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Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1945.

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*Wide Range of Interests and Accomplishments, Revealed at Fifty-Sixth Annual Convention, Indicate Alert Progressive Rabbinate Dedicated to Prophetic Ideals*

## **The C.C.A.R. Convention**

BY LOUIS RITTENBERG



**T**HAT democracy can function in small gatherings and in small halls just as effectively as under larger auspices was impressively attested at the fifty-sixth annual convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. Limited by ODT regulations to roughly half a hundred participants, this parley of Reform rabbis, meeting in Atlantic City (June 25-27), proved to be a model of freedom of expression on vital issues of concern to American Jewry.

Differences of opinion were allowed to be heard fully under the adroit and effervescent chairmanship of Dr. Solomon B. Freehof, of Pittsburgh, retiring president of the C.C.A.R. Yet when all views had been voiced exemplary discipline emerged without rancor or recalcitrance.

The final session witnessed the election of Dr. Abba Hillel Silver, of Cleveland (whose reconciliation with Dr. Stephen S. Wise had been announced the day before), to the presidency of the organization. Dr. Abraham J. Feldman, of Hartford, was elected vice-president. Members of

the executive committee, newly chosen and continuing, are listed in the caption under the picture on page 35. (See also editorials, pp. 1-3)

While Dr. Freehof's presidential report surveyed most completely the far-flung interests of the C.C.A.R. during the preceding year, individual papers shed further light upon the diversified activities of committees. Thus revealing discussions were engendered by Prof. Jacob R. Marcus' report on Contemporaneous History and Literature, Dr. Barnett R. Brickner's and Rabbi Louis I. Egelson's reports on the Chaplaincy, Rabbi Albert G. Minda's report on Church and State, Rabbi Ferdinand M. Isserman's report on Justice and Peace, Rabbi Stanley R. Brav's on Marriage, Family and the Home, Prof. Salo Baron's (read by Rabbi William G. Braude) on Spiritual Reconstruction of the Jews of Europe, Rabbi Jacob Singer's on Synagogue Music.

Other reports were presented (chiefly to the executive board) by Rabbis Sidney L. Regner, on Finance; Harry S. Margolis, on Investments;



Isaac E. Marcuson, on Publications; Abraham Shusterman, on Solicitations; William F. Rosenblum, on the Synagogue Council; Solomon B. Freehof, on Liturgy; Jacob D. Schwarz, on Synagogue Activities; Emil W. Leipziger, on Arbitration; Solomon B. Freehof, on Jewish Education; Leon I. Feuer, on Religious Education; Harry Kaplan, on Religious Work in Universities; Louis Witt, on Ceremonies; Samuel M. Gup, on Pensions, Relief and Subvention; Harry W. Ettelson, on Information Concerning Judaism; Louis L. Mann (in absentia) on Arbitration; and Prof. Sheldon H. Blank, on Archives.

The nominations of candidates for officers were a trifle heated but resolved in a spirit of amity, so that recommendations made by the nominating committee were fully endorsed by the delegates. Tempers were seldom ruffled. The objective of over-all mutuality was never lost sight of. The president's soothing wit, fuelled by deep Talmudic wisdom, served as a happy lightning rod for occasional tangents.

**T**HE most thorough deliberation was accorded the problems that may face the chaplains upon return after V-J Day. The whole question of rabbinical readjustment incidental to the war's end was given earnest, intelligent and constructive discussion.

After a brief but graphic review of the incidents preceding victory in Europe and the tragic death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Rabbi Freehof decried the "injustice done to our chaplains by many who have



• Rabbi Abraham J. Feldman, Hartford, new vice-president of the CCAR.

spoken in their behalf." He referred to "certain Anglo-Jewish newspapers creating the impression that there is great discontent and unrest among the Jewish chaplains in service." He declared this to be "untrue and quite unfair... a libel to describe our chaplains as being obsessed with the problem of their own post-war jobs." The C.C.A.R.'s president expressed the conviction that the chaplains "are being absorbed in their sense of present duty, not thinking of themselves but of the men whom they are serving."

"Our chaplains are our colleagues,"



emphasized Rabbi Freehof. "When their work is over in the army, they will be rabbis just as are the rest of us. They will neither wish to glorify their military past nor to build up any special future status upon it. We want no rabbinical American Legion in the C.C.A.R."

Rabbi Freehof noted that this is the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the Synagogue Council of America, which had been formed upon the initiative of the C.C.A.R. He cautioned, however, against the "danger of rapid expansion." He called attention to activities of the Synagogue Council which impinge upon the province of constituent agencies, notably through direct contact with the communities and the issuance of publications, which were not sanctioned by the "original terms of reference for the Council." He recommended appointment of a committee to survey the work of the Synagogue Council "in relation to the original plan and its present activities."

With a view to replenishing the treasury of the C.C.A.R., drastically depleted by the creation of the Pension system, the president's message also proposed consideration of the establishment of a book concern jointly by the Conference and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. The principal purpose of this agency would be the sale of books of all kinds to members of the Conference and their congregations and to publish books in behalf of the members." While the two organizations would retain their respective rights in such of their present publications as the

*Union Prayerbook, Union Hymnal*, text-books, etc., the new Book Concern would donate its profits annually to the Joint Pension Fund.

Mindful of expansions planned by American Rabbinical schools, envisaging also the training of lay professional public servants for various fields of Jewish leadership, Rabbi Freehof urged that a fresh attempt be made to merge the Hebrew Union College and the Jewish Institute of Religion.

The message also spoke ruefully of the *Yishuv* in Palestine as being "in a position of uncertainty...until the struggle between empires, the justling between larger and smaller powers be finally brought into equilibrium by a world organization, the present status and the just future of the *Yishuv* cannot be assured."

Rabbi Freehof expressed the hope that the rebuilders of world Jewry would cease quarrelling among themselves. Viewing the Central Conference of American Rabbis as a "barometer of the emotional health of American Jewry," an organization in which events transcend its own boundaries, he saw reason for satisfaction with the results of Conference activities during his two years of piloting.

**S**PEAKING for the Committee on Chaplains, Rabbi Brickner first presented the statistical record, showing that (as of June 7, 1945) there were 276 rabbis serving as chaplains in the Army, Navy and Maritime service. Of this total 132 were members of the Reform group, with a likelihood that thirteen others will soon





• Officers and Executive Board of CCAR. Left to right, TOP: Herbert I. Bloom, Stanley R. Brav, Abraham Feinstein, Solomon B. Freehof. SECOND ROW: Alan S. Green, Abba Hillel Silver, president, Abraham J. Feldman, vice-president, Aryeh Lev. THIRD ROW: Harry S. Margolis, treasurer, Jacob R. Marcus, Isaac E. Marcuson, administrative sec., S. Felix Mendelsohn. FOURTH ROW: David Polish, Sidney L. Regner, fin. sec., David H. Wice, Louis Witt, Bernard Zeiger.



be in uniform. Rounding out this remarkable record, the speaker added:

Forty-four other members of the C.C.A.R. came forward to serve their country but were physically disqualified. 141 of our men were actually commissioned as chaplains. The overall picture indicates that over 200 of the C.C.A.R. men offered themselves for the chaplaincy. When we compare this number to the total number of men in the Conference eligible for the chaplaincy, it is a record of which the Conference, the Hebrew Union College, the Jewish Institute of Religion, and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations have good reason to feel proud. The War and Navy Departments have on a number of occasions commended us on our procurement job and the calibre of men we have furnished.

Rabbi Brickner further revealed that the Chief of Chaplains had asked for thirty-six additional chaplains, of which "our ratio was about eighteen." Of these, twelve men recommended have received endorsement." He also reported that quite a number of civilian rabbis have been furnished for extremely urgent service in hospitals, IRC camps, staging areas, Redistribution Centers, etc.

The problem of replacement procurement has been a difficult one to solve. The list of retired rabbis had to be fine-combed. A number of such rabbis were summoned back into the active ministry as replacements. The H.U.C. and the J.I.R. gave their wholehearted cooperation by accelerating their courses.

The Committee on Chaplains is

likewise eager to protect the interests of rabbis in the chaplaincy, to prevent any "replacement rabbis from taking the positions of those for whom they are substituting.

The report concluded with an expression of appreciation "to our faithful and devoted secretary Rabbi Louis Egelson and his secretary Ruth Mandelkern, who have performed a tremendous job in connection with our work; without their devoted service the record we have made could not have been possible."

Supplementing Rabbi Brickner's report, Rabbi Egelson spoke as secretary of the Committee on Emergency Placement. He reviewed the efforts made in coping with problems resulting from demobilization of C.C.A.R. chaplains. These fall into two categories: (1) men whose graduation from rabbinical seminaries was accelerated and entered the chaplaincy from replacement positions; (2) men who could not become chaplains for physical reasons and are now serving as replacements.

Aware that there would not be enough pulpits available for returning chaplains, other channels of service had to be explored. These include possibilities as U.A.H.C. regional rabbis, assistant rabbis in established congregations, Hillel Foundation directorships, educational directorships, Jewish Center work, civic protective work, relief and rehabilitation work abroad under the J.D.C. or U.N.R.R.A., and Army-Navy post-war chaplaincy.

The two Reform seminaries have agreed to plan refresher courses, many

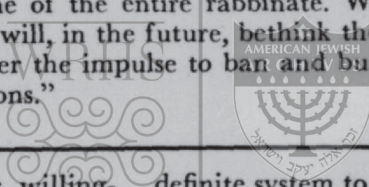


## **Reform Rabbis Condemn Excommunication**

**C**HARACTERIZING the recent excommunication by a rabbinic group of a colleague and the public burning of a prayerbook he edited, as a shocking demonstration of intolerance, the executive board of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, at a meeting held in Atlantic City, immediately upon adjournment of the 56th annual conclave of the C.C.A.R., adopted the following resolution:

"The Central Conference of American Rabbis through its Executive Board expresses its strongest condemnation of the act of a group of rabbis who recently excommunicated Dr. Mordecai M. Kaplan for publishing a modernized prayerbook and who publicly burned the book which they condemned. This shocking action violates the very spirit of freedom of thought and the tolerance which we cherish in our country. It is an expression of bigotry which has saddened the pages of human history. Without taking sides in the theologic issues involved, we nevertheless must condemn unreservedly the revival of medieval acts of excommunication and book burning.

"When some rabbis who are out of touch with the modern spirit indulge themselves in much outgrown practices, they make themselves ridiculous and impair the good name of the entire rabbinate. We hope that those responsible for this action will, in the future, bethink themselves and exercise self-discipline whenever the impulse to ban and burn tempts them to such shocking demonstrations."



rabbis have expressed their willingness to engage assistant rabbis. U.N.R.R.A. Director Herbert H. Lehman has written Rabbi Freehof encouragingly regarding the possible utilization of some chaplains. Equally reassuring has been the attitude of Hillel's Director Abram Sachar. Rabbi Egelson's survey among the chaplains themselves indicates that there are likely to be fifty-seven men requiring positions.

"We are informed unofficially," said Rabbi Egelson, "that complete demobilization of chaplains may be a process of three or four years; that plans are now being drawn in Washington for a

definite system to be followed in releasing chaplains; that demobilization will be just a trickle, at the rate of perhaps one or two a month . . . As men are released, the two or three months intervening before actual release from the Army will enable us to attempt to meet the desire of the returning chaplain for the field of activity which he has chosen."

The Committee on Emergency Placement adopted the following resolution: "Recognizing that its task to place returning chaplains is inextricably bound up with the replacement of civilian rabbis, the Emergency Placement Committee recommends to the executive board of the C.C.A.R. the establishment of a Central Committee for the Placement of Rabbis, with all groups,



lay and rabbinic, and the seminaries cooperating, and with a professional executive director in charge of the replacement of all rabbis.

The two reports were illuminatingly discussed by Rabbis Silver, Bernstein, Isserman, Philipson, Wohl, Brickner, Ross, Egelson, Freehof, Bloom, and Rothschild. This session was concluded by a lofty expression, on man as a free agent and as a co-worker of God, by Rabbi Shusterman.

**T**UESDAY afternoon the delegates heard an informative report by Rabbi Minda, chairman of the Committee on Church and State. Of primary concern to his committee during the past year has been the intensified efforts to introduce religious education as an integral part of the public school curriculum, the Release-Time plan, use of school buildings for religious instruction, census of religious backgrounds of pupils, procurement of teachers whose salaries are paid by religious organizations for Bible instruction in high schools, and evangelistic programs in school assemblies.

While there are signs that some states are rejecting these efforts by legislation and otherwise, the report contends that the opposition in New Hampshire, Washington, Massachusetts and California "offers no grounds for believing that this problem will not confront the American public in the years to come." Rabbi Minda reviewed the measures taken by the C.C.A.R. and the Synagogue Council of America, in the American spirit of separation of church and state. He re-

ferred to the deplorable Kingston incident, which centered around the obligatory participation of Jewish pupils in the observance of the Christmas holiday. He pointed out that "in the vast majority of public schools Christmas and Easter holidays are observed," and that, out of regard for community relations, "few Jewish communities or their leaders have offered any objection."

Rabbi Minda also called attention to instances where rabbis have shown anxiety lest Jewish children fail to show "proper attitudes in public schools during the Christmas celebration." Others have fostered "joint Christmas-Chanuko celebrations," which the C.C.A.R. had condemned some years ago, declaring that "two wrongs do not make a right."

Furthermore, the report expresses concern over attempts to legislate funds for state aid to private parochial schools in the matter of transportation, text-books, etc." The Committee made three recommendations:

1. Appoint a special committee . . . to study the three phases of this situation: Observance of religious holidays in public schools; the intercultural program; the question of Jewish parochial schools from the point of view of Jewish education, and more particularly of its bearing on the position of the Committee on Church and State.
2. The Central Conference of American Rabbis should deplore and condemn, as contrary to American principle and tradition, the questioning of an individual's views on religion as a test of fitness for holding public office.
3. The C.C.A.R. should disapprove any legislation that seeks to provide



state funds for the aid of private and parochial schools, regardless of the denominational auspices under which they are conducted.

**A** VOLUMINOUS and meaty report by the Justice and Peace Commission was read by Rabbi Isserman. In sixteen concise categories, the Commission's preoccupations ranged over all the vital questions that arose during the preceding year to affect Jewish life here and abroad. These subjects were grouped under the following headings: Foreign Affairs, President Roosevelt, Peace with Germany (see inside back cover), The Jews of Europe, Protecting the Consumer, Labor and Industrial Relations, Race Relations, and The Future.

Under the final heading, the Commission notes that "life in our country has not yet attained to prophetic levels; inequalities, injustices, discriminations exist." Urging that the C.C.A.R., unawed by threats, remain in the vanguard to further the Kingdom of God, the report concludes on a challenging note of prophetic idealism:

With the end of the war, domestic conditions will call for the application of the prophetic ideal. Reactionary forces have not accepted defeat. They have reformed their ranks, assembled a huge war chest, and plan to use their influence on church and school, on press, on ministers and rabbis, to stop the wheels of progress, to eliminate and avert social advances which interfere with their privileges. The temper of the men who brought Fascism in Italy, Francism in Spain, Nazism in Germany, Tojoism in Japan, and Clivedenism in

England, is not unknown in our country.

Here, too, the defenders of the old order, masquerading under the flags of liberty and religion, may covertly feed anti-Semitic passions to halt the tide of reform. Buchenwald is eloquent testimony to our neighbors of the inevitable fruits of anti-Semitism. Hatred of masses of men in any minority or class is always an instrument of confusion used by the forces of reaction. Because it worked in Germany, there will be those who believe that it will work here. That we deny. We have faith in the American tradition and in the idealism that tradition has fostered in the souls of our fellow-citizens, and we face the future with confidence.

We must be on guard lest we permit the hysteria and fears occasioned by the memories of the Jewish tragedy in Europe to dampen our enthusiasm for the demands of social justice and weaken our courage in struggling by the side of the underprivileged.

In the coming conflict between reaction and enlightenment, the oppressed groups of our country and of the world can depend on the American rabbinate who, steeped in prophetic idealism and moved by the word of God, will champion their cause until justice is established, peace reigns and the right is set in the earth.

**T**HE Committee on Synagogue Music (Rabbi Singer reporting) reviewed the efforts and handicaps that attended its activities. Its principal recommendations dealt with needs to revise the Hymnal, congregational singing, junior choirs and Hymnal, a Sabbath of Song, and a wide distribution of those recordings of Jewish music which are soon to be

*(Continued on page 63)*



it is loved by father and mother. In this way the positive inhibition against lying is set up, without mentioning the word. It is only fear of the consequences which impels anyone to lie. If fear is banished from the mind of the child it will tell the truth directly and frankly. It is the best possible habit that the child can learn, for it will enable him to face all the facts of life unflinchingly when he

grows up, and life will be simplified for him because lies always lead to complications and unhappiness.

This is the way in which we must translate our ancient teachings into modern guiding. The elaboration of these principles is the great task of Constructive Reform Judaism. This is the crying need of men, women and children, and they must be helped if we are to do our duty fully.

## Convention of the C.C.A.R.

(Continued from page 39)

edited jointly by the Hebrew Union College and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. The report also urged that composers of synagogue music be accorded greater encouragement.

The Joint Committee on Ceremonies reported on a variety of fruitful activities, including the growing popularity in congregations of the Family Yahrzeit Light Ceremonial; the Kidush for Sabbath Eve; the Megillah Ritual; the Chanuko Service Pageant; Ceremonies for Sabbath Sh'kolim, Sabbath Sholom, Sabbath Todo, Sabbath Ovos; Megillah in English; the Synagogue Suko, and other ceremonies.

The Commission on Synagogue Activities (reported by Rabbi Schwarz) presented a rich gamut of projects, new and current. These were the outgrowth of definite demands and pursued in cooperation with other U.A.H.C. organizations. Listed under new projects were the residue of ex-

periences in—

(a) authentic knowledge for ministers, (b) gathering in the unsynagogued, (c) liturgical music project, (d) service music for broadcasting stations, (e) congregational building plans, (f) observance of V-E Day. Current projects include: (a) Isaac M. Wise Memorial Sabbath, (b) B'nai B'rith Synagogue Night, (c) synagogue poster stamp, (d) synagogue singing, (e) Town Hall discussion, (f) director's field trips, (g) the National Association of Temple Secretaries, (h) the *Synagogue Section of LIBERAL JUDAISM*, (i) Committee on Ceremonies.

The Commission recommended that "the C.C.A.R., in cooperation with the U.A.H.C., take necessary steps to organize a Commission on Synagogue . . . to undertake the task of providing adequate synagogue music for our needs insofar as it is able to do so."

**T**HE final session, with its excitement of election of officers, brought the convention to a close in an atmosphere of true harmony which is inherent in democratic procedure.



The formal transfer of the presidential gavel from Rabbi Freehof to Rabbi Silver reflected this very spirit. The retiring president's adieu follows:

I want to express to the Conference my unreserved gratitude for the honor conferred upon me when you elected me as president two years ago. It is a tremendous honor to be elected by your colleagues who are not easily deceived by factitious devices, who know all the tricks and all methods of publicity, and who judge their colleagues very calmly and very keenly. In addition to being elected by colleagues in the Central Conference, I have often thought about the almost ferocious democracy of our Conference. Nobody can impose himself upon our Conference. They are not too much impressed by too much outside fame. They elect whom they want and whom they like and in whom they believe. That is why it has been a tremendous compliment to me, and you will have my life-long gratitude. I have enjoyed the two years of presidency, such a joy that I am delighted to be able to transfer that joy to the man for whom I have a strange combination of love and reverence. Abba Hillel Silver and I were classmates, we graduated thirty years ago. You have not been electing young presidents, as the presidents might have liked to pretend, during these past years. It is not only because he is my friend and comrade that I wanted to have the glory of being president of the greatest rabbinical assembly in the history of Judaism, but also because I know that the Conference has the pleasure and privilege of having its most talented son now as its leader. You are electing the man who, in my judgment, is our grandest colleague. It is with joy and pride and confidence in the Conference's future that I now offer the gavel to you, Abba.

The Conference arose and applauded as Rabbi Freehof handed the gavel to president-elect Silver.

Rabbi Silver, deeply touched, responded briefly:

I need not tell you that which you know, that there is no honor which a member of the Central Conference of American Rabbis regards as more precious than that of being elected president of this body. I have had in my life quite a number of honors. I regard none of them as satisfying to my soul and as inspiring and uplifting as this which you have now conferred upon me. I will try to approximate the work of Sol Freehof. I am confident that I shall not be able to match it. Sol has now joined the illustrious list of great presidents of this revered body; he has brought and will continue to bring luster and distinction to this Conference and to American Jewry. It has been one of the deep satisfactions of my life that Sol and I have found ourselves so often working together in significant Jewish tasks.

I know I will have to lean on him from here on greatly because, as you probably know, peace seems to have broken out in Zionist circles (laughter) and I may have to return to political leadership in the movement which will absorb a great deal of my energy and time and thought. I will lean heavily on Sol Freehof as I will lean heavily on Abe Feldman, friend of my boyhood, of my youth, who has rare qualities of spirit, of soul, and mind. You have done a wise thing in summoning this fine colleague to the high office of the vice-presidency of the Conference.

All I can say at this time is that I will try to serve you, conscious of the high mandates of this office; that I will serve you in faithfulness, and to the best of my ability. (Applause)