

ACCOUNTABILITY

HAVE trained myself to be patiently and politely responsive to the large number of those who turn to me for information on editorial themes of this journal—also themes I wrote about *decades* ago. But patience and politeness failed me (and now I regret it) when a few weeks ago a distinguished member of the Central Conference of American Rabbis phoned and suggested that we meet so as to explore how to guide the CCAR Committee charged with reporting on how the Jewish Agency spends United Jewish Appeal funds collected in the United States. As Chairman of his new committee, the rabbi thought that I might have information for his colleagues and himself.

Patience and politeness failed me in replying because ever since I reprinted most of the so-called "Fulbright Report" on the Jewish Agency, in 1963, while pointing to what I referred to as "United Fundraising—Universal Waste" (*Jewish Spectator*, March 1960) years before the investigation of Jewish Agency affairs by the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, I have been defamed by American Jewish leaders—not excepting numerous rabbis—as an "enemy of Israel."

I should not have permitted resentment to influence my reply, but I couldn't restrain myself telling the rabbi there was nothing I could add to my editorials of

the past twenty-five years, and more, as well as to my columns and "Letters" printed in the London *Jewish Chronicle* for many years. I added that the CCAR's inquiry into Jewish Agency affairs is late, too late. Still, I sent the rabbi a copy of the Resolution adopted by the 1975 Convention of the Rabbinical Assembly of America, which reads in part:

For many years now, only one responsible Jewish voice has been raised in questioning certain fund-raising procedures most of us took for granted. Dr. Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, in her magazine *The Jewish Spectator*, has consistently hammered at the lack of accountability in fund-raising drives. She was roundly denounced for it, but recent headlines bear her warnings out. The absence of strict public accountability apparently leads, or at least permits, disorders and serious losses. The American Jewish community owes Dr. Rosmarin a vote of thanks for her warnings.

The concern of the Central Conference of American Rabbis with how U.J.A. funds are spent by the Jewish Agency was sparked, I assume, by Rabbi Brian Lurie's statement that the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, of which he is the Executive Director, has the right to know how the money it raises is spent in Israel. The S. F. Federation demands that the money raised in San Francisco be accounted for.

The San Francisco Federation demands, as have many of my editorials, that funds earmarked for the Jewish Agency should NOT travel the long and expensive road of being first transmitted to U.J.A. headquarters in New York, from there to the United Israel Appeal, and only then to the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem. As the San Franciscan Jewish Federation now sees it (many of my editorials have stressed this *decades* ago), there is no reason why funds for the Jewish Agency cannot be transmitted *directly*. The San Franciscans also demand that Jewish Agency funds should not be used for financing the World Zionist Organization and its constituents, a demand likewise frequently voiced by me as well as in several articles by Professor Eliezer Jaffe of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

There is good reason to believe that Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds have closed their eyes and kept silent about the *misuse* of Jewish Agency funds because funds for Jewish domestic and local projects, too, are being solicited by invoking the needs of Israel. It is no secret that most of those who contribute to their Jewish Federations are unaware of the fact that approximately half of the funds raised are spent for domestic and local needs. *This is proper*, but it should not be kept "classified information."

IT HAS been authoritatively calculated that of the approximately 500 million dollars that will accrue to the Jewish Agency during the current fiscal year, only about seven cents of each dollar will be spent for "constructive purposes" of immigration and immigrants and *non-political* projects in Israel. It is for this reason that, time and again, I have suggested to close down the Jewish Agency and transfer relief funds for Israel to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which has an unequalled record for integrity and accountability and, most important, is not under pressure, as the Jewish Agency is, to provide budgets for obsolete Zionist political projects.

All these matters have been freely discussed in the Hebrew papers and journals in Israel, but in this country *The Jewish Spectator* was the only publication which reported that the then Israel Finance Minister Pinhas Sapir told a political rally in Tel Aviv on June 16, 1975.

At least two thousand of the four thousand officials employed by the Jewish Agency are superfluous. If they were transferred to other jobs, the Jewish Agency's operations would become more efficient.

Editor, The Jewish Spectator
Trudy Rosemarin

But today, ten years later, the Jewish Agency still employs 4,000 officials, in superfluous departments and on financing such white elephants as the Herzl Institute in New York, housed in a huge building at 515 Park Avenue, where scores of employees are busy tilting the windmills of "Zionizing American Jews," and publishing magazines, such as *Midstream*, and "Zionist" books with funds that are contributed for Israel.

The problem, therefore, is "accountability," because thus far the Jewish Agency-World Zionist Organization has not disclosed, to cite but one example, the budget of the Herzl Institute of New York and of the publications bearing its imprint. And the same secrecy shrouds the other departments and activities.

The San Francisco Jewish Federation wants a bigger say on the Jewish Agency's allocation of funds. Significantly, the *Northern California Jewish Bulletin*, which is published by the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, is sufficiently independent—unlike its counterparts in Los Angeles and elsewhere—to place "accountability" above the consequences the disclosures may have on THE CAMPAIGN. Thus far the San Francisco challenge to the Jewish Agency has been swept under the carpet and disregarded by other Federations, as well as by their General Assembly in November 1984.

I think the insurrection of the San Francisco Federation is to be credited to the leadership of Rabbi Brian Lurie who, unlike many Jewish civil servants employed by Jewish Federations, does *not* regard the office of Federation Executive Director the acme of accomplishment. Rabbi Lurie is erudite, eloquent, and endowed with much charisma. He need not be apprehensive about his future should the San Francisco Federation refuse to follow his leadership.

of the Jewish Agency.

In a 6-page thoroughly researched article, the Israeli weekly *Koteret Roshit* ("Headline") of November 14, 1984, presents, under the by-line of Aryeh Dayan, a *complete* report on the eleven Jewish Agency departments which, together, are still having on their payroll over *four thousand officials*. As an example, of the wasteful overstaffing, Aryeh Dayan reports that the office of the Chairman of the Jewish Agency—World Zionist Organization has 42 employees and a budget of 16 million dollars a year.

Mr. Dayan's article reached us too late to be translated for this issue, but we hope to print it in a later issue. Its conclusion is: "*Dissolving the Jewish Agency will not cause any damage*. On the contrary, the hundreds of millions which are

now wasted on providing jobs for thousands of its officials in Israel and *shelichim* (emissaries in the Diaspora), if used for constructive purposes will be a gain. Many departments and budgets of the Jewish Agency" writes Mr. Dayan, "appear like parodies, considering Israel's situation. One must see them in order to believe what is going on."

One of these "parodies" can also be seen in New York—in the form of two Jewish Agency Departments of Education—one Orthodox, the other "general" (whatever this may mean), with two full-time salaried directors whose useless offices reproduce the day-before-yesterday's "program material," with a large staff of assistants, of course. In addition, the Jewish National Fund boondoggles in Jewish education—or rather what it mistakes for Jewish education.

I would advise those who *care* how charity funds for Israel are spent to take time off for an inspection tour of 515 Park Avenue, New York City and, also, the town house occupied by the Jewish National Fund (42 East 89th St., New York). And, of course, those who visit Israel should seek admission to the Jewish Agency headquarters in Jerusalem—for an *unguided* visit. After all, *seeing* is preferable and more convincing than "reports."