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Minutes of the meeting of the ORT Central Board held on 19th February 1927

Present : K. Blumenfeld, L. Bramson, J. Brodnitz, A. Syngalowski,  
N. Soloweitschik, S. Frankfurt, as well as L. Frankel and L. Etkin.  
Chairman : L. Bramson      Secretary: G. Aronson

Discussed

The Chairman reads the proposed agenda to the meeting.

2. Report by Dr. Bramson on the activity of the Central Board during the 2 months since the plenary assembly. Mr. Bramson notes two particulars of the Central Board's current work: the steadily increasing work and the simultaneous need to reduce and to shorten it in view of the serious financial situation. The executive organ of the ~~administration~~, <sup>Board</sup> the Administrative and Finance Commission, has done very energetic work: it is sufficient to mention the statistics of the meetings held - the Commission held 13 regular meetings in the period between January 3rd and February 19th; 5 consultations with Emigdirekt, 4 with JCA and Joint, 6 with the United Committee and 7 with the German Department. The work of the Central Board during the period under review was to a large extent devoted to vocational training. Thanks to the presence of Ing. Frenkel in Berlin and his dynamic work in this field, considerable progress can be noted in this area. Of special importance were the consultations with JCA and Joint on the co-ordination of the work and the establishment, jointly with HIAS and Emigdirekt, of a permanent commission for the vocational preparation of emigrants, agricultural workers and craftsmen. The referee proposes that the allocation foreseen by the Admin. and Finance Commission for the joint work with JCA and Joint, for which ORT has to assume 1/3 of the cost, be approved.

Resolved

1. The following agenda to be accepted:
  - 1) General survey of the Central Board's activities.
  - 2) Activity of the purchasing department.
  - 3) Propaganda and organisation.
  - 4) The financial situation.
  - 5) Examination of the proposals of the Administrative and Finance Commission
  
2. To take note of Dr. Bramson's report. The proposals communicated in the name of the Admin. and Finance Commission to be given the following form:
  - 1) Should the collaboration with EKO and Joint concerning the program as decided upon during the deliberations materialize to allot in the form of a loan \$500 for the publication of teaching books and \$100 for the publication of forms; \$280 - 290 for instructors' courses; \$100 for the expenses in connection with the consultations with the directors of schools in Poland, it being understood that ORT contributes only 1/3 of the total expenses.
  - 2) To delegate to the Joint Commission with HIAS-Emigdirekt for the vocational preparation of emigrants the following members of the ORT Central Board: L. Bramson, A. Syngalowski, B. Brutzkus, L. Frenkel, and as their alternates L. Etkin, G. Aronson.
  - 3) To advocate the naming of an ORT colony in England after the writer J. Zangwill and to contact the persons in London who had taken part in this initiative.
  - 4) To submit for the approval of the Reconstruction Fund the following modus for the distribution of the \$12000 : \$3000 for the construction of schools, \$3000 for the Purchasing Department, \$1000 for the coverage of bank debts and \$4000 for the acquisition of securities.

Discussed

The referee further proposes to nominate the ORT representatives to the Joint Commission for Vocational Training.

Stating that the Central Administration presently maintains relations with 77 organisations, that in the ORT schools in the border States more than 4200 pupils are being trained, the referee communicates that unfortunately it has been necessary to put on the agenda the question concerning the cessation of the subventions for several schools, such as those in Libau, Ponewesch, as well as the question concerning the refusal to make available \$3000 which were to be destined for the building of a school in Bendery.

In regard to agriculture, the referee underlined the much more frequent reimbursement of loans which had been granted to farmers in Poland and Russia. Following the resolutions of the plenary assembly, it has been necessary to make various reductions in the agronomy work on credit ("kredit-agronomisch") in Bessarabia.

Furthermore, the referee proposes in the name of the Admin. and Finance Commission to name an ORT colony in Russia after the writer J. Zangwill and to undertake a collection to this effect.

As regards the activity of the Fund, the referee states that \$12000 have been received for the Fund from Chicago and proposes a way of distribution of this amount.

As regards the legalisation of the association, the referee proposes to submit the statutes of the association for registration in Germany and to instruct the Admin. and Finance Commission to this effect.

As regards Dr. Bramson's exposé concerning the reductions of agricultural work in Bessarabia, Dr. Syngalowski states that this question will have to be submitted for discussion again during the next semester.

As regards the distribution of the \$12000 of the Fund, Mr. Soloweitschik, as chairman of the Board of Foreign Funds ("Auslandsfonds") supports the proposal.

3. Report of S. L. Frankfurt on the activity of the Purchasing Department for the year 1926. The referee first of all stressed the formal conditions for the existence of the Purchasing Department and then reported on the characteristics of last year's operations and those of January 1927.

Resolved

5) To request the Administrative and Finance Commission to submit the statutes of the association for registration in Germany.

3. To thank Mr. S. Frankfurt for his report. To ask Mr. Brodnitz to participate in the discussions concerning the formal conditions for the existence of the Purchasing Dept. To ask Mr. Soloweitschik to give Mr. Frankfurt his opinion on a number of financial questions.

Discussed

According to the referee, the general balance ("Umsatzbilanz") amounts to 1,871,761,94 M; net balance - 229,336,86 M; losses and profits as of 31.12.16 = 61,165,51; gross profit = 58,793,94 M.

Concerning explanations of several questions on the activity of the Purchasing Dept., Mr. Soloweitschik, Mr. Brodnitz and others take the floor.

4. Dr. A. Syngalowski reports on the Organisation and Propaganda Department during the last five weeks. This department has many tasks, but ~~very~~ little funds. After the plenary session, at the time of the referee's return from Russia, the reductions were begun. In the first place, however, the materials he had brought with him from Russia had to be dealt with and were published in 22 publications. The Jewish journalists were informed on the activity of ORT in the region of Odessa and Bielorussia. During the same period, 5 meetings were organised. The current issue of the bulletin is at the printers. Information is being sent to ITA and to the Bulletin of the Joint Committee. Among the current tasks, the referee underlines the publication of the brochures for Poland and Bessarabia. Reverting to a description of the situation in other places, the referee mentions the preparation of an ORT Week in Poland, new committees have been founded in Cholm and in Lublin. In Lublin the Jewish Community has made available a building for use as a school. A trip to Poland by a member of the Central Board is foreseen. As regards the editorial work, the publication of an agricultural magazine in Yiddish is foreseen, which will not necessitate additional expenditure on our part.

Resolved

4. To thank Dr. Syngalowski for his report and to take note of it.



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Discussed

(candidate M. Silberfarb) to Argentina.

There is a possibility of the question of a trip to Roumania becoming acute. In addition the Central Administration appealed to the national organizations (Lokalorganisations.) regarding the ~~enhancement~~<sup>strengthening</sup> of the fund-raising drive. Simultaneously with the measures regarding the strengthening of the fund-raising drive the Central Administration is trying to achieve a balanced budget by means of reduction of organizational expenditures. In keeping with the resolutions (decisions - Beschlüsse) of the last plenary meeting L. Bramson <sup>presented</sup> reported ~~about~~ <sup>an</sup> the reduction plan which had been elaborated at the meetings of the Administration and Finance Commission of 28th and 31st January as well as 5th February, ~~XXXX~~ which he submitted for approval <sup>to</sup> of the Central Administration. In keeping with the proposals of the Administration and Finance Committee, it was resolved to designate as a goal that <sup>there be</sup> only one or no more than two remunerated members ~~XXXX~~ (receiving a salary) of the Central Admin. ~~are~~ carried ~~on~~ in the budget until January 1928. The members of the Central Admin. J. Zegelnitzky and Silberfarb would go over, entirely or partially, to the budget of the Purchasing Company (Einkaufsgesellschaft), and the salary of Mr. Bramson will be excluded from the budget two months after his return from South Africa. Those members of the Central Admin.

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who have been sent out by the United Committee (Vereinigten Komitee), draw their <sup>entire</sup> salary during that time from the Committee. Talking of other reductions the speaker suggests to the Commission to reduce expenditure for the administration, office, premises, to dismiss Instructor Gorin in Poland, to dismiss the employees of the Central Administration R. Rabinowitz and J. Josselewitz, to reduce the salary of the secretariat in London, and to discuss the question of a temporary reduction of 15% in salaries of all remunerated staff of the Central Admin.

In the following discussions participated Messrs. J. Brodnitz, K. Blumenfeld, S. Frankfurt, A. Syngalowski, N. Solowitschik.

J. Brodnitz felt that the pessimism of the Commission was not sufficiently justified. There is hope for improvement of the conditions.

K. Blumenfeld agreed with this opinion and stated that crises of this sort have also been experienced by other organizations, and that it would not be practical (defeat the purpose - unzweckmässig) , to ~~remove~~ <sup>dismiss</sup> cadre (leitendes Personal) from the direction. One could dismiss technical personnel, but not <sup>of</sup> the Central Administration. Furthermore the speaker remarked that in Germany expenditures are required, but these expenditures will bear fruit. The trips of the members of the Central Administration serve a purpose and can ~~help~~ help the Union (Verband) to overcome the financial difficulties.

S. Frankfurt supported in general the reduction plan of the Commission and pointed out that there was no other way to cover the deficit. He expressed disagreement with the budget ~~EXPOSITION~~ explanation (exposé) of Mr. L. Bramson, but stated that the <sup>submitted</sup> reduction program ~~XXXXXX~~ was right -- until the budget improved (in health) or until the fund-raising campaign in Germany showed good results.

J. Brodnitz suggested that the measures of the Commission should be re-examined. In Germany there were still many circles of society who had not understood the work and movement of the ORT Society (Verband). Planned and intensive work is required -- and the ~~fruits~~ <sup>results</sup> will not be expected for ~~nothing~~ <sup>in vain</sup>. Do not give way to pessimism! ~~Reduction~~ <sup>from the budget</sup> ~~of L. Bramson~~ <sup>Dropping</sup> means deterioration of the cause. (dismissal??) The deficit should not be feared too much ---we will manage to overcome the crisis.

A. Syngalowski considered the decisions of the Administration and Finance Committees ~~not~~ not sufficiently ~~matured~~ <sup>matured</sup>. The sense of the resolution is reduction until 1928. As long as it was a question of ~~the passing over~~ <sup>transferring</sup> of the budget ~~of~~ <sup>to</sup> the Purchasing Company (~~Uebergang auf das Budget der Einkaufsgesellschaft~~), as is the case with Zeelnitzky and Silberfarb, we agreed unanimously. However as regards the general plan we did not agree. We can only get out of the difficult situation by a big ORT drive. (Aktion). There is, however, the United Committee in the way,

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from whose ~~XXXX~~ fund-raising drive we get 40% and to whom we give our people. Would it not be preferable that we devote ourselves to our own cause and strengthen our organization? It is possible that in this case we would have the necessary means.

N. Soloweitschik said that the adoption of the resolutions would mean the liquidation of ORT. He proposed the reduction of administrative costs as well as transfer of individual members of the Central Administration to the budget of Purchasing Company, and confirmed his refusal ~~XXXXXX~~ to the adoption of the resolution. Only after the return from the States and others countries (of the various members) a definite decision should be taken.

K. Blumenfeld also expressed his opposition to the resolution of the Commission, especially to the reduction of salaries by 15% and against the dismissal of members of the Central Admin.

L. Bramson said in his closing speech that he had been unjustly ~~XXXXXX~~ attacked because of his pessimism. He was an optimist -- but for the future of the Union (Society) amputation, or reduction, was in his opinion, indispensable, in the technical as well as in the administrative apparatus. Taking ~~XXXX~~ cognizance of the expressed critical remarks, he put the proposals to the vote.

The Chairman:

The Secretary: