

Oil And Anti-Semitism

Rabbi Seymour Cohen, current president of the national Synagogue Council, had occasion to call the San Francisco JCRC last week, and asked:

"Have you seen any bumper strips out there—the ones that say: 'More oil—less Jews'?"

"No, none has been reported in San Francisco yet. We've just had a statewide meeting and none of the bumper stickers has been reported in California, not even in Los Angeles. We heard they were in the Midwest. How many have been seen there?"

"None, actually...But everybody's talking about them."



Raab

Well, we've finally located someone who knows someone who says he actually saw such a bumper strip in New York...or was it Boston? If such a sticker does not exist, it will be created by the staff of the Arab League, and such bumper strips might indeed show up here and there around the country. But they haven't showed up yet. So why is it that "everybody's talking about them?"

Jewish nervousness on the subject may be historically warranted. There is never reason to be complacent about the possibility of anti-Semitism. More than one third of the American population has said that American Jews "are more loyal to Israel than to the United States." At the moment, many of these Americans see it as an ethnic loyalty which is not necessarily bad. And, at the moment, fewer than one out of ten Americans think that American Jews are unduly involved in shaping this country's Middle East policy. But that connection between American Jews and Israel could conceivably become a nasty one, if a nasty connection is made between Israel and the United States. And that nasty connection might conceivably develop around the oil shortage.

So what do we do? Print bumper stickers saying "love Jews, not oil" —or, for bigger bumpers, "Despite what you may have heard to the contrary, Jews are not responsible for the oil crisis." By over-anticipating a wave of anti-Semitism which has not yet occurred, one can sometimes help make it occur.

The other danger in over-anticipating anti-Semitism is that it can take attention away from the main problem, the situation from which anti-Semitism might indeed emerge two connections down the line: The oil companies and some politicians seem interested in spreading the idea that our fuel shortage is directly and totally related to the Arab oil embargo.

As a recent report in the *S.F. Examiner* put it: "The present petroleum shortage can be traced to a hefty lack in refinery capacity...resulting from the fact that the major oil companies have been concentrating their operations in foreign countries over the last two decades...There may exist a serious conflict of interest between the petroleum needs of the United States and of the several large oil companies."

The energy crisis is larger than the fuel crisis. The fuel crisis is larger than the Arab oil embargo. These are the understandings that have to be made clear to the American public. These are the issues which need immediate and deep investigation by the American Congress.

Then, those bumper stickers, real or imagined, will take care of themselves.