

[American Jewish Congress]

To the Jews of America

THE JEWISH CONGRESS

versus

**THE AMERICAN JEWISH
COMMITTEE**

A Complete Statement, with the Correspondence between Louis D. Brandeis and Cyrus Adler

August, 1915

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The Duties and Responsibilities of the American Jewish Congress

By reason of the war a situation is presented which calls for most careful consideration by the Jewish people of the course which should be pursued to advance their interests.

We are convinced that the miseries of the Jews can never be satisfactorily dealt with by merely relieving individual distress, or correcting individual acts of injustice. We are convinced that the Jews' main efforts should be directed not to charity but to removing the causes which make charity necessary. To remove the causes of misery and injustice, the Jews' thoughts must be directed less to the sufferings of individual Jews than to the wrongs to the Jewish people. We are convinced that the wrongs to the Jewish people will not end until full liberty is attained.

As Americans we should all be quick to recognize that when action is contemplated on grave questions which affect vitally the welfare of the whole Jewish people, methods and means should be adopted under which decisions are not made, or action taken, until there has been full public discussion; and that *decisions affecting the Jewish people are made only by those Jews who may properly be deemed representative of the whole people*. Such consideration can be most appropriately given in a Congress; and the members of that Congress should clearly consist of those who either through existing organizations or other appropriate means may be selected to represent the whole people.

Such a Congress should, if it were possible, include delegates representing the Jews of every part of the world. But this is obviously impossible. More than 10,000,000 of the 14,000,000 Jews of the world are residents of the belligerent countries. These are for that reason, and because of the lamentable incidents of the war, precluded from participating in any general Congress. The only large body of Jews in a neutral country are the 3,000,000 Jews of America. The remaining few hundred thousand Jews in neutral countries are scattered throughout the two hemispheres. Upon the American Jews, therefore, falls the burden of acting on behalf of their brethren throughout the world, and we Americans may so act with a conviction that in so doing we are representative of the world Jewry; because—

1. The Jewish problem is single and universal, and

2. The 3,000,000 Jews of America are composed of immigrants, or descendants of immigrants, coming from every country and district, and including persons from every section of society and every shade of religious belief:

For these reasons it is desirable that a Congress of American Jews, convening on a democratic basis, should be held for the consideration of the problems of the Jewish people.

American Jews have not only the right, but the *duty* to act in this matter. And the duty resting upon us of America is especially insistent. We are free from civil or political disability, and are relatively prosperous. Our fellow Americans are infused with a high and generous spirit, which insures the approval of our struggle to enoble, liberate and otherwise improve the condition of an important part of the human race. The innate American manliness makes them sympathize particularly with our efforts at self-help. American detachment from the Old World problems relieves us from suspicions and embarrassments attending the activities of the Jews of rival European countries. Our loyalty to America cannot be questioned; because conflict between American interests and Jewish aims is not conceivable. The American twentieth century ideals and aspirations—democracy

and social justice—are the ages-old ideals and aspirations of the Jewish people. This identity of our ideals with those of other Americans, and the happy position of detachment of this country, leave us free to think, speak and act in behalf of all the Jews of the world.

The Congress should speak not upon one, but on all the issues involved in the Jewish Problem—issues long existing, which the war has accentuated, and upon which a decision may soon be demanded. There is the greater duty of a Jewish Congress to consider every phase of our great problem; because we have reason to know that the world—Jewish and non-Jewish, is looking to us to plead in the greatest of all possible Jewish gatherings for such action as may secure for our people not only full rights for the individual but an adequate development of the Jewish collective interest.

Whether the Jewish problem shall now be solved depends primarily not upon others, but upon us.

Let us Americans, therefore, lead earnestly, courageously and joyously in the struggle for the liberation of the Jewish people. Let every man and every woman do his or her part.

JEWISH CONGRESS ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE.

New York, August 16, 1915.



Introduction

We give herewith the facts in the development of the movement for an American Jewish Congress. Those who are interested in this important issue may obtain therefrom a comprehensive view of the efforts that have been made to secure unity of action on the part of American Jewry on behalf of the great catastrophe that has overtaken the Jews living in the war zone. The idea of a Jewish Congress has been nurtured through twelve months of war; first by the Jewish Emancipation Committee, later by the Jewish Rights Congress Committee, and now by the Jewish Congress Organization Committee, in which are represented fourteen national organizations, with a membership of over three hundred thousand.

The whole question as to the adequate consideration of the problems now imminent has been submitted to the American Jewish Committee, which has assumed responsibility for the proper handling of the problems arising out of the war. But this organization, although assuming this responsibility, has, during the entire period of the war, not only done nothing to meet this situation, but its president at a meeting of the New York Kehillah held on April 25th, when the question of Congress arose, publicly declared:

"A congress may lead to bad blood. You must have facts if you are to protest against atrocities in other countries. What evidence have we that these atrocities have been committed? The reports that we have received are not proper grounds on which to base the action that we propose, and rhetoric can not be used as proof in international affairs."

The inactivity of the American Jewish Committee and its inability to understand the seriousness of the situation, are reflected in extreme form by the quoted remarks of Mr. Marshall. Because of the imminent character of the problems confronting the Jewish people, and because these problems must and can be met by American Jewry, the movement for a Congress finally emerged. Now, as the creation of responsible Jewish organizations, it is prepared to meet the emergency by calling forth the strength and power and influence of the Jewish people in the deliberations of an assembly organized on a democratic basis, to consider the whole Jewish problem in all its phases.

To this movement have rallied the Jewish fraternal organizations, congregations, labor unions, mutual benefit societies, orthodox rabbis, Zionists, non-Zionists, nationalists, leading Jewish philanthropists, men and women of all shades of opinion and thought.

It is a movement of the Jewish people determined in this crisis to carry on the responsibilities which they assume.

We, the Jewish Congress Organization Committee, have faith in the Jewish people.

The opponents of the Congress openly and secretly declare their lack of faith in the Jewish people and their ability to choose proper leaders.

We give the whole record, omitting no fact necessary to an understanding of the situation which has arisen as a result of the refusal of a small organization to subordinate itself to the will of the majority of the Jewish people.

The facts speak for themselves.

The first public reference to the calling of an American Jewish Congress to grapple with the situation arising out of the European War was made at the extraordinary conference of American Zionists held on Sunday, August 30th, 1914, at the Hotel Marseilles, New York, four weeks after war was declared.

FIRST EXPRESSION OF SENTIMENT ON JEWISH CONGRESS

(From the minutes of the Extraordinary Zionist Conference, August 30th, 1914.)

Dr. N. Syrkin, B. Zuckerman, Bernard G. Richards and others offered the following resolution:

"The Zionist Extraordinary Conference assembled empowers its Provisional Committee to take the initiative, within the shortest time possible, to call a convention of Jewish organizations and Jewish committees for the following purposes:

"1. For the creation of a relief fund to alleviate the sufferings of the Jewish population in war districts and of Jewish refugees.

"2. The maintenance of Jewish institutions in Palestine and the Orient.

"3. The discussion of the entire Jewish situation in regard to the changed condition of the world after the war."

This resolution was referred to the Provisional Zionist Committee for action.

FIRST APPROACH TO AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE TO CO-OPERATE IN CALLING A CONGRESS

(Letter of Louis D. Brandeis, Chairman, to Louis Marshall, Chairman, dated August 31st, 1914.)

MR. LOUIS MARSHALL,

President American Jewish Committee.

Dear Sir:

The Provisional Committee for International Zionist Affairs was constituted at a conference of representative Zionists in New York City, on Sunday, August 30, 1914. This committee is to act on behalf of the International Zionist Organization pending the reconstruction of that organization, which has been disrupted by the present war. The Committee is endeavoring to maintain and strengthen the Zionist organization and to support such Palestinian Institutions as have heretofore been supported by that organization.

The Committee regards it also as its function to emphasize the importance of Palestine for the Jews of the world in any negotiations that may be entered upon among the Powers before or upon the conclusion of the war.

That any diplomatic negotiations on behalf of the Jews shall have due effect, the Committee believes that action should be taken by a united American Jewry.

To this end, this Committee invites you to co-operate with it in calling a conference of representatives of all the important Jewish organizations and groups in the country.

For the Committee,

LOUIS D. BRANDEIS,
Chairman.

(Reply of Louis Marshall, Chairman, to Louis D. Brandeis, Chairman, dated August 31st, 1914.)

LOUIS D. BRANDEIS, ESQ.,

Chairman.

Dear Sir:

Yours of this date, informing me of the organization of the Provisional Committee for International Zionist Affairs, and of the action taken at a conference of representative Zionists held yesterday, was considered at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the American Jewish Committee held to-day.

The Committee, recognizing the critical situation of the Jews throughout the world, as well as in Palestine, has taken such action as it has deemed proper in the circumstances to deal with the numerous problems which have arisen and which are to be anticipated. It has to-day appropriated funds in aid of Bulgarian

and Palestinian Jews, to a considerable amount. It has appointed a committee to consider the condition of the Jews throughout the world, in view of the existing war, and to make such recommendations as are demanded by such conditions. This Committee is to co-operate with all organizations which desire to accomplish the same end.

It is also engaged in making a careful study of the diplomatic aspects of the war, and the advisability of having presented to the Powers such considerations as may be deemed desirable.

This Committee welcomes your co-operation, and a special committee, consisting of Dr. Cyrus Adler, Dr. J. L. Magnes and myself, has been appointed to arrange for a conference with a like committee appointed by your body.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) LOUIS MARSHALL,

President, American Jewish Committee.

HOW THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE MET THE FIRST OFFER TO CO-OPERATE IN A CALL FOR A JEWISH CONGRESS

The invitation extended to the Provisional Zionist Committee by the American Jewish Committee was accepted. Messrs. Brandeis, Gottheil and Lipsky met Messrs. Adler, Marshall and Magnes, and discussed plans for calling a conference of Jewish organizations. A program was submitted by the Zionist organization, which did not reach the point of discussion by the conferrees, for it was apparent that the proposal made by Mr. Brandeis in his letter of August 31st, 1914, did not meet with the approval of the sub-committee of the American Jewish Committee.

The American Jewish Committee therefore called a conference of Jewish organizations, which was held at Temple Emanu-El, on October 25, 1914. Before this meeting was held, however, the Independent Order B'nai B'rith had set the machinery of its organization in motion for the collection of relief funds; the Central Relief Committee had also been formed; and the Provisional Zionist Committee had engaged in a large campaign for funds for Palestine.

The result of the Temple Emanu-El meeting was the formation of the American Jewish Relief Committee. The name given to the Committee indicates that the American Jewish Committee aimed to identify, as far as possible, the work of this Committee with its own activities, and this impression was strengthened by the election to the principal offices of officers of the American Jewish Committee.

At the Temple Emanu-El meeting, the discussion centered about relief work, and no action whatsoever was considered bearing upon the holding of a Congress.

The American Jewish Committee, in the letter of Mr. Marshall quoted above, intimated that it had appointed a committee to consider the condition of the Jews throughout the world in view of the existing war. He also intimated that the Committee was engaged in making a careful study of the diplomatic aspects of the war and the advisability of having presented to the powers such considerations as may be deemed advisable.

No official statement has been made as to the report of the committee mentioned, but the intimation that the American Jewish Committee was studying the diplomatic aspects of the war and the possibility of having presented to the powers such considerations as may be deemed advisable indicates that at that time it had no intention of sharing responsibility for any action with any other Jewish organization.

Recognizing the importance of unified action in the collection of funds for the relief of the distress of Jews, which every month seemed more and more appalling, the Congress advocates waived for the time being the question of calling of a Congress, and in common with other organizations devoted themselves to the task of collecting relief funds.

WHILE THE FUNDS WERE BEING COLLECTED

The agitation for a Congress was soon taken up, however, by the Jewish press, notably by the *Jewish Daily News*, *The Wahrheit*, and later the *Jewish Leader*. A Committee, of which Joseph Barondess, member of the Board of Education of New York, was the chairman. Meetings were held and discussions stimulated in the press.

Out of the activities of these various committees there finally emerged the Jewish Congress Organization Committee, of which Mr. G. Bublick is now the chairman. In this Committee all elements and organizations desirous of holding a democratic Jewish Congress are represented. As soon as any national organization declared in favor of a Congress, it sent its delegates to the Jewish Congress Organization Committee.

THE QUESTION COMES BEFORE THE KEHILLAH

The agitation of this Committee was concentrated at the convention of the New York Kehillah, which was held on April 25th, 1915.

At this convention Louis Marshall, reporting for the American Jewish Committee, failed to mention whether his Committee had come to any conclusions as a result of its study of war conditions or of the diplomatic aspects of the war. Referring to the agitation for a Congress, he said:

"The American Jewish Committee has been unable to appreciate that any good can be wrought by the holding of a Congress, but, on the contrary, can only behold the possibility of infinite mischief. It is certain to result in misunderstanding. Its pronouncements cannot be the result of that careful study and deliberation which, more than at any other time in our history, is required. The ebullitions of passion, the expressions of emotion, the theories of the propagandist and the dreams of the visionary will lead either to misconstruction, to ridicule or to antagonism, in those quarters where, above all things, it is necessary to look for sympathy, and to appeal to reason and to considerations of expediency."

Mr. Marshall also reported that the American Jewish Committee had decided to call a conference at an early date of the leading Jewish national organizations for the purpose of securing "an interchange of views" as to the proper policy to pursue and the methods to be adopted "for the furtherance of the welfare of those in whom we are so much concerned."

He enumerated twenty-one organizations to be invited to this conference at which the members were to exchange "views."

A resolution was presented to the convention of the New York Kehillah, which read as follows:

"It is recommended by the Convention of the Kehillah that the American Jewish Committee, in conjunction with such national organizations as may be willing to co-operate with it for that purpose, issue a call for a Jewish Congress to consider the Jewish question and to devise ways and means how to place the same on the agenda of the peace conference."

This resolution was followed by recommendations for the appointment of a Committee of Fifteen to devise a plan of representation.

After a lengthy discussion, in which Mr. Marshall, Mr. Sulzberger and others of the American Jewish Committee spoke against the resolution, and Mr. Barondess, Mr. Hourwich and Mr. Zuckerman spoke in favor of it, it was decided to defer action for one month, to give the delegates an opportunity to consider the question, and to permit the American Jewish Committee to hold a conference which was scheduled to be held on May 2nd.

SECOND UTTERANCE OF ZIONIST ORGANIZATION

The Provisional Zionist Committee adopted, on May 9th, a resolution reading as follows:

"That, in the opinion of the Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs, it is desirable that, at the proper time, a congress of American Jews, convened on a democratic basis, should be held for a consideration of the problems of the Jewish people."

On Sunday, May 23rd, the Order Free Sons of Israel met in Atlantic City and adopted a resolution favoring a Jewish Congress.

The adjourned Kehillah convention held on Sunday, May 23rd, adopted the following resolution:

THE KEHILLAH RESOLUTION ON THE CONGRESS

"WHEREAS, This convention of the Jewish Community of New York City favors the idea of holding a conference of delegates from Jewish societies throughout the country *chosen by their membership*, for the sole purpose of considering the Jewish question as it affects our brethren in belligerent lands, and in view of the fact that the American Jewish Committee has heretofore decided to hold a conference to which the heads of the leading Jewish organizations of the country are to be invited for the purpose of considering the same subject, be it

"Resolved, That the Jewish Community, as a constituent part of the American Jewish Committee, recommend to the latter that it hold a special meeting of its members with all convenient despatch to consider the advisability of calling a conference of the character favored by this convention in lieu of the conference which the American Jewish Committee has heretofore planned."

Dr. Hourwich, the mover of this compromise resolution, explained that the use of the word conference was a concession to those who were averse to the use of the word congress, but that the compromise resolution contained all that was in the majority resolution of the preceding Kehillah convention.

This resolution was seconded by Mr. Jacob H. Schiff and adopted by a vote of 82 against 66.

A resolution was then adopted directing the Kehillah representatives at the special meeting of the American Jewish Committee to vote for the above resolution. This "binding" resolution was adopted in spite of the protest of Mr. Marshall, Mr. Sulzberger and others. Mr. Schiff was not personally opposed to the resolution, but assured the convention that the adopted compromise resolution would be carried out faithfully.

THE RESOLUTION OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE, ADOPTED JUNE 20TH

The special meeting of the American Jewish Committee was held on June 20th. The session was held behind closed doors. At this meeting, the Jewish Congress Organization Committee sought to secure a hearing for the congress idea, but was denied admittance, the meeting deciding the question before the committee was received.

There were only eleven members of the Committee present who were not residents of New York. These included three from Philadelphia, and one each from the following cities: Washington, Providence, Buffalo, Newark, Rochester, New Haven, Seaford, Del., and Peoria, Ill.

The following is the resolution of the American Jewish Committee:

"Resolved, That a conference be held of delegates from Jewish national societies throughout the country, for the sole purpose of considering the Jewish question as it affects our brethren in belligerent lands;

"That the number of delegates to this conference shall not exceed one hundred and fifty;

"That each organization shall choose its delegates in such manner as it may

deem advisable, but it is recommended that in the selection of delegates, the members of the organizations or their governing bodies be enabled to express their preference for delegates;

"That a special committee of seven be appointed to designate the organizations to be invited to participate in the conference, and to work out a basis of representation for the various organizations to be invited;

"That the conference shall take place at Washington, D. C., as near as possible to October 24, 1915, and that the several organizations which are to participate be requested to select their delegates not later than October 10, 1915;

"That the Executive Committee be empowered to defer the convening of the conference if circumstances shall arise to render such action advisable."

Mr. Marshall appointed the following special committee of seven to take up the details of the conference: Dr. Cyrus Adler, Harry Cutler, Samuel Dorf, Isaac M. Ullman, Judge Julian W. Mack, Dr. J. L. Magnes and Bernard Semel.

CONGRESS AGITATION CONTINUES OWING TO REFUSAL OF AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE TO TAKE INITIATIVE

The resolution of the American Jewish Committee adopted on June 20th was not deemed satisfactory by the advocates of the Congress. Instead of sharing the responsibility with other national organizations, the resolution of June 20th was so framed as to enable the American Jewish Committee to exercise absolute control over the limited Conference it proposed calling. The committee of arrangements was a committee of its own members. The method of representation was of its own devising. The program was deliberately framed so as to exclude from consideration questions that might arise tending to perfect a permanent representative organization of the Jews of America.

In view of these facts, the Jewish Congress Organization Committee continued its agitation in favor of a Congress, and secured from a number of additional organizations expressions of opinion favorable to the cause.

The Federation of Russian-Polish Jews on May 30th in annual convention had adopted a resolution favoring an American Jewish Congress.

The Independent Order Berith Abraham (200,000 members), meeting in Atlantic City on June 6th, with representatives numbering twelve hundred men, at which a committee of the Jewish Congress Organization Committee appeared, adopted a resolution unanimously endorsing the Jewish Congress to be called on democratic lines.

At the annual convention of the Independent Order Berith Sholom (50,000 members), held on May 30th, a resolution was unanimously adopted, after hearing an argument by the Jewish Congress Organization Committee, favoring the holding of a Jewish Congress on democratic lines.

At the annual convention of the Federation of Galician and Bukowinian Jews (50,000 members), held in New York, a resolution was unanimously adopted favoring a Jewish Congress.

The annual convention of the Independent Order Free Sons of Israel of Boston had adopted a resolution in favor of a Jewish Congress, on March 25th.

THE CONGRESS AT THE ZIONIST CONVENTION

The Jewish Congress Organization Committee then approached the Zionist organization and asked that it co-operate in the calling of a Congress. The Congress Committee appeared before the session of the Provisional Zionist Committee at Boston on Sunday, June 27th, and secured the adoption of the following resolution, after a lengthy discussion:

"The Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs, having on May 9, 1915, declared itself in favor of the convening of an American Jewish Congress on a democratic basis,

"This conference of the constituent organizations of the Provisional Committee approves that declaration of policy. In furtherance thereof, it urges the Provisional

Committee to invite the co-operation of other national Jewish organizations in the United States to issue a joint call for an American Jewish Congress, which shall consider the proper steps to be taken to obtain full civil status for the Jews in all lands and the further development of a home land for the Jewish people in Palestine."

NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

At the request of Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen, a member of the American Jewish Committee and of the Zionist organization, and on the invitation and through the good offices of Judge Julian W. Mack, Mr. Brandeis, after consulting the Jewish Congress Organization Committee, agreed to meet Dr. Cyrus Adler and make an effort to secure unified action by American Jews in the matter of the congress. The negotiations are recorded in the following correspondence, which conference ended with the refusal of Dr. Adler to submit the question again to the members of the American Jewish Committee, and the issuance of the invitations to the limited conference of the American Jewish Committee to be held in Washington.

We submit this correspondence to the judgment of American Jewry.

MINUTES OF CONFERENCE OF JULY 12 BETWEEN MR. BRANDEIS AND DR. ADLER

Minutes of conference held at the Hotel Astor, New York City, July 12th, 1915, beginning at four o'clock and lasting until six, between Dr. Cyrus Adler, representing the American Jewish Committee, and Mr. Louis D. Brandeis, representing the Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs, Prof. Felix Frankfurter, a member of both organizations, was present at the conference.

Dr. Adler explained the basis of selection of the various Jewish organizations throughout the United States, which the Jewish Committee, tentatively, had in mind to invite to a proposed Conference (throughout the discussion Dr. Adler used the term "Conference" and Mr. Brandeis spoke of a "Congress") and the number of votes to be allotted to each of these organizations in such a Conference, the total not to exceed a membership of one hundred and fifty representatives. Mr. Brandeis stated that the number of delegates, the size of the Congress, did not appear to him a matter of vital moment, but the basis of the inception of such a Congress, the manner of the selection of its delegates, was a vital matter. Mr. Brandeis, therefore, suggested that Dr. Adler and he select, from the tentative list of organizations which Dr. Adler submitted, a nucleus of from twelve to twenty-four organizations, representatives of which should be invited to a preliminary conference, whose purpose it should be, in turn, to invite all appropriate Jewish organizations of the United States to meet in a national Congress, to formulate the basis of membership in such a Congress, the number and method of selecting the delegates to such a Congress, and questions of like nature.

As a result of the discussion following this suggestion, a modified proposal was made that there be called a preliminary conference. Just as Mr. Brandeis thought that no one organization or two can or should assume the responsibility or authority of inviting the rest of the country in Congress, so Dr. Adler suggested that a larger preliminary selecting committee be called as a preliminary committee, to invite representatives of other organizations for a pre-preliminary conference, to formulate all the questions for the final Conference, or Congress. He suggested that such a preliminary body consist of the organizations to whom, in the list of organizations submitted to Mr. Brandeis, he had allotted seven and five votes, respectively, Mr. Brandeis suggested that he desired to consider, with his associates, the list submitted by Dr. Adler for the preliminary committee, and subsequently meet Dr. Adler for further consideration of the matter. Dr. Adler suggested that his executive committee meets to-morrow, Tuesday, and that it would be desirable to submit to his committee the results of the interview, as well as have Mr. Brandeis

consider the results of the interview with his associates. To this end, a minute of the meeting was to be prepared, which Prof. Frankfurter was asked to draw.

FELIX FRANKFURTER.

LETTER OF DR. ADLER TO MR. BRANDEIS, DATED JULY 21ST

New York, July 21, 1915.

Dear Mr. Brandeis:

I am authorized to inform you that the memorandum, prepared by Professor Frankfurter, representing in brief the results of our conference of July 12th, was laid before the Executive Committee of the American Jewish Committee.

After a full discussion, the following resolution was adopted:

"Resolved, That the Chairman be instructed that it is the sense of the Executive Committee of the American Jewish Committee that the plan, purpose and scope of the Conference heretofore decided upon by the General Committee at a special meeting held on June 20th, 1915, be adhered to, with the modification that instead of the call for the Conference being signed by the American Jewish Committee alone, the following organizations be invited to sign the call, the Chairman to have the power to modify immaterial details: Arbeiter Ring, Federation of American Zionists, Federation of Galician and Bukowinean Jews, Independent Order B'nai B'rith, Independent Order B'rith Abraham, Independent Order B'rith Sholom, Order B'rith Abraham, Union of American Hebrew Congregations."

Let me say in explanation that our Committee favored your suggestion that it would be sufficient if you with your associates should agree with our Committee as to organizations to be invited and the number of representatives assigned to each, thus obviating the necessity of a preliminary conference. On the other hand, they felt that my suggestion that a number of organizations should join in the call was likely to produce a more favorable result.

With regard to the purpose and scope of the Conference, the Executive Committee felt that it was without power to change these. They were adopted at a meeting of the American Jewish Committee especially called for the purpose, and the Executive Committee regards itself as bound by the terms of the resolutions, a copy of which is inclosed herewith. The reason for the limitation of the scope of the Conference is that such limitation is representative of the dominant issue before the Jews of America and the Jews of the world, and it was deemed inadvisable to obscure the issue with any other subject.

I am, as you will note, given the discretion, in conference with you, to modify details such as would not materially change the main proposition. As soon as you find it possible to continue the discussion, I shall be glad to arrange with you for a further meeting.

Very sincerely yours,

CYRUS ADLER,

Chairman, Executive Committee.

REPLY OF MR. BRANDEIS TO DR. ADLER, DATED JULY 28

July 28, 1915.

My dear Dr. Adler:

I have yours of the 21st transmitting the vote of your Executive Committee, which rejects in substance the proposal submitted by me to you on July 12, 1915, for co-operation between the American Jewish Committee, the Zionists and the other national organizations in calling a Congress on a democratic basis to consider the problems of the Jewish people.

The vote of your Executive Committee declares "that the plan, purpose, and scope of the Conference heretofore decided upon by the General Committee at a special meeting on June 20, 1915, be adhered to" except that "instead of the call for the Conference being signed by the American Jewish Committee alone," eight other organizations named by it "be invited to sign the call," and that the Chairman

"have power to modify immaterial details." You also state that your "Executive Committee felt that it was without power to change the purpose and scope of the Conference," and that "the reason for the limitation of the scope of the Conference is that such limitation is representative of the dominant issue before the Jews of America," etc.

The single modification named by your Executive Committee appears to us of no significance. Even though adopted, it would leave in full force all the fundamental objections to the Conference plan as originally proposed by your Committee. The Conference would still remain thoroughly undemocratic. It would still not be co-operative. Its scope would still be so limited as to preclude the consideration of certain matters which might be deemed vital to the welfare of the Jews. The fact that your power as Chairman is by the vote expressly limited to the modification of "immaterial details," leads me to urge most earnestly, that before you and I meet again for a further discussion of this subject, the whole matter be referred to your General Committee, in order that the General Committee may take such action as is required to permit your Executive Committee and yourself to deal with the matter broadly, in accordance with the widely expressed will of the Jews of America.

When this matter is laid again before your General Committee, I trust you will make clear to them the grounds of objection to your Committee's Conference plan which I set forth at our meeting on July 12th, namely:

First: Your Committee's Conference plan is undemocratic. Democracy demands that those representatives of the Jews of America who are to assemble in Conference to take action concerning the problems of the Jewish people, shall have some voice in determining the conditions under which the conference shall convene and the scope of its deliberations. Your Committee has assumed to determine these matters itself; to determine in advance not only when and where the Conference shall be held; what the aggregate number of delegates shall be; which organizations shall be permitted to send delegates; and what number of representatives each such organization shall have; but also what its plan and scope shall be. Obviously, the mere formality now proposed by your Executive Committee of having certain other organizations selected by it sign with the American Jewish Committee the call to the Conference, would not make the proceeding any less undemocratic. So fundamental an objection as lack of democratic character can be removed only by a change equally fundamental. All national organizations must be given some voice in determining the conditions, plan and scope of the Conference or Congress. It was to this end that I proposed that your Committee join ours in inviting the leading national organizations—say 12, 24 or more, to each send one delegate to a preliminary conference which should determine when, where and how a Congress should be called, and also the number of delegates; how they should be selected; and generally the plan of the Congress, and that its scope to be set forth in the call be broadly the problems of the Jewish people, so that the Congress itself might determine after full discussion, what particular subjects it shall act upon.

Second: Your Committee's Conference plan is not co-operative. Co-operation demands that those who are to work together shall all have the opportunity, as well as the responsibility, of sharing in important fundamental determinations. The conditions under which the Congress (or Conference) shall be held, who should participate, the extent of participation, how the delegates shall be selected, and generally the plan and scope, are of the very essence of the Congress. But your plan vests this grave responsibility in the American Jewish Committee alone, and precludes others from participating in the determination of these matters.

Third: Your Committee's Conference plan, according to your letter, places a limitation upon the scope of the deliberations, which limitation may greatly impair, if not wholly defeat, the usefulness of the Conference (or Congress). Your Committee undertakes to decide (in advance) for the Jews of America what they shall and what they shall not discuss, and within what limit they may act in Conference (on Congress) assembled. Is it not clear that neither the American Jewish Committee nor the Zionist Committee, acting alone or acting jointly, should arrogate to itself

or themselves the function of determining on what subjects the Conference (or Congress) should act. Neither of our Committees acting separately can justly claim to represent all the Jews of America, nor can two committees jointly justly make such a claim. Neither of our Committees acting separately, nor the two jointly, has any mandate which entitles it or them to determine in advance (without even consulting the other national organizations) what measure may best subserve the interest of the Jewish people.

Fourth: The dangers incident to the method adopted by the American Jewish Committee in assuming to determine alone and make itself entirely responsible for all the component elements in such a Conference (or Congress) is exhibited by the "List of organizations to be invited to participate in the Jewish Conference," of which you were good enough to hand me a copy. Taking three of the organizations of kindred type there named, I find your Committee has allotted to their respective memberships the following disproportionate delegate rights:

To one with 84,000 members, 5 delegates.

To one with 4,000 members, 2 delegates.

To one with 40,000 members, 1 delegate.

In pursuance of your valuable suggestion, Professor Frankfurter (who is a member both of the American Jewish Committee and of the Zionist organization) was invited to be present when you and I were to discuss this matter at Hotel Astor on July 12th. I venture to suggest now, that a special effort be made to insure his attendance at the meeting of your General Committee to be called for the discussion of this subject; because he could aid you most effectively in presenting to your Committee the views which I expressed at our July 12th meeting.

Yours very truly,

LOUIS D. BRANDEIS.

DR. ADLER CHARGES BREACH OF NEGOTIATIONS

On July 28th, 1915, Dr. Adler sent the following letter to Mr. Brandeis:

July 28, 1915.

Dear Mr. Brandeis:

Pending receipt of a reply from you to my communication on behalf of the Executive Committee of the American Jewish Committee, dated July 21st and delivered at the office of the Federation of American Zionists, 44 East 23rd street, by messenger on that day, I beg to bring to your attention a copy of a circular letter issued by the Federation of American Zionists on the 22nd inst.

I do not believe that, pending negotiations upon which we entered in all loyalty and with the fullest desire to bring about co-operation, you have sanctioned a policy on behalf of an organization so closely connected with the Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionists Affairs as is the Federation of American Zionists, to bring about a series of agitations throughout the country aiming to influence these negotiations. I feel sure that you will have this action disavowed.

Faithfully yours,

(Signed) CYRUS ADLER.

FEDERATION OF AMERICAN ZIONISTS

44 East 23rd Street, New York,

July 22, 1915.

Dear Comrade:

The status of our negotiations with the American Jewish Committee in our attempt to secure unity of action on the Jewish Congress issue, makes it necessary that throughout the United States a public demonstration be made expressive of the feelings of American Jews with regard to this important question. It is desirable and urgent that every Zionist use his influence to call local conferences, mass-meet-

ings, etc., to have resolutions adopted, ENDORSING UNEQUIVOCALLY THE RESOLUTION OF THE PROVISIONAL COMMITTEE ADOPTED AT BOSTON, in effect:

THAT A JEWISH CONGRESS BE HELD, CALLED JOINTLY BY JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS, AND ORGANIZED ON A democratic basis, which shall discuss the whole Jewish problem in all its phases;

THAT NO LIMITED CONFERENCE CAN TAKE THE PLACE OF SUCH A CONGRESS, AND THAT SHOULD SUCH A LIMITED CONFERENCE BE HELD, IT WOULD NOT BE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SENTIMENTS AND DESIRES OF THE JEWS OF AMERICA.

We appeal to you to use all your energies during the next few weeks to secure such an expression of opinion from your community, and that you aid in having that opinion given the widest and most effective publicity.

It is important that you report to this office the results of your activity.

Immediate action is imperative.

With Zion's greetings,

LOUIS LIPSKY,
Chairman.

AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE REJECTS REQUEST FOR SPECIAL MEETING OF ITS MEMBERS AND ISSUE ITS INVITATION TO A CONFERENCE

(Letter of Dr. Adler to Mr. Brandeis, dated August 3rd, 1915)

New York, August 3, 1915.

Dear Mr. Brandeis:

I have your letter of July 28th, in which you urge that before we meet again for the further discussion of the subject of a Conference, the American Jewish Committee be reconvened for the purpose of reconsidering its vote of June 20th, in regard to the plan, purpose and scope of such a Conference. I am satisfied that no result will follow the adoption of this suggestion. The American Jewish Committee met in special session on June 20, for the sole purpose of considering this subject. It had been a matter for discussion ever since September, 1914, with various committees and in the Executive Committee. On the occasion of its special meeting, the American Jewish Committee had before it the resolutions of one of its largest constituencies—the Jewish Community of New York City. The resolutions that were adopted were a modification of a previously proposed plan for the assembling of a conference consisting of the president and one other of every national Jewish organization in the United States, willing to confer. Practically all the considerations and arguments brought forward by yourself at our conference of July 12 were presented at the meeting of the American Jewish Committee on June 20.

The resolutions of which you are aware were adopted after deliberate and careful consideration of all the arguments and by men representing all shades of Jewish opinion and from various sections of the country. They were believed to be in the best interests of our brethren abroad affected by the war and its consequences, without in any way jeopardizing the interests of the Jews in America or interfering with the proper pursuits or the autonomy of any existing organization.

You seem to take for granted that in a matter of this kind the American Jewish Committee stands upon a footing exactly similar to that of the Federation of American Zionists, or of other national bodies. May I point out to you that this interpretation can hardly be maintained upon a careful examination of the facts. Among the approximately forty Jewish organizations of national scope in the United States, the great majority were founded for specific purposes—religious, educational, philanthropic, mutual benefit, fraternal—all the various forms of activity which have from time to time developed in American Jewish life. Your own organization has for its basic purpose the securing of "a publicly and legally recognized

home for the Jewish people in Palestine." Now, if you will contrast these special purposes with those of the American Jewish Committee as recited in its charter, as follows, I think you will be constrained to admit that it is incumbent upon the American Jewish Committee to do exactly that which it is now doing; that if it did not take the steps which it has taken it would shirk the obligations which have been placed upon it:

"The objects of this corporation shall be, to prevent the infraction of the civil and religious rights of Jews, in any part of the world; to render all lawful assistance and to take appropriate remedial action in the event of threatened or actual invasion or restriction of such rights, or of unfavorable discrimination with respect thereto; to secure for Jews equality of economic, social and educational opportunity; to alleviate the consequences of persecution and to afford relief from calamities affecting Jews, wherever they may occur; and to compass these ends to administer any relief fund which shall come into its possession or which may be received by it, in trust or otherwise, for any of the aforesaid objects or for purposes comprehended therein."

You speak of the American Jewish Committee "assuming" to do certain things, and "arrogating" to itself certain powers. Let me assure you and your associates that such expressions are very wide of the mark. The American Jewish Committee, neither collectively nor through any individual member, is "assuming" or "arrogating." It is with great reluctance and a deep sense of responsibility that the American Jewish Committee took up a burden which no one else had been found willing to bear.

At the risk of reciting what may perhaps be already well-known to you, I venture to point out that, whereas in the course of the settlement and development of the Jewish people in the United States, now a matter approaching three hundred years, there had grown up numerous local organizations for specific purposes, which probably number in all about ten thousand, and that for the purpose of co-ordinating these special organizations they had been federated, more or less loosely, into some forty organizations of national scope, it happened that when a great emergency arose in the condition of our brethren in Russia at the time of the Kishineff massacres in 1905, there existed no central body to grapple with these conditions and there had to be brought together hastily and practically without consultation a small committee in New York City, which, however, met the need with the greatest efficiency.

When this crisis had passed, the men who had been foremost in doing this work themselves felt that it was necessary to aid in creating an organization which, in ordinary times should maintain a modest existence but, when occasion demanded, serve as a central point for bringing about united and effective action.

Conferences to which all the national Jewish organizations were invited to send representatives were held, and as a consequence the American Jewish Committee was formed upon as truly representative a basis as it was then possible to attain. Thereafter, all the great national Jewish organizations were invited to representation at large. Some accepted and some declined. When the creation of communities began, these were sought and incorporated as constituencies of the American Jewish Committee; and wherever such organized communities exist the members of the American Jewish Committee for the given district are elected by the Community and by it alone.

In view of these facts and the further consideration that there is now incorporated in the membership of the American Jewish Committee every shade of Jewish opinion without distinction, I do not think that it can be seriously denied that, whereas the other national Jewish organizations represent some part of the activities of the American Jews, the American Jewish Committee has gathered within itself the representation of the whole of such activities.

I cannot but feel therefore that you and your associates and those committees that are now engaged in making propaganda against the American Jewish Com-

mittee, have not given due weight either to the large general purposes of the American Jewish Committee or to its genuinely representative and democratic character.

At such a grave crisis, I would not be disposed to discuss mere phrases, but since both in our interview and in your communication you constantly reiterate the charge that the methods of the American Jewish Committee are undemocratic, I feel constrained to insist that your strictures are not justified, at least if you are employing the word "democracy" in its customary meaning in the United States.

You state that the danger incident to the method adopted by the American Jewish Committee is exhibited by the list of organizations to be invited to participate in the conference. May I remind you that the statement that the American Jewish Committee itself selected the organizations to be invited can be considered as true in the merest technical sense but not actually so in fact. The list of organizations is as objective as any list can possibly be. It was based upon the proof-sheets of the forthcoming American Jewish Year Book. It included all the organizations listed there as "national," except those which were purely auxiliary, juvenile, or known not to be entitled to be called "national" by reason of the limitation of their scope to a given State by the terms of their charters.

I handed you these proof-sheets showing the exact reason for the elimination of each society not included among those to be invited; these, I understood, you were to consider with your associates, and I was and am prepared to discuss with you any modifications of either the list or the representation granted.

The representation, I may say, has been based on three guiding principles: (1) The number of members in each organization; (2) the diversified interests of the Jews of America; (3) the geographical distribution of the Jewish population in America.

With regard to the list itself, you have furnished me with no criticism whatsoever. You have called my attention to the apparently disproportionate delegate rights, but since the proof-sheets of the American Jewish Year Book containing explanatory statements are still in your possession and I have no copy, and you do not give me the names of the organizations referred to, I cannot very intelligently discuss your criticism. I may point out to you, however, that in dealing with the representation of the organizations, the special committee (which consisted of Mr. Harry Cutler, Mr. Samuel Dorf, Judge Julian W. Mack, Dr. J. L. Magnes, Mr. Bernard Semel, Mr. Isaac M. Ullman, and myself) very carefully considered not only the membership but also the character of the organization in each case. Organizations of congregations, where the numbers seem small in comparison with those of the fraternal orders, were nevertheless given what might appear proportionately larger representation, because it was borne in mind that the membership of congregations is usually stated by heads of families and does not furnish a definite criterion of the number of souls represented. Rabbinical Associations which, of course, are limited in number, being composed of a small body of men, were nevertheless granted an apparently large representation because the rabbi is, in most communities, the acknowledged representative of the opinions of anywhere from 200 to 1,000 persons. The three Jewish colleges, though small in numbers, were nevertheless, after careful consideration, each assigned one delegate, because it was the opinion of the committee that in a conference of this kind the scholarly and historical view would prove of value in the deliberations. The Zionist organization itself, which, of course, cannot show such large numbers as some of the fraternal orders and workingmen's societies, was nevertheless given as high a number of delegates as was assigned to any organization, because of the recognition of the great interest (an interest, I may say, not limited by any means to Zionists) which that organization has in Palestine, which must undoubtedly form one of the important subjects in the deliberations of the Conference.

You may recall that I informed you that the Committee did not assign the full number of delegates, leaving thirty vacancies to be filled later either by the inclusion of organizations entitled to representation, which may not have been

known heretofore as national organizations, or by increasing the number in individual cases, should the apportionment of the committee have been found unsatisfactory. Again, the filling of these thirty vacancies was a subject left open for discussion at a further meeting which I hoped we might have, and by consultation with the representatives of other important Jewish national organizations. Upon this point, we claim no finality. Such questions and even those of the time and place of meeting were some of the details which I was given the power to modify in a meeting with you.

I cannot admit that the limitation of the Conference to 150 persons is in any way indicative of an undemocratic or unco-operative spirit, if a representative conference is to be held for any effective purpose. The one hundred million people of the United States are represented by a Congress which, in both houses, is not much larger than 500 men. The great commonwealths like New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Massachusetts, and Ohio, to cite but a few, whose populations range from eight millions to two and one-half millions, have legislatures, which, including the senates, do not exceed at the maximum 257 men; and in some states, whose populations approach three millions, the legislatures are limited to about 150. It was through such considerations and the fact that the largest estimate of the Jews in the United States heretofore made places the sum at less than three million that the number one hundred and fifty members of the Conference was reached.

The direct proportionate representation of organizations based upon numbers alone seems to me neither fair nor wise, and certainly not in accord with the methods which prevail in such matters in the United States. Even if the Conference were not limited in scope, some, if not many, of the questions which may be brought up for consideration would undoubtedly have an important international bearing. Under our system, the responsibility for these affairs is placed in large measure upon the Executive himself, and in many cases only with the advice of the Senate, a body in which Rhode Island has an equal voice with New York. Since it would have been neither prudent nor feasible to establish two houses in such a Conference, a modified system of representation must be employed in order that all interests of the Jews shall have a voice, that the Jewish residents of all states shall have at least one representative, and that at the same time reasonable weight be given to the numbers in the various national organizations.

I have recited at some length the principles which guided us in the preparation of the list to which you object, because I hope that you will appreciate the fact that the matter has been considered from every angle in view of the very special conditions before us.

You have laid special stress upon the limitation of the scope of the deliberations which you think may greatly impair if not wholly defeat the usefulness of the Conference, and you wish instead a Congress "to consider the problems of the Jewish people."

A meeting, whether it be a conference or a congress, thus called, without any restriction as to the questions to be discussed, would, I am certain, be futile and dangerous, and national Jewish organizations of importance, besides our own, would unquestionably decline to enter any such meeting.

The problems of the Jewish people, both here and in other lands, are manifold. They have been discussed on many occasions. Some of the most important ones are not capable of composition. Let me instance the single yet important matter of religion. There are many people who believe that Judaism is the kernel and the Jewish people the shell, that our continued existence during these twenty odd centuries of dispersion is due, in the Providence of God, to the Jewish religion. Now, the Jewish religion appears in various phases. It has developed differences of opinion in both theory and practice. This has been so for a long time. Here, in America, after many struggles and heart-burnings, and in spite of occasional outbreaks, we have come to recognize that upon these theological matters it may be advisable to agree to disagree. Yet no one would have the right to declare that

the theory and practice of Judaism is not a Jewish problem, and it could not with propriety be excluded from an unlimited conference or congress.

Again, in the United States, certain large organizations of Jews have been created upon issues which are purely economic and, indeed, as economic theories sometimes become part of the practical politics of a country, they may even be described as political. I allude to the great workingmen's associations, to the socialistic societies and even to those sections of Zionists who devote themselves distinctly to the propagation of the socialistic theory. Since they are assumed to be composed of Jews and to be national in scope, these organizations are to have their representatives in the proposed conference. But I cannot for a moment suppose that such a conference should be thrown open to discussions of labor and capital, hours of work, wages, or anything else of that sort.

Similar statements can be made about educational matters, philanthropic matters, and, in fact, about all the interests which our Jewish organizations in the United States each especially subserves.

None can deny that the one fact that brings us together to-day is the appalling condition of the Jews in the lands engaged in the war, and a consideration of how, if at all, we can best aid in improving it, either now or when this unhappy war shall cease.

I cannot conceive but that it would be fraught with the greatest danger not only to the Jews of America but also to the Jews throughout the world if, just at this time, when even the most deliberate persons seem to be under the influence of the prevailing excitement, an unlimited conference were called for the purpose of discussing the problems of the Jewish people.

The American Jewish Committee is not determining in advance what measures would best serve the interests of the Jewish people. If it were doing so it would not call for a conference at all. It was to secure a consensus of opinion as to such measures that it was decided to assemble this Conference, and it was for the purpose of elucidating this opinion that the Conference has been limited in number.

Even on this very point for which the Conference is being called, the American Jewish Committee has felt that the Jews of America are not the only persons to be consulted, and steps have been taken to secure the opinions of leaders of all sections of Jewry in belligerent and neutral states abroad, so that those may be freely and impartially laid before such a Conference in order that we may know how persons intimately in touch with the situation view the questions as they have actually arisen.

There is one point that has not been touched upon in our negotiations and possibly has not been made clear in our own resolutions. While it may not make for the acceptance on your part of our views, I nevertheless feel obliged, in all frankness, to state it to you. The Conference that we are planning is to meet in executive session, and only the results of its action are to be made known to the public through such definite authorized channels and to the extent which the Conference itself shall decide.

The inflamed condition of public opinion in Europe and in America, the large number of Jews in the belligerent lands—nearly three-fourths of the Jewry of the entire world—make the possibility of intemperate and even ill-considered speech so great, that we feel that we in this country have no right to risk injury to our unhappy brethren abroad in these times.

In this connection, may I call your attention to an editorial in the Jewish Comment of July 16, which I have no doubt is from the pen of Mr. Louis H. Levin, whose fidelity to the Zionist cause is, I believe, not to be questioned, and who has recently returned from Palestine, whither he was sent on an errand of mercy jointly by the American Jewish Relief Committee and the Zionist organization. In this editorial, the writer distinctly states that so far as the Jewish inhabitants of Palestine themselves are concerned, "a careless word can arouse suspicion that years of peaceful pursuits and consistent loyalty cannot overcome." In another

place he says: "The people who are living in Zion and are trying to work out a *modus vivendi* with the existing government, find the beautiful rhetoric of their unthinking friends sadly embarrassing."

You have alluded to the widely expressed will of the Jews of America, who have demanded an unlimited congress to consider the problems of the Jewish people. I venture to differ with you as to this "widely expressed will." I furnished you the other day, in a communication, evidence that some of this sentiment was being manufactured. The Federation of American Zionists in a circular letter to its members, points out that "the status of our negotiations with the American Jewish Committee makes it desirable that every Zionist use his influence to call local conferences, mass-meetings, etc., to have resolutions adopted endorsing unequivocally the resolution of the Provisional Committee adopted in Boston," and urging its members to use all their energies "during the next few weeks to secure such an expression of opinion for your (their) community, and that you (they) aid in having that opinion given the most effective publicity."

You are no doubt aware of the fact that another organization, calling itself the Jewish Congress Organization Committee, has established a Congress Bureau to carry on propaganda in favor of such a congress; that on the small Executive Committee of this Congress Bureau are to be found officials of the Zionist organizations, among them the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Federation of American Zionists; that committees have appeared before various organizations to "stimulate," as it were, this "widely expressed will" of the Jews of America. In other words, a small body of people are carrying on a propaganda intended to bring about a public agitation in favor of a Congress. So that the will of the people is as yet in the making. Methods of this kind the American Jewish Committee is unwilling to combat.

In view of all these statements and the fact that you are unwilling under present circumstances further to confer with me; in view of the fact that already on June 20, the American Jewish Committee decided to issue invitations to a Conference—which, except in two or three cases, have been withheld at the request of Judge Mack, to render negotiations with you possible—I feel obliged to issue the invitations to all the national Jewish organizations in the list handed to you, without further delay. This I have now done.

The invitation extended to the Federation of American Zionists at its last annual convention to be represented at this conference by seven delegates, which was referred by the Federation to the committee over which you preside, is therefore still in your hands.

As I am sure that it is your desire effectively to aid our unhappy brethren abroad, at this important juncture, may I not anticipate that, fully recognizing that there are theoretical differences between us as to the method and even the scope of such a Conference, you will nevertheless see your way to urging upon your associates the acceptance of the invitation and give us the benefit, in conference, of your advice and help.

Very sincerely yours,

(Signed) CYRUS ADLER,
Chairman, Executive Committee.

LETTER OF LOUIS D. BRANDEIS TO DR. CYRUS ADLER, DATED
AUGUST 10TH

Boston, Mass., August 10th.

My dear Dr. Adler:

Absence on a vacation has delayed reply to your letters dated July 28th and August 3rd, which I understand have been duly acknowledged through the Zionist Bureau of New England.

First: As to your complaint that Mr. Lipsky was arranging meetings to urge the holding of a democratic congress while your and my negotiations were pending, you are right in assuming that Mr. Lipsky did this without consulting me, but I am greatly surprised that you should find fault with his action, for he simply followed your example. You cannot have forgotten that although you and I arranged on July 7th for a conference to be held July 12th to work out some plan of co-operation, you proceeded on July 11th to commit the United Synagogue to support the undemocratic conference which the American Jewish Committee had arranged. Mr. Lipsky knew that you had done this and naturally assumed that you would not expect the friends of a democratic congress to remain inactive while you continued your efforts to defeat a democratic consideration of the problems of the Jewish people.

Second: As to your refusal of my request that you call together the full committee to consider my arguments in favor of the American Jewish Committee's co-operating with the other national organizations in a congress to be convened and conducted on a democratic basis; your refusal of my request seems to me most regrettable, for there never was a time when the Jewish people stood in greater need than now of unity and of patient deliberation. I am the more surprised at your decision since at least two members of the American Jewish Committee, Judge Mack, himself a vice-president, and Dr. Harry Friedenwald, supported my request. Your refusal to permit my arguments to be presented to the full committee seems to me strong evidence that there exists in your Executive Committee that absolutistic spirit against which the proposers of a democratic congress have so earnestly protested.

Third: While refusing the request for a hearing of my arguments by your full committee, you courteously renew the invitation to the Zionists to attend the Conference at Washington which your Committee has called for October 24th. The need of wise counsel in Jewish affairs and of unity is now so great, that I should earnestly urge my associates to yield, where possible, their objections, and attend your Conference, if I believed that there was the least likelihood of such a Conference serving the Jewish cause. But I am convinced that the Conference which you have decided upon will be worse than futile; it will be positively dangerous to Jewish interests. You state: "The Conference that we are planning is to meet in executive session, and only the results of its action are to be made known to the public through such definite authorized channels and to the extent which the Conference itself shall decide." Secrecy necessarily breeds suspicion and creates misunderstanding. Suspicion and misunderstanding have been among the greatest enemies of the Jews in the past. A Conference conducted in secret sessions, as your committee has decided, would, if generally participated in by the Jews of this country, prove a menace both to them and to the Jews of the rest of the world. It is only through a frank and open discussion of the conditions, the sufferings, and hopes of our people, that we may expect to secure the co-operation of non-Jews in our effort to obtain justice and rights. It is only through a congress convened and conducted on a democratic basis that we can expect to secure that thorough co-operation of the Jews for self-help without which they cannot be freed from existing injustice and oppression.

Fourth: You say I err that in assuming that in a matter of this kind "the American Jewish Committee stands upon a footing exactly similar to that of the Federation of American Zionists, or other national bodies." On the contrary, I was full aware of the powers granted to itself by the American Jewish Committee and set forth in its charter, but the process by which the American Jewish Committee was called into existence was as undemocratic as the steps you have now taken to create a Jewish Conference, and I use the term "democratic" in the American sense when I say that an organization in which a system of self-election and perpetuation in office is in vogue, and which meets always in secret session, cannot properly be called democratic.

Fifth: In spite of the publicity which you have given to your refusal, I renew my request that you call a meeting of the full committee, to which my arguments for co-operation in calling a congress to be convened and conducted on a democratic basis may be presented.

Yours very truly,

LOUIS D. BRANDEIS.



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