

Letter To The Editor

Dear Sir:

Among the strange bedfellows politics makes, not last on the mattress is charity. Christmas turkeys served Tammany Hall well. When Congress voted funds for hospitals, cynics remarked, "Unless you hold your nose, it almost smells like pork." Therefore it was to be expected that politics would swarm over the billions of dollars administered by the Jewish Agency in Israel in behalf of the Federation et al, and in collaboration with Zionist and Israel officials.

In recent years, Federation leaders such as Jerold Hoffberger, have gone to great pains to reduce political intervention in the agency, to improve accountability, and to assure professional competence. At least two major urban Federations have set up offices in Israel to

monitor the uses of the funds they deliver.

In "Givers and Spenders" (Ariel, Box 3328, Jerusalem, 1985) Professor Eliezer Jaffe employs an unusual method of analyzing this development. Much of the text contains dispassionate reports from *The Jerusalem Post*, or editorial essays by various contributors. One part consists of exchanges between Jaffe and two of his critics. These read like a blow-by-blow report of a prize-fight or a normal Jewish conversation.

A danger of airing this subject is that givers may lose heart unless they see a prospect for cleaning up the act. A greater danger is that if the issues are covered up, more money and morale will go down the tube.

In the interest of the donors and for the good of Israel, Jaffe deserves to be heard, loud and clear.

Officials of the Agencies he admonishes have not always thought so.

Marcus M. Rosenblum

THE JERUSALEM POST,

May 12, 1985

READERS' LETTERS

PARTNERSHIP WITH ISRAEL

To the Editor of The Jerusalem Post
Sir, - I read with interest and considerable dismay David Landau's article of March 22, "The stuff of partnership." I write as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Cleveland Jewish Community Federation, on which I have served for well over 30 years, including service as a member and officer of many of its committees. I have a great deal of respect for those leaders of the Cleveland Jewish Community who were quoted in the article and with whom I have developed a fond friendship.

But with all due respect, I differ with them acutely on their attitudes toward partnership with Israel. I also do not believe that their opinions are representative of the grass-roots feelings of most American Jews.

While we American Jews are partners with Israel in the building of the Jewish state and in the ingathering of those Jews whose only haven is Israel, we are not general partners but rather limited partners.

The lives of the Israelis are "on the line" every day. The enemies of Israel stand ready at all times to kill individual Israelis (if they were able to). Only money is at risk for American Jews.

Even the money contributed by American Jews, while helpful and perhaps even essential, is only a minuscule part of Israel's budget (less than 1 per cent) - minuscule when compared to the amount the Israeli citizen contributes in income taxes (probably the highest in the world), and in other exactions by the government. The costs to the Israelis of rescuing endangered Jews from all parts of the world and absorbing them are monumental. I submit that the so-called "charitable" contributions of American Jews are not in fact charitable, but part of their responsibility to their fellow Jews of all parts of the globe.

The *hutzpa* of an American leader who says "...we are not going to allow ourselves to be lined up in support of such a thing again" (a Lebanese invasion) is beyond mea-

sure. Who sat in underground shelters for years? Whose children lived in them for a good part of their lives? Whose lives were in constant danger from rockets fired from Lebanon? Not ours, theirs. They make mistakes, of course, but who are we to judge their security requirements from afar? They have the greater information - their judgments are less likely, in most instances, to be incorrect.

The same leader, Ted Kanner, states that he represents the cutting edge in American Jewish life, that the thinking segment of Jewish leadership, put in a confessional, would reflect the trend he is describing. Kanner quotes Professor Eliezer Jaffe of the Hebrew University as one who discerns a "stirring" in patterns of American Jewish philanthropy. Jaffe has quoted with apparent approval in a monograph, "Givers and Spenders," an article by a gentleman who proposes that, if the Israelis will not give American Jews more authority over spending of their funds, they should stop giving to the UJA. Israel's security requirements take a back seat to American Jews' rights to direct the use of their charitable dollar.

I relate to Barry Shrage's statement that "if we fail to support Israel, the Jews of America will burn down their (Federation's) building." This I suggest is the way most American Jews feel about their contribution to a safe and secure Israel. Let the so-called Jewish "leaders" take note of this fact. The contributions of American Jews are to Israel, not the Federations.

BENNET KLEINMAN
Cleveland.

David Landau comments:

Bennet Kleinman, a leading attorney, is a widely respected and controversial figure in the Cleveland Jewish community. I regretted that I did not manage to meet him during my stay in Cleveland, and am pleased he has, through his letter, enriched the series "Faces of American Jewry."



**Bennet
Kleinman**

Commentary

'Givers and spenders'

"*Givers and Spenders -- The Politics of Charity in Israel*" is one of a number of publishing ventures by Eliezer D. Jaffe, a Clevelander who made aliyah to Israel in 1960. He is associate professor of social work at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. His record and reputation in his field of sociology are outstanding.

"Givers and Spenders," consists of a series of essays and articles assembled or written by Dr. Jaffe, most of which consist of attacks on the manner in which American Jewish charitable funds are channeled to Israeli institutions.

I was scarcely impressed by the monograph since the attacks by the writers are very general and except for complaints that politics play a part in allocations, the specifics are difficult, if not impossible, to find in the writings.

Of the 110 pages of the book, some 25 are devoted to a lengthy discussion of the ouster of one Raphael Kotlowitz from his position as chairman of the Jewish Agency's Aliyah Department. The overriding significance attached to this event completely escaped me.

ELIEZER WHARTMAN writes, among other things, that if the "Who is a Jew" law is passed by the Knesset, Conservative and Reform Jews "should make it clear to the government of Israel that they will not give a penny to the so-called 'Jewish State.' Nor should they allow their synagogues and community centers to be used for fund-raising purposes by any Knesset member who votes for the bill." Ironically, the latter suggestion has already been adopted by the Conservative Movement.

Whether this position serves the security of Israel and the perpetuation of the Jewish people apparently is of little significance to Mr. Whartman. The dichotomies and schisms of Jewish life must play a superior role, come what may.

Jaffe's anti-establishment position is made clear when he suggests that the Jewish Agency go out of existence, with its functions to be replaced by a group of professionals who will direct the disposition of American Jewish charitable funds. Presumably, he will be among those professionals.

Jaffe's view is that the failure to give American Jews control of their funds constitutes "taxation without representation." I respectfully, of course, disagree.

Jaffe fails to take account of the fact that American Jewish "philanthropy" to Israel is in fact in satisfaction of Diaspora's share of responsibility to ransom, rescue and provide succor to persecuted Jews in all parts of the world. It is not the sole responsibility of the Israeli.

ROBERT E. LOUP, then national chairman of the UJA, points out in his article that Jaffe fails to take account of the monumental accomplishments of the Jewish Agency during its many years of existence. Loup deplores Jaffe's suggestion that this unique cooperative

effort of Diaspora's Jewry and Israel be terminated.

I am sure that there is some politics in charity in Israel — as there is in virtually all charitable endeavors. It is naive to believe otherwise. But Jaffe neither points out precisely the nature or extent of political involvement nor does he specify the damage arising therefrom.

My guess is that the book will be read by a limited group. I trust they will find it a more interesting and significant work than I did.

Community Forum

Giving and spending should be accountable

Bennet Kleinman's review of my book *Givers and Spenders--The Politics of Charity in Israel* (CJN, June 14) sounds like it was written before he read the book. The book points out specifically how representatives of the political parties in Israel have taken major control over UJA monies forwarded to the Jewish Agency, and how all Agency Departments are headed by representatives of the parties. It also includes a 25-page presentation on how Ariel Sharon almost became the head of the Agency's Aliyah Department precisely because of the donor's indulgence of Israeli politics. The whole purpose of this book was to inform and educate donors to get the most for their money regarding their Israeli philanthropy.

Instead of slogans regarding the Agency's past glory, which are indeed part of the record, one now has to get down to taking the politics out of it so it can properly tackle new jobs and provide better accountability to donors. The period of donating to the UJA (and the

Jewish Agency which receives those funds, i.e., \$437 million in '84-'85) simply because of blind belief in the ability of the spenders to use it wisely, is part of the past.

If Bennet Kleinman is satisfied to give his money without wanting to know details about how it gets used, and is content to settle for fat and politics in his philanthropic effort, that's his business. But he certainly wouldn't settle for that in Cleveland Federation allocations, and I suggest he not export a double standard for Israel-bound money. In more personal terms, I would ask him to stop branding those of us who believe that changing the Agency is both necessary and feasible as "anti-establishment" and "troublemakers" out for personal gain.

I hope that CJN readers will review the book for themselves and draw their own conclusions.

PROF. ELIEZER DAVID JAFFE
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Dear Editor,

At one time book reviews were sacrosanct in that no author, however badly his book was treated by a review, would ever rush to print with a rebuttal. Today, for better or for worse, this is no longer the case, and perhaps a dialogue between reviewer and author is of use to the reading public since, as we all know only too well, reviews can sometimes be a little onesided. However, in the Spring and Summer 1984 issues of *Forum* there is not one, but two responses to book reviews, one of which even begins "I have always believed that book reviews ought not to be answered by authors!"

It is not for me to defend Dr. Samuel Cohen in connection with his review of the book "Giving Wisely" by Dr. Jaffe (and I must place on record immediately that I am the Director of the Jewish National Fund for Gt. Britain & Ireland and therefore a colleague of Samuel Cohen.) It does seem to me, and I assure you there has been no discussion, let alone collusion with Samuel Cohen, that Eliezer Jaffe is somewhat unfair in his review of a book review, particularly when he refers to the Jewish National Fund trying to "maintain a hard won monopoly over the right to interpret the right of Israel's charitable needs;" this is a somewhat loaded expression and completely inappropriate. The real point is that the Jewish National Fund is one of the major fundraising bodies for Israel, whereas Eliezer Jaffe is only dealing with the minor, smaller (even if signifi-

cant) charitable funds. The Jewish National Fund carries out very important fundraising, as well as Zionist and educational activities throughout the world, and has been doing its important work for over eighty years in connection with the redemption of the Land of Israel, as the afforestation and land reclamation authority involved with all settlement activity within the pre-1967 boundaries of Israel, with land reclamation and settlement infrastructure, with responsibility for the totality of Israel's afforestation, with the preparation and construction of all picnic and recreation areas, and the beautifying of Israel generally for all its inhabitants. There can be no comparison between the JNF's fundraising activities and those of, for example, the admirable but considerably smaller charities in Israel referred to in Samuel Cohen's book review. All comparison is invidious, particularly between fundraising objectives, but if the implication of Dr. Jaffe's book is only to give to the small charities rather than to the major ones which have been in existence for so long, and who are carrying on equally important work today, then perhaps Dr. Jaffe must be accused of throwing out the baby with the bath water.

Sidney L. Shipton

Director,
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