

Review of a Book Review

My congratulations to Samuel Cohen for reviewing my book, *Giving Wisely: The Israel Guide to Non-Profit and Volunteer Social Services*. In 1982, when I hand-delivered a copy to his boss, Charlotte Jacobson, the elected head of the J.N.F., asking her to review it for *Hadasah Magazine*, she refused, and lectured me adamantly on the damage the book would do to U.J.A. and mainstream fundraising. So I suggested that she write a negative review, but she rejected that idea too, apparently on the premise that donor ignorance is fundraiser bliss.

As a senior fundraiser for the Jewish National Fund (a fact omitted from his review), Sam Cohen is committed to and believes in the need to maintain a hard-won monopoly over the right to interpret Israel's charitable needs, to determine the appropriate conduits for sending money to Israel, and even the amount of money expected of individual givers. Institutional survival and individual success dictate instinctive rejection of independent

attempts to educate people about alternative or additional ways of giving charity to Israel for fear of losing out to new ideas, new Israeli contacts and partners, and competition for the Israel-bound dollar.

Cohen questions my "authority" to hold an independent briefing last summer for non-Israeli delegates to the Jewish Agency Assembly in Jerusalem. He doesn't know that for months I pestered the United Israel Appeal representative at the Jewish Agency to conduct a pre-Assembly seminar in order to alert delegates to the politicization of the Agency, its dependence on the World Zionist Organization, and the need to withstand Israeli government dictates concerning the organization and administration of the Jewish Agency and the allocation of U.J.A. and Keren Hayesod funds. After getting nowhere with this effort, I rented a ballroom at the Hilton Hotel with \$400 of my own savings, recruited two more speakers, mimeographed invitations, and with the help of my children, distributed the invitations in the lobbies of Jerusalem's major hotels. Nearly two hundred delegates attended the meeting, Zionists

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and fundraisers alike, and we had an extremely interesting and stimulating discussion about the future of the Jewish Agency. I would like to believe that my "Off-Broadway Seminar" had some role in educating the non-Israeli delegates. (Three delegates later gave me, unsolicited, \$100 each to help pay for the Seminar.)

By what "authority"? By the same authority that I contributed the twinning concept to Project Renewal; by the knowledge gained as a social work educator, researcher and practitioner in Israel for 25 years; and by right of intimate understanding of Israel's social services and social policy issues. Unfortunately, Cohen believes that "insiders in and around the Israel-oriented fundraising world know Dr. Jaffe to be anti-establishment. It's that simple". If this statement reflects the analytical capacity of the "insiders" what is the intellectual level of the "outsiders" around the Israel-oriented fundraising world? Slogans may sometimes work for emotional fundraising, but in this instance, the "anti-establishment" label is a character-assassination device, unrelated to the facts or the issues discussed.

Mr. Cohen questions the "validity" of *Giving Wisely*, as if there was some plot to leave out the mainstream agencies. Ironically, a questionnaire was indeed sent to the Jewish Agency (and to some of its subsidiaries such as the Pincus Fund, etc.). This was forwarded to Charlotte Jacobson, then chairperson of the Control Committee at the Zionist Organization headquarters in New York. Shortly thereafter, an American employee of the Control Committee called requesting a meeting at the King David, where he asked me kindly not to pursue plans to publish the book because it would

endanger the larger mainstream fundraising effort. Similarly, Hadassah Hospital and other Hadassah services in Israel received questionnaires to be included, but never responded. The Joint Distribution Committee in Israel went so far as to send in a completed questionnaire, but when the final profile was sent for approval they felt (correctly) that their status as a major receiver of funds, at the source, did not warrant their being listed in a book for Israeli organizations seeking resources. To my recollection, the Keren Kayemet was also sent a questionnaire, but did not respond, as did many other organizations — which besieged me, after publication, with letters asking if they could appear in the next edition. While there was no plot to keep any non-profit organizations out, there was great pressure by the mainstream organizations not to participate and not to have the book come out at all.

Unlike many of the functionaries at the Jewish Agency, the World Zionist Organization, and the Federations, I deeply believe that donors can and want to be educated and become more sophisticated concerning their philanthropy for Israel. I believe they can demand reform and depoliticization of philanthropy, and more accountability and results for their money. I believe in donors' personal involvement with Israeli self-help groups, and that these encounters will lead to changes in patterns of giving and to much greater levels of giving.

Finally, I cannot accept monopolization of philanthropy by the mainstream organizations or attempts to keep issues of reform from the lay leadership. . . . Anyone outside that circle is considered *persona-non-grata*, and has to do the best he can to break through.

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 *Miyah* 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 acknowledge 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.

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