The Transcript

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

Mr. Biren: I think the major qualification necessary in bringing about a successful presidency is the capacity to understand the potential of the office, and of the problems of the school. And, I think the major role of the president is to act as the arbiter of communication between the student body and the administration. We do not want to be like the typical university. We are not going to do battle with the police or 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 the University. We should make the administration understand that we have the long-range goals of Yeshiva at heart. We are all Jewish, and we look upon Yeshiva not merely as an academic institution, but as a unique institution of its kind, a yeshiva — and we all want to bring about what's best for Orthodoxy Judaism in America. I think it's a matter of security 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 attending to their needs. I would 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 a school spirit and to use the name in the Jewish community.

The Commentator: What do you hope to do with respect to the Belfer Graduate School on our campus?

Mr. Biren: 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. I don’t think it is an issue anymore. But, if you want me to answer a theoretical question, I do not think it should be open on Shabbat, and I think student council should take the initiative, and if there are various ways we could apply pressure such as publicly presenting our displeasure through The New York Times, since Yeshiva is very much in the news.

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, 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 tool. It also raises the question of what will the solution I propose be, that at least to answer a theoretical question. What I would propose is that at least to answer a theoretical question. What I would propose is that we need a new facilities, and the need for new facilities, such as a student union building.

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The Commentator: Why would you attempt to improve the academic and religious atmosphere?

Mr. Sternberg: I would attempt to point out the head of the religious councils and the roshet 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 students 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. Biren, how would you go about establishing a rapport between the administration and the students?

Mr. Biren: In order to establish a rapport, there must be some visible signs of a rapport to be established. Special events such as special talks in closed door negotiations, there must be an emphasis on visible communication. There must be signs that we thought about the feelings of the students and the administration, and in general, how to make the best of it.

Mr. Schapiro: If I were to ask myself the same kind of question, I would ask myself to what extent I can establish a rapport with the students. I would say, for one thing, that we need a new facilities, and the need for new facilities, such as a student union building. The Commentator: Mr. Biren, how would you go about establishing a rapport between the administration and the students?

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Candidates Have Final Say Before Tomorrow's YCSC Election

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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 presi- dent. I would try to lead as an individual and how he reacts to the crisis of the moment, how he grows in office, how he learns from his mistakes, how he can take advantage of his strengths.

The Commentator: Mr. Sternberg, one of the objections we have heard to your candidacy in 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 administra- tion — I can walk in, I can talk to them, when I walk in that I mean business, and I have demonstrated this effective- ly in the matter of improving RIETS Hall, and the proposed tuition hike. So, I think the objec- tion you have raised is unfounded.

The Commentator: Mr. Schapiro, why have you abstained from the campaign which is only 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 20-year disparity we have when dealing with an administration that refuses to talk to us as adults. It was a degrading experience to have to come hat-in-hand to the administration and not be treated with respect. However, I have since reentered, and decided that I could do the move, out of the three candidates to change this atmosphere, because we have no try to communicate with the administration, and I feel that abstaining myself from politics for one year does not lessen my qualifications. As a regular student I was able to speak to adminis- trators such as Ralph 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 inside the school have made me aware of the problems that face the school. Serving in one field can be too narrowing in influence when one has to represent an entire student body.

The Commentator: What is the issue you feel most on the calling of a student strike?

Mr. Sternberg: It is very diffi- cult 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 constan- tly 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 addi- tion, 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 adminis- tration in conjunction with the issue. I envision four steps in our powers: first, we must try diplo- macy 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 inevitable that we will further 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 ultimatum. But at all costs, a peaceful strike.

Mr. Birn: Basically if we want a standard for what we are going to demonstrate I think there will be something, in the most gen- eral terms, which represents a seri- ous breach of trust on the part of the administration. You see, adminis- tration — 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 es- pecially important, such as the Sen- ate's refusal to recognize other means of communication, then this is something which we should strike for. However, before we call a strike, we must understand that it isn't just a chitchat. However, if these strikes are controlled effec- tively, we can have a peaceful effective 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 previous to it, if the administra- tion rejects the students' request petition, would you call for a strike?

Mr. Birn: Yes.

Mr. Schapiro: I really don't think I would. I would ask the students to write to the administration, to have the power to make policy concerning student council, would you call for a strike?

Mr. Birn: Yes.

Mr. Schapiro: Yes.

Mr. Birn: Yes.

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

Mr. Birn: I think the ultimate question in this campaign is whether or not there is a student government that the student government are doing as much as we can. I am not satisfied with the way things are run; keeping full well that with the proper utilization of our resources we can do more. I think we must have a chance to make a clear statement, do we 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 ex- perience as councilor or council- ment and how he reacts to the problems that face the school. Serving in one field can be too narrowing in influence when one has to represent an entire student body.

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The Commentator: Mr. Schapiro, in an election at Yeshiva, the basic difference in a campaign is not really one of issues. More or less everyone is go- ing to be for the same thing. . .

Mr. Schapiro: I am going to be doing when the person gets in; in; will he be able to imple- ment his proposals. So the diffe- rence 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 per--suasive speaker, the most sin- cerer, who will come over as the most rational and will have the most concern for the students, or not. I don't know, who you would 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 Feb- ruary, YCSC was informed that a tuition hike was in the planning stages and that Council would be consulted in sub- sequent deliberations. Shortly thereafter, President Hain dis- covered the truth in tuition was a fait accompli and that student government was to have a say in the matter. Thanks to the unspoken assurance by Mr. Hain at the meeting on March 9, where they were presented with the facts of Yeshiva's economic plight and the reasons for the Univer- sity's action.

With this meeting in mind, Student Council voted to negoti- ate 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 negotiate and students' demands by proposing a $250 raise. It must be understood that the first element to suffer from the Uni- versity's potential inability to meet its financial obligations would be the students themselves. However, the decision-making process of the Uni- versity violated its ethical responsibility to the students, which is especially unfortunate considering the inception of the Sen- ate. 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 attempts 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 Com- mentator to be apprehensive about the administration's intentions in future dealings with the students.

The Dworken family, being Yeshiva University who pay to send their children to their recent periodical, would you call for a strike?

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