

Earl Raab

Meier Kahane and Louis Farrakhan, both of whom are likely to show up in San Francisco one of these days, have at least one thing in common: they are becoming public personalities in this country, drawing audiences far beyond their own membership circles./p

Farrakhan recently spoke in Washington, D.C. to a crowd of ten thousand, the size of his Black Muslim sect's membership throughout the country. Members of his audience interviewed by the Washington Post said they disagreed with many things he said, particularly with his savage anti-semitism. Nevertheless, a lot of people who want to fill their meeting halls or shore up their TV ratings will now be inviting him to speak. And Kahane, scheduled to come to this country soon, is already booked at two national TV networks, although more than nine out of ten American Jews say they disapprove of him./p

There may be another way in which Farrakhan and Kahane are alike: the deadly blows they may be dealing their own constituencies, on whose behalf they are presumably speaking. In attacking Farrakhan, Willie Brown, the Speaker of the California Assembly, and other black leaders have complained that Farrakhan's extremism is bound to set back the cause of the American blacks./p

Israeli critics feel the same about Kahane. Dan Meridor, an intimate of both Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir, and a cabinet secretary to them both, said this month:/p

"There is a common interest shared by Kahane and the PLO in proving that Jews and Arabs cannot live together peacefully. One racist extreme feeds off the other." It is reported that Meridor told a recent meeting of fellow Herut members that "the racism of Meier Kahane is diametrically opposed to the Revisionism of Ze'ev Jabotinsky." Meridor said that Kahane's extremism "stems from sources of evil that are fundamentally anti-Jewish, indeed anti-everything we believe in."/p

Meier Shitrit, a leading Likud member of the Knesset, said of Kahane:"He's the antithesis of all we've taught in the upbuilding of our country. He's a threat to Jews everywhere." Shitrit says that Kahane's "racist incitement here will be used as a cover for every anti-semitic demagogue the world over." Many Israelis believe that Kahane is destructive to Jews because he is destructive to Jewish values; others believe that he is destructive to Israel because Israel cannot survive in a permanent state of war with and isolation from Arabs in the Middle East./p

It is for these reasons that , without a dissenting vote present, the Knesset voted to make illegal any party

espousing racism, or holding that Israel cannot be a democracy, as Kahane has held. And it is for these reasons that the President of Israel has refused to meet with Kahane. /p

Of course, there is much talk about the survey results which show that as many as five per cent of Israelis would now vote for Kahane- and that many more young Israelis agree with some of his statements. The surveys do show irrefutably that democratic values among young Israelis, the victims of continuous warfare and terrorism, are shakier than they have been in the past. The Knesset and the educational institutions of Israel are attempting to repair that damage, although peace is the ultimate remedy. But to keep perspective, we must also remember our experience with George Wallace when he was at his extremist worst. In pre-election surveys, when he ran for President, as many as 25 per cent of the people said they agreed with much of what he said and would vote for him. But they were just expressing their frustration. When they went to the polls, fewer than half of those people actually voted for him; they were finally repelled by his extremism. /p

Thus it will be, one can hope and expect, with those public personalities, Farrakhan and Kahane.