



EDITORIAL



WHY NOT THE B'NAI B'RITH?

Some weeks ago Mr. Felix Warburg of New York, called a conference of a number of leading Jews of the North and East, for the purpose of considering the conditions of the Jews the world over. Just what the result of the conference was we do not know. But a number of leading coreligionists did come together and the matter was considered.

It is commendable in Mr. Warburg to have taken the initiative in this matter. Mr. Warburg's activities entitle him to a place among the leaders of American Israel, indeed among the Jews of the world. However, it occurs to us that the concern of world-Jewry is a greater affair than the concern of one man or of even a small coterie of men.

It is for this reason that it seems to us that the proper agency to consider the condition of world-wide Jewry, would be a world-wide organization that knows no party lines, so far as divisions in Jewry are concerned. If we had no such organization it would be eminently proper to form one; since we have it, we ought to use its machinery.

We would exclude the International Zionist Committee from attempting to deal with this matter—not because it has not at its head some of the most capable Jews of the world, but because it is essentially a partisan organization, and one that has divided Jewry into camps that are not particularly friendly to each other. In this matter of the status of a world-wide Jewry, we need unity, and statements to the contrary notwithstanding, we believe it can be had.

The organization which to our mind ought to have taken up this matter, is the Independent Order B'nai B'rith. The order extends over the United States; it has branches in England, in Germany, in Austria and Turkey. It has within its membership some of the greatest and most prominent men of Europe. It is regarded as the most prominent as well as the most representative organization by Europeans, in America. It could well undertake to look into this question, because of the machinery and the fine traditions the order has built up.

We do not know why the B'nai B'rith has not undertaken a survey of Jewish conditions abroad. Had the order done this, we are certain that Mr. Warburg would not have called his conference. But it seems to us that it is not too late yet. Mr. A. B. Seelenfreund, the grand secretary is in Europe now, looking into the condition of the European districts. He will be in a position to gather the most valuable information. As far as we know, Mr. Warburg's council has not yet done anything definite, nor can anything be done before most searching and thorough investigation has been made. It is true commissions have been sent to Europe to study the conditions of the Jews,

but this has been from the side of philanthropy, only. What we need to know, and what the I. O. B. B. could find out and let the world know, is, how shall our coreligionists be rehabilitated economically and put upon an independent basis.

The investigation would take time, toil and funds. But there is no greater problem before the Jewish world at the present time. It is even a more pressing problem than that of the acquisition of the Holy Land, for the latter will settle the fate of one or two million at the utmost, while the economic existence of eight million is now in danger. The problem of the Jew in Eastern and Southern Europe is more vast than most of us think, and the time is rapidly approaching when the solution of this problem will have to be shifted from a philanthropic and temporary basis, to a permanently economic one.

It is in this readjustment that the B'nai B'rith could render magnificent work. It could make itself in this connection, an everlasting place in the annals of Jewish history, and probably world's history. It will take work and effort—but all that will be expended will be more than worth while.

We have heard much against the order. Much that we have heard is fiction, not fact. Every organization has its friends as well as its enemies; and the more successful an organization is, the more enemies will it have, in the ranks of similar but less successful organizations. But there is some truth in some of the accusations that have been made against the B'nai B'rith, more particularly against the policy of inaction in later months.

Let us not forget that it was the B'nai B'rith that started that chapter in the late war, that ended or is about to end, in so much glory for the Jewish Welfare Board. Let us not forget that the practical extinction of the Hebrew caricature is due to the efforts and the energy of the B'nai B'rith. Let us not forget that the success—or whatever of success—attended the Jewish Congress, was due to the initial tact of Adolf Kraus—though this is not so well known. If, therefore, there are something that the leaders of the order have overlooked, they have at least accomplished much.

Nevertheless, the order has lacked or at any rate, has not shown in these later years—a world-wide vision. Its conquests have been of a local character—at best confined to the United States and Canada. The order needs a larger vision; it needs to extend its scope; it must give its members a world-view of Jewish affairs, and now is the time to do it. Now is the opportunity to do it; now is the time to establish its right to the guardianship of Israel the world over.

Will the leaders of the order do it? It has the men of mentality; it has the men of heart; it has the men of deeply Jewish loyalty; it has the machinery; it has the standing; it has all that is necessary to accomplish the task—but has it the will?

JOIN THE CONGREGATION.

Within a short time the high holy days will be here and there will be a great rush for seats in the temples. There are large numbers of people who never affiliate themselves with the congregation only on the two great holy days or the occasion of funerals or weddings. Such indifferent people do much harm within the ranks of Israel. An unfortunate thing about these people is that they expect the attention of the rabbi when they are in need of his services and are indignant if they do not receive it, even though they contribute nothing toward the support of the congregation. They fail to realize that if others had been as neglectful of their Judaism as they have been there would be no rabbi to give them the desired attention. Every Jew should be affiliated with the congregation of his community, even though it may involve extra expense.

The congregation is the most important of all Jewish activities and should be liberally supported, both financially and in personal effort. There are many people who only join a synagogue when they desire their children to receive the benefit of the religious school, and after they have been confirmed they withdraw their membership. Such actions are most niggardly and reflect very little credit upon those who do such things, and yet they think they have done their duty when they give their children the benefit of a Jewish religious education, but they are mistaken, for this education is of very little benefit if it is not nourished by the proper example, as nothing exercises such an influence upon children as the actions of their elders. It is not enough that parents join a congregation, they should also attend services as regularly as possible.—The Jewish Review-Observer.

We probably stand too close to the stupendous events of the last four years to properly estimate values and judge men correctly. But many of us have received the impression that the Great War and the following armistice and peace negotiations, have not produced any great outstanding figure towering above all others. No Richelieu, no Disraeli, no Bismarck, no Metternich has appeared, as far as is now apparent. But as stated at the beginning of this paragraph, perhaps we stand too close to men and events and thus lack the proper perspective for correct judgment.—American Israelite.

Orthodoxy and Judaism cannot consistently plead for the retaining of certain outward symbols and ceremonies while great fundamental principles, such as the Sabbath, are utterly neglected. Religious considerations in Israel are far beyond the prayer-book, the covering of the head, the wearing of the talith, and a thousand other customs which we would by no means lose in spiritual value.—Jewish Voice.