

Presidential Candidates Speak Out On The Issues

The purpose of this special edition of THE COMMENTATOR is to better acquaint the students of Yeshiva College with the three candidates who are running in tomorrow's election for the presidency of the Yeshiva College Student Council.

Last Wednesday evening the three candidates, Martin Birn, Louis Schapiro and Richard Sternberg, attended a meeting of THE COMMENTATOR Governing Board. At that time they were questioned by the Board members on various topics concerning YC, and their answers were spontaneously taped through the courtesy of WYUR. The text of this issue is composed of excerpts from that discussion. The questions and answers are printed in the order they were asked. We feel that it is important that YC students be fully knowledgeable about the viewpoint of the man they choose to represent them in the coming year, so we urge you to carefully read the transcript of this interview.

The Transcript

The Commentator: How do you see your role as president, and what do you feel are the powers of the office?

Mr. Birn: I think the major qualification necessary in bringing about a successful presidency is the clear understanding of the potential of the office, and of the problems of the school. And, I think the major role of the president is to set up a means of communication between the student body and the administration.

Mr. Schapiro: We are not going to be like the typical university. We are not going to do battle with the police or occupy the library; the ultimate weapon a student leader could use would be a strike, and of course it would be a peaceful strike — but before that, the duties of a president are to be a diplomat, to speak, to persuade, and to influence. As president I would try to act as liaison to make the administration aware of the fact that the students are concerned with the problems of Yeshiva. We must show the administration that we too have the long-range goals of Yeshiva at heart. We are all Jewish, and we look upon Yeshiva not as merely an alma mater, but as a unique institution of its kind, a yeshiva — and we all want to bring about what's best for Orthodox Judaism, and the president has to make sure that we are traveling together along this road not pushing against each other.

Mr. Sternberg: The role of president is one that involves enhancing the integrity of the student body and of student council, to be able to sit down with the administration, as we have done with the Senate and the tuition

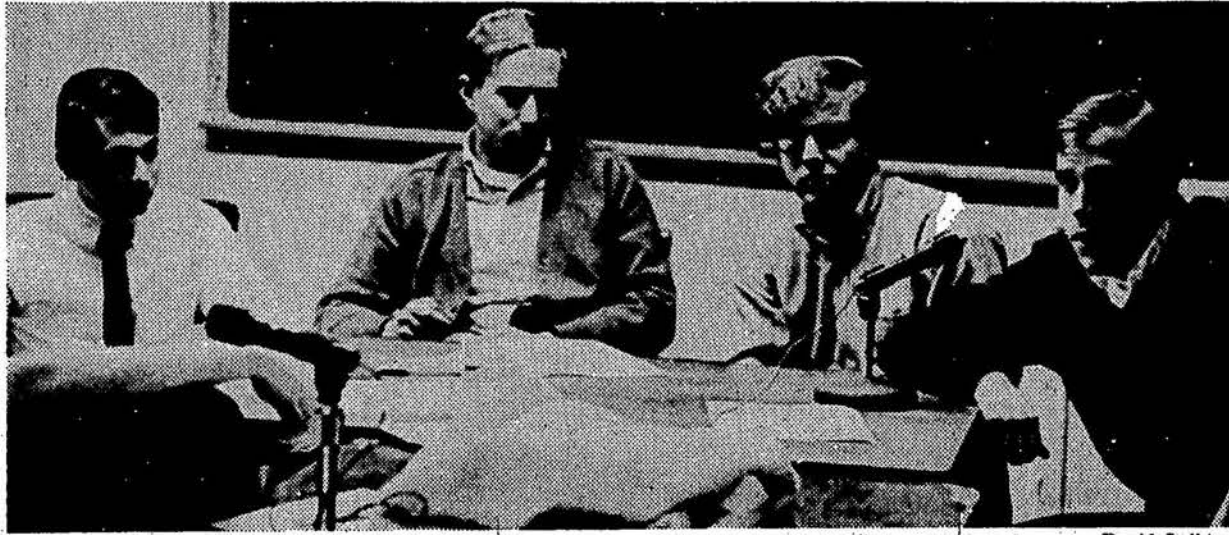
hike, to avoid any rash action. At times a strike is necessary, but it should be held in abeyance. The reputation of Yeshiva is rapidly deteriorating, because of rumors of the admission of non-Jews and because of rumors of the loss of religious atmosphere . . . it is necessary for the president to work with the leaders of the other student councils to try to build up Yeshiva, to try to enhance its name in the Jewish community.

The Commentator: What do

be a wholesale use of Belfer on Shabbat.

The Commentator: What do you see as the major specific problems you will face as president, and in what order of priority do you see them?

Mr. Sternberg: We are going to be faced with the problem of how to make good use of the Senate . . . the problem of the deteriorating religious atmosphere within the school and campus life in general, how to make the best



David Leibtag

The three candidates for the presidency of YCSC were confronted by THE COMMENTATOR Governing Board last Wednesday evening in a taped discussion. The participants were (left-to-right): Richard Sternberg; Editor-in-Chief Morton Landowne, who moderated the discussion; Martin Birn and Louis Schapiro.

you hope to do with respect to the Belfer Graduate School on our campus?

Mr. Birn: As I understand it, the problem with that is that it is going to be open on Shabbat. But I have heard that Dr. Belkin has stated it will not be open on Shabbat, so I guess this isn't an issue anymore. But, if you want me to answer a theoretical question, I do not think it should be open here on Shabbat, and I think student council should take the initiative, and there are various ways we could apply pressure, such as through publicly stating our displeasure through *The New York Times*, since Yeshiva is very image conscious.

Mr. Schapiro: The problem of Belfer is something that I have already introduced into my campaign, and I have spoken about it to the assistant dean at Belfer, Dr. Charles Patt. As I understand it, Dr. Belkin's policy is that only long-range projects may be checked daily, but at the present time, there is no enforcement of this policy, and it has led to abuses and might lead to further abuses. They might ask you to use the cafeteria on Shabbat, or opening the switchboard — it's given them a toehold. It also raises the problem of *maris-ayin* . . . the solution I propose is tighter enforcement of the rules as to who is allowed to enter the building.

Mr. Sternberg: I have discussed this problem with Dr. Miller and he stated that the University was planning some sort of tighter security system so that there will not

use of our facilities, and the need for new facilities, such as a student union building.

Mr. Birn: I would say that the first priority is the Senate, and making it a meaningful means of communication between the administration and the students. The second priority is that we have to insure that there are no longer any breaches of trust such as the one which led to the tuition hike. The third is the definition of our goals as a yeshiva.

Mr. Schapiro: This is a very theoretical question . . . I would begin with many projects — the revamping of the guidance program, making it more career oriented . . . revamping the P or F system, revamping registration, I would begin with the more mundane problems, but at the same time I would be trying to solve some of the more long-range problems which I have already brought up — the Belfer problem, the use of the senate, the challenge of the Federal Government.

The Commentator: Mr. Sternberg, how would you attempt to improve the academic and religious atmosphere?

Mr. Sternberg: I would attempt to meet with the heads of the religious councils and the roshei yeshiva to hear their proposals for the establishment of programs. As far as YC goes, this can be done in two ways, one by enhancing the dignity of the YC student in terms of his relations with the administration, and to effect a change so that they see that we mean business. Also, we need better teachers and better courses.

The Commentator: Mr. Birn, how would you go about establishing a rapport between the administration and the students?

Mr. Birn: In order to establish a rapport, there must be some visible signs of a rapport to begin with. Specifically, while there is value in closed door negotiations, there must be an emphasis on visible communication . . . there must be more open meetings to enhance a feeling of trust . . . a feeling of working together. Hopefully, it

to mature into it, but the hours of school work would have to be cut down so that pressure could be eliminated, so that students won't feel that the grade is the most important thing.

The Commentator: Are you satisfied with the Senate proposal?

Mr. Schapiro: I am satisfied as it is right now because it is merely a step. To ask for more at this point would be to ask for too much. If it is able to function, what more can we ask for?

Mr. Birn: I would like to see its scope broadened past merely academic affairs.

Mr. Sternberg: I feel it is an excellent proposal, one that the school can work with without change. But when and if problems arise, I am sure it will be amended.

The Commentator: Vis a vis your role as YCSC President, do you see yourself as an active participant in the discussions, or as an arbiter; also, how would you be able to present to the administration a viewpoint passed by Council to which you were personally opposed?

Mr. Birn: The president is not just an arbiter; unfortunately under Robert's rules he cannot make a motion, but he has an obligation to make recommendations and state clearly his opinions as the highest representative of the student body. I would be in favor of instituting some sort of veto power for the president which council could override.

Mr. Sternberg: It is the president's job to represent the student opinion, and so I feel he has the obligation to make his views known. He must represent all student opinion to the administration because it is the desire of the student body.

Mr. Schapiro: I would actively partake in the discussion, because it is the president who must formulate policy because he is the one who is dealing with the administration more or less all of the time . . . council has the right to punch holes in it . . . If he disagreed with an action of the council I feel that the president should approach the administration with members of the executive board, and I would like to have them come with me on a rotating basis . . . If it were a proposal with which I disagreed, I would take a back seat and let someone else present it, but if it came to a point of having to present it to the student body, and it was voted through by student council, I would go out there as if it were my own.

The Commentator: Mr. Birn, why are you running for office when you haven't been involved

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REMINDER

Mayor Lindsay will speak this evening on: "Ethnic Group Relations in New York City."

8:00 P.M. F501
Admission by ID card only

Candidates Have Final Say Before Tomorrow's YCSC Election

(Continued from page 1, column 5)

in student politics for three years?

Mr. Birn: This is probably the most valid question that could be brought up against me, how can I be effective without experience? Let me say, Lord knows I've tried, I've lost two elections. But all the experience in the world isn't going to guarantee a successful presidency . . . it depends on the individual and how he reacts to the crisis of the moment, how he grows in office, how he learns from his mistakes and how he learns to take advantage of his successes.

The Commentator: Mr. Sternberg, one of the objections we have heard to your candidacy is your inability to deal with the administration effectively. Could you comment on that?

Mr. Sternberg: Experience is a very important factor in being president of student council. Having been on student council, I have a rapport with the administration — I can walk in, I can talk to them, they know when I walk in that I mean business, and I have demonstrated this effectively in the matter of improving RIETS Hall, and the proposed tuition hike. So, I think the objection you have raised is unfounded.

The Commentator: Mr. Schapiro, why have you absented yourself from student politics for a year after having been an active member of student council?

Mr. Schapiro: I did it out of a feeling of disillusionment. When I was on YCSC I realized the utter despair we have when dealing with an administration that refuses to treat us as adults. It was a degrading experience to have to come hat-in-hand to the administration and not to be treated with respect. However, I have since recanted, and decided that I could do the most, out of the three candidates to change this atmosphere, because we have to try to communicate with the administration, and I feel that absenting myself from politics for one year does not lessen my

qualifications. As a regular student I was able to speak to administrators such as Rabbi Groff and Dean Bacon, as any student can, and in that way I acquainted myself with the issues. As a matter of fact, my diverse activities in the school, Junior court justice, serving on a varsity team, and serving in conjunction with a publication, didn't hurt my knowledge of the problems that face the school. Serving in one field can be too narrowing an influence when one has to represent an entire student body.

The Commentator: What issues do you feel merit the calling of a student strike?

Mr. Sternberg: It is very difficult to say which issues should we strike on, because we don't know what issues are going to come up. If the Senate doesn't go through we have no alternative, but before we call a strike we must negotiate. If the administration is sincere, we will negotiate until we turn blue. If they are just trying to pacify us then we have no other course of action. But we should not constantly scream the word strike; it's like the boy who cried wolf too often, and when we really mean it, it won't be effective. In addition, the issue must have a degree of magnitude.

Mr. Schapiro: In most cases it won't be the particular issue that decides whether or not a strike will be necessary, it will be the way we are treated by the administration in conjunction with the issue. I envision four steps in our powers: first, we must try diplomacy and persuasion to get our ideas heard; then, if we don't get a proper response we will have to organize a protest to demonstrate that we have the support of the student body; if this doesn't elicit rational explanations of why they do not accept our ideas, then it is necessary to go one step further and organize picketing, but still continue to attend classes. Then if we are still not treated like

adults and do not receive a proper explanation, we must use the ultimate weapon, a strike, but at all costs, a peaceful strike.

Mr. Birn: Basically if we want a standard for what we are going to demonstrate against I think it will be something, in the most general terms, which represents a serious breach of trust on the part of the administration towards students—something that threatens to break down any chance for meaningful communications, not only on this issue, but on future issues. But if it is an issue which is especially important, such as the Senate, which will provide such a means of communication, then this is something which we should strike for. However, before we call a strike, we have to have meaningful negotiations, and if these don't work, we must present visible signs of student support in the form of petitions, sending class representatives to the administration and peaceful demonstrations. And, when we do go on strike, we must worry about *chilul hashem*, because it isn't just a cliché. However, if these strikes are controlled effectively, we can have a peaceful strike, but nevertheless a meaningful strike. But we must not forget the workability of the threat of a strike.

The Commentator: Given the situation that exists now, and all the discussion that has gone on

The Dworken family wishes to thank all those at Yeshiva University who were so kind to them during their recent period of bereavement.
Steve Dworken

previous to it, if the administration rejects the students' request for a \$250 tuition hike, would you call for a strike?

Mr. Birn: Yes.

Mr. Schapiro: I really don't think you can give a yes or no answer to a question like that.

Mr. Sternberg: Yes.

The Commentator: If next year we find out that there is truly an abuse of the Shabbat at Belfer, and negotiations do not evoke a satisfactory response, would you be willing to call a strike?

Mr. Birn: Yes

Mr. Sternberg: Yes

Mr. Schapiro: Yes.

The Commentator: Would you care to make a closing statement?

Mr. Birn: I think the ultimate question in this campaign is whether we as a school and we as a student government are doing as much as we can. I am not satisfied with the progress we have made knowing full well that with the proper utilization of our resources we can do more. I think I am qualified for this office because I have a clear understanding of the school and its problems, of student council and its potential, and of the presidency and its potential.

Mr. Sternberg: I feel because of the rapport that I have with the administration, because of my experience, because I know how student council functions, and because I have dealt with the administration effectively and achieved many things for student council that I will be best qualified for

this position.

Mr. Schapiro. In an election at Yeshiva, the basic difference in a campaign is not really one of issues. More or less everyone is going to be for the same thing . . . The essential difference is what is going to be done when the person gets in; will he be able to implement his proposals. So the difference is not where I stand on the

issues but who will be the better spokesman, who will come across to the administration as the most persuasive speaker, the most sincere, who will come over as the most rational and will have the most well-thought-out plans. In other words, who would you like to have in your corner defending students rights, and I feel that I will be that best spokesman.

Editorial Opinion

The University's unilateral decision to raise tuition by approximately \$350 per student once again raises the spectre of bad faith and deviousness which has so often characterized Yeshiva's relations with its students in the past. In early February, YCSC was informed that a tuition hike was in the planning stages and that Council would be consulted in subsequent deliberations. Shortly thereafter, President Hain discovered that the boost in tuition was a *fait accompli* and that student government was to have no say in the matter. Thanks to Mr. Hain's efforts, student leaders were invited to a special meeting on March 9, where they were presented with the facts of Yeshiva's economic plight and the reasons for the University's action.

With this meeting in mind, Student Council voted to negotiate with the administration for a \$250 hike rather than to throw the entire tuition raise back into the University's lap. THE COMMENTATOR believes that YCSC's decision was a wise and just one. The student body was realistically unable to combat the plethora of facts and figures with which Dr. Socol confronted Mr. Hain; and YCSC, recognizing this, judiciously decided to consider both the administration's and students' demands by proposing a \$250 raise. It must be understood that the first element to suffer from the University's potential inability to meet its financial obligations would be the students themselves.

However, in its method of decision-making the University violated its ethical responsibility to the students, which is especially unfortunate considering the inception of the Senate. The Senate is possibly the most progressive institution to be established at Yeshiva since the college's creation 41 years ago, but the administration's attempt to literally "cram the tuition hike down our throats" is a 100% transgression of the Senate's principles. This reversion to almost medieval autocracy augurs ill for the Senate and leads THE COMMENTATOR to be apprehensive about the administration's intentions in future dealings with the students.

In order to avoid a recurrence of the recent events, THE COMMENTATOR suggests that a permanent committee made up of YCSC and Office of Student Finances representatives be institutionalized to review semiannually the University's budget and to have the power to make policy concerning tuition. This would create bilateral machinery for future financial decisions. Furthermore, the catalogue should be revised so as to read that "no increase in tuition shall affect a Yeshiva College student during his four year stay at Yeshiva."

Although THE COMMENTATOR acquiesces to the necessity of a tuition hike, it does not agree that an all encompassing fee of \$100 should be established to cover registration, student activities fees, etc. since those who do not take labs will suffer at the expense of those students who major in the sciences.

Finally, Dr. Socol has emphasized that the tuition hike would only affect the 25% of students paying the full tuition since scholarships would concurrently rise. (This aspect is not entirely clear). Dr. Socol romantically sees himself as "Robin Hood"—stealing from the rich to give to the poor. THE COMMENTATOR urges that a comprehensive reevaluation of all scholarships take place in the near future and that those who will be most affected by the tuition hike will be reconsidered for scholarships.



The faculty of Yeshiva College, in an assembly on March 12, 1969, unanimously approved the proposed Yeshiva College Senate. One of the members of the faculty called this decision "a milestone in the annals of Yeshiva University." The Senate, to be composed of members of the student body, faculty, and administration, will govern many functions of the College. Its decisions can be vetoed, however, by the President of the University or a two-thirds vote of the Faculty Assembly. It was approved by YCSC the previous evening (above picture).

As of this moment, both the faculty and the Student Council have approved the substance of the proposal for the Senate, but both have authorized minor changes in wording to clarify and improve the document without altering its substance. These changes are expected to be completed within two weeks so that the proposal can then be submitted to Dr. Belkin for his approval. While refusing to predict Dr. Belkin's reaction to the proposal, Dean Isaac Bacon gave his personal endorsement to the Senate, calling it one of the "most liberal proposals that have appeared in any university."

The Commentator

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