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Wheeler, Senator Burton K., 1943.

cc. Dr. Silver

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MINUTE OF CONVERSATION WITH SENATOR BURTON K. WHEELER
at Interstate Commerce Committee,
Capitol Building, Washington, D. C.
Friday afternoon, December 17, 1943

Present: Senator Burton K. Wheeler of Montana, Mr. Leo Sack and Rabbi Feuer.

Senator Wheeler was very affable and spent about an hour with us. During the first part of the interview, he spent considerable time trying to make out a case for himself as a great and misunderstood liberal. He seems quite self-conscious about the fact that he has been accused of being an anti-Semite. He asserted that such charge was ridiculous.

"If you will look up the record," he exclaimed, "You will see that in 1935 and 1936, before hardly anyone else was talking about it, I was going up and down the country condemning Hitler's persecution of the Jews."

He did not omit to mention the fact that his secretary and one of his stenographers are Jewish. The above is interesting in view of the fact that we had not made the slightest reference to Mr. Wheeler's past record as a liberal or to his attitude towards the Jews. We were anxious to go on with the subject of Palestine.

About half way through the interview, he finally permitted us to come to the subject of Palestine. His first question was revealing. He wanted to know whether there had not been considerable exaggeration and propaganda in the matter of the number of Jews who had been killed in Europe. We assured him that estimating the number of Jews slaughtered by the Nazis at 50% of the total would prove to be conservative. He pretended to be surprised. He then discussed the usual questions with us, inquiring about the attitude of Britain, assuring us, in this connection, that he has been falsely accused of being anti-British. He was interested in the question of the absorptive capacity of Palestine and of relations with the Arabs. These questions were treated in the

usual fashion, discussing the reasons for England's policy, pointing out the false issues which have been raised with regard to the disagreements between the Jews and Arabs and indicating the real facts about absorptive capacity. He seemed very much interested in all these subjects and listened to us with rather close attention. He told us that he had voted for the Lodge-Fish Resolution in 1922, that he understood the necessity for and deeply sympathized with the aspirations of the Jewish people for a national home. He indicated that the project would continue to have his support.

This man is, of course, not to be relied on. He is very obviously a consummate politician and actor, a complete opportunist and a person deeply embittered by his hatred, particularly for the President. It was, however, important and necessary to see him. His name should not be actively connected with our movement in any way. It may, however, be possible to get his silent support, and what is more important, to disarm him in advance so that he will not lead any active opposition. This, of course, cannot be counted upon. Mr. Wheeler will do what he believes to be politically opportune at the moment.

L.I.F