



ref

Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations
of America

84 FIFTH AVENUE • NEW YORK 11, N. Y. • ALgonquin 5-4100

MEMORANDUM

DATE: **25 Shevat 5723**
February 19, 1963

TO: Rabbi Norman Lamm

FROM: **Moses I. Feuerstein**

SUBJECT:

Enclosed is copy of minutes of a meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee of the Synagogue Council of America and the National Community Relations Advisory Council, together with a plan proposed by Rev. Charles L. Borgognoni, Chaplain of Catholic Students of Syracuse University, for religious education in the public schools.

Please let me have your comments.

M.I.F.



Joint Advisory Committee

of the Synagogue Council of America

and the National Community Relations Advisory Council



55 West 42nd Street, Room 1530, New York 36, N. Y. • LOnacre 4-3450

Co-Chairmen

MORTIMER BRENNER
RABBI JULIUS MARK

February 12, 1963

Constituent Organizations

AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS
CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF
AMERICAN RABBIS
JEWISH LABOR COMMITTEE
JEWISH WAR VETERANS OF THE
UNITED STATES
RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY OF
AMERICA
RABBINICAL COUNCIL OF
AMERICA
UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW
CONGREGATIONS
UNION OF ORTHODOX JEWISH
CONGREGATIONS OF AMERICA
UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF
AMERICA

*State, County and Local Jewish
Community Councils Affiliated
with the NCRAC in*

CONNECTICUT

DELAWARE

INDIANA

MINNESOTA

BROOME COUNTY, N.Y.

CAMDEN COUNTY, N.J.

EASTERN UNION COUNTY, N.J.

ESSEX COUNTY, N.J.

AKRON NASHVILLE

ALBANY NEW BRITAIN

ATLANTA NEW HAVEN

ATLANTIC CITY NORFOLK

BALTIMORE OAKLAND

BOSTON ORLANDO

BRIDGEPORT PATERSON

BROOKLYN PEORIA

CANTON PERTH AMBOY

CINCINNATI PHILADELPHIA

CLEVELAND PITTSBURGH

COLUMBUS PORTLAND, ME.

DETROIT RICHMOND

EASTON ROCHESTER

ERIE ST. LOUIS

FLINT SAN DIEGO

FORT WORTH SAN FRANCISCO

HARTFORD SCHENECTADY

HOUSTON SCRANTON

INDIANAPOLIS TOLEDO

JACKSONVILLE TRENTON

KANSAS CITY TULSA

KINGSTON UTICA

LOS ANGELES WASHINGTON

LOUISVILLE WATERBURY

MEMPHIS WILKES-BARRE

MILWAUKEE YOUNGSTOWN

TO: Joint Advisory Committee

FROM: Phil Jacobson, Secretary

SUBJECT: Minutes of Meeting of January 24, 1963

ATTENDANCE:

Herbert Berman
Rabbi Philip Hiat
Rabbi Israel Klavan
Mrs. Ida Krohn
Rabbi Aryeh Lev
Joseph Robison
Isaac Toubin

Synagogue Council of America
Synagogue Council of America
Rabbinical Council of America
National Women's League
Jewish War Veterans
American Jewish Congress
American Association for Jewish
Education

Albert D. Chernin)
Philip Jacobson)
Morris Laub

NCRAC Staff

United Synagogue of America

Released time Proposal - Syracuse

The committee gave extended consideration to a proposal advanced by the Rev. Charles L. Borgognoni, on behalf of the Catholic community of Syracuse for a staggered released time program. Copies of the plan, attached to these minutes, had been mailed in advance to committee members. It was recognized at the outset that the JAC stands in opposition to released time. While this would not necessarily place us in opposition to the Borgognoni proposal, it was stressed that this proposal seems to be a dangerous extension of current released time arrangements, for reasons herein after expressed.

A) The release of a student "according to a schedule satisfactory to himself, the school, and the church" during any free study period of the week probably would create serious administrative and curriculum problems.

B) Certainly we cannot and do not object to the erection of a released time religious center in the vicinity of a public school as recommended in the Borgognoni proposal. However, the "principle" of parallel public and religious institutions suggested by the proposal might

well affect both public school site selection and scheduling. Members of the committee considered this principle a dangerous departure.

C) The teaching situation in the religious center would very likely be quite inadequate, so much so that it is reasonably certain the public school would soon be asked to rearrange its schedule to make the work of the religious center more effective.

D) Many reservations were expressed in regard to part III of the Borgognoni plan. It was recognized that this section of the plan is not necessarily essential to the proposed change in the regulation. At the same time, Part II did seem to be embodied in the proposal by implication, at least. Among the objections noted to this phase of the proposal was the arrogation to religious counselors (chaplains) of responsibility for the solution of the behavioral problems of public school children.

E) There seemed to be a basic assumption in the plan that released time is premised on the state's obligation to guarantee each child a religious education. This assumption was based on the last paragraph under "Background of the Law" on page 1. It was stressed that the responsibility of the school extends only to the matter of scheduling so as to accommodate the religious needs of students.

Rabbi Klavan advanced the following suggestion:

That either by regulation or by statute a child, with the consent of his parents, may be excused one study period a week for any reason deemed important to the parent. Thus a child could have permission to leave the school for an appointment with his dentist, for a music lesson - or for religious instruction. While this would seemingly constitute a form of dismissed time, it was noted that the proposal here advanced, unlike dismissed time as generally understood, would take effect during any part of the school day.

Mr. Robison advanced the suggestion which seemed to have strong support in the committee, that the Jewish member of the Syracuse Interfaith Committee might recommend that the unit rule be lifted in respect to the Borgognoni proposal. This would make it possible for either the Protestant or the Catholic community or both to offer the Borgognoni plan for formal consideration by the state Commissioner of Education. It was stressed however that the Jewish representative should make it clear that there will almost certainly be Jewish opposition to the plan, either by the Jewish Welfare Federation of Syracuse alone or with other Jewish organizations in the state.

Received too late for reporting to the committee was the following commendation from Jules Cohen:

"Since we are opposed to released time, certainly the Jewish community of Syracuse should not participate in the proposal to erect a building adjacent to the new High School which would be the center for released time religious education.

"At the same time, I think the Jewish community should not stand in the way if the Protestant and Catholic groups find the proposal acceptable. The released time program is going on anyway, and so

long as the Jewish community does not participate and makes its opposition known, I don't see that it makes much difference if the students go to their respective churches or to a building such as the one proposed. Although I am sensitive to the implications of having a "religious center" next to the High School, I don't think it is important enough to antagonize our Christian friends by suggesting that the Jewish members of the Interfaith Advisory Committee to the Syracuse Board of Education should veto the project."

Shephard v. Verner

This is a case of a Seventh Day Adventist who was denied unemployment compensation benefits because of her refusal to work on Saturday. The matter has been accepted for review by the United States Supreme Court. It was unanimously agreed that the agencies of the Synagogue Council of America and the NCRAC should seek leave to file an amici brief. The Committee was assured by Mr. Robison that a draft of the brief would be submitted in advance to all constituent agencies for their comments and approval, so that any agency not wishing to appear on the brief might have its name withdrawn

P.J.

A PROPOSAL

(reading time: 8 minutes)

This proposal has the whole-hearted approval and support of the Most Rev. Walter A. Foery, D.D., Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Syracuse.

PART I

PRESENT PROGRAM FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF N.Y. STATE

A. EDUCATION LAW:

1. Statement of the Law: Section 3210, subdivision 2-b: Absence

Absence from required attendance shall be permitted only for causes allowed by the general rules and practices of the public schools. Absence for religious observance and education shall be permitted under rules that the commissioner shall establish.

2. Background of the Law:

Certainly it is the opinion of the majority that Religion is important in the life of everyone. Religion teaches man to love his Creator and his fellow man, to shun evil of all kind: dishonesty, impurity, injustice, hatred, etc. Without a firm adherence to these truths, man will not practice virtue and consequently, man will bring harm to any society, whether it be domestic or civil.

"And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle."

...GEORGE WASHINGTON,
Farewell Address

Mindful of the importance of religion in the life of the student, the state of New York enacted the forementioned law so that each student would have the opportunity to learn Religion according to his own Creed and at the same time, the State could free itself of any charge that it supported, maintained, or professed any particular Creed.

In other words, it is our opinion that this law was not enacted merely to placate the wishes of believers, but an honest recognition of the cogent fact that Religion is necessary in the education of a student.

B. REGULATIONS OF THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION:

1. Statement of the Regulations: Section 154: Absence from school

1) Absence of a pupil from school during school hours for religious observance and education to be had outside the school building and grounds will be excused upon the request in writing signed by the parent or guardian of the pupil.

2) The courses in religious observance and education must be maintained and operated by or under the control of duly constituted religious bodies.

- 3) Pupils must be registered for the courses and a copy of the registration filed with the local public school authorities.
- 4) Reports of attendance of pupils upon such courses shall be filed with the principal or teacher at the end of each week.
- 5) Such absence shall be for not more than one hour each week at the close of a session at a time to be fixed by the local school authorities.
- 6) In the event that more than one school for religious observance and education is maintained in any district, the hour for absence for each particular public school in such district shall be the same for all such religious schools.

2. Change in the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education:

The following change in Article XVII, Section 154, paragraphs 5 and 6 of the regulations of the Commissioner of Education was adopted by the Board of Regents in their August 1961 session:

- 5) Such absence shall be for not more than one hour each week at the close of (a) either the morning or afternoon session or both at a time to be fixed by the local school authorities(.), providing that the time designated for each separate unit, the primary grades (K-3), intermediate grades (4-6), junior high school grades (7-9), and senior high school grades (10-12) shall be the same for all pupils in that unit in each separate school.
- 6) In the event that more than one school for religious observance and education is maintained in any district, the hours for absence in each particular public elementary or secondary school unit in such district shall be the same for all such religious schools.

3. Background of the Regulations and the Recent Change in the Regulations:

These regulations represent the efforts of the Commissioner of Education to apply the law fairly and adequately under prevailing circumstances. Under these regulations he has sought to eliminate as many problems that would arise under such a law and at the same time to fulfill the intent of the law.

The recent change gives notice that he is constantly seeking to better the program and therefore is not beyond the pale of further change for better results.

PART II

A PROPOSAL FOR A NEW AND FURTHER CHANGE
OF THE REGULATIONS OF THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

A. BACKGROUND OF PROPOSAL:

Up to this time the Released-Time Program for religious instruction has worked with mixed success. It has its defects, but it has also produced much good. However, we should never feel absolutely satisfied, reluctant to look for better results. This is not the nature of man; he constantly seeks to improve. This is not the goal of the educator; he steadfastly studies to enlighten. This is the story of the march of civilization.

The author of this proposal is a graduate of the public schools and has participated as a student in the released-time program for religious instruction. Furthermore, he has taught public school students in the

released time program for 14 years and enjoys excellent and cordial relations with the faculty and student body of North High School; Syra, NY. His proposal represents the prayer, study and experience of these years.

B. THE PROPOSAL:

A building, erected by the religious authorities, located on private property immediately adjacent to the new North-East Sr. High School, Syra, N.Y. would be the center at which the students of this senior high school would receive religious education.

The student, according to a schedule satisfactory to himself, the school and the church, would use one of his free study-periods of the week to leave the school building and go to the religious center to receive instruction. After his period of instruction, the student would re-enter the school building in time to attend his next class.

The ideal situation would be to have each of the three major faiths erect its building. However, since this proposal would operate for a temporary (in order to prove its worth), but defined, period, it would be plausible to adopt the practice used on most military bases, viz., one building - erected, maintained and used by all three Faiths.

PART III

THIS PROPOSAL WOULD OFFER MANY ADVANTAGES
TO THE STUDENT, THE SCHOOL, THE COMMUNITY AND THE CHURCH

A. ADVANTAGES TO THE STUDENT:

1. The student would learn the truths of his Faith in a modern, well-equipped religious center. The study of Religion - its importance is noted above - would assume status in the mind of the student.
2. The student would have the benefit of a moral counselor. Problems of conscience, which often lead to delinquency when not solved, would be the concern of the religion teacher.
3. The student would have more qualified teachers. Under this proposal of staggering the teaching load over a period of five days a week, fewer and better-trained teachers may be provided.
4. The student would be getting maximum benefit from the time allotted by the State. Because of the proximity of the center, no time would be lost in getting there.
5. The student would be in less danger of accidents which often result from walking or riding to churches distant from the school.

B. ADVANTAGES TO THE SCHOOL:

1. The school would have less scheduling problems.
 - (1) Under the present set-up, the daily class schedule must be shortened on 'religious-instruction-day' in order to give the student a free hour at its end for Religion.
 - (2) Under this proposal, the daily schedule would not be disturbed at any time; classes would function the same each day.
2. The school would have one or more teachers freed for other duty. Less students in the study-hall require less supervision.
3. The school would acquire the services of the various religion teachers as student counselors in moral affairs (chaplains). Disciplinary problems could be referred to them for help and solution.
4. The school would escape the tinge of "God-less education" and at the same time adhere to the traditional division between church and state.

C. ADVANTAGES TO THE COMMUNITY:

1. The community would have a better citizenry. As stated above, Religion in the life of an individual gives him, among many things, a sense of moral values. Thus trained, he is prepared far more completely for adulthood and responsible citizenship.
2. The community would have an actual symbol of inter-faith cooperation in this religion center. Here, all the Faiths would be working together in fashioning the lives of young people. Truly an excellent way to learn tolerance.
3. The community would have better church-state relationship. Although the two must be separate, they cannot get along without the help of the other.
4. The community would be progressive in its educational program. This proposal is definitely explorative and even daring, but it would possibly be the answer to an old and troublesome problem: How can Religion be taught to public school students without endangering the church-state separation principle?

D. ADVANTAGES TO THE CHURCH:

1. The church would accomplish its purpose - to instruct the young - under the best possible conditions:
 - (1) more qualified faculty because of the staggered teaching load;
 - (2) ideal teaching and learning conditions - modern classrooms, aids, etc.;
 - (3) more time for teaching.
2. The church would save money which could be used for better equipment, etc.
 - (1) There will be no need for buses to transport students. Lack of sufficient funds for this purpose often has meant the curtailment of the religious instruction program for some churches.
 - (2) There will be no need of a multiplication of buildings, supplies, aids, equipment, etc.
3. The Church would have personal contact with the young. Because of a more active and successful instruction program, the chaplain would come to know the student more perfectly and would assume the role of counselor more adequately. Certainly, delinquency should decrease as a result of such personal and interested contact.

PART IV

REQUESTS

- A. We are not requesting a change in the law; the proposal is certainly within the confines of the law. We are requesting a further change in the regulations of the Commissioner of Education. This he can do.
- B. We are not requesting this proposal for any other school in the city or state. This proposal is to be considered as a "pilot-program". This is sound, educational practice. If, within a defined period of years, the advantages mentioned above do materialize, then the proposal could become a reality in other schools of this city or any community of the state.

- C. We are requesting that this proposal be allowed to continue at least for a period of six years.
1. We feel that only after such a period of time can a true and honest appraisal of the proposal be made.
 2. Since the building contemplated would cost a considerable sum of money, a definite and legal agreement for the 6 year period would make the financial investment a sound undertaking. It would be foolish to invest such a sum of money in a building which could be closed should the school authorities see fit to cancel the program at any time within six years.
- D. We are requesting that this proposal be given quick approval so that the center may be built in time to open together with the new North-East Sr. High School in September, 1963. A new school building and a new program for religious instruction would present a challenge to all concerned, a challenge which will make Syracuse a leader in progressive educational thinking.

Respectfully submitted,

REV. CHARLES L. BORGOGNONI
Chaplain of Catholic Students
Syracuse Univ. - 112 Walnut Pl.
(GR 8-5959) Syracuse, N.Y.