

Canadian Jewish news

CJC Plenary attended by close to 1,000 registrants

By CAROLYN BLACKMAN

TORONTO - Almost 1,000 registrants attended Canadian Jewish Congress' 26th Plenary Assembly earlier this month.

An annual general meeting opened the day-and-a-half-long plenary, in which Irving Abella, a professor at York University and a past national president and chair of the CJC war crimes committee, was named honorary



IRVING ABELLA: Named honorary chair of CJC.



EDGAR BRONFMAN: Presented with the Saul Hayes human rights award.

president of CJC. Later that evening at the gala dinner, he received the Samuel Bronfman Medal for service to Canadian Jewish Congress and the Jewish community of Canada.

The dinner, hosted by Peter Mansbridge, chief correspondent for CBC Television News, was a tribute to the late actor Al Waxman, who was to have been chair of the plenary.

At the plenary's closing luncheon, attended by Ontario Premier Mike Harris, Edgar Bronfman, president of World Jewish Congress (WJC), was presented with the Saul Hayes Human Rights Award for his outstanding leadership of WJC and the World Jewish Restitution Organization, and his efforts on behalf of Holocaust survivors and the rights of Jews around the world.

The first major plenary session featured a discussion on funding of private religious schools.

A session on Jewish Advocacy in Canada facilitated by Winnipegger Jim Carr, founding president and CEO of the Business Council of Manitoba, included Stanley Hartt, former chief of staff to Brian Mulroney; Allan Kaufman, former chief of staff to Art Eggleton; and Michele Landsberg, a columnist with the Toronto Star. Respondent was Art Hagopian, president of the Canadian Ethnocultural Council.

Landsberg said secular Jews who have not identified with the Jewish community are some of the most effective and passionate advocates.

"We must widen our embrace of the Jewish community so we won't lose these Jews."

Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut, senior scholar of Holy Blossom Temple and a past president of CJC, moderated a session on Holocaust Restitution.

"The Holocaust is at the forefront of our con-

siderations and concerns, and adequate and just restitution is part of those concerns."

Concurrent to that session was a panel on child poverty, and a panel about issues facing Jewish students on campus.

The session on child poverty was moderated by Elaine Todres. Speakers were Rabbi Arthur Bielfeld of Temple Emanu-El in Toronto, who organized the Campaign against Child Poverty; social activist June Callwood; Teri Kay of Jewish Family and Child Services; and Claire Morris and Gordon Zeesman of Human Resources Development Canada.

Rabbi Bielfeld said that more than 20 percent of Canada's children live in poverty and the "Jewish figures on poverty are virtually identical to the Canadian figures."

School breakfast programs or after-school programs take care of a few children five days a week, Callwood said, but "that is not the answer. The answer is to change public opinion so everyone says, 'Let's take care of our kids.'"

Zeesman said, however, that when children go hungry, it is not usually a food problem; it is that the family is paying too much rent. Affordable housing would help these families, he added.

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School funding debated

By RON CSILLAG

TORONTO - The cost of a private Jewish education would increase if government funding was secured, educator Bernard Shapiro told the Canadian Jewish Congress plenary May 6.

Saying he fully supports public funds for private and independent schools largely as a moral issue, Shapiro, who was speaking as part of a panel, warned nevertheless that fees for Jewish day schools would go up if tax dollars for them were available.

Because they would draw many more children and put added pressure on the system, costs "would far exceed the funding provided," said Shapiro, who headed a provincial Royal Commission into private school funding in 1985.

Shapiro earned applause when he said Ontario is "morally bound" to fund Jewish schools the same way it funds Catholic education. So in addition to increased costs, private schools would "have to relinquish some independence. There will be a price."

Panelist Michael Bryant, the Liberal MPP for St. Paul's, said the situation facing private schools in Ontario was the most "self-evident example of discrimination in Canada." The status quo cannot go on, he said. Otherwise, "the tyranny of the majority will prevail."

Tory MPP Tina Molinari said she, too, was a booster of funding for Jewish day schools, and noted it was her government that has allocated a total of \$14.4 million toward health services in private schools, money that should be flowing soon, and made retroactive to last year. Molinari, the MPP for Thornhill, said she met recently with Finance Minister Jim Flaherty and Attorney General David Young to discuss a provincial tax credit against private school fees. The idea, she said, was well-received.

Ed Morgan, the newly-installed chair of CJC's Ontario region and the lawyer who argued the funding case before the Supreme Court of Canada, called on the community to redouble its efforts, and also called on the province to consider it a priority this term.

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U.S. Jewish news

Arafat deputy meets with Powell as Beilin, Erekat take to New York

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON

(JTA) - A U.S. invitation to Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat was still not in the offing, but his chief deputy met last week with Secretary of State Colin Powell. The meeting represented the highest-level talks yet between Bush administration officials and Palestinian leaders in Washington.

Mahmoud Abbas, commonly known as Abu Mazen, requested a meeting with Powell during his visit to Washington last week for a medical checkup. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice also attended the meeting, sources told JTA.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority's chief negotiator and spokesman, Saeb Erekat, spoke in New York on May 15 alongside Yossi Beilin, Israel's former justice minister and one of its leading doves. The two discussed the prospects of resuming peace talks from the point where they broke off just before Israeli elections in early February.

The Abbas visit is being downplayed by State Department officials, who say they had been expecting him for several months. The United States has tried to remain even-handed in its approach to Israeli-Palestinian violence, but Palestinian leaders have been noticeably absent from the schedules of the president and secretary of state.

President Clinton invited Arafat to the White House more often than any other foreign leader, but Arafat has not been invited back since President Bush moved in four months ago. State Department officials said they did not believe an Arafat visit was imminent.

Bills would force PLO, Lebanon to shape up - or lose some funds

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) - Two pieces of legislation under consideration in Congress could change the way the United States interacts with Israel's neighbors. The first bill, sponsored by Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.), would require the State Department to assess whether the Palestinian Authority is complying with its obligations under peace agreements with Israel - and, if not, to impose sanctions. Also under consideration is a bill to limit nonhumanitarian aid to Lebanon if it does not secure its border with Israel.

Ackerman's bill, the Middle East Peace Commitments Act, would add teeth to current State Department reports that chronicle Palestinian actions but do not make judgments about their compliance with peace agreements, and do not impose consequences. His bill "goes a mile further," Ackerman told JTA. "This helps us all to see clearly what the facts are and whether or not there have been violations."

Currently, the State Department issues several reports that touch on Palestinian actions. The most direct is the Palestine Liberation Organization Commitments Compliance Act, which twice a year chronicles Palestinian actions against Israel. The latest PLOCCA report, released last month, aroused controversy by reporting that Palestinian Authority "security forces instigated and participated in anti-Israeli violence" - without directly linking the violence to P.A. President Yasser Arafat.

Survivors cheered by hopes that California fund may pay out soon

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES

(JTA) - Holocaust survivors in California are applauding a nonprofit foundation for impoverished survivors in California that received \$4.2 million U.S. from three Dutch insurance companies two weeks ago - and hoping that promises for quick payments for the fund prove accurate. The money presented May 10 from Aegon, Fortis and ING America will fund the California Humanitarian Foundation for Holocaust Survivors.

The foundation is believed to be the first of its kind funded by European insurers, which many believe have dragged their feet in paying out benefits to Jews - and their heirs - who took out policies between the two world wars.

California Attorney General Bill Lockyer said he hopes the action by the three Dutch firms "will unleash efforts all over the world by insurance companies to overcome interminable delays."

Lockyer urged other European insurance carriers to step forward in meeting their obligations to Jewish and other victims of the Holocaust "as a matter of conscience."

Arthur Stern described establishment of the new foundation, which he chairs, as "a significant milestone for all survivors." Stern, like eight of the foundation's 12 members, is a Holocaust survivor.

He estimated that some of the 1,000 to 2,000 impoverished among 22,000 survivors in California should receive their first payments by early September.

The primary California survivor communities are in Los Angeles, the San Francisco Bay Area and San Diego.



COLIN POWELL, U.S. secretary of state: Highest-level talks yet with a Palestinian official.

Beth Israel to honor Torah reader Leon Berger, Cantor Arky Berkal at 25th anniversary evening

The Beth Israel Synagogue's name in English means house of Israel, notes Leon Berger. For Berger, the North End synagogue's long-time Torah reader, and for the members of the congregation, the Beth Israel is not just a house of worship, but also a home.

"From the first time that I came to the Beth Israel, I felt like one of the family," Berger says. "The environment is very welcoming. Reading Torah is a pleasure. The Beth Israel is my second home."

On Sunday, June 24, the Beth Israel Synagogue will be recognizing Berger and Arky Berkal, its long-time cantor, as part of the synagogue's 25th anniversary celebration. Both Berger and Berkal say they feel honored by the occasion. Berger's sons, Max and Jack, are coming in from Toronto for the evening (a third son, Hart, lives in town), and Berkal reports that he celebrated "Uncle" Louis Berkal has already bought his ticket.

Other highlights of the evening will be a candlelight entrance by bar and bat mitzvahs through the years, musical performances by the Garden City Collegiate jazz choir and by Erica Schultz, and a door prize weekend at the lakeside Country Inn in Gimli.

Originally from Poland, Berger came here in 1949 to start what turned out to be a 47-year career teaching at

Talmud Torah and Joseph Wolinsky Collegiate. He retired in 1996. He says that he still misses teaching occasionally. He is looking forward to seeing some of his students on June 24th.

It was Rabbi Neal Rose, he says, who first asked him to be the Torah reader at the Beth Israel. That was 20 years ago. Not only does he enjoy reading the Torah, but he also enjoys discussing the readings with members of the congregation.

He says that he enjoyed working with all the rabbis that have graced the bimah at the Beth Israel over the past 20 years. He also enjoys working with Arky.

"I taught Arky his haftorah for his bar mitzvah," Berger says.

Berkal, in turn, talks about how much he likes working with Berger. A lifelong cantor from a family of cantors, Berkal has been the fulltime cantor at the Beth Israel since 1982. He retired six years ago from teaching math at Garden City Collegiate. Since then, he has been involved in genealogical research, singing in choirs, and organizing musical evenings in the Jewish community, including two concerts in conjunction with the Jewish Heritage Centre's exhibition of a century of Jewish Music in Winnipeg last fall.

Tickets for the June 24 evening are available from the synagogue office at the number in the ad below.

Author on domestic violence to address community groups

Domestic violence can occur in any intimate relationship and Jewish families are not immune to the problem.

Jewish Child and Family Service is presenting a number of sessions featuring Dr. Elaine Weiss, Ed.D., a renowned speaker in the area of domestic violence. On Tuesday, June 5 she will give a public presentation on Jewish Domestic Abuse, entitled From Secrets to Solutions - Breaking the Cycle at the Four Points Sheraton at 7:30 p.m. On Wednesday, June 6, Elaine Weiss will conduct an educational workshop on domestic violence for professionals in the areas of health, social work, counselling and education to train them in working effectively with women who may be in an abusive relationship. In the evening she will be the guest speaker at the JCFS annual meeting. Her topic is Does

Domestic Violence Really Happen in Jewish Homes?

Dr. Weiss is a Clinical Professor at the University of Utah School of Medicine. She is a survivor of abuse and has written a book entitled *Surviving Domestic Violence: Voices of Women Who Broke Free*, which describes how abuse happens to women from all economic, educational and ethnic backgrounds.

This program series is supported by the Jewish Foundation of Manitoba - Women's Endowment Fund, Jewish Women International, Lakeview Management, the Rose and Max Rady Jewish Community Centre, and the Province of Manitoba.

For more information contact Merrill Shwaid, Public Relations Coordinator, Jewish Child and Family Service, phone the number listed in the ad below.

From Secrets to Solutions Breaking the Cycle



A PRESENTATION ON JEWISH DOMESTIC ABUSE

Guest Speaker Elaine Weiss, Ed.D.

Author of *Surviving Domestic Violence: Voices of Women Who Broke Free*

Tuesday, June 5, 2001 • 7:30 pm

PLEASE REGISTER BY MAY 31, 2001 REGISTRATION FEE \$10.00

Four Points Sheraton • Winnipeg Airport
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REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED

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Join us in celebrating
Beth Israel Synagogue's
25th Anniversary
on Sunday, June 24, 2001
at 7:30 p.m.

We will be honouring
Cantor Arky Berkal &
Torah Reader Leon Berger

Tickets: \$10.00 each
Can be purchased at the office.
Call 582-2353