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Zionist Organization of America, telegram to seven past
presidents, 1947.

DETROIT, MICH. JUNE 3, 1947

LOUIS LIPSKY MORRIS ROTHENBERG ROBERT SZOLD STEPHEN S WISE SOLOMON GOLDMAN
LOUIS E LEVINthal EDMUND I KAUFMANN

YOUR TELEGRAM IS A DISTINCT DISSERVICE TO THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT COMING AS IT
DOES ON THE EVE OF THE MOMENTOUS UNITED NATIONS DELIBERATIONS STOP YOUR
TELEGRAM IS THE FIRST ATTEMPT ON ANYONE'S PART TO INFLUENCE DETROIT DELEGATION
FOR OR AGAINST ANY CANDIDATES FOR OFFICE IN ZOA STOP YOUR IMPLICATIONS OF
UNDUE POLITICAL PRESSURE ON DISTRICTS IS NOT TRUE IN DETROIT AND ARE PETTY
MATTERS COMPARED TO THE NEED OF MAKING THIS COMING CONVENTION A UNITED
DEMONSTRATION OF THE STRENGTH AND SOLIDARITY OF OUR MOVEMENT STOP SINCERELY
SUGGEST FOR THE SAKE OF PEACE IN ZOA THAT YOU DESIST FROM MAKING THIS
UNNECESSARY DISTURBANCE STOP IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE MOVEMENT WHICH WE
ALL HAVE AT HEART LET US UNITE OUR FORCES AND OUR STRENGTH SO THAT WE CAN
FIGHT OUR COMMON ENEMIES AND UNITED ACHIEVE OUR GOAL OF A JEWISH NATIONAL
HOME IN PALESTINE

MORRIS M. JACOBS, PRESIDENT
DETROIT ZIONIST DISTRICT

BOSTON, MASS. JUNE 4, 1947

THE FOLLOWING NIGHT LETTER WAS JUST DISPATCHED TO THE FOLLOWING SEVEN
FORMER PRESIDENTS GOLDMAN KAUFMAN LEVINTHAL LIPSKY ROTHERBERG SZOLD AND
WISE QUOTE YOUR TELEGRAM ADDRESSED TO DISTRICT PRESIDENT IN OUR REGION HAS
COME TO MY ATTENTION I DEEPLY DEPLORE THIS UNNECESSARY AND CONFUSING ACTION
ON YOUR PART NEW ENGLAND HAS NEVER HAD TO BE ADVISED HOW TO FUNCTION IN A
DEMOCRATIC MANNER AND HAS ALWAYS PERMITTED COMPLETE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION
BY ITS DELEGATES PRESENT NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION HAVE NEVER INSTRUCTED
NEW ENGLAND TO BIND DELEGATES NOR ADVISED US HOW TO VOTE ON THE CONTRARY
SOME FORMER ADMINISTRATIONS HAVE DONE SO WE ARE GRAVELY DISTURBED BY THIS
GRATUITOUS ADVICE UNQUOTE

WRHS
MORTIN J. ROBBINS MD PRESIDENT
NEW ENGLAND ZIONIST REGION
AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

COPY OF LETTER

June 4, 1947

Dear Dr. Wise:

I have received a telegram signed by you and six other former presidents of the ZOA.

For your information, none of the delegates of this Region elected as delegates have, I am positive, been instructed, directly or indirectly, with respect to any matter which may present itself before the coming Convention -- nor have any been solicited until now to take any position with respect to any candidate for office. I say "until now" advisedly though the telegram which I received does not specifically solicit support of a particular candidate, it is sufficiently clear to any informed Zionist that it does solicit opposition to one.

Before receipt of this telegram, considering all of the events which have occurred since the last Convention, the progress we have made, the mistakes, the fortunes, and misfortunes which have befallen us, I came to the conclusion without solicitation or request of any kind, that Dr. Emanuel Neumann, if he would accept the presidency, deserved my support. I so wrote him. My first knowledge that he would be a candidate came on reading of it in the press.

Following the writing of this letter, we held a Regional Administrative Council meeting at Chattanooga this Sunday last. It was attended by delegates from all of the districts of this Region. The matter of the candidacy of Dr. Neumann was not on our agenda but in our general discussions with respect to the coming Convention, I found a remarkable unanimity of opinion among our leaders for his candidacy. This unanimity was spontaneous and was so far as I could ascertain, in no way inspired by solicitation or suggestion by anyone outside of our Region. It aroused, as I see it, as a result of the sober recognition of the services which Dr. Neumann had rendered during his lifetime to our cause.

I think, furthermore, that the sniping and snapping at the heels of Dr. Silver and Dr. Neumann by former presidents of the ZOA will not register too well with our delegates. I think, therefore, though I can speak for no individual and control no vote other than my own, that when the delegates from the Southeastern Region vote, they will do so without instruction, without solicitation, without pressure and unanimously for the candidacy of Dr. Neumann exercising, in so doing, their full right of freedom of speech. As for myself, I can state no freer spirit ever lived than I. It is about the only worthwhile thing I possess and I guard it zealously. However, it has been my experience that there is often a confusion between "freedom" and "license". I have never understood democracy to be synonymous with anarchy and confusion. Though democracy does not require regimentation, I do believe that to be effective some discipline is necessary. Discipline was rather sadly breached at the Congress in Basle and by subsequent events in which former presidents of the ZOA participated.

It is my considered opinion that neither influence requested nor solicited by anyone except yourselves and therefore freely given to you, that Dr. Emanuel Neumann will be elected president of the ZOA, that following the end of his term, he will probably join with other former presidents in sending telegrams on the eve of the Convention which I will receive and to which I will make reply as I do now; and thus we will go on from strength to strength sending telegrams and electing presidents as democratically as we always have in the past.

Very sincerely yours,

Abe Berkowitz, President
Southeast Region, ZOA

Copies sent to Judge Rothenberg, Rabbi Solomon Goldman, Edmund I. Kaufman, Louis Lipsky
Robert Szold, Judge Louis E. Levinthal

TULSA, OKLAHOMA

JUNE 5, 1947

Solomon Goldman, Edmund I. Kaufmann, Louis E. Levinthal, Louis Lipsky
Morris Rothenberg, Robert Szold, Stephen S. Wise

MATTER OF DEEP REGRET TO US THAT ALL OF YOU WHO ARE OUR FRIENDS SHOULD
LAUNCH A DIVISION OF INTEREST IN ZIONIST RANKS AT A TIME WHEN THE TOP
LEADERSHIP OF THE ZOA HEADED BY DOCTOR SILVER IS SO PREOCCUPIED WITH
HEAVY RESPONSIBILITIES. THE LEADERSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP OF OUR REGION
KNOW FROM EXPERIENCE THAT THE PRESENT ADMINISTRATION HAS NEVER DIRECTLY
OR INDIRECTLY TRIED TO DICTATE TO US TO BELONG TO ANY PARTY OR GROUP OR
TO INSTRUCT OUR DELEGATES. WE FEEL THAT YOUR INDICTMENT ON THESE GROUNDS
IS QUESTIONABLE. WE APPEAL TO YOU AS LOYAL ZIONISTS TO USE YOUR INFLUENCE
TO BATTLE THE COMMON ENEMY AND WORK FOR UNITY WITHIN OUR ORGANIZATION.
YOU CAN BE ASSURED THAT OUR REGION HAS NEVER BEEN MORE UNITED AND NEVER
MORE RESOLVED TO RESIST ANY ATTEMPT FOR A DIVISION IN THE ZIONIST RANKS.
WE FEEL THAT THE CONVENTION IS ~~solvent~~ ^{sovereign} AND ARE CONFIDENT THAT IT WILL BE
WIDE OPEN FOR FULL DISCUSSION OF DIFFERENCES AMONG DELEGATES AND WILL
RESOLVE IN THE ELECTION OF MEN WHO WILL SERVE BEST THE ZIONIST CAUSE.
TOGETHER LET US JOIN FORCES NOW FOR ISRAEL FOR THE BLOOD OF OUR MARTYRS
FOR ZION

JULIUS LIVINGTON PRESIDENT
SIDNEY HEROLD, ABRAM GELLER AND SIDNEY PINES VICEPRESIDENTS
SOUTHWEST REGION ZIONIST ORGANIZATION OF AMERICA

M/

Hartford, Conn. June 5, 1947

~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~

I AM AT A LOSS TO UNDERSTAND WHAT PROMPTED YOU AS FORMER PRESIDENT OF Z.O.A. TO ISSUE AT THE CRUCIAL PERIOD AND ON THE EVE OF COMING HISTORIC CONVENTION SUCH A STATEMENT. WHAT IS WRONG FOR HARTFORD ZIONIST DISTRICT AT ITS REGULAR MEETING HELD A MONTH AGO TO UNANIMOUSLY ENDORSE THE CANDIDACY OF ONE WHO IS UNQUESTIONABLY QUALIFIED AND ENTITLED TO THE OFFICE THAT YOU HELD IN THE PAST. WHY IN YOUR OPINION IS THIS NOT DEMOCRATIC PROCEDURE? WE RECEIVED NO COMMUNICATIONS WHATSOEVER FROM PRESENT ADMINISTRATION AND NO ONE CAME TO INFLUENCE US. YOUR TELEGRAM CREATES A VERY BAD IMPRESSION WE SHOULD THINK MORE ABOUT THE CRUCIAL MOMENT ZIONIST MOVEMENT IS FACING AND HOW BEST TO PRESENT A UNITED ZIONIST FRONT TO COMING CONVENTION ACTIONS SIMILAR TO YOURS ON PART OF RANK AND FILE ZIONISTS WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE BEEN CONDEMNED BY YOU AS TROUBLE MAKING WITHIN THE MOVEMENT. COMING FROM EX-PRESIDENT DOES NOT CHANGE THE PICTURE. AS IT IS NOTHING BUT TROUBLE MAKING WITHIN THE MOVEMENT I REGRET YOUR ACTION. IT CERTAINLY WAS UNCALLED FOR.

JUDGE JOSEPH KLAU PRESIDENT HARTFORD ZIONIST DISTRICT

June 5, 1947

TELEGRAM

JUDGE MORRIS ROTHENBERG

BROOKLYN DISTRICT PRESIDENTS HAVE ~~SEN~~ SHOWN ME YOUR ILL-ADVISED
TELEGRAM. OUR DISTRICTS DEPLORE YOUR ACTION. WE ARE COMPLETELY
UNAWARE INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING CONVENTION. IN FACT YOUR ACTION
IS FIRST EVIDENCE POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING. OUR REGION IS DEMOCRATIC
IN OPERATION. YOUR ACTION UNDEMOCRATIC AND UNWORTHY. ADVISED
LOUIS ROCKER OF MY POSITION. I AND MY COLLEAGUES UNIVERSALLY ADVOCATE
CANDIDACY EMANUEL NEUMANN. FOR GOOD OF MOVEMENT PLEASE DESIST
FROM THESE DEPLORABLE TACTICS. WE NEED UNITY AND AS GOOD ZIONISTS
YOU SHOULD HAVE FIRST AWARENESS OF THAT NEED.

BENJAMIN G. BROWDY, PRESIDENT

BROOKLYN ZIONIST REGION

copy sent to Louis Lipsky

C O P Y

June 6, 1947

ASTOUNDED AT ATTITUDE AND UNWARRANTED INSINUATIONS OF PAST
PRESIDENTS OF ZOA STOP TRI STATE REGION HEARTILY APPROVES
AND ENDORSES DEMOCRATIC CONDUCT AND SAGE POLICIES OF PRESENT
ADMINISTRATION STOP TRI STATE REGION ALWAYS FREE TO SUPPORT
CANDIDATES OF OWN CHOICE STOP EVENTS CALL FOR UNIFIED EFFORTS
OF ALL ZIONISTS ESPECIALLY PAST PRESIDENTS.

LESTER COHEN, PRESIDENT

TRI STATE REGION ZOA



COPY

COPY

Copies of this letter sent to:

Louis Lipsky
Stephen S. Wise
Morris Rothenberg
Louis E. Levinthal

Solomon Goldman
Edmund I. Kaufmann
Robert Szold

June 6, 1947

Dr. Stephen S. Wise
40 West 68th Street
New York City

Dear Dr. Wise:

I have recently received a telegram signed by you and Solomon Goldman, Edmund I. Kaufmann, Louis E. Levinthal, Louis Lipsky, Morris Rothenberg and Robert Szold.

The Seventh Zionist District, of which I have the honor to be president, in accordance with its usual practice, is sending to the National Convention delegates "uninstructed, unbound, uncommitted to any group or faction, and unpledged to any candidates or list of officers."

Though I agree that the conventions should be a legislative assembly and that no administration should use its machinery to perpetuate its power, I am amused at finding the names of certain signatories attached to the telegram criticizing the tendency to reduce the convention to a mere demonstration and to perpetuate administrative power. Further, I recall that the tendency to concentrate power in the administration and to use the convention as a mere demonstration or series of mass meetings was the practice of the administrations whose presidents are among the signatories of the telegram. I recall also, that the last convention, under the administration of Dr. Silver was more of a deliberative body than many preceding conventions. The telegram seems to me in this respect, rather laughable.

This letter is an expression of my own opinion, since I have not had the opportunity to present this matter either to my Executive committee or to my membership.

Yours sincerely,

Leon A. Kohn
President

LAK/br

[June 1947?]

Telegram sent to each of the seven signatories of the telegram

YOUR TELEGRAM OF JUNE THIRD WAS A GREAT SURPRISE TO ME SINCE IT IS RATHER AN UNUSUAL EXPERIENCE THAT PAST PRESIDENTS SHOULD ATTEMPT TO CAUSE DISSENTION WHEN WE ARE IN THE MIDST OF TRYING TO SOLVE A DIFFICULT POLITICAL SITUATION. IN OUR REGION WE ARE FULLY AWARE OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES GOVERNING OUR ORGANIZATION. WE HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE OF EFFORTS MADE BY THIS ADMINISTRATION TO INTERFERE WITH THE INNER POLITICS OF OUR REGION OR OF ANY ATTEMPTS TO INSTRUCT OUR DELEGATES IN THE MANNER IN WHICH THEY SHOULD VOTE AT THE NATIONAL CONVENTION. I DO RECALL HOWEVER THAT THIS PROCEDURE HAS BEEN QUITE PREVALENT DURING THE ADMINISTRATION OF SOME OF THE SIGNATORIES OF THIS TELEGRAM. WE FULLY RECOGNIZE OUR RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS OUR MOVEMENT AND WE SHALL COME TO OUR NATIONAL CONVENTION WHICH IS COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT AND WHICH WILL BE MAINTAINED ON A HIGH DEMOCRATIC LEVEL. IT IS THE WILL OF THE DELEGATES OF THE CONVENTION WHICH WILL PREVAIL AND SHAPE THE COURSE OF OUR DECISIONS AND ACTION.

LOUIS A. FALK, PRESIDENT

NEW JERSEY ZIONIST REGION

[June 1947?]

STATEMENT BY ORDER BNAI ZION

It is a source of deep regret to me as Nasi of Bnai Zion that a group of past Presidents deemed it desirable to launch an attempt at division by sending out an uncalled for and unwarranted telegram to the various Districts and Regions, accusing the present Administration under the leadership of Dr. Silver that it is attempting to perpetuate itself in power by having asked for instructed delegates to this Convention. The Order knows from experience that the present Administration has never directly or indirectly tried to influence its inner affairs or indicate the attitude of the delegates to the coming Convention.

Not only does this telegram create a very bad impression at this crucial moment in Zionist history, but it casts a deep reflection upon the motives of some of the signatories whom we learned to look upon as spokesmen for the cause.

Zionist leaders, even though not past Presidents, need not be taught in matters of democratic procedure.

Bnai Zion recognizes its responsibility towards the movement and is coming to this Convention with but one thought in mind - to elect the best man available and to continue the militant and activated policy and tempo of the present Administration.

I am confident that I bespeak the sentiments of most if not all of my colleagues in the Order.

A. Redelheim
Nasi