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Series I: General Correspondence, 1914-1969, undated. Sub-series A: Alphabetical, 1914-1965, undated.

Reel Box Folder 78 27 1730

World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1933-1934.

Hon. Secretary:
The Hon. LILY H. MONTAGU, J.P.
Liberal Jewish Synagogue,
28, St. John's Wood Road,
London, N.W.8.



The Red Lodge,
51, Palace Court,
W.2.

17th May, 1933.

Dear Dr. Silver,

This is a duplicate of the letter I am sending to you in Palestine; I am writing it in case anything should go wrong with the other.

I do not suppose that you will be surprised to hear that at our Executive meeting held on May 8th we came to the sad decision that we cannot hold a big Conference this year. This is very disappointing to us, and we are especially troubled at the thought that your promised co-operation must be postponed till happier times. Nevertheless, we are resolved not to lose the opportunity of getting a Progressive Jewish audience to hear you. If, therefore, you will be willing to come to London instead of Hamburg, we shall very gladly through our Progressive community here organise a public meeting, at which you can either give an address on the subject you planned, or submit some other title to our English group. I need hardly say that we shall be most grateful for your attendance at the small Conference of which

I enclose a notice. Personally, I shall be so pleased to renew my acquaintance with you.

With kindest reg rds,

Yours sincerely,

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I should be most grateful if you would cable your answer, as we should have like to have as long a time as possible in which to organise the meeting.

PROPOSED ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

IN LONDON ON SUNDAY, July 30th, 1933
IN COMMECTION WITH THE MEETING OF OUR GOVERNING BODY

SUBJECT OF THE CONFERENCE: JEWISH PUBLIC WORSHIP

Would you kindly let me know:

- 1. Whether you can attend the Conference and whether you would like us to obtain hospitality for you. We should very much value your co-operation.
- 2. Whether you know of any other representative members of your Congregation who will be able to join us. Will you be good enough to make this small Conference known as far as possible.

Unfortunately the funds of the World Union do not allow of our paying the travelling expenses of any beyond the members of the Governing Body.

If sufficient representatives of the Progressive Youth Organisations can be in London at this time to take part in the above Conference, the English Youth Associations will also arrange a Youth Meeting for them.

EINDLY REPLY TO THIS NOTICE WITHIN TWO WEEKS.

June 1, 1933. The Hon. Lily H. Montagu, J.P., 51. Palace Court, W.2., London, England. My dear Miss Montagu: Permit me to acknowledge receipt of your letter of May 17th. You may be surprised to receive this letter from me from Cleveland, but owing to a very sad event in our family we were compelled to change all of our plans and return to the States immediately. The beloved sister of Mrs. Silver, Mrs. Pauline Lazaron, passed away suddenly. We were informed of the news by cable while we were in Jerusalem and we left immediately. I question very much whether I shall go back to Europe this summer. Should I do so, I shall be very pleased to communicate with you. If not, I hope that I may be able to be of service to you at some future time. With all good wishes, permit me to remain Cordially yours. AHS: BK

December 28, 1933. The Hon. Lilly H. Montagu, J.P., The Red Lodge. 51. Palace Court, W.2. London, England. My dear Miss Montagu: My plans for the coming summer are altogether indefinite and I therefore cannot at the present moment say whether I shall be able to come to Europe in July to attend the Conference of the World Union. My summer plans will probably not be made until March or April. If you can ait that long, please let me know and at that time I will write to you whether I am going to Emurope. The subject which you suggest interests me very much. With all good wishes, I remain Very cordially yours. AHS: BK

Hon Secretary: The Hon. LILY H. MONTAGU, J.P. 31, Alfred Place, London, W.C.1.

The Red Lodge, 51, Palace Court, W.2.

17th January, 1934.

Dear Dr. Silver,

I have shown your letter of December 28th to Dr. Mattuck. We both regret very deeply that there may be a possibility of your not being able to come to Europe next summer, and attend the Conference of the World Union. We were hoping so very much that you would be able to speak; as we so rarely hold a conference it is most important to get someone who is really an authority on the subject. If there is a chance of our being able to have you, we will of course wait a month or two until you can decide on your plans. Would you

be kind enough to let me know as soon as you possibly can? o We Hall be writing disassocied ? in great deprecelly 4 you cant come. With kindest regards,

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Yours sincerely,

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Hon Secretary:
The Hon. LILY H. MONTAGU, J.P.
31, Alfred Place,
London, W.C.1.

The Red Lodge,
51, Palace Court,
W.2.

6th February, 1934.

Dear Dr. Silver,

I told the members of the Governing Body, at the meeting on January 29th, that you would not be able to let us know just yet whether you will be able to speak at the Conference. In deciding to delay our plans for your decision, they expressed the wish that I should ask you to be kind enough to let me know as soon as you possibly can. They are all most anxious that we should have an address from you. The date of the Conference has been definitely fixed for July 6th to 10th.

Yours sincerely,

Les Hrotoju

Hon Secretary:
The Hon. LILY H. MONTAGU, J.P.
31, Alfred Place,
London, W.C.1.

The Red Lodge, 51, Palace Court, W.2.

11th July, 1934.

Dear Dr. Silver.

We were very sorry that you could not attend our Conference, but I think that when the reports come toyou you will find that we had some successful meetings. We had a number of young delegates who added immensely to the interest of the Conference. I am glad to say that the Conference unanimously accepted the suggestion of the Governing Body that a committee should be formed to investigate, and if possible initiate, religious work in Palestine on Progressive lines. We all feel that the time has come when some such work is urgently necessary. but it is of course clear that we should not want to impose on the people in the country any form of Progressive Judaism with which they were not completely in sympathy. It was decided that the plans of work must be submitted to the Executive of the World Union, and before any definite steps are taken to appant an organiser, their consent must be obtained. The Governing Body very much hope that you will be prepared to serve on this committee. We all feel that your knowledge would be of the greatest help in the important work which lies before it. I should be glad to hear from you as soon as possible whether you are prepared to

join this committee, and whether you can give a suggestion as to the Chairman. The other members are to be Dr. Elbogen, Dr. Ehrenpreis, Dr. Goldenson and Mr. Perlzweig. For the present I should like to be allowed to do the secretarial work from the centre, as so much will have to be done by correspondence. Would you kindly let me have your answer at your earliest convenience, as our Executive will meet very soon after the High Holydays. In asking the members of the committee to serve, I was directed to point out that the work would be restricted to definitely religious work in Palestine.

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Hon Secretary: The Hon. LILY H. MONTAGU, J.P. 31, Alfred Place, London, W.C.1.

The Red Lodge, 51, Palace Court,

12th September, 1934.

Dea D- Silver

I have not received an answer to my last letter, but I feel that it may have gone astray while you were on holiday. I should be so glad to know if we might count on your cooperation with any Progressive religious work that may be undertaken in Palestine.

Since writing to you, I have heard of a possibility of a Progressive committee being formed on the spot, but we should still need an advisory council definitely appointed by, and working in close co-operation with our Executive. As we want to get our work into order as soon as possible, I should be glad if you would write to me. I should also be glad if you could suggest a Chairman for the committee, which is to consist of Dr. Ehrenpreis, Dr. Elbogen, Dr. Silver, Dr. Goldenson and Mr. Perlzweig.

Yours sincerely,

Hon. Secretary:
The Hon. LILY H. MONTAGU, J.P.
Liberal Jewish Synagogue,
28, St. John's Wood Road,
London, N.W.8.

The Red Lodge, 51, Palace Court, W.2.

19th Wotober, 1934.

Dear D-Silver.

Executive early in November, and that the Palestine work is entirely held up by our not getting a reply from you as to whether you will join our advisory committee. I do hope you will see your way to ascepting the suggestion, because you must see that the personnel of the committee makes a great difference, and if we have to have these very long delays in finding the people to serve, we cannot hope for any useful work. I wrote to you on the subject first in July.

With apologies for troubling you so much,

Yours sincerely,

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Hon Secretary:
The Hon. LILY H. MONTAGU, J.P.
31, Alfred Place,
London, W.C.1.

The Red Lodge,
51, Palace Court,
W.2.

21st November, 1934.

Dear Dr. Silver.

I was so glad to hear from you at last in answer to my letters about the proposed Palestine committee. You seem, however, to misunderstand the attitude of the World Union in the matter of the Reform Movement in Palestine, and I should like to try to explain it to you as fully as I can.

on the part of the Governing Body that a Reform Synagogue in Palestime should be "anti-Nationalistic, anti-Zionistic and non-Hebraic." The issues indicated by these adjectives fall outside the scope of the World Union. It is just as prepared to help Zionists and Nationalists to establish Progressive Jewish Congregations where none now exist as it would be to help any other group of Jews toward the same end.

Secondly, it is not the intention of the World Union to bring into Palestine a Reform Movement from outside. We have had communications from and about Palestine saying how much a Progressive Jewish Movement is needed there, and we have even had a report of an informal meeting of a number of Palestinians with an American rabbi, at which the Palestinians made clear their desire to have Progressive Judaism, and their feeling that the World Union ought to support

them. In view of such reports, the Governing Body of the World Union felt, and feel, that it should make it clear that it is prepared to help Palestinian Jews to have a Progressive Jewish Movement in that country.

The plan is something as follows:-

- 1. That a group be established in Palestine to promote Progressive Judaism.
- 2. That the World Union do its utmost to obtain funds to help them initiate the Movement, and to engage a minister for themselves when they have found a man whom they think the right man.
- 3. That all reports of needs, etc., from the Palestine Committee should go to the Advisory Committee, who would, on the basis of these reports, make recommendations to the Governing Body. The Governing Body also hopes that the Advisory Committee would help to obtain the money necessary for grants to the Palestine Committee.

Now I have explained the situation fully, I hope you will consider joining us, and will let me know as soon as possible if we may have your co-operation. We should be so very disappointed if you decided against doing so.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

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WORLD UNION FOR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM.

Hon Secretary:
The Hon. LILY H. MONTAGU, J.P.
31, Alfred Place,
London, W.C.1.

The Red Lodge,
51, Palace Court,
W.2.

5th December, 1933.

Dear Dr. Silver,

You will remember that last year you had planned to come and speak at our Conference when unfortunately personal trouble at home made you alter your plans. We have decided to hold a regular Conference next year in spite of the many difficulties which confront us, and it was left to our officers to choose a subject. We have decided on "Judaism and Human Destiny". We should be so grateful if you would be prepared to speak on "Judaism and the Destiny of the Human Race" on Sunday morning, July 8th or the 15th, either in Paris or in London. This meeting will be followed by a general discussion, and we should be glad if you would take thirty minutes to open the discussion. I do hope that you will be able to consider this suggestion favourably, and that we may have your reply as soon as possible, for we have much to arrange. It would give infinite salatation to all concerned of you could say you Yours sincerely,

Les Amoraga

Hon Secretary:
The Hon, LILY H. MONTAGU, J.P.
31, Alfred Place,

London, W.C.1.

The Red Lodge, 51, Palace Court, W.2.

20th December, 1934.

Dear D- Solver,

I enclose a memorandum which gives you the full history of the recent work of the World Union in connection with Palestine. During the year or two preceding 1934 the World Union was not doing anything at all in connection with that country. I hope very much that your committee will very shortly become active. The address of the Hon. Secretary, Mr. Perlzweig, is 3, Hurst Close, London, N.W.11.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE PALESTINE SUB-COMMITTEE

1. From Minutes of Governing Body Meeting, January 29th, 1934.

A letter had been sent to the Governing Body by Dr. Elbogen. It was written to him by Rabbi Wilhelm (of Dortmund) expressing the hope that some work on Progressive lines might be undertaken in Palestine. The Secretary said that similar letters had been sent to her, and she thought that it was most important that some concrete scheme of work might be produced from a reliable source.

It was decided, after discussion, to tell Rabbi Wilhelm that if he could get together a committee of inquiry, and formulate with them some definite suggestions, the Governing Body Would consider them with the utmost sympathy. He was advised to get into touch with Mr. Perlzweig as soon as the latter went to Palestine at the end of February.

Mr. Perlzweig had received a letter from Dr. Elk, who had recently visited Palestine, and was anxious to assist in Progressive work there; and it was suggested that he should be put into connection with Rabbi Wilhelm, first being asked, however, to discuss his views with Herr Stern. The Secretary was also asked to put other inquirers into connection with Dr. Wilhelm.

2. From Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, May 4th, 1934

Mabbi Wilhelm of Dortmund, who was very highly spoken of by Herr Stern and Dr. Elbogen, was spending some months in Palestine, and had been asked to write his impressions of religious conditions in the country to the Secretary. He wrote that he considered there was a most promising field for work, especially among the young people, and that the first step must be the setting up of a modern Rabbinate. The functions to be fulfilled by such a Rabbinate would be the following: - the giving of spiritual help and guidance to individuals, the performance of ceremonies in a modern and worthy manner, the organisation of study hours and the Oneg-Schabbat, as the inauguration of regular services would be premature and inadvisable, work among the Kwuzoth on the land, work among young people beginning with the setting up of a youth centre. He would be only too glad to place himself at the service of the World Union for this work.

Frau Ostwald, Secretary of the Austrian group, had been in Palestine and had discussed matters with Rabbi Wilhelm. She confirmed his point of view, and felt that he might well be a suitable person to undertake Progressive work. The Secretary had also heard from Herr Kaminka and various other individuals.

Mr. Perlzweig had visited Palestine, and submitted a report of his impressions. He had discussed matters with Rabbi Prinz and with a young Hebrew writer of distinction, Mr. Yaari. He divided the Jewish population into three sections; the Old Yishuv, and urban settlements and old colonies, and the new communal colonies. The Old Yishuv was incredibly superstitious, and he felt that the children who were brought up in that way would one day provide a problem which only Progressive Judaism would be able to tackle.

The towns and older settlements are Orthodox. The young people have no interest in the Synagogue but a good deal in religiou; they are the mainstay of the Oneg Schabbat meetings. They too present a hopeful field for Progressive work.

The older colonies are inclined to stress observance at the expense of ideals of social justice, brotherhood, etc. The new communal colonies, on the other hand, say they have no use for "religion." But in reality they respect sincere religion, they have been reluctant to abandon organised religion, and would like to find some form of organised religion which would be in harmony with their social and ethical nee ideals. Both Mr. Perlzweig and Rabbi Prinz felt that a Progressive Jewish University Settlement should be established. He suggested that the matter should be discussed at the Conference, or that it be referred to a committee of the Conference.

After a good deal of discussion, it was AGREED, on the motion of the Chairman, that the Secretary be asked to write to the American members of the Governing Body, and to South Africa, ad also to any individuals in England who might be thought suitable, asking whether any individuals in their communities would be prepared to give a donation to inaugurate Progressive work in Palestine. If replies were received in the affirmative, the matter should be carried further and brought before the Governing Body, but if no encouragement was forthcoming the matter would have to be dropped.

It was pointed out that, even if work could eventually be undertaken Rabbi Wilhelm would not necessarily be the best person to initiate it, and it was therefore AGREED that he be told that no decision can be reached at the moment, and as the prospect is so very doubtful the Executive of the World Union has no alternative but to advise him not to take it into account at all in formulating his own plans.

3. From Minutes of Governing Body Meeting, July 6th, 1934.

The Executive Committee had agreed at its meeting on May 8th to write to the American members of the Governing Body and to Rabbi Weiler, and also to ask any individuals in England who might be thought suitable, as to whether earmarked subscriptions might be collected to inaugurate Progressive Jewish work in Palestine. So far she had only had replies from Dr. Morgenstern and Dr. Goldenson, who had expressed their interest and asked for more detailed plans.

Rabbi Weiler had said that for the moment he was too much absorbed in the needs of Johannesburg to be of any assistance, although he realised the need for religious work in Palestine.

A letter had been received from Dr. Elbogen, expressing his conviction that Dr. Wilhelm was the right man to organise Progressive Work in Palestine, but recommending that the World Union should not openly associate itself with the work of the pioneers. The members of the Governing Body unanimously accepted the Chairman's point of view that any Progressive work done under the auspices of the World Union must be carried on openly.

Much discussion followed, but there was a unanimity of opinion that the need for Progressive work was urgent, and incontestable. It was finally AGREED, on the suggestion of Mr. Perlzweig, that the Governing Body should if possible appoint a special committee to investigate, and if possible initiate, Progressive work in Palestime It should be proposed to the Conference that a special committee be appointed, as funds would have to be collected from private sources.

4. From Minutes of Governing Body Meeting, July 10th, 1934.

The Secretary said that she had received encouraging letters from Dr. Goldenson, who, without making any definite committal, said that he hoped to be able to raise 500 dollars for work in Palestine, and Dr. Morgenstern, who also wrote most sympathetically, and said that he hoped in the Autumn to raise several hundred dollars if the decision to start work in Palestine was accepted by the Governing Body.

The Chairman moved that the Committee, the appointment of which was recommended in the Secretary's report to the Conference, and accepted by the Conference, to investigate, and if possible initiate, Progressive Jewish work in Palestine, should consist of Dr. Elbogen, Dr. Ehrenpreis, Dr. Goldenson, Dr. Silver and Mr. Perlzweig.

A protracted discussion on the suggestion of work in Palestine ensued. The Chairman accepted Mr. Waley's recommendation that the plan of work should be submitted by the Committee to the Executive before the initial practical steps were taken, and the proposal as to appointment of organiser should also be laid before them. Mr. Reinhart did not see the necessity for a separate committee, for he thought that the usual policy of the World Union should be adopted, and, as had been done in other countries, the work should be carried out altogether from the central Executive. He also objected to the work being initiated directly by the World Union. After several members had given their opinion, the Chairman said that he felt that work in Palestine offered such practical difficulties that a committee of experts, acquainted with all the problems of the country, was indispensable as an advisory council. He agreed that no effort should be made in Palestine or anywhere else to estrange Orthodox men and women from their allegiance, but he thought that

The World Union should always be prepared to combat indifference and irreligion by constructive work. Finally he amended his resolution, and moved it in the following terms:-

"That a committee consisting of Dr. Ehrenpreis, Dr. Goldenson, Dr. Silver, Dr. Elbogen and Mr. Perlzweig be appointed to investigate the need for Progressive Judaism in Palestine and the possibility of initiating it, to report upon the result of their investigation to the Executive of the World Union, and, if their report is accepted, to initiate such work. If any of the people mentioned refuse to serve, the Executive be empowered to appoint someone in his place."

CARRIED

It was AGREED that it should be an instruction to the Honorary Secretary and to the members of the Committee that when any announcement is made to the Committee or by the Committee, it be made clear that the work in Palestine is of a definitely and exclusively religious character.

It was also AGREED that the character of Progressive work ultimately to be undertaken would be evolved from the group resident in Palestine.

5. From Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, November 14th, 1934.

The Secretary reported that Dr. Elbogen and Mr. Perlzweig and Dr. Goldenson had consented to serve on the advisory committee for Palestine, and Herr Stern said that Dr. Ehrenpreis was also willing. A letter from Dr. Goldenson was read, to the effect that he was sending 100 dollars for Palestine work.

The Chairman proposed that Dr. Ehrenpreis be asked to be Chairman and Mr. Perlzweig Honorary Secretary, and that Dr. Morgenstern be asked to join the Committee.

CARRIED

The Secretary reported that Rabbi Rauch had Written on August 17th that he had met the following people:-

Dr. Hantke, Director of Keren Hayeson,

Mr. H.M.Kalvarysky, ex-Director of Pica, Mr. Algred Berger, Manager Phoenix Co,

Dr. Fritz Simon, Manager Migdal Insurance Co,

Dr. Joseph Treu, Surgeon, Dr. A. Feilchenfeld, Lawyer,

Dr. H. Graupe, Rabbi,

Dr. K. Wilhelm, "

Dr. G. Harlitz, Archiv-Director of Jewish Agency.

They were all ardent Zionists. There was no service or teaching which would satisfy them, but they did not start one on their own because they needed material help at the beginning, in order to be able to employ a full-time rabbi. Once started, they expected to be able to carry on themselves. He felt that the real lack was not this modest sum of money, but leadership. They felt that the least the World Union could do was to give them this financial support, i.e. a grant of £100. They had approved his suggestion that all labels should be omitted at first. He had seen Herr Kaminka at Tel-Aviv, and been very impressed by him. Herr Kaminka had felt that it might not be the wisest thing for the World Union to start with a subvention, but that the Jerusalem group should begin work on its own first, preferably with Palestinian leaders. He thought news-paper publicity of great importance, and mentaioned a paper whose leading contributor was Dr. Bergmann.

The Secretary wrote to Dr. Bergman, Librarian at Jerusalem, but he replied that he did not contribute to any paper and did not know to what she was referring.

Dr. Elbogen wrote on September 18th giving a report of an interview he had had with Dr. Wilhelm on the 17th. He was still more convinced that Dr. Wilhelm was the right man to undertake the work. He had supporters among those who had been in Palestine many years, and among all shades of society and of thought. He wanted to start where the need is greatest, with the funeral service. He would proceed to organise services after this, beginning with an Oneg Schabbat. It was a very important fact that Dr. Wilhelm has the approval and confidence of the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Kuk. Orthodox Jews were working hard at the revival of religious forms. Besides a limited fund for the beginning, which might be repaid later, he reckoned the cost would be £40 a month. He could come to London to discuss matters at the end of September.

After consultation with the Chairman, the Secretary wrote that the World Union ought not to entrust the work in Palestine to Dr. Wilhelm with a free hand. A scheme would have to be found which was acceptable to a responsible committee in Palestine, or better still a committee there should draw up a scheme and then appeal to the World Union to support it.

Dr. Elbogen replied that he greatly regretted Dr. Mattuck's decision, on the grounds of "Never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day."

Dr. Morgenstern had written that Dr. Lauterbach, Professor Emeritus of Talmud of the Hebrew Union College, was now resident in Jerusalem, and would almost certainly be both able and happy to assist a Committee to promote Progressive Judaism in Palestine. It was also possible that Rabbi Zuckermann might return to Palestine, and he felt that Rabbi Zuckermann would be an excellent person to be the salaried leader of the movement.

The Secretary wrote to Dr. Lauterbach, asking for his views. He had replied that he felt her attitude to the problem in Palestine to be the right one. The principle needs were to give the rising generation an appreciation of Judaism as a religion, and to do this in a modern way, i.e. a Progressive way. The initial work must be undertaken by a local committee on the spot, who must receive moral and material support from the Executive, but the whole movement must not be labelled as the work of the World Union, as this would harm it.

Dr. Dienemann, Who was visiting Jerusalem, wrote that a Progressive service there would be a conservative one in the Continental sense of the word. Only a German rabbi could be the leader, as the need for Liberal Judaism springs from the Germans, but everything would have to be conducted in Hebrew. The work was very necessary, but support would probably be needed for two or three years. In reply to a letter from the Secretary suggesting that the work should not be too much in the hands of German immigrants, and asking for practical suggestions, he wrote suggesting that the work be entrusted to Dr. Wilhelm, with perhaps Dr. George Harlitz. He said the matter was most urgent because Orthodoxy was working hard, and would gain by delay.

Mr. Perlzweig had suggested getting in touch with Dr. Hantke, who has been in Palestine for some years, and who comes to London quite frequently.

Considerable discussion then took place on the principle upon which work should be undertaken. It seemed to be generally agreed by the members of the Executive that the initiative must come from people on the spot, but there was a difference of opinion as to whether it must come from people long resident in Palestine, or Whether it might be accepted if coming from German immigrants. The names of Dr. Hantke and Dr. Harlitz were mentioned as possible organisers. The Chairman proposed that one of these two be written to, after Herr Stern had taken advice upon the choice in Germany. agreed that the Secretary should put the selected organiser in possession of all information re interested people and reports from Dr. Rauch and other correspondents, and he should attempt to form a group of those interested in Progressive Judaism, and report to the World Union advisory committee. The organiser should be told that if he could get a group together the World Union would support them to begin with, even to the extent of enabling them to appoint a rabbi.

CARRIED

It was AGREED that the functions of the Advisory Committee should be as follows:-

- 1) To act as a sub-committee of the Governing Body and the Executive, to be in immediate contact with the work in Palestine.
- 2) To receive reports from the local committee in Palestine, and to give them advice and help when asked for, provided that any question involving financial responsibility on the part of the World Union, or any question of principle, be first submitted to the Governing Body.
- 3) To present reports to the Governing Body on the work in Palestine, based on the reports received from the local committee, and to make recommendations to the Governing Body on the action which, in their opinion, should be taken.

