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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOCIAL ACTION PROGRAM OF REFORM JUDAISM, 1878-1969

by

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters and
Ordination

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Referee, Professor Stanley F. Chyet

Dedication

To Joyce

Without whose encouragement and
love this work would never have
been completed

and

In Memory of

Sheldon Gordon

My Rabbi, my teacher and my friend

"Let the memory of the righteous be for a
blessing"

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PREFACE

When the Union of American Hebrew Congregations was established in 1873 the United States was not the industrial world power that it is today. America was in the beginning of her period of change from an agrarian rural society. The Jews, while not numerous, lived primarily in the expanding urban centers. The great industrial revolution changed American society from rural to urban living.

With continued urbanization, the American cities posed difficulties with which a rural people was unfamiliar. The industrial revolution needed labor to operate the new factories of the growing mechanical age. As a result, immigration to American shores was not only accepted, but was encouraged.

Continued growth in industrialization led America to play a larger and more ominous role in world politics. Because of America's growing alliances abroad, she found herself in the midst of a great world war. This war taxed the industrial complex of America and demanded a further growth in industrialization and urbanization. While this growth brought great prosperity to America, it also brought with it a striving for luxury on the part of the American people. As a result, Americans extended their credit lines to the breaking point. The American economy could not handle the strain and in 1929 Americans witnessed the beginning of the great depression, where millions were unemployed. The country moved into a period of so-called socialization whereby the Federal government took more and more control over the free enterprise system.

By the late 1930's America was again preparing for a world war. In 1941 she entered the war, which witnessed the wanton destruction and butchery of six million Jews on the European continent. The industrial complex of

our nation was taxed again in order to make the hardware needed to fight the war in Europe and the South Pacific. Unemployment was at a low point and the economy was again growing.

When the war ended in 1945, Americans began turning to the domestic problems that had been created by the total change from rural living to urban life. The disparity between rich and poor, between black and white grew daily. The polarization that resulted has been of great concern to Americans, and the domestic scene has witnessed various attempts at bridging the gap between all peoples in American life.

Recognizing the stabilizing influence that religion can have during times of social crisis and social upheaval, the UAHC and the CCAR have made attempts at coming to grips with the problems of American society. The following pages represent a summary of the work done by the Reform movement, toward bettering this society and relieving problems caused by that society. To understand the social action movement of Reform Judaism, one must fully understand that social action takes place only in a growing society. As we shall see, all social action in Reform Judaism is in response to specific social problems within our culture.

DIGEST

In times of social crisis man has often looked to his religious institution for guidance, help and security. Frequently those organized institutions of religious life have developed programs which seeks to work within the social system to change the evils which bring on frustration. Reform Judaism and the institutions of Reform namely, the CCAR and the UAHC have proven to be pillars in this kind of social justice movement.

Although only touching the surface of the involvement of Reform Jews in the area of social action, this thesis is an attempt at showing the growth and development of such a program of social action.

Since 1878 Reform Judaism has attempted to deal significantly with social issues in a religious context. An enormous amount of effort has been given to social action, sometimes with very positive results. At other times, the development of such programs has been frustrated by internal problems within the ranks of Reform Judaism causing social action to fail. This thesis is an attempt at delineating the successes and failures with a social action program of a major religious body.

SECURING A FOUNDATION FOR SOCIAL ACTION

During the formative years of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), questions of social justice, and the amount of involvement in social action on the part of Reform Jews, were in debate. Not until the UAHC Convention in 1878 did the Reform involvement in this area of social justice take on institutional dimensions. We find that during the convention a constitutional amendment was passed that would enable the Union to engage in the serious questions of social justice. The amendment to the Union constitution reads as follows:

It shall be the duty of the Union to keep a watchful eye on occurrences at home and abroad, concerning the civil and religious rights of Israelites, and to call attention of the proper authorities to the fact, should any violation of such rights occur, and to keep up communication with similar central Israelite bodies throughout the globe.

To establish relations with kindred organizations in other parts of the world, for the relief of Jews from political oppression, and for rendering them such aid for their intellectual elevation as may be within the reach of this Union.¹

It was through this constitutional amendment that the Union made the Board of Delegates on Civil Rights an established part of the UAHC. As was clear in the amendment, the function of the Board of Delegates would be to deal with problems that were specifically Jewish problems of civil rights. This is important to bear in mind at the start, as we shall see that the movement made many changes in policy during the years that followed.

American Reform Rabbinate did not find itself institutionally involved in this matter of civil rights during the decade before 1885. However, little was done on an organizational level, this did not preclude Reform rabbis from speaking out on social issues during these years. As

early as 1870 rabbis did speak on political or economic issues, even if only rarely.²

In 1885 the Reform movement, under the leadership of its Rabbinates, adopted the Pittsburgh Platform which was used as the yardstick by which Reform would take place. The eighth point of that platform, although not a mandate to social action, gave the Reform laity and rabbinate more freedom to move in the areas of social justice and social concern.

In full accordance with the spirit of Mosaic legislation which strives to regulate the relation between rich and poor, we deem it our duty to participate in the great task of modern times, to solve on the basis of justice and righteousness the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society.³

This statement presents a much broader base than did the Union's constitutional amendment of 1878, which was really concerned specifically with Jewish problems.

Even with the Pittsburgh Platform as their standard bearer, the rabbis still moved very cautiously after 1885. They were involved in the area of social concern, but they moved in a utopian and unrealistic manner.

"This approach represented a philosophical attitude rather than a dynamic call to action. The realization had not yet dawned that religion had to offer more than preachments, it had to rub shoulders with everyday politics and economics, and had to be willing to take risks for the sake of ideals."⁴

Bearing this in mind, it is not difficult to see why the CCAR, between its founding in 1890 and 1908, passed only two social pronouncements, one was to join together with the Golden Rule Brotherhood for Peace, and the second a typical kind of social pronouncement condemning child labor.

These first 18 years of the CCAR are very noticeably void of real social concern, which leads Leonard Mervis to say: "The social concern in the formative period of the conference is to be described in terms of social service rather than social justice."⁵ One of the reasons for this one can only speculate. Mervis feels that the CCAR was too engrossed in its own internal struggles with respect to the institutions of Reform Judaism, that it had little energy left to tackle the monumental problems that were beginning to develop in the cities and rural areas of our own country. They were so engrossed in oratory on questions such as on which day to observe the sabbath, that they had little time to put into practice the positions that were preached on the sabbath.⁶

While the CCAR was trying to make up its mind on the important religious issues of the day, the UAHC was busying itself in the area of social justice. The Reform leaders during these years immediately preceding and immediately following the turn of the century were men of noble aspirations and genuine dedication to the religious task. They sought the good of Jews wherever they might be and they began to find some areas of concern for all of mankind. They thought that Reform Judaism⁷ could lead the way into the Messianic Age.

Examples of their deep concern in more than one area are evidenced by their dealing with the problems of Eastern European Jews and the idea of global law and an international police force, all at the same time. Although the report of the Board of Delegates on Civil Rights is primarily concerned with the problems of Russian Jewry both here and in Russia, it still finds time to be concerned with the overall problem of man's inhumanity to man.

After the turn of the century, the American people seemed to turn toward new dimensions. The improvement of society no longer rested in the hands of a few chosen leaders, but the whole nation began to be united on a new social quest. Together with the rest of the nation, the clergy too, began to take up arms in defense of social rights. While it was uncommon in the past to find clergymen speaking out on social issues, many now preached the social message.⁸ The clergy, including the CCAR, became very much involved in political life.

Taking their cue from the gentile clergy, the CCAR turned more toward the social scene. The first substantive issue with which the CCAR dealt was the Jewish working man who lived in the squalor of the large cities. It was because of this social problem that the CCAR created its first real social committee. Created in 1910, the Committee on Synagogue and labor, failed in its first attempts because it was divided between those who espoused purely religious objectives and those who wanted to broaden the scope of the concerns of the committee. The committee failed to bring a synthesized platform which a growing number of rabbis seemed to be seeking.⁹

The social concerns of the Rabbis, were becoming broader even if without a legal institutional machinery with which to work. In 1911 the CCAR set up a committee to do a study in the area of criminality. Whether this was in response to a 1910 request of the CCAR to make a statement backing legislation that would halt the traffic on white slavery, we cannot be sure, but we can be certain that the conference was not insensitive to outside pressures.

At the 1911 conference a CCAR committee on "Dependants, Defectives, and Delinquents" was set up. It was pointed out that the conference should undertake a more thorough investigation of the causes of criminality... The synagogue cannot afford to be behind the church in the solution of this problem.¹⁰

Although the concerns for the Eastern European immigrants was the most time-consuming task of the social justice program of the UAHC, there were other areas in which the Union made its presence felt, even in these early years. It was through the offices of Simon Wolf, the chairman of the Board of Delegates on Civil Rights of the UAHC, that Jewish servicemen were finally granted passes for leaves on the Jewish High Holy Days. The influence of Wolf and his office cannot be too highly stressed, as he was one of the most influential people on this issue.

Wolf's major concern, though, was with immigration laws and the Russian treatment of Jews. He worked diligently to secure American governmental sympathy for the treatment that Jews received in Russia. Coupled with this concern was the American passport question. The Russians had failed to validate the passports of American Jews. This problem was within the bounds of showing concern over Jews wherever they might live. The Board under Wolf's leadership influenced the President and other high American officials to such a degree that any new treaty with Russia would have as one of its points on the agenda the validation of passports of American Jews in Russia. Then in conjunction with the problems of Russian Jewry, Wolf's committee worked hard to prevent an American quota being set on immigration from Russia.

Toward this end, we find that in 1911 the UAHC through its official committee, the Board of Delegates on Civil Rights moves into the areas of concern with other Jewish national groups. The International Order of

B'nai B'rith and the American Jewish Committee tried to fight the proposed immigration restrictions that Congress was contemplating.¹¹ Important here is the fact that in this area of social concern, the UAHC through its committee took a stand on a national issue, as a national religious representative body.

The UAHC annual report of 1911 also saw the Board of Delegates involved in trying to persuade aliens to begin the long process of naturalization. A number of specific incidents had been reported whereby some aliens were denied medical treatment. This inhumane treatment caused Wolf to urge the UAHC to adopt a program whereby the Board of Delegates could urge these immigrants to begin naturalization. Once the process of naturalization was begun, when a problem such as medical services would arise, the immigrant would at least have begun the process¹² and would not be refused this treatment.

The reports of Wolf's Board of Delegates between 1912 and 1914 all dealt with the problem of immigration, specifically Jewish immigration. The reports reflect the Board of Delegates' work in specific cases. That is to say that when some alien was being threatened with deportation, if Wolf was contacted, he would serve as the lawyer in that specific case, and he would try to prevent this Jew from being deported. The Board was specifically concerned with the Jews who were being deported during these years, and for a number of years to come.

Although the major thrust of the UAHC's social justice program in 1913 is still found on the immigration front, the Board of Delegates began work on the labor front as the CCAR had done only two short years earlier. The Board of Delegates strongly supported President Taft's proposal for a

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Department of Labor. Although the Union as a whole did not adopt such a proposal, the Board of Delegates was involving itself in this highly political area, and was at least making recommendations to the whole body in an area that for the Union was virtually untouched.

Also in 1913 we notice that the UAHC together with the B'nai B'rith and other concerned Jewish individuals helped to defeat a North Carolina law which would have made Bible reading in the public schools mandatory. The Board of Delegates had its representatives testify against such a move on the part of the State of North Carolina. ¹⁴ Largely due to the efforts of the Board of Delegates and the B'nai B'rith this controversial State constitutional amendment did not become law in North Carolina.

With the U.S. on the brink of World War I, attention was almost solely given to the problems of immigration. The Board of Delegates worked diligently to secure basic rights for these immigrants, and to urge our government to take actions that would enable the immigrants to achieve some semblance of normal living. The UAHC was also vitally concerned with the status of the Jews who lived in Eastern Europe. In the reports of the Board of Delegates in 1915, Wolf remarked that since the war had begun, we American Jews need not feel ashamed at helping our co-religionists in those countries which are at war. Assurances have been made by President Wilson that once the war is over he would use his office to help ¹⁵ oppressed Jews in those countries affected.

During the years of the war, the major effort made on the part of the Board of Delegates was in conjunction with the B'nai B'rith and the United Hias to relieve the oppressed and suffering immigrants who came to

our shores. The term we might apply to this period of Union participation is social action. Now the tide had turned from resolutions and platforms in the Union, to helping people who needed help. For these years the Union was not concerned with the over all policies as much as it was concerned with aiding those who needed the help of the Board of Delegates.

While the Union through the Board of Delegates, was deeply involved in various aspects of the social justice mission, the CCAR was groping with a platform from which it might eventually launch a social justice campaign. In 1915 as a result of the disappointing report of the Committee on Synagogue and Industrial Relations, the Commission on Social Justice of the CCAR was instructed to draw up a preamble and a set of principles. Thus an effort was launched to secure a firm foundation for the CCAR on this matter of social justice.

Even without such a platform, the CCAR committed itself in 1918 to two very important principles with respect to the problems of labor and management. First the CCAR saw fit to recognize "the right of labor to¹⁶ organize and to bargain collectively." Secondly the Conference came to grips with an increasingly more difficult problem, namely whether labor had any rights with respect to the kind of remuneration it receives. "We advocate workmen's compensation for industrial accidents and occupational diseases, a fair minimum wage and regulation of industrial conditions with¹⁷ particular reference to the special needs of women."

With pressures growing within the CCAR to come up with a suitable platform from which to make these pronouncements, the committee on Synagogue and Industrial Relations, under the leadership of Horace Wolf, submitted a report in 1918 which helped the CCAR focus its plans for the future of the social justice movement within the Conference.

The next few decades will have as their chief concern the rectification of social and economic evils. The world will busy itself not only with the establishment of political, but also with the achievement of industrial democracy through social justice. The ideal of social justice has always been an integral part of Judaism. It is in accordance with tradition, therefore, that the Central Conference of American Rabbis submits the following declaration of principles as a program for the attainment of which the followers of our faith should strive.

1. A more equitable distribution of the profits of industry.
2. A minimum wage which will insure for all a fair standard of living.
3. The legal enactment of an eight hour day as a maximum for all industrial workers.
4. A compulsory one day of rest in seven for all workers.
5. The regulation of industrial conditions to give all workers a safe and sanitary working environment, with particular reference to the special needs of women.
6. The abolition of child labor and raising the standard of age wherever the legal age limit is lower than is consistent with moral and physical health.
7. Adequate workmen's compensation for industrial accidents and occupational diseases.
8. Legislative provision for universal workmen's health insurance and careful study of social insurance methods for meeting the contingencies of unemployment and old age.
9. An adequate permanent national system of public employment bureaus to make possible the distribution of the labor forces of America.
10. The recognition of the right of labor to organize and bargain collectively.
11. The application of the principles of mediation, conciliation, and arbitration to industrial disputes.

12. Proper housing for working people, secured through government regulation when necessary.
13. The preservation and the integrity of the home by a system of mothers' pensions.
14. Constructive care of dependents, defectives, and criminals, with the aim of restoring them to normal life wherever possible.¹⁸

Although the program that the Conference offered here was wide in scope, it was not terribly original. The Conference still finds itself as the follower among leaders, rather than in the role of leader. The platform that the Reform rabbis adopted, while being of significance, was still the stepdaughter of what the gentile clergy had already proposed. "It included all of the recommendations that were called for in the 1912 social platform of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America,¹⁹ and in the 1919 Bishop's program of the Roman Catholic Church."

Noticeably missing from this platform was a plank on war and peace. This does not mean that the Rabbis were not interested in world peace. According to Mervis, the Reform rabbinate was not very much different on this issue than were its Christian counterparts. On the issue of war,²⁰ the Conference remained neutral. Individually many rabbis spoke out against involvement which might lead to war, but the Conference as a group remained silent.

Despite the lack of an adequate war plank, and regardless of the Conference taking its cue from the gentile ministers, "The declaration was a strong social credo, showing the vital social interest of the rabbis and their eagerness to participate in the improvement of their country. Furthermore, it established social justice instead of social service as²¹ the proper emphasis of the conference." With the adoption of this

highly significant platform, the Commission on Social Justice became the sole authorized committee for the Conference on the matter of social concerns and involvement on the part of the Conference in those concerns.

After establishing this Commission of Social Justice under the leadership of Horace Wolf, its first chairman, the Conference faced the difficult task of putting the platform which the Conference adopted into practice. Wolf's first report toward this end was anything but exciting. The Commission was in the midst of preparing a bibliography of relevant materials and reprints of certain articles.

While the CCAR was in the throes of launching its program for social justice, the UAHC through its Board of Delegates on Civil Rights was looking for direction. Of course the aftermath of the World War left the Board with many problems with respect to immigrants. The Board still functioned as a sort of public defender of the rights of individual Jews who needed the help of a counsel. This job was nothing new however, and the Board of Delegates needed to find some new direction toward which it could direct its efforts.

Perhaps the 1918 annual report might serve to illustrate, both the groping of the Board, and the direction that it seems it would follow:

On the score of civil rights we have zealously watched the oft-repeated attacks on Jewish people as a class and as individuals. While ever-ready to defend our rights, let us not ignore our duty as patriotic American citizens, and aid in stamping out the attempts on the part of anyone, especially Jews, who destroy law, order, and the great Republic founded by our fathers and maintained by the sons.²²

The intent of this statement seems to be clear, that the Union might think about involving itself in matters that pertain to the whole community, not merely to the Jews in that community.

While it took the Conference a long time to adopt its first platform, only two years after its adoption the need was felt by the CCAR to update the platform on social justice that was passed in 1918. At the convention in 1920 an updated set of principles was adopted by the Conference with these new emphases noted.

1. The Conference was more specific in its declaration that labor had a right to collective bargaining. That is, the labor force had the right to share determination of working conditions.
2. Mention was made of the Bolshevik revolution and the scare that it was causing in the United States.
3. Attention was also drawn to the widening gulf being forged between the blacks and whites. The Conference pleaded for sanity and humane treatment for all.
4. In keeping with its past work, the Conference opposed the racial bias that was legalized in the immigration act of 1920. "The rabbis urged the maintenance of that haven of refuge distinguishing America from its very founding."²³

The year 1921 found the Board of Delegates with a new problem with which to work, Sunday closing laws. The Board, according to its annual report of 1921, spent much time trying to curb the ban on Sunday business. More than the blue laws was at stake. At stake for the Board was a specific Jewish problem: was a man who closed his business on Saturday to observe his Sabbath, to be punished economically by not being allowed to open his shop on Sunday which was not his Sabbath? For the Board this was a matter of separation of church and state. The Union was also concerned, as it had been in the past with American foreign policy. The Union wanted to make its position clear with respect to American financial aid. The UAHC did not approve of American aid being given to countries which would deny equal rights to all its citizens.

The year 1922 witnessed a new thrust on the part of the CCAR. The report of 1922 mentions a great demand on the part of labor unions, universities and social groups to have the pronouncements of the CCAR on social issues. The Commission on Social Justice of the Conference recommended to the CCAR that such a plan be put into operation whereby the social pronouncements would become a matter of public record. Interesting to note that the report mentions that similar proposals were now in effect in both Protestant and Catholic groups. These groups had but recently begun to have their pronouncements disseminated through paid publicity campaigns. The Commission also made an effort to align itself with Christian groups for other causes during 1922. "This desire for contact with similarly inclined Christian bodies is seen in the various attempts during 1922 taken by the Commission to unite with Catholic and Protestant leaders in joint social justice announcements."²⁴

Other issues which concerned the Conference in 1922 included a pronouncement deploring the Supreme Court decision which declared a child labor law unconstitutional. Also, in accordance with their platform, the rabbis recommended a study of unemployment insurance which would serve as protection for a laborer during periods of enforced illness.

During this active year for the Conference, the Union too was maintaining its activities on behalf of the immigrants. The Board of Delegates on a day-to-day basis, still acted to help process aliens by aiding in securing passports and clearances. Concern was also noted over world civil rights, especially for the Jews who lived in Poland and Roumania. The issue of Bible reading in the public schools again was at stake. The

Board of Delegates also spent a great deal of time seeking to prevent the introduction of the Merchant of Venice into various curricula.

The report of the Board of Delegates in 1923 reflects two new issues. The UAHC adopted a resolution on uniform marriage, divorce and desertion laws. This resolution was passed by the Biennial with the widest possible intent. It was not aimed at Jews specifically, but rather it was the Union's attempt at a resolution which was universal in nature.

The report also indicates that growing unrest was being felt among American Jews because of discrimination. The report shows that the Union was concerned with the discrimination in a Federal Park board's book which contained two anti-Jewish jokes. The Board was more concerned however with the growing tide of anti-semitism in the American universities and colleges as evidenced by limitations on the number of Jews that could enter the universities. Harvard was cited as one of those schools which placed a quota on Jewish enrollment.

Important for our discussion here is the fact that during 1923 Simon Wolf, the chairman of the Union's Board of Delegates since its inception, had died. For nearly fifty years Wolf headed this Board and directed its work in the area of social justice. With his death, changes were certain to follow as we shall see with the report of 1924.

The CCAR under the leadership of Horace Wolf, the chairman of the Commission on Social Justice, pursued its involvement in the areas of cooperation with other religious groups. During 1923 and 1924 the Commission's main activity was in cooperation with Protestant and Catholic groups in preparing pamphlets on economic factor in international relations. In addition the Conference gave attention to the industrial and economic sources of war.

On November 8, 1924, a special committee of the UAHC known as the Committee of Twenty-Six gave this startling recommendation to the Executive Board of the Union.

Your committee recommends that the Union should concentrate its efforts upon its religious purposes and abandon every other activity which tends to dissipate its energy and occasion a departure from the real and essential aims of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, to wit: the cultivation of Judaism. Your committee is of the opinion that the work being done by the Board of Delegates on Civil Rights can be adequately performed by other agencies now engaged in such work, and that its continuation by the Union diverts the attention which should be applied in other directions to much greater benefit.²⁶

Keeping in mind the above statement of principle made by the "Committee of Twenty-Six," namely to drop the Board of Delegates from the Union, note the disparity presented in the report given by M. D. Rosenberg, the presiding officer on the Board of Delegates on Civil Rights, only one month after the Executive Board meeting. Rosenberg called for a constitutional amendment that would enlarge the scope of the Board rather than do away with it altogether. These points would be added to the present program of the Board, if the amendments were passed:

1. To provide means for relief of Jews from political oppression.
2. To take action seeking to eliminate unjust discrimination whenever the same shall be deemed prejudicial to law.
3. To see to it that the civic and political rights of the Jew are maintained whenever the same are in danger of being transgressed.
4. To supply the Union with information on questions and events whenever the same appear to affect the rights of the Jews on questions of immigration, passports, injustice and discrimination and on such other questions as the executive officers of the Union may from time to time request.
5. To see to it that in the enactment of legislation it shall operate with equality upon all religious faiths.

6. To use its offices, so far as the same is compatible, in the preservation of American principles, conserving the separation of church and state.
7. To enlighten the public through the medium of the press and other literature in cases of misunderstanding of the Jews and misconceptions of his position and purpose in life.
8. To use its offices in facilitating the cause of the Jew in matters before civil and military authorities when through ignorance, poverty or other causes, he is prevented from making proper presentation of his case.²⁷

At the conclusion of the proposed amendments Rosenberg makes a plea for the reconsideration of the proposal of the "Committee of Twenty-Six." He says:

The work committed to the Board of Delegates on Civil Rights should receive the careful consideration of the members of our faith. The Board as such has continuously functioned now for a period of sixty-five years, and became an adjunct of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1878, from which time under the able leadership of Mr. Simon Wolf, until his death, it continued to accomplish noteworthy work for the welfare of Israel throughout the world. In the discharge of its duties, a high standard has been established, and it is hopeful that the Board as at present constituted, may continue in maintaining the lofty ideals of our faith and in the solution of its problems, seeking to continue its usefulness and thereby to conserve the time-honored traditions of Judaism.²⁸

Interesting in this entire report is that an emphasis is placed on the help which the Board offered the Jews. The plea to the convention is on this ground, namely that the matter of Civil Rights as defined by the constitution is to deal with matters which affect Jews.

We see here that a shift is taking place. While ten years earlier the CCAR would only maintain social justice programs on behalf of Jews, we find here that the Union in trying to maintain the Board of Delegates and must seek its continued maintenance on Jewish grounds, not on the grounds of general Civil Rights. Although point five of the proposed amendments might appear to be general in nature, one can't help but feel that it is aimed at securing legislative right of Jews.

The Union, by contrast to some of its earlier work, seemed very conservative. On the other hand, the CCAR which was extremely cautious at the turn of the century, was at this time working hand-in-hand with similar gentile groups on some areas that did not affect Jews directly.

This shift in emphasis on the part of the Union was noted by some members of the CCAR at the Union Biennial in 1924. Now that the rabbis had the momentum, they wanted the Union to accept the platform which the CCAR had adopted, with amendments in 1920. The members of the Conference who attended the Biennial would not let the Union disband its Board of Delegates without a fight.

A major address on social justice presented to the Union by Rabbi Louis Wolsey. Within the text of Wolsey's paper he alluded to problems that were not just Jewish problems, but problems which faced us as American Jews. Wolsey made a plea to the assemblage that they not turn their backs on the concerns of the day. He urged them to adopt the program that the CCAR had adopted in 1920. This address was delivered on the heels of a decision made by the Union to do away with the Board of Delegates on Civil Rights.

As Wolsey concluded his impassioned remarks, Rabbi Samuel Mayerson proposed a resolution which would have the Union adopt the declaration on social justice made by the CCAR. After discussion by both laymen and rabbis, Rabbi James G. Heller amended the motion to the effect that the "Chair be authorized to appoint a commission on social justice to consider the platform of the Central Conference of American Rabbis...and that the report of this commission be made a special order of business at the next council." After

discussion ensued further amendments were proposed, all by rabbis of the CCAR. The final vote of the Council was taken and the following motion was finally adopted:

That the Council give its heartiest endorsement to the platform on social justice as adopted by the CCAR and presented to this convention, and that this platform be referred to a special commission of the Union which shall be appointed by the incoming Executive Board, and shall report at the next Council.³⁰

Two things are worth noting here. First, we must understand that the rabbis dominated the Biennial Council of the UAHC. The proposal was theirs as were all of the proposed amendments. The laity participated in the discussion, and voted, but the rabbis who were present were the ones who made the Council actually reverse a decision that it had made only a day earlier. Secondly, the Union did make a complete reversal in its policy. If we recall the report of the "Committee of Twenty-Six," the evidence presented shows clearly that the Union was trimming its social justice program. There were no pretenses about doing away with the Board of Delegates, in order to present a program such as was finally adopted. The "Committee of Twenty-Six" wanted the Union to stay away from controversial issues. The Council seemed prepared to go along with the "Committee of Twenty-Six" by virtue of the fact that they voted to disband the Board of Delegates on Civil Rights. Thus we see that under the influence of the CCAR, or by reason of the fact that the resolution which Rabbi Mayerberg presented may have come as a surprise for the first time, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations aligned itself with the Central Conference of American Rabbis on the issue of social justice. This alignment as we shall have reason to see, had important implications from this

time until the present.

In 1926 the Council heard a report on the subject of social justice by the special commission which was appointed at the 1924 Biennial Council.

The following resolution was unanimously adopted:

Resolved that this Council instruct the Executive Board of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations to recreate a commission of social justice, designed not for the solution of specific factional controversies, but for the pronouncement and preservation of the traditionally sympathetic attitude of Judaism toward those who are struggling for more equitable and just conditions of life in fields of industry, commerce, and social relations toward progressive effort in the realm of industrial, economic, and sociological aspects of human relationships and,

that achievement of the ends in view be subserved by fostering through cooperation and financial assistance, whenever and wherever the same is deemed fitting and proper, the efforts of the Central Conference of American Rabbis to apply to the solution of modern social problems the lofty ideals of Judaism.³¹

Thus the Union and the Conference were at one with respect to their official positions on social justice.

The final adoption of the Union Declarations passed at the 1926

Biennial Council read as follows:

1. The recognition of the principle of mutual service through the performance of economic function is of first importance to our social philosophy.
2. The recognition of the dignity of labor and the realization of society's dependence upon the effort of the toiler.
3. That human rights take precedence over the rights of property.
4. That man's labor is his very life and constitutes his primary service to society. It is not merely a commodity to be bought or sold in the market.
5. The recognition of the duty on the part of the employers and employees alike, to exercise in the adjustment of their own interests a due regard for the paramount rights of society.
6. The duty of the synagogue and its pulpit to speak courageously in defense of human rights as part of its prophetic function.³²

These declarations on social justice as passed by the Biennial Council represented the most broad-minded platform to date in the Reform movement. The key to these pronouncements however still lies with the Executive Board of the UAHC, because the implementation of these principles was to be the responsibility of a Commission on Social Justice. The establishment of such a commission, by a motion previously discussed, was referred back to the Executive Board for study.

At the Executive Board meeting, held June 24, 1928, a motion was made by Leo Weil to disband the Commission on Social Justice, before it was even established. Despite Rabbi Wolsey's persistent efforts to see the commission become a permanent part of the Union, the Executive Board passed the following motion:

In as much as the Union of American Hebrew Congregations finds it impossible to provide inadequate fashion the necessary means and to devise the proper methods of dealing with the vast and complicated problems of social justice, we recommend that the Commission on Social Justice be discontinued for the present, it being understood that this action does not express a lack of interest in the question of justice as it arises in social and industrial relations, but rather an appreciation of our ability to deal effectively and helpfully enough with it. The genius of Judaism has always been imbued with a profound understanding and sympathy for those whose unhappy lot cries for better and more just conditions of social control. It is therefore with deep regret that we find ourselves compelled at this time to discontinue the commission.³³

Although this was a disappointment to the liberal elements in the UAHC and the CCAR, they succeeded in reinstating the Commission later in the year. Important to note is the fact that there was not unanimity even in these early years between those who favored and those who did not favor social action work.

Moving again from the theoretical problems of social justice in Reform Judaism, back to some of the real issues that faced the movement, we see that 1925-1926 saw the Conference involved in the question of birth

control. A federal bill to repeal a law which prohibits the dissemination of information through the mail, was being bitterly opposed by the Catholic church. The CCAR was asked to make public its viewpoint on the issue.

The CCAR passed the following resolution:

The subject of birth control should not be treated as suspect from the standpoint of the law, and should not be relegated to clandestine discussion and agitation, but on the contrary should be brought out to the light of day from the secret places to which it has been consigned.

At the same time, this Commission feels as a result of its own study of the facts...that the regulations of the Federal Penal Code forbidding transmission through the mails of matters pertaining to conceptual devices and methods should not be repealed. We are of the opinion that all information necessary for the guidance of parents can be fully and adequately imparted to them by their own family physicians.³⁴

Noted here is the abrupt change in the general tenure of the resolution.

The first paragraph seems to indicate that the CCAR will support the repeal of such a law. But we notice that the CCAR aligned itself with the Catholic Church on this matter.

Perhaps the reason for the above stance is seen in the Conference's attempt at a coalition group with the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, on the subject of international relations. The Conference indicated its desire to accept a similar coalition with Catholics and other Protestant denominations. In fact the CCAR did cooperate with Protestant and Catholic groups investigating the strike of engineers and firemen of the Western Maryland Railroad.

Even though the CCAR still made pronouncements, there was growing dissatisfaction with the platform that was adopted as amended in 1922. Since the first platform on social justice was adopted by the Conference, there had been continued efforts made to update the platforms of the CCAR.

Under the leadership of Edward Israel, the new chairman of the CCAR Commission on Social Justice, a new platform was adopted in 1928. This new platform came into being because the gulf between the rich and poor in American life was growing ever deeper. This new platform dealt with eighteen specific issues, and was the most wide ranging pronouncement yet by any segment of the Reform movement. The strongest plank dealt with unemployment insurance. The CCAR urged business as well as state and federal government to come up with some plan of action on unemployment insurance, in addition to some system of nationally interlocking employment agencies.

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A new area of concern for the Conference was found in a plank on International Relations. For the first time the CCAR gave approval to the rights of conscientious objector. The Conference also indicated disapproval of compulsory military training.

During the beginning of Edward Israel's term as chairman a question of policy with respect to the commission's work was resolved. Israel asked for greater power to act in the adjudication of problems in the area of social justice without waiting for the whole Conference to give him the authority. This power was granted Israel, and with it a precedent for the future.

Highlights of work done by the Conference in 1928 include the active endorsement of the Pullman porters in their attempt at unionization. The CCAR urged collective bargaining in the bituminous coal miner's strike. They also decided to publicize the work of the Commission on Social Justice. In the area of action the CCAR mediated a labor conflict between the cap-maker's union and some Chicago employers. Perhaps most important from the

standpoint of unanimity in the Reform movement, a decision was reached to bring to life the inactive Union's Commission on Social Justice.

The years that followed were difficult ones indeed, not only for the Reform Jews who were struggling with an ideological problem of social justice, but for the nation as a whole which was being thrown into the depths of devastating depression which would be felt throughout the world. The CCAR responded to the depression in very positive ways. In 1931 for example, together with two other national religious organizations the CCAR convened a conference on unemployment in Washington. "The purpose of the conference was to highlight the necessity for action." ³⁶ This might be said to be the beginning of a new type of social justice for the Conference. Pronouncements were no longer sufficient, but they needed to be accompanied by direct actions.

With respect to the depression, the CCAR made very strong statements against an economy that would let millions be unemployed. The Conference did not advocate socialism, but it did hold that industry had to be used to benefit the people. "On the whole the Conference maintained the 'new deal' point of view, calling for a redistribution of the national income through high wages, the protection of the rights of labor, and heavy income taxes." ³⁷

For the Conference, a new era of social justice was dawning. "The Commission was beginning to have an effect upon the actions of the individual congregational rabbi in the field of social justice." ³⁸ These years under Edward Israel were significant ones for all of Reform Judaism. Changes were made which made the term social justice a living reality in terms of individual participation and a change of focus from specifically Jewish

problems to problems that affected all Americans. "In the years 1927-1933 under the leadership of Edward Israel, the thinking of Reform rabbis on the subject of social justice had undergone change: interfaith activities began to be curtailed as independent action became the trend." ³⁹

The years of indecision on the part of the Union with respect to the Commission on social justice seemed to be nearing an end in 1931. The Thirty-First Biennial Council of the UAHC voted overwhelmingly to reorganize the defunct Commission on Social Justice. The Commission would work hand-in-hand with the counterpart commission of the CCAR.

The first report of the rejuvenated commission indicated that a magazine was being contemplated. This would be in conjunction with the CCAR and nearly a full third of the magazine would be devoted to the practical application of the historic teachings of Judaism to the problems of daily life. "The latter in other words to be a department devoted to social justice and the socializing of religion." ⁴⁰ Plans were also being made to have the Union adopt the entire program of the CCAR. In 1932 a seminar was held under the auspices of the Union's Commission of Social Justice. The seminar dealt with industrial relations, and because of its success additional seminars were being planned.

Although the program of the Union, in cooperation with the CCAR was beginning to become a regular part of the Union's work, there was still the feeling that the CCAR remained the mainstay of social justice in American Israel. "Because our labors are for the most part supplementary to the work of the rabbis, we are in a position to evaluate that work. May we take this occasion to express our sincere gratification and pleasure over the achievements of the rabbinical group in attaining for Reform Judaism so

high a place among the churches of America in the social justice endeavor." ⁴¹

As the rabbis had been concerned with acceptance in the general community only a decade before, now the Union, the lay organization of American Reform Judaism, seemed to be headed in that same direction. The Union was making its strong bid now for community recognition. Studies were begun with respect to church work, to enable the UAHC to make Judaism more compatible to the current environment. These areas occurred for the most part in the field of social justice in community action agroups. "Both the sisterhoods and brotherhoods made an extremely large focal point of their activities the working out of ideal and practical long term and short range goals for civic amelioration. The Jewish community had to have a part and a say in the over-all civic policies of each community for the realization of practical reform religious ideals. We note therefore greater trends each year toward intercommunal liaison work between rabbis and civic organizations." ⁴²

In 1934 Sidney Goldstein became the new chairman of the Conference's Commission on Social Justice. That same year the CCAR made a recommendation, which in years to come, would become the most important with respect to involving the whole of the Reform Jewish community. The Conference urged that each congregation in the Union establish its own committee on social justice. In this way each congregation would be able to be its own spokesman on issues which it felt compelled to speak.

At the 1934 Biennial Convention a symposium was held on "the Synagogue and Social Justice." At this symposium, the view represented by the rabbis seemed to be taking form. The proceedings outlined the speech of Robert P. Goldman, the Union's Chairman of the Commission on Social Justice.

"Any statement of principle is not for the purpose of binding others so much as it is a guide for the conduct of our fellow Jews and of ourselves. Before any official pronouncement on the question of social justice is made the background should be laid by education and discussion in the congregations themselves. It is therefore proposed to set up a committee on social justice in each congregation to study the vital questions involved."⁴³

The discussion that ensued at this symposium emphasized that the synagogue should identify actively with the great movements on behalf of social justice, and they should take the form of educational programs in order to create a consensus on the great moral questions of the day. "It was pointed out however, that such a consensus should be based on fundamental moral principles, but the synagogue could not be expected to make any decisions on controversial economic or political questions requiring the knowledge and training of experts."⁴⁴ Although the Union is committed to the principles of social justice here is further evidence that the Union is confused as to just how to proceed with its good intentions. We also see the opposing point of view, which would time and again appear telling the Jewish community to stay out of the political affairs and "stick to religion."

In 1936 the major effort waged by the Union Commission on Social Action was in the area of trying to interest the individual congregations in the question of social justice. The Commission reported that in its effort, educational materials were in the midst of preparation or had in some cases been completed. Some fifty congregations showed enough interest to order either the whole lot of materials or at least some of the new publications.

The Commission went on to report that some troubles had arisen in some congregations with respect to the advisability of the Union's participation in such an endeavor. "Many congregational officers got the impression that this committee [referring to setting up a congregational committee on social justice] would be expected to take sides on controversial social problems and that it would be its duty to make definite pronouncements on these problems on behalf of the congregation." ⁴⁵ Thus while part of the congregational structure was pushing to secure social justice within the congregations, another group was already claiming that the congregations cannot be committed to such practices. Despite the number of congregations which may have misunderstood the intent of the commission, according to Goldman, the Commission would still seek to involve individual congregations, because there was no intention of forcing congregations to make these pronouncements without any consensus within the congregation.

Regardless of the efforts of the Commission, the 1936 report is anything but optimistic. Only thirteen synagogues had adopted the suggested plan of forming their own social justice committee. A change in tactics was therefore proposed. First, the educational program should be continued but it should be introduced by the rabbis, rather than by this committee. Second, a new name was proposed: "In view of the fact that the title Social Justice has been associated in the minds of many people with political implications which are not embraced in our program..." ⁴⁶

The name chosen was Educational Program for Social Betterment.

In 1937 Barnett Brickner took over the chairmanship of the CCAR Committee and a reversal of the progressive social action program emerged. We find that the CCAR repeated essentially what had been done under the administration of Horace Wolf. Most of the pronouncements were superficial

and there was no willingness to run the risk of controversy. Again we notice interfaith pronouncements on labor practices. In short "it appeared to be the program of 1920 all over again."⁴⁷ A new aspect did emerge however, the relations between Negro and white, Negro and Jew. This was precipitated by a growing concern among the rabbis about black anti-semitism. In 1938 the CCAR recommended to the movie industry to exercise great care in the treatment of the Negro theme so as to avoid anything that would arouse racial tension.

The last years of the 30's saw Father Coughlin and the rising threat of Hitler's Germany. The CCAR mirrored the attacks on Jews and the growing tide of anti-semitism in the U.S. and abroad. The response, however, was one of great weakness. The Conference made many pronouncements on themes of the past, but they offered no new concrete suggestions for action. They opposed fascism and communism, and urged federal programs for the care of the jobless and schoolless youth. But in all of this one is left with this conclusion: "One may clearly note in these statements, and in all those of this period, the presence of much rhetoric, but surprisingly few concrete suggestions."⁴⁸

As the decade of the thirties drew to a close, the social justice programs of both the Union and CCAR were floundering. It is, I believe, partially in response to this that the Columbus Platform included in its planks a very strong pronouncement on the need for social justice. Having succeeded, and then having failed at finding a meaningful program for the Reform movement, the Conference and the Union were now back at the drawing board, so to speak, trying to find the right words to translate this concern for social justice into deeds. With this in mind the framers of the Columbus Platform of 1937 included the following paragraphs which either

directly or indirectly set the stage for the next decade on social justice programming.

Ethics and Religion. In Judaism religion and morality blend into an indissoluble unity. Seeking God means to strive after holiness, righteousness and goodness. The love of God is incomplete without the love of one's fellowmen. Judaism emphasizes the kinship of the human race, the sanctity and worth of human life and personality and the right of the individual to freedom and to the pursuit of his chosen vocation. Justice to all, irrespective of race, sect or class is the inalienable right and the inescapable obligation of all. The state and organized government exist in order to further these ends.

Social Justice. Judaism seeks the attainment of a just society by the application of its teachings to the economic order, to industry and commerce, and to national and international affairs. It aims at the elimination of man-made misery and suffering, of poverty and degradation, of tyranny and slavery, of social inequality and prejudice, of ill-will and strife. It advocates the promotion of harmonious relations between warring classes on the basis of equity and justice, and the creation of conditions under which human personality may flourish. It pleads for the safeguarding of childhood against exploitation. It champions the cause of all who work and of their right to an adequate standard of living, as prior to the rights of property. Judaism emphasizes the duty of charity, and strives for a social order which will protect men against the material disabilities of old age, sickness and unemployment.

Peace. Judaism, from the days of the prophets, has proclaimed to mankind the ideal of universal peace. The spiritual and physical disarmament of all nations has been one of its essential teachings. It abhors all violence and relies upon moral education, love and sympathy to secure human progress. It regards justice as the foundation of the well-being of nations and the condition of enduring peace. It urges organized international action for disarmament, collective security and world peace.⁴⁹

Chapter 2

TOWARD A JOINT COMMISSION ON SOCIAL ACTION

The decade of the forties began much the same as the Thirties had ended. The CCAR made pronouncements, and the UAHC was having a very difficult time selling social justice to the laity. The UAHC may in fact have given up the task, as the Commission on Social Justice had all but disappeared from the minutes of the Union. In November, 1941, the report of the Commission on Social Justice merely stated that it was in the process of reorganization. It appears that there was no one heading the "reorganization" process, nor was a chairman listed even for the sake of the Union directories. By the following biennial, the Commission on Social Justice had deteriorated to such an extent that it was no longer listed in the Union directory as a standing commission of the UAHC.

Although the Biennial of 1941 saw the Union pass a number of resolutions on war, Nazism and fascism, we can hardly say that the social justice program was one of vital interest to the Union membership. To be against fascism in 1941 did not take a great deal of courage, even for Jewish organizations. In its wartime conventions the UAHC failed to come to grips with the problems of the European Jewish community which was being destroyed by the Nazis.

As had been the pattern in Reform Jewish life, when one of the institutions, either the Union or the Conference was lacking in social concern, the other tried to fill the void. I think it is in this light that we must view the CCAR during the war years. In the area of social justice the Commission on Social Justice of the CCAR worked hard, even to the point of bringing new concerns before the Conference. In 1941 the CCAR

began to involve itself in the problem of housing. They endorsed a national housing conference program of institutes, following the lead of various Protestant and Catholic groups which did the same.

On a functional procedure the Commission on Social Justice requested the CCAR to merge the Commission with the Committee on International Peace. The commission claimed that it was impossible to maintain a totally domestic program with the entire world in a state of flux. They recognized that the problems to be faced in the United States were bound up with the problems that were emerging in Europe and other areas of the world.

By the convention of 1942, a joint committee of the CCAR was formed; it was to be known as the Commission on Justice and Peace. Aware, however, that there were many areas that would now fall under the direction of this commission, its organizers divided it into nine subcommittees. 1) international relations and peace organizations; 2) race relations; 3) social and industrial relations; 4) alien and immigrant problems; 5) civil liberties; 6) agriculture and the farmer; 7) civic reforms; 8) conscientious objectors; 9) world reconstruction. What needs to be recognized here, is that the CCAR made an effort to bring these problems under one umbrella, the umbrella of social justice. Although this might be considered a rather naive measure by today's standard, it is the first step in many years that the Conference took in order to make its social justice program meaningful and important.

The chairman of the new joint commission was Ferdinand Isserman. He castigated the Conference for all of its pious pronouncements and its obvious lack of deeds to accompany those pronouncements. He tells the

Conference that when replying to Christian groups that inquire as to the social justice program of the Conference he gives this standard reply:

"The rabbinate is so forward looking that it can dispense with much propaganda." He then goes on to criticize the CCAR: "Nevertheless I know and you know, that though frequently our pronouncements have been buried in the archives of our conference and we have never undertaken any systematic work among our laity.¹

The problems of non-action on the part of the CCAR, he hoped, would be alleviated by the CCAR's hiring a man to fill the full time position in the area of social justice.

In spite of Isserman's pleadings, the Conference's new joint Commission of Justice and Peace presented its 1943 report. One would expect this report to be filled with positive programs for a world increasingly on the brink of utter destruction. Instead we find that the 1943 report is a throwback to the earlier days of the CCAR. In the pages of this annual message the CCAR made further pronouncements of a trite nature, like approving of every act that our government was making to seek equal rights for all of its citizens.

The CCAR was becoming an agency that made pronouncements. During these frustrating years, the United States was under the leadership of the "New Deal" Roosevelt administration. The CCAR was bound up with the idea of the man, and the ideal he presented. The socialism that had crept into American life induced the CCAR to make this recommendation in 1943.

Our government should take every possible step to provide for a fair sharing of all available food and commodities, and to equalize the sacrifice as far as possible.²

By 1944 the Conference again seemed to have reevaluated its position on justice and peace and again called for a solution to the problem of

making pronouncements without appropriate actions emerging from them. Thus, in 1944 the CCAR called for a full time director for the Commission of Justice and Peace.

Also to be noted here is the CCAR position on race relations. The Conference seemed to be more aware of the problem of race in America. The CCAR instituted a yearly message, for Race Relations Sabbath, which was sent to Christian groups throughout the U.S. The Conference also recommended that its members invite a Negro to preach from their pulpits on Race Relations Sabbath. Although this seems like tokenism, it was a bold step in the mid-forties.

Perhaps the most important issue for Jews during the years 1940-1945 was the war in Europe and the accompanying news of the Nazi annihilation program. While there is much controversy as to just when the Jewish community in the United States learned of the Nazi exterminations, it is well known that Hitler's anti-semitic campaign pointed in the direction of severe steps to be taken against the Jews. It is clear that the Jewish community in this country was alarmed at the possibilities of what would happen to the Jews on the continent.

Both the CCAR and the Union were ineffective in their efforts against Hitler's fascism. While searching, one is struck by the lack of material. In 1933 and 1935 the UAHC passed a small number of resolutions lamenting the oppression of German Jews. Again on November 10, 1939, the UAHC passed a resolution condemning barbarous Nazis for their brutal attacks and desecration of synagogues. In 1943 the UAHC passed a resolution that reads as follows:

God uses men and people at great moments in History as the instruments of revelation. The four freedoms, the Atlantic charter, Collective security, common responsibility for a

just and enduring peace enunciated by our president and his advisors and the leaders of the United Nations have practical goals which may be measurably realized. To their achievement we pledge our unreserved devotion. While the four freedoms must be applied to all persons of whatever faith, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations is deeply concerned with the fate of Jews in all lands who are suffering special hardships and even loss of life simply because they are Jews. We call upon our government, and through it, on the United Nations, to see to it, that in the post-war settlement adequate provision shall be made to safeguard their rights, as well as the rights of all people who have been persecuted because of race or religion. We urge that adequate provision be made for their rehabilitation in new homes and in Palestine. We ask that our government use its good offices to see that Palestine is opened as quickly as possible for settlement of as many Jews as desire to go there and who can be taken care of.³

Interesting to be noted here, is that nowhere in the resolution of the UAHC during the war years is the whole problem of mass-extinction of Jews even mentioned. In all cases, the language as well as the subject matter seems to be placed in a universal type of formulation, and does not deal with the terrible atrocities of the Nazi government. After the war, in the late 40's and early 50's the UAHC dealt with the subject of genocide, but this was after the fact.

The same problem holds true for the CCAR. If the UAHC said very little about the problem of Nazi Germany, the CCAR said even less. For an organization that had been known for its forthright pronouncements, even if there were no accompanying actions, the war years were a terrible disgrace to the CCAR and the entire Jewish community. Between 1939 and 1944 the CCAR made practically no pronouncements or even allusions to the war in Germany and the suffering of the Jews at the hands of the Hitler regime. To illustrate how meaningless the CCAR became on the subject of the destruction of European Jewry, we might look at some of the resolutions that the Conference passed during the Hitler years.

On Anti-Semitism

We note with great satisfaction the manner in which non-Jewish leaders of public opinion the world over have cooperated in meeting the attacks made by the Nazis upon the Jewish people. (1934)⁴

There are no other resolutions that deal with anti-semitism and the Nazis not even after the U.S. became involved in the war. Once the war was over, and the United Nations began to deal with the subject of genocide, the CCAR made the following proclamation in 1948:

We vigorously denounce the premeditated destruction of entire religious, national and racial groups as a wicked and dastardly crime against humanity and urge the commission on Human Rights of the United Nations to approve the draft of the genocide convention. (1948)⁵

In the early years of the social justice movement, immigration laws were a chief concern of the Reform movement, both in the UAHC and the CCAR. In the war years, the CCAR did pass three resolutions on immigration. One in 1934 asked the government to revise the artificial quota system that excluded so many from American shores, and to replace it with a law that allowed an individual to immigrate to this country if he was able to maintain himself. Two other immigration resolutions that were passed, one in 1943 and the other in 1944, both dealt with American policy toward the Chinese, in the Chinese Exclusion Act. The important thing to bear in mind here is that nowhere in the resolutions dealing with immigration did the CCAR ask the Federal government to aid Jewish refugees in Europe. Nowhere in the resolutions can one find, even a glimmer that the Conference would ask the government to open its gates to the millions of Jews of Eastern Europe.

The CCAR in these years had failed to come to grips with the problems of Jews in Europe. The Conference became so engrossed in being universal

in its approach, so just, so righteous that it failed to do more than merely condemn Germany for its crimes against humanity. Even after the war, the Conference maintained its stance of aloofness as can be discerned by these resolutions passed by the CCAR immediately after the war. They even seem to sympathize with Germans who aided Hitler.

We favor the immediate trial in Allied courts of those Germans responsible for crimes against the civilian population and for violations of International law. We believe that the people of Germany who supported Hitlerism have a moral obligation to aid in the restoration of the cities and countrysides destroyed by their invading armies. We believe that Germany must return the loot her soldiers have taken in occupied lands, restore confiscated property and re-settle peoples forcibly transplanted. (1944)⁶

In considering the terms for peace for the German nation we are moved by no desire of vengeance or retaliation but by the imperatives of justice and the need to avoid future wars. We seek neither a hard nor a soft but a just peace... (1945)⁷

Noticeable here by its absence is the word Jew. Nowhere in the resolutions does the CCAR make mention of its special concern for Nazi War crimes specifically against Jews. Perhaps the CCAR was waiting for the Gentile social justice groups to make such special mention first, which had been the policy of the CCAR.

The 1945 CCAR convention saw the urging again of a full time director of social justice. Perhaps this was due to the obvious feelings of guilt which CCAR members must have felt once the war was over. Then too, the CCAR was groping to find direction for the energies that it possessed for social justice. The search for direction may also be born out by the fact that the conference was again asked to divide the joint Commission on Justice and Peace into two or more separate committees. The task to which the Social Justice Commission had to address itself was large. This feeling may have enveloped the CCAR with a sense of inability to speak on any issue

because of the great number of issues that were being presented.

By 1945 the UAHC too, became more aware of the need to do something more in the area of social justice. Maurice Eisendrath, then the director of the UAHC, urged the Union to join with the Central Conference of American Rabbis, in forming a joint Commission on Justice and Peace. Eisendrath was led to this suggestion because of his participation in the United Nations Conference of International Organizations. Eisendrath said to the Union Board:

The presence in San Francisco of so many church groups representing both their lay and clerical constituencies brought directly and vividly home to me a long-felt void in the Union's program. Ever since the Union discontinued the Board of Delegates on Civil and Religious Rights it has surrendered the whole field of social action, with the significant moral and spiritual issues, to secular bodies... The splendid cooperation between the CCAR and the Union in our several joint commissions prompts me to recommend that the executive board authorize its director to explore, with the CCAR the possibility of establishing a joint Conference-Union Commission on Justice and Peace.⁶

The CCAR too, recognized this need and at its convention in 1946 recommended to its executive board that it cooperate with the UAHC in establishing a Joint Commission on Social Action. (CSA) What is interesting to note here is the term social action. It is a new term in the vocabulary of both the Conference and the Union, and it represents more than a change in name. It represents what had been lacking in the Reform movement since the days of the Board of Delegates, namely appropriate actions to accompany well meaning resolutions. Both the Conference and the Union came to realize that pronouncements on social issues would become meaningful only if there was some machinery which would implement those resolutions. These feelings were expressed by Rabbi Eisendrath in March, 1946:

In so far as Reform Judaism is concerned, very little has been done about it [social action]. It is true that from time to time the CCAR has sponsored special institutes however in the day by day, year in and year out tasks of social justice and of building a peaceful world, we in the Reform movement have done very little other than pass resolutions, forward looking and laudable though these be.⁹

In the spring of 1946, members of the Executive Board of the CCAR met with representatives of the UAHC and later approved the joint Commission on Social Action (CSA). At that time, the budget proposed was \$16,000, half to be borne by each organization. In March, 1947, the Union Biennial met and approved the plan for this national commission which would speak out on human relations in America and in the world, and be a means for helping the individual congregations implement their own social action program. In April, 1947, the CCAR met and formally approved the recommendation of their Executive Board to form this national commission.

Although one would think that the establishment of this commission would have signaled the beginning of a new movement within Reform Judaism, we are disappointed to learn that the Joint Commission, although approved had a hard time getting started, and once started met with much opposition, as the report of the CCAR in 1948 indicated.

We learn from the chairman of the Committee on Justice and Peace of the CCAR that the Joint Commission was being implemented and that as its first task, a series of five position papers or statements would be made. The first two: "Judaism and Race Equality" and "Judaism: Management and Labor," had been issued. The Commission was asked by the Conference not to publish the last three statements. "A committee of members of the Executive Board waited on the chairman and indicated that there was dissatisfaction with the commission because: a) it was moving too fast; b) getting bigger than the Conference; c) too costly, and d) the statements in the annual

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report were too lengthy." While the commission was struggling along, there may have been internal difficulties as this absurd justification for negating the work of the commission indicates. There may have been members of the CCAR who could see that what the joint commission was attempting to do, was far more than the CCAR had done.

While the internal struggle for success of the Joint Commission was confined to the pages of the CCAR yearbooks, the public exposure of the commission would indicate that it was proceeding without difficulty or opposition. The magazine Liberal Judaism announced the proposed program of the Commission.

The ten point program envisages an extensive program of education within and without of the liberal Jewish fold, in addition to collaboration with kindred agencies of other religious denominations and secular groups to the end that, 'international peace, social justice and international harmony may be furthered most effectively. It is also planned to make known to legislative bodies the attitude of Liberal Judaism in matters of social justice whenever legislators are considering, laws involving the problems of justice, peace, and race.¹¹

Important to note here is the fact that the commission seemed to be going in a particular direction. Secondly, part of that program, as reported here, would deal with the legislative process. This mention of the legislative process and the fact that the Commission planned to act as a lobby group on certain issues may have caused a good deal of tension within the movement. We know that in the years to follow this became a major issue within Reform Judaism.

Again, within the pages of the official documents of the Union we find that many were not happy with the CSA or with the idea that social action is part of the program of the Reform movement. Eisendrath attacked those within the movement who would have the UAHC take no part in social action programs. Then he reminded those people of what strides the churches

had made in the areas of social justice.

Nor do our contemporaries within the church remain quite as silent as some of our congregational leaders would wish us as a religious organization to be. Recently at Amsterdam the representatives of nearly every Protestant denomination in Christendom denounced the evils of a Selfish Preatory capitalism with the same vehemence as they did the evils of a dictatorial oppressive communism. How some of our numbers would have squirmed and shuddered if these halls would ring with such candid words as constrained these churchmen, lay and clerical, to declare: 'while some of the evils of early capitalism have been corrected, the system still tends to subordinate human needs to the economic advantage of those who have the most power over its institutions... So spoke Christian churchmen, and the authority for such straight talk is Our Hebrew Prophets. We must speak with equal clarity and vigor with regard to the conflict between labor and management, in response to the appalling revelation of the President's committee on Civil Rights, in the tangled, troubled realm of race relations, in the sordid international game of power politics, in the face of impending immoral use of atomic power: Religion, Judaism, Liberal prophetic Judaism must have its say, must speak its mind, point the finger, name the name and do the righteous deed. The Joint Commission of the CCAR and UAHC on Social Action which has but recently been formed in compliance with the will of our last Biennial, must be put to work.¹²

The battles over the whole question of social action within the Reform movement must have been bitter for Eisendrath to have used the kind of argument that he did. He asked the Jews to behave like Jews, because Christians were behaving like Jews should behave. His passion for the survival of the commission was based on his fear that it would become a commission in name only, that it would be totally ineffective as an instrument of social action unless it had the complete sanction and support of the organizations of Reform Judaism.

Eisendrath's fears became reality as we learn from the CCAR yearbook of 1949. The Commission would issue no statement except on race relations, brotherhood week, and labor day. It was further stipulated that the Executive Board of the CCAR had to approve any statement of the Commission.

The rabbis had been able to successfully cripple the actions of the Commission on Social Action. The organization could not speak except on certain issues, and what it said had to be censored by the Conference. Then too, there was no clear indication that the Commission could function in the area of social action, and in getting the individual congregations involved in social action.

The yearbooks of 1950 and 1951-52 clearly indicate that what once had some glimmer of life, was now almost completely moribund.

The Joint Commission on Social Action this past year has not been particularly active, owing to the fact that it has been operating under the limited appropriations of the CCAR and the UAHC. Much of its efforts have been transferred to the Justice and Peace Commission.¹³

This is another way of saying that the Commission is defunct and the Conference itself will take over speaking on social issues. Although the Conference tried to deal with the social problems as they had in the past, through the making of resolutions and statements, many members began to realize that their statements were merely buried in yearbooks.

By 1952 the CCAR was aware that more than mere resolutions were needed to accompany a desire for social change. The individual members of the CCAR began writing texts, invited guest speakers to their pulpits, showed an increased need for Jewish groups to be involved with national groups who had similar concerns for social action.

This increased awareness on the part of the individual members of the CCAR led to a renewed attempt to make the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism a meaningful, important part of American Jewish life. The defunct commission was restored in 1953 with a new director, Rabbi Eugene Lipman.

Chapter 3

THE INTERNAL PERIOD

With reestablishing of the Commission on Social Action in 1953 a new era in the movement began. We might characterize 1953-1959 as the internal period for social action in Reform Judaism. The Reform movement, through its instrument the CSA, began a period whereby there began to develop a program of social action for congregations affiliated with the UAHC. The years from 1953-1959 set the stage whereon the whole question of priorities of social action took place. The movement became aware that there was more to social action than pronouncements on social issues. The individual congregations set up committees within the framework of the congregation for the purpose of promoting social action.

During these years the Jewish community became very much involved emotionally with the plight of the Negro in the South, and many began to feel that there was some connection between the words of the prophets, and social legislation. All of these changes took place during the years 1953-1959, the internal period of growth for the social action movement of Reform Judaism.

Since the CSA was to be a joint instrumentality of the Union and the CCAR, it would theoretically represent the feelings of both organizations. According to the charter of the Commission, the CSA could act upon only those resolutions which had been passed by both the CCAR and the UAHC. Thus, with the reestablishment of the CSA, there was a single organ for social action in the movement, which would indicate what direction Reform Judaism would take in the area of social action.

With the reorganization of the CSA, a list of priorities had to be defined so that the movement would, for the first time, have some real direction.

The CSA set as its first priority the organization of individual social action committees on the congregational level. This they hoped would

be accomplished by the issuing of an organization manual for synagogue social action, along with periodic suggestions for action on specific problems with which the social action committee might want to become involved. The second part of the development was to be a study of various Christian denominations and their social action program.

By June, 1953, the Commission reported that it was in the process of codifying all social action resolutions passed since the UAHC had been founded. This would enable the Commission to work in areas that were already approved of by the UAHC Biennial resolutions. The CSA also made it known that it would feel free to issue statements on issues of the day if those statements were in keeping with past resolutions. Communication between the CSA and individual congregations was improving since the Commission had begun the preparation of a periodic information bulletin, Social Action in Review.

In October, 1953, Al Vorspan joined the staff of the Commission as a full time employee who would serve the function of the Executive Secretary of the CSA. Thus, for the first time in the history of the CSA, the movement seemed to be headed in a direction from which there would be no turning back.

At the October, 1953 meeting of the CSA there was much discussion on the way in which the CSA could best do two things; first, they were interested in keeping good communication with the congregations, and second, they were vitally interested in giving program ideas to those congregations that already had established committees of social action. It was decided that the CSA would issue study-guides which could be mass-distributed, with special emphasis placed on action for the temple social action committee. This was to be the major link with the congregations, and it showed that the CSA was interested in something other than what Reform Jewish organizations had felt important in years past. The CSA was more interested, in creating an atmosphere on a local level conducive to social action than it was in declaring, in ~~given issue~~ on a national level the official position of the CSA on a

November, 1953, witnessed the first issue of Social Action in Review. First indications of the paper were that it was a review sheet of what the Christian social action groups were doing in the area of social problems. The bulletin, in its first four or five issues, was preoccupied with the gentile groups. Small news briefs appeared about what various Protestant or Catholic positions were on issues ranging from church-state separation to civil liberties and Communism. What is noticeable is that there was a total absence of news from either the CCAR, the UAHC or any individual congregation. This may be attributed to a number of factors:

1. The leaders of the Social Action Movement may have realized that many of the constituents were vitally concerned with what similar Christian groups were doing in the area of social action. By saturating the paper with news of Christian social action, there would be a positive effect on Reform congregations.
2. The CSA was just in its infancy since reorganization. Its main concern was strengthening the social action program in individual congregations. It may have been too soon to evaluate the results of the CSA in concrete terms. There may not have been congregations that were able to function sufficiently well in social action to justify a description of social action activities.

By June, 1954, Social Action in Review indicated that the CSA was having some impact on the movement. There appeared to be an increasing interest and concern for social action evidenced by a number of conferences and conclaves. One such conference had a panel on the subject of the "Social Action Program of Reform Judaism" which emphasized the need for social action committees in individual congregations. This conference was sponsored by the New York State Federation of Temple Sisterhoods.¹

The impact was also felt by the CSA itself at its meeting on June 28, 1954. It was reported that, in a little more than a year, there were more than 30 congregation-wide social action committees. Although all feedback on the commission was not positive, some of the negative comments contributed to an awareness that the CSA did function actively in various areas of social concern. One such negative comment appeared in the UAHC publication American Judaism there, Rabbi Ephraim Rosensweig urged the commission to have the

"courage and compassion to introduce a resolution that will put American Reform Judaism on record against the H-Bomb." ² At issue here was not the H-Bomb, but the reliance on the CSA for maintaining a certain ethical standard for American Reform Jews. Involved too is the fact that this type of article, together with some replies, could, for the first time, be printed in a forum. This was a great step forward for the CSA for now it could present issues such as the controversial issue of Nuclear warfare to its constituent congregations.

This idea of presenting issues for the education of individual congregations and congregants was a very important problem for the CSA. The members were vitally concerned that these social concerns be presented in the congregations. They were vitally concerned with the types of educational tools available for individual congregations. The CSA endorsed a number of efforts on the behalf of this educational process. They issued pamphlets, commissioned a number of books for religious school and adult education, published the periodical Social Action in Review, produced a number of filmstrips, and even tried their hand at the production of a movie. All of these efforts supplied ideas for discussion within congregations. The Action which the CSA was striving for at this stage was of organization and education.

While the process of organization was slow, the Union and the Conference were still in a position to make their moral voice heard. The Union especially became involved in the whole matter of Civil Rights. While there were many other areas in which the Union, the CSA and the CCAR were engaged, the interest in Civil Rights in the 1950's and 1960's was most noticeable.

The choice of Civil Rights as a major area in which the CSA would

function came at the Executive Board meeting of the UAHC in November, 1954. The Union had issued a statement supporting the United States Supreme Court decision on Segregation.

The Executive Board characterized the decision as a major chapter in the history of the growth of true equality under the law, and it urged congregations in all sections of the country to join with forward looking racial, religious and civic groups in the community in using their influence to secure acceptance and implementation of desegregation in every community in our land.³

Important here is the fact that the Union and later the CSA embarked on a journey in social action which would have great impact upon those Negroes effected by segregation. Perhaps more impact was felt in Civil Rights than any other program of the social action movement.

While the Union was laying the ground work for the CSA, many of the affiliated Union organizations made their views known, for representation in the CSA. The National Federation of Temple Youth, National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods and the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods all asked for and received representation on the joint Commission of Social Action.

Once the CSA had completed its groundwork for the laying of a secure foundation to the movement, they began to project plans for future implementation. Among their priorities were: the exploration with Protestant and Catholic groups of the possibility of a "National Commission on Social Action" of the combined religious groups; preparation for the congregations of a study guide on the implications of the U. S. Supreme Court decisions on segregation cases; and preparation of a study guide on the major issues involved in American foreign policy.⁴

By January, 1955, Social Action in Review began to carry news briefs

on some social action projects conducted by the 'local synagogues' social action committees. One congregation gave the impetus for the establishment of a Jewish Community Council as its expression of concern with social action. Another congregation held a social action workshop under the auspices of its sisterhood, for more than 200 women. Still another congregation held a conference with local Protestant and Catholic leadership, looking toward joint action on issues of mutual concern.⁵ Important to note is the fact that each of these briefs was read by many individuals in other communities. Moreover local congregations were given a sense of security, by reading that other congregations were participating in social action.

We see that some congregations, and many individuals were interested in the area of social action. But as interest grew the dichotomy between those who were interested and those who were not grew wider and deeper. The debate over the synagogue's being active in social concerns, began in the mid-1950's. We learn from some of the respondents to an American Judaism Forum: "Does the Synagogue have a Role in Social Action." The arguments are clear and they speak for themselves.

No condition which involves the application of justice brotherhood, or love should be beyond the preview of congregational action....I conclude therefore that congregations not only have a right, but a duty to form committees on Social Action.⁶

In our country, religious groups have been aggressive in social action. Protestant and Catholic bodies frequently issue pronouncements on the issues of the day....we Jewish laymen were far behind our Christian brethren when at the last Union Biennial we resolved to found a Social Action Commission because: "The worship of God must be transmitted into the work of God."⁷

The negative side of the debate claimed that the religious groups have a legitimate right to be concerned with social problems, but social action

was too elastic a term that could involve too many areas of interest.

Many made the distinction between a rabbi's right to speak and a congregation's advisability to take collective action as a Jewish religious organization.

I cannot escape the feeling that whatever immediate problems plague synagogues, they will not be solved by converting their assemblies into forums for discussion and polemics on matters which are, at best, only collateral to the essential function of our religion, the worship of God in the beauty of holiness.⁸

If we will be Jews, we will be Jews in our every action, and find religious meaning in every cause. But this universal relevance of Judaism does not mean that the synagogue ought, as a corporate body to make pronouncements on social and political issues, nor that the synagogue or its members should act as a group, a segmented body in affairs which are primarily secular and American, not merely Jewish in scope.

America is no theocratic state, and the synagogue is no political action committee. The Jewish ethic is clear and certain, but righteousness is personal and Judaism is not a set of economic or legal or political pre-concepts which tell us how in the particular environment of modern America we are to realize eternal precepts.⁹

The Union may have tried to conceal some of the dissatisfaction in the movement over social action. Each issue of American Judaism carried at least a page of "Letters to the Editor" which had been encouraged by the publishers. From the time that this forum appeared, at least a year elapsed before a page of "Letters to the Editor" was again included in American Judaism. This of course is not a sin of commission but rather one of omission. One can surmise that there were letters sent to the UAHC and the editors of American Judaism concerning the debate on social action. It was a current and controversial issue. I am led to the conclusion that there were many who were against the synagogues' involvement in the areas of political and social problems.

The debate over social action was also taken to the floor of the Union Biennial in March, 1955. There, the delegates approved three major declarations which were presented by the CSA: One on individual liberty, one on achieving a just peace, and one on desegregation. The Biennial also approved a recommendation that efforts be intensified to make social action effective in more congregations. There were now 100 or more social action committees or study groups registered with the CSA.¹⁰

Perhaps the brightest light for the CSA was the involvement both in spirit and action of the National Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY). During the summer of 1955 the NFTY groups that met in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, and in Saratoga, California, devoted themselves to social action. The NFTY Board authorized a special committee on social justice to intensify NFTY participation in social action projects. This growing spark was later to prove to be one of the brightest flames in the whole social action movement. Those who left the summer programs, and later who left NFTY to establish themselves as men and women in various congregations in Reform Judaism, took with them a passion for social action which helped to promote involvement in social action by Reform synagogues.

By June, 1955 the Commission was in contact with 125 Social Action groups many of which were in need of materials and guidance. The CSA did prepare a study guide on segregation, but Vorspan expressed concern over the lack of congregational response on that study guide. Also of concern to the Commission was the growing tension between congregations in the north and those in the south. The Commission decided that a task force from the CSA ought to visit congregations in the south which were very much opposed to the goals of the social action program. This they hoped would serve to unify the congregations in the south with those in the north. In most

instances it was felt that the congregations which were opposed, based their decision on the misconception that the fight for Civil Rights was synonymous with social action. In other words, many southern congregations felt that to be involved in social action meant necessarily to be involved in Civil Rights.

The tension within the movement on this issue was evidenced by the refusal of the Southeast region of the Union to reaffirm the UAHC position supporting desegregation. While the southern congregations took their stand against formal affirmation of desegregation, individual synagogues in the north began to issue statements in support of Civil Rights. The Stephen Wise Free Synagogue of New York, issued a statement in support of President Eisenhower's Civil Rights program. Temple Sinai in Washington appealed to members in its own congregations for financial support for the citizens of Montgomery, Alabama, who were struggling to achieve equal rights in public accommodations.
11

Even congregations in the so-called border states became involved in this North-South struggle. At a special meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Council of the UAHC, representatives of the various congregations reaffirmed the Union's position on desegregation.
12

Although one would condemn the southern congregations for their lack of participation in social action, it is not hard to realize the problems they faced. Rabbis Charles Mantonband, Jacob Rothschild, and Perry Nussbaum were all serving in the South during the Civil Rights struggle, and they informed the members of the CCAR how absolutely panic-stricken the southern Jewish community was becoming.

If the white Christians are fearful, the Jew is panic-stricken. He sees himself as another minority, the next potential victim of mass hysteria. Such an attitude is not true of all Jews of course....but it is accurate enough.¹³

Another reason for the southern Reform Jewish communities to be displeased was due to the CSA not being altogether honest in its attempt at helping the local congregations' social action committee. An example of this disregard for the local communities and their problems was evident at the Commission meeting, June 29, 1956. At that time, Rabbi Lipman reported that many American organizations were organizing a relief program for the victims of segregation in the South. Lipman, the immediate past director of the Commission, suggested that the CSA take the initiative at convening a conference of all Jewish organizations to consider joint activities in the area of relief.¹⁴ For many, this indicated that the CSA was working outside of its mandate to help develop education materials and program ideas for the local congregations. However well-meaning the proposal may have been, it indirectly involved those southern communities which had already indicated that they were opposed to the CSA working in the area of Civil Rights, at the local or national level.

An interesting sidelight to this matter of taking a leadership role, in aiding segregation victims, is the comment made by Rabbi Brickner. Brickner cautioned the CSA against Jewish leadership in such a program and emphasized that the cause of desegregation would better be served if Christian groups took the initiative to play the leadership role.¹⁵ Again we see that the CSA was more concerned with national issues than it was with helping local congregations implement social action. When the CSA should have been responsive to its southern congregations, it only seemed to antagonize?

This whole question of raising funds for those who were victims of the southern oppression came up again at the Commission meeting in October, 1956. At that time there were at least 25 more local social action groups that the Commission was dealing with, bringing the number to around 150. It was suggested that there would be strong reactions against the CSA being the agent to set up a relief fund in the south. Rabbi Roland Gittelsohn contended that anything other than a gift to the Red Cross would be resented.

But if the only choice is between defaulting in our responsibility to Judaism or irritating some of our people we have to take the latter risk. In good conscience there are certain actions we must take, not because we want to hurt southern Jews, but because we must be faithful to our own principles.¹⁶

Rabbi Gittelsohn's intent was clear with respect to Jewish values. He indicated that we, supposedly speaking for the CSA North as well as the South, have to be true to our principles. In reality he excluded the southern congregations on this issue in which they were very much involved.

At the UAHC Biennial in May, 1957, Gittelsohn defended his position, and the position which the Commission had finally adopted.

Some of my friends in the south have pleaded in my presence that pronouncements on desegregation by bodies like our Union will expose them to anguish and pain. I do not and cannot take their protestations lightly. I would not willfully and unnecessarily bring pain upon any human being. But I know that no battle has ever been won, no major social change has every been accomplished without casualties.

Jews who live in the South find themselves in the front lines in this war for human dignity. The only thing which gives me the moral right to speak to them as I do now is the fact that I have myself been in the front lines of war. I did not choose to be there. I do not pretend for an instant that I would have had courage enough to volunteer for such duty. But once it was thrust upon me I had to accept, whatever the possible cost to me or those I love.

I presume to believe that exactly such is the situation of those Christians and Jews living in the South who know that desegregation is morally right. They, too, are in the front

lines through no choice or fault of their own. It is too late to shift the scene of battle; the war already rages. Their only choice is to do what they know is right or surrender and then try to live with themselves. I do not envy their dilemma. I have profound pity for their pain. I pray that God may give them the strength to do what they must and the privilege to see the fruits of their triumph.¹⁷

The position taken by the CSA was the correct one for most congregations. Therefore the CSA began a program to teach southern congregations that social action was not merely to be equated with Civil Rights, desegregation, and racism. While these were some of the issues of social action, it was hoped that the CSA would help the southern congregations find other outlets.

The success of the CSA could really be gauged only on the quality and quantity of the programs of the social action committees on the local level. If the programs outlined in the news briefs of Social Action in Review, were any indication of the success of the CSA, then we must say that the experiment of a Commission on Social Action was a success. We learn that some congregations were holding retreats with social action as the topic for discussion. Other groups sponsored Race Relations Sabbath seminars. Still others were concerned with the issue of prayer in public schools. In at least one instance a survey of attitudes and practices regarding religion in the schools was conducted by a social action committee. In still another synagogue, the social action committee together with the community's mayor, evaluated the need for improved community facilities for¹⁸ mental health.

In one case, the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue social action committee suggested program ideas to the CSA. The committee asked the CSA to develop a study-guide on the moral implications in the problem of Arab Refugees.

Within a year, the CSA began to work on an "Issues of Conscience" pamphlet,
¹⁹

As the Driven Sands. Thus we find that not only is the CSA having influence on the local social action groups, but those groups are having an effect on the CSA as they become more in tune with the areas of social concern.

By June, 1957 there were more than 200 local social action committees. This outstanding growth in the number of local groups which took up the banner for social action, spoke well of the efforts of the CSA. Jacob Weinstein, Rabbi of K.A.M. Temple in Chicago, called social action a new frontier in American Jewry. He praised the work of the Commission and the local groups and he said:

The work of the Commission and of the local committees in each temple and synagogue, not only promises to add a very constructive force to the progressive ranks of American liberalism, but can become the true guardian against the use of ritualism as an escapists cloak.²⁰

One specific outgrowth of the CSA action campaign, was the support of Koinonia. Koinonia, a farm in central Tennessee, was an experiment in biracial living. The people of Koinonia believed that they could live and work together, as friends and neighbors, whether they were black or white. Their chief enterprise was the growing and selling of pecans to whoever would buy the product. The CSA and especially NFTY adopted Koinonia as a special project. During the summer of 1957 whenever and wherever NFTY groups met, money was raised for Koinonia. The CSA authorized its staff to "use every means of promotion we have in Reform Judaism to urge support of Koinonia through the purchase of their products, and that we distribute whatever information we can to urge men who use such products in their business
²¹
 to use Koinonia's if possible."

By January, 1958, the CSA was already well-known and well respected. The idea of social action was taking hold on the American Reform community. Even the problem of Civil Rights for Negroes did not shock the American Reform movement. American Judaism carried articles, almost monthly, on segregation and other problems which faced the American Negro. The Reform community seemed to be reacting favorably to social action. By the end of 1958 there are 250 groups, devoted to social action. This was a large increase over the 30 groups which existed in 1954.

As the work of the Commission became more successful, the kinds of issues with which the CSA dealt became more involved with the sources of problems. This meant a shift in focus from dealing with practical suggestions at implementing social action, to groping with theoretical national solutions. These national activities played an increasingly more important role for the CSA. On the issue of Civil Rights, the following resolution was introduced by the CSA in November, 1958.

We urge all congregations within our Union to withhold the use of facilities in circumvention of judgments and orders of the Supreme Court and other federal courts, and to refrain from any course of conduct which could support instrumentalities of any state or private organizations seeking to frustrate the enforcement of such judgements and orders.²²

While this is only an example, it indicates the position of the CSA, and the fact that it is becoming increasingly involved in issues on a national level.

By June, 1959, we learn from the CCAR Yearbook that there were 275 local social action committees, "making social action a household term and a routine aspect of congregational life."²³ This report also indicated that congregations from all over the country were involved in social action. These synagogues sought advice from the CSA on ways in which to implement

their programs. Below, is a sample of activities of the CSA, from a ten day period picked at random:

To advise on a situation in a nearby community where high school youngsters had organized a Nazi Club with a Furrher, literature and arms;

To alert our congregations in California, New Jersey, Washington and Minnesota on the dangers of certain humane slaughtering bills in their states;

To meet with representatives of the Larchmont Temple about their new "Religion in Everyday Life" program.

To council a congregation in Long Island on a Lord's Prayer crisis in the schools;

To help the Chicago Region of the Union prepare testimony on housing for the U. S. Civil Rights Commission;

To assist a struggling interracial Christian Settlement near Poughkeepsie;

To help Rabbi Eisendrath prepare testimony on behalf of the Synagogue Council of America on foreign aid;

To advise a congregation in Sacramento, California, on what to do, if anything, about a controversial Crucifixion story which appeared in their daily newspaper;

To get materials and contracts for Commissioner Irving Fain's fair-housing fight in Rhode Island;

To help a congregation in Boston plan a seminar on business ethics;

To help a congregation in New York City set up an inter-synagogue social action institute;

To develop, via correspondence, a social action program in Portland, Oregon;

To meet with New Jersey youth advisers to plan a social action session at a Union Camp;

To address a Harvard conference on business ethics;

To meet with a new social action committee in Cleveland;

To address three congregations on social action in Reform Judaism.²⁴

Interesting to note, is the emphasis placed on preparing testimony, and influencing legislation which occupies the time of the CSA. The CSA, although still giving aid to local congregations, now seems to have expanded its program to include new issues and techniques.

As the "internal period" of social action draws to a close, we see the CSA stepping into what many called political action. This period of relative success for the CSA is followed by two years of bitterness over social action. This bitterness began outwardly with the UAHC Biennial convention in November, 1959.

Chapter 4

THE GREAT DEBATE

During the early 1950's while the CSA was growing in stature and helping the local congregations establish their social action committees, the clouds were beginning to gather for a debate over the whole question of our involvement in the area of social action. Until 1956 small pockets of resistance existed, but none really articulated their disapproval of the direction in which the CSA was moving.

In September, 1956, in American Judaism, a symposium on "Do Temples belong in Politics: A symposium" appeared. While the debate that was to rage in 1959-1961 ostensibly centered around the establishment of the Religious Action Center, the real issues were already being developed in this 1956 debate. One central issue, which we shall confront over and over again, is whether or not Reform Judaism has anything to say on the social issues of our time. A second issue is whether the central body of organized Reform Judaism in America has a right to set forth those principles. In the symposium Rabbi Norman Gerstenfeld stated his opposition to UAHC participation in Social Action in words that he used again in the 1959-1961 debate.

In political matters the rabbi speaks to but never for his congregation. The board of the congregation and the majority of the members dare not speak for the congregation in this field, nor have they the right to join a local or national organization whose delegates speak for the congregation.... When a man joins a congregation he does not delegate to anyone the right to speak for him.¹

Rabbi Albert Plotkin defended the right of the Union's involvement in the area of social action:

....the price of liberty is the eternal vigilance of those whose firm conviction it is to defend human liberties. Our duty is to enlarge our participation in civic matters through

positive action.... Our failure lies in that frequently after the pulpit sounds the ethical note, there is no follow-up by the congregation. Temple social action committees will help fill this void.²

Thus the symposium here reflected what it was that would be at issue in the years ahead.

At Miami Beach in November, 1959, the Biennial Assembly of the UAHC passed a resolution which gave the officers of the Union the right to establish a center for Social Action in Washington, D.C. This Religious Action Center (RAC) was to be purchased through a donation given the Union by Mr. and Mrs. Kivie Kaplan of Boston. The establishment of such a center was a natural outgrowth of the work of the CSA, but many individuals and congregations felt strongly that such a center should not be in Washington. As a result a debate took place for nearly two years which put into focus the work of the CSA and the stands taken by individual leaders of the UAHC with respect to social issues.

Although the Biennial took place in November, 1959, one must look to June, 1959 in order to gain perspective on the whole issue of the RAC. If one assumes that the donation of a \$100,000 gift is one that is not made in haste, then it would follow that this gift had been made or at least conceived many months before the November Biennial. In Social Action in Review issued in late June, 1959, there was much talk of the upcoming Biennial which was to deal with social action. The editors were careful, however, not to mention, even in passing, that there would be a discussion of a proposed RAC. This omission seems a bit strange because one would think that the Union would do its best to keep its member congregations informed of such developments in the realm of social action. One might speculate and say that the Kaplans had not yet given their gift to the CSA.

This is possible, but indeed not probable.

In the following issue of Social Action in Review, for October and November, 1959, specific plans were revealed for the Biennial. Here again social action is mentioned as the major emphasis with workshops on race relations, interreligious affairs, business ethics, the relationship between American Jewry and Israel, world peace, and the synagogue social action committee. Nowhere in the issue was there a mention of the possibility of a debate over the establishment of a social action center in Washington. However, we do know that by late October, 1959, Kaplan's gift had already been offered to the CSA.

In a letter to Congressman Abraham Multer dated October 23, 1959, Rabbi Eugene Lipman, the director of the CSA states:

I want to tell you about a major project on which I am now at work and which hopefully will come to fruition in the next year or so. It is a most confidential matter at the moment. I do not know when Maurice (Eisendrath) will want to bring it to either our Commission or to the UAHC Board.

We have a pledge of \$100,000 from Kivie Kaplan and his wife for the purchase of a building in Washington which will have several functions but will serve primarily as a social action center....

I have been working with a realtor or two in Washington looking at buildings.³

Important to note here for reference later on, is the fact that the money for the Center must have been pledged well in advance even of Lipman's letter, because he had already made specific contacts in Washington for the purchase of the building. This means that at least one month before the Biennial, and probably two or even three months before the Biennial, the UAHC leadership knew that the money was available. This fact will be important later because one of the claims of the Union was that they did not

have sufficient time to inform the member congregations of the UAHC about Mr. Kaplan's offer prior to the Biennial.

At the Biennial itself in November, 1959, Maurice Eisendrath announced the gift of the Kaplans' and asked the Biennial to accept it. On the floor of the assembly a heated argument raged with those opposed to the center asking that the decision to accept the gift be deferred for a number of reasons. First, it was felt by many people present that a sufficient number of people had left the assembly hall, and a decision of this type needed the largest possible representation. A second reason offered against the establishment of the Center was the fact that there were many Jewish organizations already in Washington. Those who opposed the center felt that one Jewish voice in Washington was sufficient, and there was no need for a specific "religious" Jewish viewpoint. A third reason in opposition to the center, was a fear that the Union leadership would use this office for its own pronouncements on social issues.

Those in favor of the RAC pointed to the fact that our legislative bodies often looked to the Reform wing of American Judaism for guidance and suggestions on major legislative issues. When this occurs, the Reform movement needs to be present. Those who were interested in our relationship with other religious bodies pointed to the fact that most religious groups were represented in Washington. Congressmen themselves favored the RAC, as Abraham Multer's comment reveals:

....We need this institution for information. We need it for propaganda. We need it for lobbying -- not the invidious kind of lobbying that most people refer to, but the kind of lobbying that honest legislators want and seek, the lobbying that means guidance, the lobbying that means giving them the information the people back home want them to have.⁴

The one last point made during this short debate, was that if a motion to table or defer the acceptance of this gift passed, the Kaplans' gift would have to be returned. This added bit of pressure from the Chairman of the Biennial, Earl Morse, turned the balance. The resolution to accept the gift from the Kaplans passed the Biennial. This closed only the first chapter in the fight for the social action office in Washington.

Social Action In Review, for December-January 1959-1960 announced that the UAHC was to open a Washington arm of the CSA. The purpose for the RAC according to the article was:

To express the voice of Reform Judaism on major legislative issues as mandated by the Union's Biennial Assemblies.⁵

This statement, is very different from those made at the Biennial. It would seem that the Union would have its member congregations believe that the work of the RAC would be as spokesman for the Reform Jewish establishment of this country. If this is a correct analysis, the UAHC leadership had deceived its constituency at the 1959 Biennial and those who opposed the establishment of the RAC could well take issue with the UAHC.

During the months following the November Biennial, the storm clouds did begin to form, but if one were judging the opposition to the RAC by what he read in the Social Action in Review he would think that the movement had healed the bitterness that was displayed over the center at the Biennial. There was no indication given in Social Action in Review that there is the least bit of dissension among Reform leaders. The only reports we get are those of the successful social action programs of individual congregations.

The debate began to gain momentum in May, 1960, when J. E. Bindeman, President of the Washington Hebrew Congregation, sent a letter and a resolution from his congregation to Rabbi Eisendrath. In this letter Bindeman

indicated that since the Biennial his congregation had studied the proposal to establish the RAC and they resolved that any action outside of study would force the Washington Hebrew Congregation to be violently opposed to the Center's establishment. The resolution of the Washington Hebrew Congregation which was passed on March 21, 1960 maintained these points:

1. Congregations are voluntary membership organizations which people join for religious purposes. An essential part of their religious purpose is the duty to teach morality and ethics.
2. Freedom of the pulpit is maintained, and the rabbi has the complete autonomy to give his spiritual message and moral judgments.
3. The pulpit speaks to the members but never for the members of a congregation.
4. By joining a congregation, a person does not authorize anyone to speak or act for him on social or political issues.
5. Pressure for legislative decisions should properly not be in the name of any sectarian group, but through non-sectarian agencies. If there is a separate Jewish aspect of any social problem then it can best be expressed through existing non-congregational Jewish action bodies which the individual may join.

Since the UAHC claims that it has the right to purchase and maintain a Social Action Center that "will express the voice of Reform Judaism on major legislative matters as mandated by the UAHC assemblies" and since such a Center would assume the right of the UAHC to speak for the pulpits, congregations, and members of Reform Judaism on social and political matters: We the Board of Managers of the Washington Hebrew Congregation, do hereby resolve as follows:

1. We oppose social action by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations that will go beyond study.
2. We deny that the UAHC has the right to be the spokesman of its pulpits, congregations and members.
3. We object to the establishment of the proposed Social Action Center which would speak for Reform Judaism on major legislative matters.
4. We request (a) that the Board of Trustees of the UAHC give full

and immediate consideration to the basic issues outlined above; (b) that the General Assembly be given the opportunity after full debate on the issues to reconsider its decision to establish a Social Action Center in Washington; and (c) that pending the above all further action establishing such a Center be deferred.⁶

Attached to the resolution was a statement of explanation. Interesting to note in both the resolution and in the explanation is the fact that what is thought to be the reason for the controversy, namely the establishment of the Center, is only a minor issue. What seems to be major is the politics involved between the Washington Hebrew Congregation, and the UAHC. That is to say, what appears to be at question here is who does speak for Reform Jews.

While the opposition to the Center was trying to gain force and strength, the UAHC failed to acknowledge publicly that there was opposition which had submitted a resolution. In the June-July issue of Social Action in Review still no mention was made of the growing tension over the RAC. Not only have the editors played down the issue editorially, but they did not even print the "Letters to the Editor" column for the past few issues. One would think that an issue like the RAC would have drawn many letters both in support and in opposition. Without having the facts to substantiate this claim it is difficult to make any conclusions, but one would suspect that the UAHC was in the process of keeping the whole matter very tightly under cover until a clear pattern of opposition would develop.

By November, 1960 many congregations had voiced their opinions to the Union. In most instances these letters asked for clarification

on the exact program that the CSA planned to follow in the new RAC. Again the Union was reluctant to address itself to the whole question of the RAC. Irving Fain, Chairman of the CSA, wrote to Al Vorspan, the Commission's director, with regard to answering some questions posed by a congregation asking for a precise program outline for the RAC.

I am skeptical whether we should take this initiative to write a letter in which we would go on record, on paper, as to exactly what we would eventually do in the Washington Center in the near future, or in the distant future.⁷

While the opposition to the Center grew during the year or so after the 1959 Biennial, the Union leadership felt the responsibility to go ahead with its plans to implement the Kaplan's generous gift. In a letter to Jerome Friedman, President, Chicago Sinai Congregation, Judge Emil Baar, Chairman, Board of Trustees of the UAHC, indicated that the CSA would look for a suitable building for the Center because the Biennial had passed the resolution.

While the Union leadership was very confident that the resolution to establish this RAC had been passed by an overwhelming majority, it nonetheless began to change its position under the steady onslaught of opposition to the RAC. A clear policy change is thus seen in the letter from Baar to Friedman.

....whether or not we purchase a building in Washington before November, 1961, I can assure you that the subject of the Emily and Kivie Kaplan Social Action Center will be on the agenda of the forthcoming General Assembly.⁸

The Union would allow the whole matter to be brought up again so that unity might be achieved within the Union membership.

The Union still maintained its policy of not publishing or publicizing any of the controversy in its Social Action in Review. By January 19, 1961, Judge Baar however, did communicate by mail with all of the congregational

presidents. For the first time he outlined the proposed program of the RAC as it had been delineated up until that point. He claimed that the RAC would function, as the CSA had done within the mandates passed by the general assemblies of the Union and/or the CCAR. Its program was to be in two categories.

1. It would be a service arm of the UAHC by supplying materials that are best researched in Washington, which would suggest programs of education and action for the local congregations.
2. It would represent and express the viewpoint of the national institutions of Reform Judaism sometimes in concert with other religious bodies, Jewish and Christian.⁹

While these are the two main areas of program responsibility that the Union saw for the RAC, there were several other program areas in which the RAC would function to supplement, its primary responsibility.

1. The RAC would house a library on Judaism and social action for study by government personnel and other interested persons.
2. It would provide pertinent Jewish religious information to requesting agencies and individuals within government and non-government spheres. This material would be on Jewish ethical principles as well as data about the position of Reform Judaism and other Jewish groups on specific questions.
3. The RAC would help set up institutes and seminars.

While the Union offered a concrete program for the RAC, the controversy was being furthered by Alfred Bachrach of Temple Emanu-El of New York and David Bress of Washington Hebrew Congregation. On February 7, 1961 they sent a letter to every congregational president calling for a special meeting to help block the Union's attempt at implementing the RAC. They wanted support in their bid to get the Union to defer the establishment of the RAC. Their letter claimed:

The Board of the UAHC has refused to change or even delay its decision. We are now left with no alternative but to state our case to the lay leaders of the temples of the country and to ask each of you to take a stand with us.¹⁰

Once this letter was mailed to the congregations, the Union was to have a better idea of where it stood in the controversy. The fight here however is not over the RAC or social action, but rather over the way in which something could or could not be carried out by the UAHC. Unfortunately the controversy was over the procedures under which the Union operated.

By mid to late February the Ad Hoc Committee which Bachrach represented was beginning to get responses to its plea for support. Some of the respondents were of course anxious to support the committee because in many instances the congregation had its own "axe to grind" with the Union. Other congregations on the other hand were loyal supporters of the UAHC policy, and they urged the Union not to delay in making the RAC a reality.

One such letter which supported the Union came surprisingly enough, from a congregation in Charlotte, North Carolina.

I do not fear unwise actions by my fellow Jews before they are committed. I can not believe that our own people would suddenly get a lust for power and begin a series of embarrassing actions.

However I do fear an ineffectual voice when there is a need for action to meet real problems.

In short, Unity is not surrender.¹¹

Another letter from a southern congregation indicated that they believed Judaism to imply actions and feelings in the modern age.

Our understanding of Judaism, moreover, seems to be at variance with the statement. (The Washington Hebrew Congregation Resolution) From our own study we find that if Judaism is anything at all, it is a religion of action, a translation into daily deeds and attitudes of all the high ideals and principles enunciated so gloriously by our prophets. While there has rarely been uniformity of opinion as to exactly how these goals are to be obtained, neither has there been any concerted effort to stifle the voices that proclaimed these truths as a stimulus to human effort. We find almost incomprehensible, therefore, the statement, for instance, to the effect that, "on social, political, and economic issues there is not, and must not be a Reform Jewish viewpoint, or even a Jewish viewpoint." Our understanding of our great heritage leads us to exactly the opposite conclusion.¹²

While this statement indicated a social awareness, and even support for the Social Action Center in Washington, this congregation indicates further that it was not pleased with the way in which the Union leadership had rammed business through the general assembly.

In no way should our position be misunderstood as one of opposition to the Social Action Center. We believe firmly in the principle of Social Action, And in the right of the Union to establish such a center which will help all of our member congregations to understand the demands of Judaism in vital areas of life.

It is precisely because we favor the establishment of this center, and because there seems to be such deep misunderstanding of the function of the center, that we join with you in requesting the short delay until all objections can be thoroughly aired, and until the function of the Center can be adequately explained to our constituents.¹³

Thus here is a congregation that supported the establishment of the Center, but had joined the forces that opposed the Center because it was opposed to the procedures employed by the UAHC.

By February 16, 1961, the debate was beginning to take on a particular form. The Union had much more support than did the opposition. The Union had regional directors who would act as spokesman for the Union position, and the support of the CCAR and most of the influential laymen of the movement. On February 16, 1961, Maurice Eisendrath wrote to Rabbi Mann of Chicago Sinai Congregation. In this letter he indicated that there was too much support around the country for the Union not to move forward on its mandate from the 1959 Biennial.

....thirty-three congregations in the New England Region had urged upon our administration the speedy implementation of the Miami resolution. Since that time, I might add parenthetically, the Pacific Southwest Council consisting of some forty-five congregations and the Southwest Council consisting of sixty-one congregations have taken similar action.¹⁴

Thus the Union had a good deal of support for its position.

The support of the Regional directors might best be illustrated by the following excerpt from a letter to Maurice Eisendrath from Richard Hirsch, then the director of the Chicago Federation of the UAHC.

We had a full discussion of the matter at the Chicago Association of Reform Rabbis meeting on Wednesday, February 15, and I indicated to the rabbis that they should use their own judgement. In cases where the president felt that he could answer the letter without bringing it to the attention of the board, he should do so. If the president felt confident that the board would give favorable response to the Union position he should take a vote of the board. If the president deemed it advisable, he should convene a meeting of the delegates who attended the Biennial to corroborate the facts of the matter. If the president or the board was negative about the matter, the Emanu-El letter should be ignored.¹⁵

Although this approach is not what one would call democratic, it was effective, because very few of the Chicago area congregations responded to the letter from Bachrach and Bress.

The heart of the debate was seen by a number of congregations which responded to the Bachrach - Bress letter. Many saw this debate, not as one of social action, or even of the establishment of the RAC, but one which involved the personalities of the men involved in the leadership positions on both sides. One such letter to Alfred Bachrach from Calman Levich reflects this position.

We respect the motives and fears of those who oppose a social action center, yet we pray that you find it in your hearts to limit future discussion of this issue to the principles rather than the principals.¹⁶

While the debate over the RAC continued the Union went ahead with its plans to establish the RAC in Washington. In early 1961 the Union found a building that was suitable to house the Center. Plans for the function of the RAC were in the process of being drawn up: and the Union began making plans for the fight that would take place in Washington at the 1961 Biennial.

It would seem that the Union, although it had committed itself to a review of the RAC resolution at the 1961 Biennial was establishing the Center as though there was no opposition. In the process of establishing the Center the UAHC was also making alliances with other religious groups which had similar offices for social action in Washington as the following will indicate:

I believe you will be pleased to see the attached announcement of the establishment of a religious action center in Washington, D.C. to serve as an arm of the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism.

It is our hope that the Center, working closely with Protestant and Catholic bodies, will strengthen the ideals of religion in their application to the great moral issues of our time.¹⁷

By March 23, 1961, the Union leadership could see that they were far ahead on the debate. A tally of mail received revealed the following:

1. Definitely affirming Union Stand	145
2. Definitely opposing Union Stand	20
3. Requests to postpone action until further discussion at the Biennial	27
4. Refuse to take stand because of a lack of information	18 4

In order to gain further support, the Executive Board suggested to Judge Baar that he inform the congregations that although the Union had purchased a building in Washington, it would be impossible for the RAC to begin its program until after the Biennial. This was due to the fact that title for the building would not be in the Union's possession until July 1, 1961. In his letter to the congregations, Baar indicated that the UAHC was meeting with representatives of the opposition in an effort to resolve the dispute. If the dispute is not resolved by the time of the Biennial, then there will

be ample time at the assembly to debate the issue further. Thus it was now the Union's hope to gain strength by being open on the issue of the RAC.

The Social Action in Review of June, 1961, announced the purchase of the Washington building. The article told of an overwhelming majority of those present at the Biennial in 1959, as having voted to make this RAC a reality. No mention was made however of there even being a controversy over the establishment of such a center, or of the Union's willingness to take the issue up again in the November 1961 Biennial. Thus while the Union is candid when it issues letters to congregational presidents, it is lax in telling the whole story of the RAC when it comes to a publication that is as widely read as Social Action in Review.

This seems to have been one of the failings all along with the Union, in its debate over social action. In private communications, Eisendrath and Baar et al were perfectly willing to meet the opposition more than half way, but when valuable help could have been solicited through Social Action in Review or American Judaism, the UAHC seemed to shy away. Perhaps the reason for this is that the UAHC leadership was afraid to bring the controversy to the average congregant lest the reaction would be negative. Although the debate up until this time had been bitter, it had really been fought between the power structures on both sides of the debate. The power structures were well aware of what was happening, but the constituency was shielded from the clouds of controversy.

Eisendrath may have had other reasons for making sure that this controversy was kept in low key. He indicates in a letter to Judge Baar on August 15, 1961, that he knew what the real issue was in this debate.

....I feel that this matter will never be settled until it is settled right. If we should go to the Biennial indicating how far we have been prepared to go in the direction of conciliation, safeguards, democracy, congregational participation and the like but underscore the fact that all of this appears to be insufficient in the sight of some who desire nothing less than the removal of myself from the presidency and the election as Chairman of the Board or as "lay president" as well as board members unsympathetic and even antagonistic to myself as the then-to-be professional administrator, perhaps this would be the issue to be decided by the Biennial. Then I believe this poison would be out of our system because if I have any political sense at all, and if I have any sensitivity to our constituency, I believe that those of us who have been seeking to lead the Union over the past decade or so would be overwhelmingly vindicated. Unless we face this issue which Bachrach has made unambiguous and central, we will be fencing with shadows, making concession after concession, proliferating red tape, stultifying our program and ourselves.¹⁹

Thus for the administration of the Union, the fight has not been the RAC. It would seem that Eisendrath and Baar would not try to bring the issues of this letter to the heart of the debate. And as we shall see, by the time the Biennial takes place in November, 1961, the Ad Hoc committee has substantially changed its policies concerning the RAC.

On November 6, 1961, before the Biennial, the Ad Hoc committee submitted a number of resolutions including one concerning the establishment of the Center. What strikes the reader immediately is the fact that the committee approved the Religious Action Center. They even went so far as to approve of the Center staff giving legislative testimony as long as that testimony follows the lines of the mandates of the Union Biennial. Despite a number of recommendations which would make the work of the CSA and the RAC especially cumbersome, the Ad Hoc committee finally gave ground on the one issue over which they originally began their controversy.

The real issues which the Ad Hoc committee dealt with in its resolution were those which surround the procedures of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. It was over this resolution that the Union and the

Ad Hoc committee had really been debating over the past two years. Although the RAC was ostensibly the issue, it was, I believe, a shield and a buffer for this resolution:

A standing committee to be known as the Resolutions committee is hereby created to function when required throughout each year.

- (a) Proposed resolutions for consideration at Biennial Assemblies may be submitted in writing to the Resolutions Committee at any time.
- (b) The Resolutions Committee shall transmit proposed resolutions to every congregation for informational purposes.....but in no event shall such proposals be mailed to the congregations less than ninety days prior to the ensuing Biennial.
- (c) Prior to voting upon any resolution the Resolutions Committee shall....apprise the General Assembly of tabulated opinions expressed by the congregations for or against such resolutions and of any amendments thereof, together with the Resolution Committee's evaluation of those opinions and other findings which that committee desires to submit for presentation.
- (d) All resolutions involving subject matter of a public nature can only be acted upon at a session of the Biennial at which a quorum is present and a majority vote is needed for passage. Any resolution submitted within 90 days of the Biennial needs a 60% vote for passage.²⁰

While the resolution continued, these were the important points. We can see here that the issue has been the way in which some delegates conceived of the RAC resolution having been railroaded through the 1959 Biennial. It was felt that the Union leadership acted in haste at the convention in 1959 in hopes that there would not be a large debate on the floor of the general assembly.

The question remains, could this controversy which really dealt more with personalities than it did with either RAC or social action, have been avoided? It would seem to me that what was at stake here from the beginning

was the integrity of the Union leadership. I believe that the Union made a grave tactical error in not announcing the Kaplan's gift well in advance of the 1959 Biennial. We know that the gift predated October 23, 1959, because by that time Rabbi Lipman was already looking for a building suitable for the RAC. We know too, that there was some question as to the number of delegates present when the vote on the RAC took place in 1959.

We also have evidence that Rabbi Eisendrath was less than honest in his dealing with local congregations, even after the 1959 Biennial. The date of the Kaplan's offer, it seems to me, is the crucial issue. We know that the gift predated October 23, 1959, but then we read in a letter from Maurice Eisendrath to Melville Dunkelman, President, Wise Temple in Cincinnati, the following:

The idea of a center in Washington is not a new one as you will see from the background material enclosed. It has also, apparently, been a dream of Mr. Kivie Kaplan's, who donated the funds for it, for many years. On the eve of the Biennial in Miami, Mr. Kaplan first apprised me of his decision to make such a center for social action available to the UAHC. Accordingly, I lost no time in including it in my "State of the Union" message the Sunday evening which opened the Assembly, with the recommendation that it be accepted.²¹

Here I believe is the crux of the issue. The gift was offered a good deal of time before the Biennial, yet the UAHC President on many occasions maintained that the gift was given on the eve of the Biennial. We might quarrel about terms, and say that 'eve of' is very relative. But then there would have been no reason for Dr. Eisendrath to make the point that he "lost no time in including it in his State of the Union Message." We must conclude that the controversy as it finally developed could have been avoided, had the Union leadership informed the constituent congregations that such a proposal would be on the agenda of the Biennial. There was indeed time for this kind of communication.

This interesting chapter in the social action movement of our Union, ended when the UAHC position on the RAC was overwhelmingly endorsed by the 1961 Biennial. A new era in the social action program was about to begin.

Chapter 5

A STRUGGLING COMMISSION

Once the great debate in Reform Judaism had been decided, with the exception of a few stubborn pockets of resistance, the notion of social action within the movement had won a permanent place in the program of the Union and CCAR. The RAC, the culmination to the whole idea of social action, was going to take its place in Washington, D.C. With the RAC firmly implanted in the minds of Reform Jews, we shall see a general shift. The emphasis of CSA, moved from local program planning to pressure on major national issues. The RAC was the Jewish religious voice in Washington, and whether the CSA did or did not intend the RAC to serve as a pressure group on various issues, it did serve that function.

Recognizing the possible problems involved with having a wing of the CSA in Washington, in November, 1961, the Commission began a concerted effort to help the local congregations on their programs for social action. The CSA decided to publish a "program-a-month" newsletter which would suggest a monthly program based on positions taken by the UAHC and the CCAR. This newsletter was to give background material, resolutions and ideas for implementation in the local setting.

At the same time, the CSA heard a report from Joseph Rauh, a very active member of the Commission, and a lawyer in Washington. Rauh urged that pressure be put on the White House as soon as possible and to as great a degree as possible so that there might be passage of an equal housing bill.¹ Rauh was interested in the passage of the bill. The question is raised: Was it the job of the CSA to be placing pressure on the White House or any other arm of the government?

While the CSA became more involved in issues on a national level,

the local congregations were becoming very much involved in the social issues in their own communities. Temple Israel of Boston was seeking help from members of the congregation in securing adequate housing for Negroes. At the same time they tried to help non-white employees find employment in keeping with the skills that each possessed. The congregation had responded well to this call to action.²

Efforts in the South too met with favorable response. The desegregation of the Atlanta schools was successful, due in great measure to the efforts of religious institutions. Rabbi Rothschild's synagogue social action committee aided that successful desegregation.

Jews faced with the fighting of their own minority status, are always fearful and insecure in the face of great social change, nonetheless, I think it can be truthfully said, that almost without exception; the Jews of Atlanta courageously stood up for and out as champions of the liberal cause.³

Rabbi Richard Hirsch, director of the RAC urged the CSA in April, 1962 to help organize the American Jewish community. He felt that it was improper that Jewish community organizations only came together when there was concern for Israel. Being the unifying force in American Jewry was not invisioned in the formulation of the safeguards for the RAC. In the final analysis it is not important whether the RAC did finally approach the other organizations in Washington. What is of utmost concern, however is the fact that the CSA was moving more into the realm of national programs and was concerned less with the needs of local social action committees.

By December, 1962, the RAC had been firmly established. The CSA was still responding however to the biting issue of "who speaks for Reform Jews." Before the debate took place, the CSA was firm in positions that it took.

Since the debate, the Commission seemed almost shy, and timid in its approach. The members were concerned that whatever they did would be assuming a position of "speaking for all Reform Jews." At issue in December, 1962 was the affiliation by the CSA with a national peace movement. Turn Toward Peace. Some members of the CSA felt that it was not proper for the CSA to affiliate because there were questions as to just what this affiliation would commit Reform Jews to. Al Vorspan, an advocate of joining the group, claimed that congregations in some instances were far ahead of the CSA in this area.⁴ Both notions represent confusion since affiliating with such organizations was not a function of the CSA.

Further confusions of this type were also brought to the meeting as a result of the CSA working on desegregation in the South. Some of the southern congregations could not understand why they were not consulted prior to representatives of the CSA coming into their communities. The whole attitude here, seemed again, to be one of distrust. The Southeast Council of the UAHC asked that prior consent be given before the CSA acted on a local issue in their area. The question of whom to consult in these congregations arose however, since Atlanta and Miami were the only cities in the Southeast Council to be represented by Social Action Committees.

To add to the further frustration of the December, 1963, meeting, the CSA began to deal with the whole problem of emerging Negro-Anti-semitism. Part of the Black community was growing blatantly anti-semitic. This would make it increasingly difficult for the CSA to operate in the area of Civil Rights as we shall see.

While the CSA sought its own self-image, Rabbi Brickner reported to the Commission that the southern congregations had agreed to set up committees

within each congregation for the CSA to consult. Brickner pointed out to the CSA however, that it was made crystal clear to these congregations, that the CSA would not permit anyone, or any congregation to exercise its veto power over the work of the Commission.⁵

This kind of statement only added to the schizophrenia of the CSA. Many members looked upon the CSA as some autonomous body with powers separate from or in addition to the powers given it by the CCAR and the UAHC. Second, many members of the CSA really did not quite understand exactly what the function of the CSA was. Was it the function of the CSA to make pronouncements and to be involved in local issues which local congregations did not favor? Was the CSA to be a large national group whose function it was to have an impact on legislation? Or was the Commission to make congregation social action committees aware of issues, to secure information about those issues, and to point up why the issue was relevant to Jews? In the eyes of some members of the Commission, involvement on a national level seemed to be the reason for the existence of the CSA. Others were vitally concerned that the CSA produce programs for the congregations.

The Commission became quite confused as to just where it was going, as the following excerpt from its meeting of June 3, 1963 would indicate:

He said the Commission is under immense pressure to be concerned with the broad issues. The only way the Commission can act, and the only way it can get individuals to act, is if it has a mandate on a particular subject. There are some social action committees which are taking the kind of concrete and individual action we would like to see social action committees take. Is it the function of this Commission, as an entity, to "persuade and cajole individual Jews into ethical conduct?" Can we as a Commission convince rabbis to sit down

with members of their congregations who are offenders? We have not done very much of this by and large. Can we take responsibility for individual offenders? Most organizations have taken the position that the Jewish community cannot be responsible for individual culprits. Mr. Rauh is saying that our job is to take this responsibility. How we can exert influence is a highly complex matter.

This Commission is part of a structure, not a total structure. We cannot relate to individuals. The Commission's primary point of referral must be congregations and the people who belong. Its job is to express national Jewish religious point of view in terms of mandates from general assemblies and whatever action needs to be taken nationally to help local congregations take their own collective positions.

But we must make an important distinction very clear. We are not responsible for the actions of every Jewish group, but we are responsible for the actions of the leaderships of our congregations. This is why most of us feel frustration and a sense of guilt. We make pronouncements and those who take positions of leadership may on many occasions be violating the principles we set forth.

Our task is to prepare the Jewish community for understanding its responsibilities and its members' responsibilities. It won't change mavericks. While the passing of resolutions does seem ineffectual in the long run, it does serve a purpose. We educate our congregations within the community. Then we hope individuals will come up to the standards we set.⁶

The CSA was getting caught up in polemics and administration and was fast losing the momentum that it once had in producing material for the local organizations. One can speculate here, that the reason for this lag in efficiency in the CSA, was twofold. First is the fact that the energies expended in the debate had sapped a great deal of strength from the social action movement. Once the RAC was established in Washington many felt that the Center staff would be able to help the Commission in furnishing congregations with social action materials. The second reason, far more important, is that Negro anti-semitism was growing and being felt by the Jewish community.

Jews became increasingly reticent about working in areas even remotely connected with Civil Rights. With this gradual pulling away from Civil Rights, the CSA was virtually without a "major" project. Perhaps the CSA did not feel the immediate pressure but the signs were present that the CSA would be searching for direction. This area of Civil Rights was one in which the CSA had done much work, had influenced many people, and had even helped get needed legislation passed. Now the decision would have to be made, in what new area of social concern would the CSA strive for expertise?

Further confusions abounded during the summer, 1963 with the now famous "March on Washington." In a memo letter to congregational social action committees, Balfour Brickner said that the UAHC would join with the National Council of Churches of Christ and the National Catholic Welfare Conference in the Washington March. "We believe most of the members of our congregations are committed to these purposes and are anxious to demonstrate their commitment in a tangible fashion."⁷ Although Rabbi Brickner thought that most congregations would favor the Union's participation, in the March, at the November, 1963 Biennial, Eisendrath indicated that he received much criticism about the participation by the CSA in the March.

Most of us stand callously aloof from the struggle or savagely condemn our Union for issuing a call to individual decency and religious commitment; for participating in a march which for dignity and decorum has few if any counterparts in history; for inviting as a speaker to this Biennial one of the greatest moral and spiritual prophets of freedom in our time.⁸

While Eisendrath was critical of those who did not favor actions, his position is clear, and unbending. He would not be deterred from a high quality program of social action. Though tired and weary from the fights over the right to engage in social action, Eisendrath, was still arguing

his point that as Jews we are obligated to engage in events like the "March on Washington."

There are those who recoiled terrified from any participation of the UAHC in the March on Washington, and I too, was terrified when I learned of it while I was in Europe. I was terrified that perhaps the UAHC might not participate.⁹

Eisendrath was also critical the Union constituency for its nebulous "Call to Racial Justice." This pillar of social action was disappointed that the "Call to Racial Justice" issued by the Reform movement was minimal when compared to the call issued by the National Council of Churches of Christ which authorized that risks were to be taken to secure rights for Negro freedoms.

By November, 1963 70 congregations had already adopted the call to racial justice. A document which pledged that a congregation would not support institutions or use suppliers which had discriminatory employment practices.¹⁰ By 1965 only 150 congregations would adopt the "Call." In addition to the rather small number of congregations accepting the "Call to Racial Justice," the timidity with which it was adopted by those 150 congregations was somewhat appalling. A follow-up questionnaire revealed the following:

1. Does the congregation hire employees without regard to race or religion?

Yes 91%

No 7%

2. Does the congregation buy supplies only from firms that practice non-discrimination in employment?

Yes 40%

No 58%

3. Does the congregation let out services and construction contracts only to those firms which are non-discriminatory in employment?

Yes 40%

No 58%

4. Does the congregation deal only with banks and investors who have non-discriminatory employment practices?

Yes 34%

No 61%¹¹

While it is heartening to note that the congregations themselves adopted non-discriminatory employment practices, it is quite shocking to see that even these 150 congregations wouldn't wholeheartedly adopt the call to racial justice. By 1965 not even ten per cent of the Union's membership had been so motivated by the CSA, to fully adopt the "Call to Racial Justice."

The Union, would have us believe that social action within the rank and file of Reform Judaism had been going smoothly. Al Vorspan, reporting in American Judaism, revealed that social action was entering a new era, the era of action. The more than 400 local congregations were, according to Vorspan, going to make significant contributions in the action field. Vorspan gave his explanation for this new growth in action:

...Events have caught up with us all.; the bursting racial challenge, the climactical church-state development, new crises of war and peace, the sickness of our cities, the quickening pace of interfaith cooperation, the war on poverty, the deepening ordeal of Soviet Jewry, all these and many others have overtaken us. These are all on our doorsteps, not to be ignored. To ignore them is to doom our synagogues to irrelevance.¹²

Vorspan's air of optimism on the status of the social action movement was vindicated by the view that Rabbi Richard Hirsch expounded in April, 1964. Hirsch claimed that the Jewish community in America was no longer insecure, as it had been in the 50's. Now, according to his view, the American Jewish community was more likely to be involved in issues that were divested of specific Jewish interests. How different this was from the American Jewish community of the 19th century that worked only on issues of direct Jewish interest.

These expanded efforts manifested the new secure status of the Jew in the new America. The change in emphasis from particular interests affecting the Jewish community alone to universal interests affecting all men is in keeping with Jewish tradition.¹³

The feelings represented at the Commission meeting in May, 1964, were less optimistic. Vorspan and Hirsch were members of the CSA by virtue of the fact that they worked as staff members of the Commission. The air of optimism present in their articles in the spring of 1964, was absent from that meeting in May. Rabbi Arthur Lelyveld, a strong social action leader said that the CSA had turned its back on the Call to Racial Justice. He added that the CSA didn't even know where it was.¹⁴ The minutes reflect Lelyveld's notion. While Civil Rights legislation was being passed through Congress, the racial tension in the U.S. was mounting. Violence was sure to effect the cities during the coming summer, and the CSA doesn't really know what advice to give the congregations which asked for counsel. Mandates or no mandates, resolutions or no resolutions, the Jewish Community was beginning to get scared, and they were asking the CSA for help. This did not appear to me to be the same kind of Jewish community that Vorspan and Hirsch were so optimistic about just months before this meeting.

Even as late as November, 1964, at the meeting of the UAHC Board of Trustees, Eisendrath seems to be defending social action. The fight over congregational participation in social action projects was still being fought on this national level.

Social action does not constitute, as some would have you believe, our sole preoccupation, nor does it command a disproportionate share of those desperately needed funds, though I do not know why one should be apologetic or defensive even if this were true; that is, if we really believe that one of our major purposes as Reform Jews, is to further the moral message of our prophets and the ethical mission of our forbears.¹⁵

With respect to the Religious Action Center, its activities had been quiet as it was in the process of making alliances within the Washington community. It had sponsored a number of seminars and conferences, like a two-day CCAR conference on disarmament. Its plans indicated that long-range education for Jewish and Christian community leaders would be among its priorities. The first step in that program would be a summer seminar for theological students.

The November, 1964 meeting of the CSA revealed an interesting development in the whole structure of social action. NFTY had always had representation on the joint commission. Local youth groups had always participated within their synagogues and regions on social action projects, but only now does NFTY come of age in the social action movement. Beginning with the summer of 1964, the idea of a NFTY Mitzvah Corps program developed. When the adult congregations failed to give support to action oriented programs, the youth of the movement took over the reigns of action. For the summer, a group of youngsters, together with a chaperone couple, worked in the ghetto area of New York City. The volunteers, labored at many kinds of jobs, building bridges of understanding between blacks and whites. The program was so successful that plans were already being made to continue the program for the summer of 1965 in New York City, and Chicago. This was one of the unique action programs that the CSA had been able to implement among American Reform Jews.

As the youngsters had picked up the banner of social reform, the adults in the local communities were mostly devoid of action oriented programs. The Commission was in the position of urging congregations to take action, as evidenced by the March, 1965 CSA meeting. The Commission

approved the go ahead for more Mitzvah Corp programs on one hand, and on the other it asked congregations to use investable funds for social uses.¹⁶ The Commission was so ineffective that it needed to almost plead with congregations for something as unactive as investing money. The Commission also endorsed the Mississippi Summer Project, which would give aid to the southern Negro, and support to the Civil Rights workers, 40% of which were Jewish. While these causes were needed, the CSA lacked the vitality it once had to implement the program. The suggestions that began to come from the CSA dealt with these problems only in an ethereal soft of way, lacking in concrete steps for local implementation.

Perhaps the reason for the lack of creative work in the CSA was due to an attitude in American Jewish life. American Jews do not see themselves as truly emancipated, more often than not we see that the American Jew fears for his position in this society. Johann S. Ackerman indicated that Jews ought not get involved in what he called "political issues" because when Jews are the enemies of those in power, they will have a difficult time in the United States. A second reason outlined by Ackerman was that Israel¹⁷ could not afford for America to be anti-Israel. While Ackerman may be pessimistic, I believe that the evidence points to the fact that most American Jews were uncertain about engaging in these issues because of Judaism's precarious position in society.

In November, 1965, Eisendrath may have sensed that it would be advantageous for the CSA to slow down somewhat. Eisendrath spoke out against the American involvement in Viet Nam at the Biennial, but the issue of Viet Nam was not yet clearly defined. Thus, whatever Eisendrath said about Viet Nam, was not considered as "political" in 1965. At the CSA meeting

however, Eisendrath made a plea for new priorities for the Commission. While he was, of course, interested in world peace as an issue, he may have been more intent on preserving the machinery of social action. The issue of world peace in 1965, was an issue with which no one could take offense. In this way, the machinery of the CSA would be maintained. The second possible reason for choosing world peace, was that the CSA was looking for direction. The issue of Civil Rights was now a difficult one for the Jewish community. The other issues that the CSA had worked on, brought very little response from the local congregations.

As a result of Rabbi Eisendrath's plea, it was moved, seconded, and unanimously passed, that the whole problem of world peace be made the number one priority of the Commission on Social Action for the next two years.¹⁸

In its struggle for survival, the Commission on Social Action tried to come to grips with the notion of world peace. The Commission involved with peace organizations, but in so doing lost its identity as the CSA. It tried to implement programs for a local level, but its attempts were naive, and disregarded by the congregations. The issue of world peace, was too complex for the CSA to deal with in a meaningful way.

The work of the Commission focused more or less on the work of the Religious Action Center, which became the kind of organization that the Union had always intended for it to be, primarily an educational institution. For several weeks in July, 1966 the RAC in cooperation with Harvard Divinity School, held a seminar for theological students. The students studied the government from the point of view of a religious body being represented in the nation's capital. The students, from many seminaries, Christian and Jewish, spent the period of one month being briefed on the work of a religious

action group such as the RAC. They studied the impact of religion on the congressional system, and most important, they studied issues from a new perspective. The program was successful in a very significant way.

Perhaps the most significant realization issuing out of the Seminar's work is that churches and synagogues may also become the places "where the action is" once religious leaders and laity are awakened out of their parochialism."¹⁹

Although not repeated as a summer seminar, the RAC has from time to time planned shorter one week intensive seminars for seminary students. These shortened seminars help the student understand the work of religious bodies in our nation's capital.

Although the CSA had little influence, wherever its influence was felt, programs developed in an ongoing kind of way. Perhaps the best example of the influence of the CSA is the Upper Park Avenue Community Association (UPACA). The New York Federation of Reform Synagogues became²⁰ partners with UPACA on a joint venture in the fall of 1966. They became co-sponsors of a non-profit housing corporation. Although the bi-racial group had difficulties in getting started on the project, and despite the current of black power and black mistrust of the white establishment, the UPACA project continues to function. Its original goal was to convert a section of Harlem into 388 livable housing units. The two groups work together, with a 15 man board of directors, seven from UPACA, seven from the New York Federation of Reform Synagogues and Rabbi Balfour Brickner who serves as mediator. The group deals not only with housing, but with a whole range of inner city problems from consumer education to "day care centers."

According to Rabbi Brickner:

The partnership serves as "undeniable refutation to those who say that White and Black can't make it together.

We are rehabilitating more than buildings. We are learning to rehabilitate ourselves through one another. It is slow, hard, and somewhat painful, but it is working."²¹

The project is probably the best sustained program of social action by any group of Reform Jews in the country.

By November, 1967 Rabbi Eisendrath claimed that there were 500 local social action committees,²² His address to the Union Biennial did not indicate that the CSA and the whole social action movement within Reform was in very serious trouble. Irving Fain and others of the CSA noted that at the Biennial there was an undercurrent of resistance to social action proposals.²³ Rabbi Lipman castigated the CSA and claimed that they had done a poor job of educating the local congregations. Rabbi Gittelsohn placed the blame, not with the CSA but rather with the prevailing mood of anxiety in the country, from which the UAHC and its CSA were not isolated. What was disheartening, to the Commission did not seem to be the lack of action, but rather there was a feeling that the CSA was back in 1949 expending all its energies just to get a resolution passed.

The significant truth that came from the meeting was pointed out by Rabbi Palnick of Little Rock, Arkansas. He claimed that the ineffectiveness of the social action movement could be blamed on the total collapse of the liberal coalition which ruled the country for over ten years.²⁴ The Jewish community by and large was no longer deeply involved in the great social issues as they once were. The possible reasons for the disinterest may have been White back-lash or even the association by laymen that Civil Rights and social action were the same. In any event the flame of social action was in danger of being extinguished. The CSA searched for an issue, so

that it could again put its vast machinery to work.

The meeting of the Commission in March of the following year saw Israel as the major focus of attention.²⁵ The CSA was concerned that the U. S. had condemned Israeli raids in Jordan. Now the CSA was faced with a serious Jewish problem. They respond by discussing the practicability of reprinting two previous publications of the CSA, Israel and American Jewry1967 and Beyond and As The Driven Sands.

Although the members were searching for directions in which to go, the immensity of the problem, overshadows any attempt by the CSA to deal with the issue substantively. The Commission seems lost, in any area that deals with an international problem. This feeling of being lost, is not the same when we read the minutes of the Commission during the Jewish involvement in Civil Rights... There we read of a confident organization, one with plans and creative ideas. Here we have a timid, defensive group, a group that is really without a priority or direction.

By October, 1968 the whole mood of the Jewish community had shifted to the Right. Rabbi Hirsch noted that Jews are not safe in a society that is unstable.²⁶ The Jews were pulling back and withdrawing from all social concerns. Viet Nam and the race riots had by this time taken their toll on Jewish liberals, and many Jews were saying that we have to protect the Jews.

With this shift, the idea of social action seems almost unreal. Even in the area of civil rights, the CSA had pulled away. The whole process is reminiscent of the family pulling away from one of its members who is dying from a terminal illness. Black anti-semitism had taken its toll on Jewish liberals.

As there had always been stubborn pockets resistant to social action, now there were those who refused to pull away in time of moral distress.

NFTY for one, refused to quit social action. The idealism of those young people kept their action ratio high in the area of race. Many NFTY regions, even this past summer, still held Mitzvah Corp programs in the ghettos. The NFTY members present at the CSA meeting in October, 1968 complained that the CSA and the congregations hadn't displayed the actions they had espoused as Jewish values, during times of social crises. This period in history they claimed demanded these Jewish values.

As the CSA searched for something to do, the NFTY groups worked at doing something. The CSA grasped at straws even at its meeting in March, 1969 where it tried to pass a resolution that in spite of Black anti-semitism, the CSA would do the right thing. ²⁷ While reports from all areas of the country were being received that the social action programs are being stopped in congregations, the CSA limped along avoiding the obvious and turning its wheels of machinery with little or no effect.

CHAPTER 1

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1. Max Kohler, "The Board of Delegates," in UAHC Proceedings, X, (1922) 9188.
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4. Mervis, p. 172.
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6. Ibid.
7. Cogdell, p. 7.
8. Mervis, p. 176.
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12. Ibid., 6868.
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14. Ibid., 7348.
15. Ibid., IX (1915) 7934.
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18. Ibid., pp. 178-179.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
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22. UAHC Proceedings, IX (1918) 8426.
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24. Bergman, p. 4.
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26. UAHC Proceedings, X (1924) 9620.
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29. Ibid., p. 9809.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid., XI (1927) p. 17.
32. Ibid., p. 208.
33. Ibid., XI (1928) 10.
34. Bergman, p. 6.
35. Mervis, p. 182.
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41. Ibid., p. 49.
42. Gerstein, p. 18.
43. UAHC Proceedings, XIII (1935) 174.
44. Ibid., p. 175.
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6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. 27.
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10. CCAR Yearbook, LIX (1949) 118.
11. "Liberals Gird for Social Action." p. 4.
12. UAHC Proceedings, XV (1950) 313.
13. CCAR Yearbook, LX (1950) p. 153.

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3. Social Action in Review, II:1 (November 1954) 1.
4. UAHC Proceedings XV p. 470.
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7. Ibid., p. 5.
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21. Ibid., November 25, 1957.
22. Ibid., November 11, 1958.
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5. Social Action in Review, VII:2 (December-January 1959-1960) 1
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7. Memo: Irving Jay Fain to Al Vorspan, November 2, 1960.
8. Letter: Judge Emil N. Baar to Jerome Friedman, December 23, 1960.
9. Letter: Judge Emil N. Baar to Congregational Presidents, January 19, 1961.
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11. Letter: Walter Klein to Alfred Bachrach, February 13, 1961.
12. Letter: Beirne M. Prager to Alfred R. Bachrach, February 28, 1961.
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15. Letter: Richard G. Hirsch to Maurice N. Eisendrath, February 21, 1961.
16. Letter: Colman Levich to Alfred R. Bachrach, March 6, 1961.
17. Letter: Maurice N. Eisendrath to Rev. Rufus Cornelson, March 10, 1961.
18. Memo: Selma Meyerson to Maurice N. Eisendrath, March 23, 1961.
19. Letter: Maurice N. Eisendrath to Judge Emil N. Baar, August 15, 1961.
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