of the Jewish community mandated that at least the conversations be held.

Mrs. Jacqueline Levine, president of the Women's Division of the Congress, stated that this had been a difficult question for both the officers and the staff leaders who had been involved in the

discussions. Though we all have our hearts in the AJCongress movement and our allegiance is both intellectual and emotional, she was satisfied that we were not doing a disservice to our intellectual commitment by pursuing this exploration. At meetings of the LCBC, she said, she frequently finds it difficult to justify separate financing of two organizations which have been converging. In New Jersey, at least, the differences between the two agencies were smaller than the differences within each agency.

The American Jewish community, moreover, has less money now than it used to have for the community relations agencies. This proposal would make our domestic programs more effective.

Dr. Hertzberg, president of the Congress, pointed out that the question before the meeting was not the desirability of merger but whether conversations with the AJCommittee be authorized. Up to this point, he said, discussions had been informal; it was time to bring the matter to the Executive Committee. While the cautions that had been expressed were relevant, there was still no merger proposal to act on.

He also said he viewed the discussions as taking place between equals and as aimed at finding the most effective way to protect Jewish interests in the U.S. today. He expressed the hope that conversations would also continue with other Jewish national community relations organizations aimed at eliminating duplication. The Jewish community here and Israel's needs abroad demand that we husband our resources carefully.

Dr. Hertzberg then moved that a Merger Committee be established and that the following persons be appointed to this Committee: Howard Squadron (chairman, Governing Council); Stanley Lowell (senior vice president); Theo Bikel, Ted Mann, Jacqueline Levine (co-chairmen, Governing Council); Leona Chanin (chairman, Executive Committee, WD); Murray Gordon (a national vice president). This motion was overwhelmingly approved. Dr. Hertzberg then appointed himself and Mr. Squadron as co-chairmen of this Committee. He later removed himself as co-chairman, giving Mr. Squadron sole respon-

sibility as the chairman. Subsequently, Rabbi Arthur Lelyveld (former president of Congress); Shad Polier (honorary chairman, Governing Council); and Virginia Snitow (former president, WD) were added to the Merger Committee. The Committee was asked to pursue these conversations and report back frequently to the Executive Committee.

If it appeared that merger was possible the matter would then be discussed in every chapter and division of the Congress, by the Governing Council and at an appropriate convention.

First Meeting of Merger Committee of the Congress (June 18, 1974)

At the first meeting of the Merger Committee there was general consensus that this matter warranted serious exploration but that the conversations with the AJ Committee had to proceed along the following lines:

1. If an investigation showed that ideological differences had become insignificant between the Congress and the Committee and if matters of ~~organization, implementation, staff and constituencies~~ could be resolved satisfactorily then and only then would Congress consider the creation of a new organization in Jewish life, an organization that merged the best features and strengths of both organizations. Hopefully, such an organization could more effectively project the concerns of the Jewish community. Hopefully, it would become a large and important force in Jewish life. If the Congress Merger Committee found that ideological differences were significant, it would recommend that the merger conversations cease. In such case there would be no advantage for Jewish life in eliminating an opportunity for diversity and pluralism.

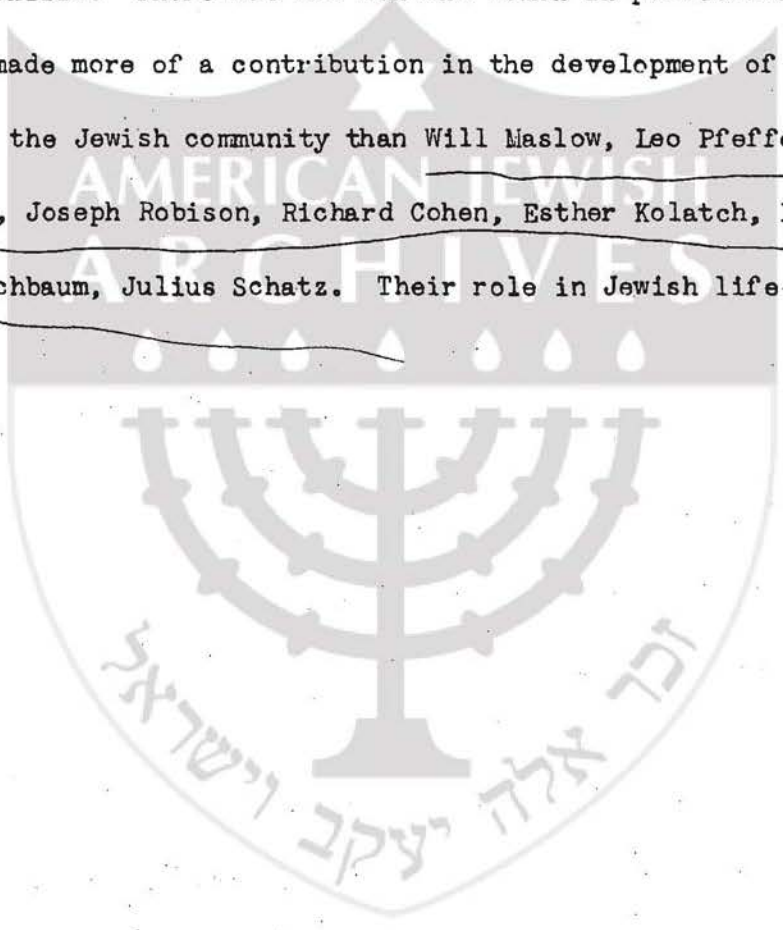
2. Neither organization was to "acquire" or eliminate the other. It had to be a "true merger," resulting in an entirely new organization. The new organization was to have a new name, to demonstrate clearly that a new organization had indeed been formed. The Merger Committee would therefore not suggest that the new organization bear the name of AJCongress, although it believes that the Congress name, the unique role of its founder Stephen Wise, its role in mobilizing support for the State of Israel at a time when other Jewish organizations were indifferent or hostile, its dramatic opposition to Hitler and its creation of the concept that law could be used as a prime weapon in the fight against racism and social injustice (at a time when other Jewish organizations were concentrating on other sociological techniques to defuse racism) gives the Congress a special place in the annals of Jewish history.

3. It was also agreed that a formula for representation would have to be devised locally and nationally to make certain that Congress leadership retain a leadership role in the new organization. Men and women like Dr. Arthur Hertzberg, Howard Squadron, Shad and Justine Polier, Stanley Lowell, Theodore Mann, Theo Bikel, Jacqueline Levine, Leona Chanin, Virginia Snitow, Arthur Lelyveld--to mention a few--are unique in Jewish life. Their brilliance and ability to articulate the issues of Jewish concern must be preserved in any new organization. Similarly, on a local level Congress leadership must be preserved in whatever new structures are created.

4. The new organization should affiliate with the World Jewish Congress. The Congress was a prime mover in the development of the WJCongress. Our president today is one of five international vice presidents of WJC. Our former president, Dr. Joachim Prinz, has been chairman of the Governing Council of the WJC and is today also an international vice president. We believe in the importance of having a world Jewish consultative body in which the problems of world Jewry could be discussed. We believe that such a body helps reinforce the concept of the Jewish peoplehood and the oneness of our history and our destiny.

5. It was also felt that the Women's Division should be continued at this time. While many women today believe that the time of women's organizations is over and that the integration of men and women in coed organizations is to be preferred, the leaders of the Congress and its Women's Division believe that women and men should be given a choice. Those who want a WD with its special programs and activities, should have that option. Those who prefer a single coed organization, should also have that option. In other words, alternate lifestyles should be available. The WD, moreover, has been an innovator of ideas in the Congress and in the Jewish community. It has provided new ideas and program leadership for the total Jewish community. Its leaders--Lillian Steinberg, Jacqueline Levine, Virginia Snitow, Leona Chanin--to mention a few, are women of exceptional achievement. Their leadership and the vigor of the WD should be preserved.

6. And finally, it was the opinion of the Merger Committee that the staff of the Congress consisting of some of the most creative personnel in Jewish communal life must also be part of this new organization. Much of Congress' image and importance has been the result of their efforts and creative skills. There are few men and women in professional Jewish life who have made more of a contribution in the development of ideas and programs for the Jewish community than Will Maslow, Leo Pfeffer, Naomi Levine, Phil Baum, Joseph Robison, Richard Cohen, Esther Kolatch, Lois Waldman, Martin Hochbaum, Julius Schatz. Their role in Jewish life must be preserved.



The Second and Third Committee Meeting of the Congress (July 2, 23, 1974)

The second and third Merger Committee meetings devoted the bulk of their discussion to ideology, style, tone and constituency of both organizations.

Ideology

The program, resolutions, public statements, pamphlets, briefs, printed and mimeographed materials, etc., of the Congress and the Committee were examined in depth to determine if there were in fact differences in ideology between the Congress and the Committee.

After a painstaking examination of the materials produced by both organizations during the past several years, it was the consensus of the Merger Committee that the differences did not appear to be significant.

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During the past several years, for example, both the Congress and the Committee approved the joint program plans of the NJCRAC. Indeed, staff of the Congress and the Committee, in many instances, played important roles in drafting major sections of those plans. In no instance did the Congress or the Committee issue a dissent on the positions taken by the NJCRAC. These positions covered Israel and the Middle East, Syrian Jewry, Soviet Jewry, the holocaust, genocide convention, hunger and starvation, Latin American Jewry, antipoverty programs, legal services, manpower and minimum wage, revenue sharing and fiscal policy, education, housing, voting, women's rights, affirmative action, preferential treatment and quotas, invasion of privacy, capital punishment, criminal justice, censorship, obscenity and pornography, abortion, amnesty, anti-Semitism, inter-religious relations and church-state issues.

While the individual resolutions of both agencies on these subjects show differences in language and emphasis, they indicate no significant substantive distinctions.

Church-State

It has been stated frequently that on the issue of church and state the positions of the Congress and the Committee are different. The Merger Committee gave special attention therefore to this problem. It found no difference in the statements or resolutions of the two agencies except that the Committee supports shared time; the Congress does not. Moreover, it found that the Congress and the Committee are members of PEARL, and the names of both agencies appear on the briefs submitted by PEARL.*
Indeed, the Congress and the Committee names appear on every significant brief submitted in this field since the early days of the McCollum and Gideon Bible lawsuits, in the East Greenbush case in New York State, in the Lemon case in Pennsylvania, and in the recent Meek case. Thus, in all critically important cases the names of both the Committee and the Congress appear. In addition, neither the Committee nor the Congress has ever dissented from the NJCRAC statement on church-state which takes a clear and unequivocal stand in support of separation of church and state and a clear repudiation of efforts to bring prayers and devotional services into the public schools. Only the UAHC has dissented from that statement.

Catholic
News

Having said this, it is important to point out that the Congress has been more active in this field and more willing to bring lawsuits. Congress has been recognized as the lawyer for the Jewish community on this issue, a position which it holds with pride. This has been due not merely to the strong convictions of our members on this issue but to the unique role that Leo Pfeffer, for many years a staff member of the Congress, has played in developing the law on the First Amendment.

Today Leo Pfeffer is chief counsel for PEARL. The briefs he prepares on behalf of PEARL are signed in almost every case by the major national

*New York State Committee for Public Education and Religious Liberty

Jewish organizations, including the Congress and the Committee.

The Congress has never believed that taking a firm church-state position has impaired its relationships with the Catholic and Protestant communities. Our relations with both communities are no better or worse than that of other Jewish organizations. On issues that are of advantage to Catholics or Protestants, they have joined us in coalition, (i.e., antipoverty programs; amnesty; Vietnam; Gideon Bible). On issues with which they differ from us (abortion, Israel, etc.), it is not likely that a modification of our church-state position will make them an ally.

Recently Will Maslow was asked to serve as a consultant to the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. and our staff is actively involved in cooperative efforts with that group. (We were told that the National Council was not pleased with the abrasive qualities of the consultants already named from other Jewish organizations.)

As stated above, we have worked cooperatively with the Catholic community in the Gideon Bible suits and in other cases involving the free expression of religion. The WJCongress, moreover, of which we are a leading constituent, has excellent relationships with the Catholic Church and the Pope. It was the WJC which originally formed the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultation (I.J.C.I.C.) and invited the AJCommittee to join with them. The first chairman of the I.J.C.I.C. was Dr. Joachim Prinz, then president of the AJCongress. The second chairman was Dr. Arthur Hertzberg, current president of the AJCongress. Dr. Hertzberg continues to be intimately involved in interreligious activities. He meets frequently with men such as Father Flannery and Monsignor Ostreicher and other Catholic leaders involved in interreligious work.

The Merger Committee concluded therefore that a merger of the two organizations would cause no damage to the important interreligious activities of either organization.

Vietnam and Amnesty

The Merger Committee did find, however, two areas in which the Congress and the Committee reacted differently to important political (and moral) issues, i.e., Vietnam and amnesty. As early as 1966 the Congress opposed the Vietnam war. The Committee remained silent, issuing its first statement in 1972.

As for amnesty, the AJCongress issued a strong statement calling for unconditional amnesty in 1973. The Committee issued no independent statement. It did, however, support the NJCRAC statement in 1974 on amnesty which is similar to that of the Congress.

Style, Tone and Constituency

The Merger Committee also considered whether in spite of the similarities between the program and policies of the two agencies there were any differences in style, tone and constituency which might impair merger.

On style and tone it found it difficult to compile evidence to prove or disprove the perception that the Congress style was different from or more militant than that of the Committee. Perhaps 20 or 30 years ago the style differences were sharp and identifiable. Today they are more difficult to discern. While in some areas of the country Congress has a more activist membership than the Committee, in other areas the opposite is true. On the national level, the style differences seem not to be significant.

It was suggested by the Merger Committee that a study on style and tone, area by area, be undertaken with conclusions that can be documented by specific evidence, if it is possible.

A recent memorandum prepared by the AJCommittee makes reference to "style differences" between the two organizations. Those statements however are not supported by any hard evidence. This will be discussed further with the Committee and perhaps some additional insights will emerge.

As for constituency, there are differences. The Merger Committee felt that while the young AJCongress member and the young AJCommittee member may be more alike, the typical older Congress and Committee members represent different social and economic classes. The Congress membership includes a large number of professionals--doctors, lawyers, professors, teachers, etc.--and a large number of middle-class entrepreneurs. The Committee membership also has large numbers of professionals but also includes many more affluent businessmen. The Merger Committee recognized that a major question that will have to be discussed within and between the two agencies will be: whether organizations with different social and economic classes can merge for purposes of political action. We believe this is a key question in these merger conversations.

The Negotiating Committee

It was the decision of the Merger Committee that the first meetings between the Congress and the AJCommittee should be with small subcommittees rather than by the larger Merger Committees. Consequently, the Merger Committee of Congress, with the approval of the president, set up a small subcommittee which it calls a "Negotiating Committee." Howard Squadron, Murray Gordon, Stanley Lowell, Theodore Mann and Jacqueline Levine were appointed to serve on the Negotiating Committee.

The AJCommittee has set up its own small negotiating committee which it calls "a liaison committee."

In preparation for the first meeting of the two negotiating committees, Mr. Squadron and Mr. Lowell had several meetings with the chairman of the Merger Committee of the AJCommittee, Dr. Morton Blaustein. Philip Hoffman, former president of the AJCommittee, joined these meetings.* The discussions were mostly preliminary explorations in order to set the agenda and procedure to be followed by the negotiating committees when they began their conversations. There were also efforts at those meetings to isolate the issues and problems that would have to be faced in the joint meetings of the negotiating committees. One matter was thoroughly discussed. Dr. Blaustein indicated AJCommittee's feeling that the result of any merger would be an organization named the AJCommittee. Mr. Squadron stated that such a result was utterly unacceptable to the Congress and talks should not and could not proceed if the Committee was "acquisition" minded. Dr. Blaustein felt the talks should continue, leaving the question of name for later resolution.

The first meeting between the negotiating committees of the Congress and the Committee took place on Wednesday evening, January 22, 1975 at the offices of the Committee.

Dr. Blaustein welcomed the group to this historic meeting and stressed the fact that whether or not anything specific comes from these discussions they are important since they have forced each agency to examine its own organization and to become better acquainted with the other. He pointed out that the AJCommittee was considering not merely merger but perhaps other forms of closer cooperation. For this reason they have called their committee a "liaison committee."

*Specifically, for the record, Mr. Squadron, Mr. Lowell, Dr. Blaustein and Mr. Hoffman met in November; Mr. Squadron and Mr. Hoffman and Dr. Blaustein met in December; and later that month (December 26) Dr. Blaustein and Mr. Squadron met again.

Howard Squadron made clear in his introductory remarks that the Congress was at this time considering merger; that we had not considered other methods of cooperation but that this was always a future possibility. It was not before us, however, at this time. He expressed the hope that this meeting would provide a frank exchange of questions and answers stressing ideology. He also made clear that he was disturbed at the extent of stereotyped notions that we each have about the other. Some of this, he suspects, is transmitted through staff; the rest is probably the result of our own parochial attitudes concerning other organizations. He, too, expressed the hope that regardless of how these meetings ended they would help us in getting to know each other better and in this way help us develop a better understanding of how the Jewish community functions today.

Naomi Levine indicated that she supported the merger concept not because she thought it might be better necessarily for the Congress or for the Committee but because she genuinely believes it would be better for the total Jewish community. She does not believe that there are basic ideological differences. She does not believe in a monolithic Jewish community and if there are differences the organizations should obviously remain separate. But if there are no differences then we do a disservice to Jewish communal life by permitting proliferation, fragmentation and duplication. She believes that the structures of the 30's and 40's are not effective today and have to be revised.

Bert Gold agreed that regardless of how these meetings ended they were of historic importance because they demonstrate our desire to understand each other better and to search for effective operational modes for Jewish communal life. He recommended (and the negotiating committees agreed) that the discussions be broken down into five categories:

1. Ideological problems
2. Style and method of operation
3. Organizational and institutional problems
4. The constituencies of both organizations
5. The problems of implementation

A large part of the meeting was spent discussing the style, tone and method of operation of both organizations. There seemed to be a feeling among the Committee representatives that while their organization worked through a "consensus process," the Congress was given more to the resolution of issues through a "conflict modality." The Congress representatives rejected this view. They pointed out that on every major issue faced by the Congress, whether it be Arab investment in the U.S., affirmative action, Wilder v. Sugarman, amnesty, Vietnam, mandatory retirement, tax credits, school busing, etc.--extensive background material is prepared (some of the best material in the field); discussions in depth are conducted on every level within the agency; often special task forces are created to resolve differences of opinion, if they exist; the end result represents a consensus within the organization. Indeed, neither the Congress nor any other organization could exist unless it worked through consensus. Otherwise there would be such hostility within an agency as to make it impossible to survive.

The negotiating committees also began to discuss ideology. Since the hour was late, the only areas that were discussed specifically were church-state and the World Jewish Congress. On church-state, while no one could point to any policy differences, there was a feeling that the style of the organizations in this area was different. However, this too was not substantiated by anything specific.

As for the WJCongress--representatives of the AJCommittee made it clear that they would find affiliation with the WJC impossible. They oppose it on ideological grounds and believe that the WJC could seriously affect their overseas operations and important aspects of their interreligious activities. Since this was an area of sharp disagreement between the two agencies, it was decided that a discussion of the WJC would be the principal item for discussion at the next meeting of the negotiating committees.

Such a meeting has now been set for March 5, 1975.

Conclusion

It would be impossible to indicate at this point what will result from these discussions. Only one meeting has taken place between the Committee and the Congress. There are major questions that still remain to be resolved.

These include the following:

1. Are the differences that do exist in ideology between the Congress and the Committee important enough to warrant the preservation of the two organizations?
2. Are the styles of the two organizations different enough to warrant the preservation of two separate organizations?
3. Are the constituencies such as to make merger difficult or impossible?
4. Are the Congress and the Committee ready to dissolve their own individual identities and merge into a new organization with a new name and new organizational structure?
5. Can the issue of the Women's Division be resolved?
6. Can the problem of the WJCongress be resolved?

7. Assuming these problems are resolved affirmatively, what kind of new organizational structure should be created? What should be the formula for distribution of leadership positions? How shall staff be integrated? How shall we cope with the chapter and division structure of both organizations? What kind of structure should be organized on a local level?

You may be certain that as these questions are explored the negotiating committee, the Merger Committee and the Executive Committee will keep you informed.

