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World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1936-1937.

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.

15th July, 1936.

Dear Dr Silver,

We had a very important meeting of the Governing Body, especially in so far as Palestine was concerned. Dr. Dienemann ^{done} has ~~an~~ excellent service through his visit to Palestine, and he recommended that definite subventions should be given in response to their request, to Rabbi Wilhelm, working on educational lines in Jerusalem, and to Rabbi Elk, who is inaugurating congregational activity in Haifa. Another small subvention, Dr. Dienemann thought, should be given for work in the district round Jerusalem, and also for the colony of Kijak-Bialik. Moreover, Dr. Dienemann laid great stress on the need for a rabbi to minister on Progressive lines in Tel Aviv, and the possibility of ~~being~~ doing all this work and propaganda depends a great deal on our ~~own~~ power to raise the necessary funds, which for the moment we ~~estimate~~ estimate to be about £2,000. An English member of the Governing Body offered £250 immediately on the understanding that another £250 would be collected. Other small sums have been offered, but we are only at the beginning of our collection, and I was asked to forward you our resolution and at the same time to ask you how far, as a member of the Advisory Palestine Committee,

can co-operate. We believe that the appeal should get a very wide
response. I should be very glad to hear from you on the subject.

Yours sincerely,

Hyman M. ...



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Resolution passed by the Governing Body dealing with Palestine

That the following letter be sent to Rabbi Elk:-

"The World Union is ready to help in the upbuilding of the religious life in Palestine, and is prepared to give £150 for one year to your organisation on the understanding that it will work for a development of Judaism in Palestine in the spirit of the Preamble to the Constitution of the World Union. In accordance with the principles of the World Union, we leave your organisation independent to do this work in relation to the conditions of Jewish life in Palestine. We hope that when your organisation is strong enough it will become affiliated to the World Union."

That a similar letter be written to Dr. Wilhelm offering £100 for work in Jerusalem and £20 for the surrounding districts and colonies.

Rabbi Dr. Elk

Haifa den 11. September 1936.
Mount Carmel, Beth Itin.

Dear colleague,

Through our colleague Dr. Dienemann I have learned that you are in the Palestine Committee of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. Dr. Dienemann, as you are already aware, visited Palestine in the interests of the World Union in order to study the possibilities there of a religious revival in its progressive sense. At the meeting of the World Union in London in July 1936 he gave a comprehensive report of the findings, particularly of the work of the Union " Baith Ysrael" in Haifa of which I am the rabbi and which I together with a group of interested people founded a year ago. His report was enthusiastically received also by the Americans there. It was to be translated into English and disseminated widely in America, I do not know if you have read this report, but I conceive it as my duty to inform you of our work, of the accomplishments it has achieved and of the objectives we have set ourselves, as it is our belief, that what we are doing here, has significant not only within the confines of Palestine, but for the further development of Progressive Judaism in the world.

The aim of our Union is to create a synthesis between traditional Judaism and the dynamics of the life, which is developing in Palestine. We stand on the platform of Jewish Nationalism and see a religious truth and a religious task in the return of our people to Palestine and in the rehabilitation of the land. Inasmuch as we are rooted simultaneously in the life of Palestine and in its religious traditions (in an undogmatic sense) we believe that we have something essential to give to the many who are looking for a means of religious expression. Through these means we will help in time to create an atmosphere, in which religious life can develop organically, giving direction and example for both, for people in Palestine and in the Galuth as well. Our work, is being built according to a specific plan. We have turned to no one for help. Only the Jewish Agency helped us with a small financial grant). To the larger Jewish public we wanted to come only when we were beyond the merely theoretical and had some accomplishments already to our credit. This has been achieved. Religious services have been established, which draw large attendances on Sabbaths and holidays, the youth has been drawn to us and with satisfaction we are able to say, that both, the youths and children, attend

the services in large numbers. In this last winter we began our adult education work. In a comparatively short time we have been successful in becoming a factor in the spiritual life of Haifa. In consequence of the report from Dr. Dienemann the World Union has granted us a financial subvention through which our further work will be made easier.

We know that the success of this work depends on ourselves, but on the same time we are convinced of the fact that cultural religious work of the kind, we wish to do, is only possible when the religiously interested Jews of the whole world will cooperate with us. Only then will it be possible to create here a centre of progressive Judaism. Numbers of the leading german rabbis, Seligmann, Baeck, Dienemann, Elbogen and others, are following our work with interest and stand to our side, ready to help in the upbuilding of our institutions. Above all, Dienemann, who has seen our work, is helping us in our development through the organisation of a "Miphal Baith Yisrael". To-day we turn to the rabbis of America, to the Zionists and Non-Zionists, that they too should be helpful in this work, which in our minds is the weightiest that can confront a religious Jew: the revival of our religion in Palestine and its relation in the rebuilding of the land.

Inasmuch as the task of establishing our religious services has been accomplished, we are taking the next step after the holidays and are opening a house of study as also a construction of a reading-room and a library. The reading-room should become a cultural and social centre for the youths here. This will be tight together with the organisation of a Toynbee-hall. For your assistants in equipping the reading-room and in the building-up of the library, which should contain books of the religious, philosophic and social character, we would be deeply grateful. We would welcome also receiving the essential Jewish newspapers and periodicals in English and in Hebrew, which are published in America as also of the publication of the Jewish schools and conferences. We want to open the reading-room immediately after the holidays with a working library, but realize, that the completion of the library will naturally take long time. If you would be interested in our work, we should be glad to write more in detail of our ideas for the development and the content of the library.

The importance of making a first contact is uppermost in our minds now. It would give us joy, if our work would find the same response in America that it has already found in England and in Germany.

Yours sincerely

AM. J. S. R.

WORLD UNION FOR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM.

Hon. Secretary:

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

1st March 1937

Dear Rabbi Silver,

I am sending you a copy of the complete brochure on Palestine, consisting of reports from Dr. Elk and Dr. Wilhelm, and a foreword by Dr. Dienemann, ^{are now} which have been translated rather freely and duplicated. Extracts were sent to Rabbi Wohl some time ago for the collection campaign in America, ^{WRHS} as we felt that the complete papers ^{AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES} were too long for this purpose, but we think that the members of the Palestine Committee will wish to read the full reports.

As you have probably heard we are holding a formal conference this year during the first weekend in July, probably in Holland, to discuss "Organised Religion and Modern Life" and very much hope that you will be able to come.

Yours sincerely,

Lily Montagu

WORLD UNION FOR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM.

Hon. Secretary:

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

12th March 1937

Dear Rabbi Silver,

After an interval of two years we are hoping to organise a formal Conference this year ~~commencing~~^{during} the first week-end in July, probably at Amsterdam. The Conference will last from the Friday until the Tuesday night, but the day for the discussion of the central subject - "Organised Religion and Modern Life" - will be Sunday. *July 4th*

We are asking a German speaker to take the theoretical aspect of the subject, and we would be immensely grateful if you would deal with the practical side. We should be glad for you to speak for 40 minutes, and should have to make this time the absolute limit in order that all our delegates should have an opportunity to speak if they so desire.

We should also ask for a short synopsis to be sent to us by the end of May, so that we could get it translated, and if necessary circulated.

I need hardly say how grateful we should be if you would agree to undertake this task. We have not had the pleasure of an address from you, and I am sure we should all find it thoroughly interesting, instructive and stimulating.

Would you be kind enough to send your answer to Rabbi Zepin who will cable your assent to us. I should like to add that I am supported in my request by our Hon. Officers and also by the American members of the Governing Body.

Yours sincerely,

Lily H. Montagu

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Secretary

RABBI GEORGE ZEPIN

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TELEPHONE: PARKWAY 7345 « MERCHANTS BUILDING » CINCINNATI

April 12, 1937.

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver,
The Temple,
E. 105th & Ansel Road,
Cleveland, Ohio.

Dear Dr. Silver:

I have no desire to press you
but I have received a letter from Miss
Montagu asking me to cable her whether
you have accepted her invitation to speak
at the conference of the World Union for
Progressive Judaism. Will you please
advise me?

With kind regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

George Zepin
Secretary

GZ:SG

April 21, 1937

Rabbi George Zepin, Secretary,
Union of American Hebrew Congregations,
Merchants Bldg.,
Cincinnati, Ohio.

My dear Rabbi Zepin:

Please pardon the delay in answering your letter. I have been extremely busy these last few weeks and my correspondence has lagged.

I wish I were free to accept the invitation to address the World Union for Progressive Judaism. My present plans, however, call for my going to Palestine in July to see my Folks and I am therefore compelled to forego the pleasure of attending this Conference.

With best wishes, I remain

Very cordially yours,

AHS:BK

WORLD UNION FOR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM.

Hon. Secretary: THE HON. LILY H. MONTAGU, O.B.E., J.P.

THE RED LODGE, 51, PALACE COURT, LONDON, W.2.

16th July 1937

Dear Rabbi Silver,

At the meeting of the Authority Committee held on Friday, July 2nd, in connection with the Conference, it was decided to ask the Governing Body to dissolve the present Committee and in its stead to invite representatives of progressive religious thought who should consult together, and from time to time produce papers or books for the guidance of progressive thinking people. These expositions should be in no way dogmatic, or such as could possibly be taken to formulate a creed, since such attempts would be wholly contrary to the principles of the World Union.

It was felt that if these people were representatives who could command respect their influence would be of very great value.

It was recommended that there should be three representatives of religious thought from America, Germany and England. I have to ask you if you will be one of the American representatives. You will find the complete list of those invited on the enclosed sheet of paper.

Yours sincerely,

L. H. Montagu

P.T.O.

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J
23rd July 1937

P.S. I hope you will forgive the delay in sending this letter because I wanted to enclose with it the summary of the meeting of the Authority Committee held in Amsterdam on Friday, July 2nd, and I have just received this from Dr. Dieneman. I hope it will interest you. When I hear that you are prepared to join the Committee, I will give you copies of the other papers which show the work of the Committee leading up to the Holland Conference, if you have not already had them.

