

# "Too Many Jews At Wisconsin University"?

The Forward Today Presents A Complete and Dispassionate Account of the Strained Relations Existing Between the Jewish and the Gentile Student Bodies at the Famous State University

by NATHAN S. LEICHMAN

MADISON, WIS., Jan. 31. — When Mrs. Meta Berger, widow of the late Victor Berger, and regent of the University of Wisconsin, introduced a resolution before the board of regents on January 15 that rooming houses which discriminate against race, creed, or nationality should officially be discredited, it was a sign that the Gordon suit had finally aroused to action one regent, who is determined to stop the recent wave of anti-Semitism before it overflows its banks.

No action will be taken on her resolution until President Glenn Frank returns from his Southern tour. Mrs. Berger's resolution follows:

"Be it resolved that it is the sense of the board of regents that the authority with power to place rooming houses and halls housing girl students of this university on the accredited list, shall not place on the accredited list any rooming house which in any way discriminated against any students on account of race, creed, or nationality."

Many instances have occurred recently where Jewish girls, especially those from New York, have been refused the right to lease rooms merely because they were Jewish. The latest incident to come to light is that of Mildred Gordon, a Jewish girl from Chicago, who has just started suit for \$10,000 against the officers of Langdon Hall, a women's private dormitory at the university, on the grounds that she was caused humiliation, embarrassment, and mental anguish, for having been discriminated against because of her religion.

Miss Gordon charges that the owners of the dormitory have adopted an iron-bound policy to deny any Jewish girls at the University the right to live at the dormitory, although literature sent out by the owners does not indicate that there are rules discriminating against any race or religion.

The procedure in accepting applications, she claims, was to take the application of those that applied, Jew or Gentile. Then, when it seemed that enough Gentiles were certain to fill the hall, those applications of the Jewish girls would be returned with a formally courteous note of refusal.

Miss Gordon says in her complaint that on August 31, 1929, she applied for a room at Langdon Hall and filled out a questionnaire, answering one question thereon with the statement that she was Jewish; since her application was accepted and a room reserved she had stationery and engraved cards printed with Langdon Hall as her Madison address.

When she arrived in Madison on September 19 to start school, and had her trunk delivered at Langdon Hall, she was denied admission. The hostess at the dormitory requested her to see the manager, Mr. Malone. "He refused," Miss Gordon stated, "to arrange a room for me. He even offered to pay my hotel bill at the Hotel Lorraine, and this I considered an insult. The rooms had not been assigned when I filed my application. I was told that all rooms were filled."

Miss F. Louise Nardin, dean of women, insisted that Miss Gordon had a right to stay at Langdon Hall, since its owners had not given her notice of refusal, or refunded her money, before September 1. Even the customary formal note of refusal usually sent to the other Jewish girls when their applications were turned down, was not sent her, Miss Gordon avers.

Other Jewish students have pushed forward claims that they were also barred because of their religion, and their applications returned; some have been deeply insulted, especially since they learned that the dormitory was not completely filled until the latter part of September.

This suit by Miss Gordon is not the first sign that anti-Semitism exists at the university; other instances have shown it more plainly. For several years, or ever since the Jewish students have started to come in large numbers, a tide of feeling against the Jew has started.

A religious survey of the university made last year showed that the Jews were second only to the Catholics in number. Comparison with last year's figures indicates that the number of Jewish students has doubled in the last two years; last year's freshman class alone contained as a single group more Jews than any other group.

Some Wisconsin Jews, when interviewed as to the grounds on which such a sudden wave of anti-Semitism had started, stated that they believed the Eastern Jews to be responsible. Said one, "They, the Easterners, the out-of-staters, are the obnoxious ones; they are loud and superficial, especially those from New York and New Jersey, and refused to keep up to orthodox standards."

Statistics reveal that out-of-state Jews are increasing at a tremendous rate at the university; some years ago Illinois was the haven of refuge in the West. Later Michigan became the mecca; and now Wisconsin leads in the number of Jewish students, with an enrollment of almost ten per cent Jews, out of a student body of almost 10,000.

New York and New Jersey have more than doubled the number of students here in the last decade; New York has three times as many students now, at Wisconsin, than she had just

## Leading Figures in Wisconsin "U" Affair



META BERGER



GLENN FRANK



ALEX. MEIKELJOHN

ten years ago. In 1919, 323 students registered from New York and New Jersey, and comprised one half of one per cent of the then total enrollment of 7,294. In 1929, New York students comprised approximately three per cent of the total student body of 9,537; New Jersey, in 1929, had one per cent. So in ten years a steady shift of Eastern immigration has made its way westward, first towards Illinois, then towards Michigan, and finally towards Wisconsin. Such an immigration is surprising when one realizes that New York and New Jersey are over 1000 miles away, and that some of the best universities in the country are almost within a stone's throw.

It has been increasingly apparent in the last two years that there is an open split between many Gentiles and Jews. An advertisement such as the following, appeared in the Daily Cardinal, the student newspaper, on Oct. 25, 1929, and is hardly a sign of good feeling:

Wanted — Third man for moderately priced apartment, upper classman preferred. Gentile only. Call B-4784.

Even such a minor incident indicates in which way the wind is blowing; it is an unpleasant situation. Most students hardly feel, however, that the suit brought by Miss Gordon will have any effect either to make the breach wider, or to fill the gap already created.

Of a rather serious nature was the "Apex Club" affair of last year. The Apex Dancing Club consisted of leading fifteen fraternities on the campus, and was formed because some Gentile sorority women objected to the presence of Jewish students at the Memorial Union dances; the Memorial Union is the official social center where all students have the right to enter.

Members of the club explained that the only purpose of the organization was to keep out "undesirables" and to provide an agreeable group in the ballroom. They admitted on questioning, however, that the club was really formed to keep out Jewish students.

Posters appeared on the campus announcing that the Apex Club would hold a dance on a certain date, and indicated very plainly that only members were invited. For some time after the organization of the club, attend-

## "Eastern Students Are Responsible for the Present Situation," Say University Officials — Meta Berger Champions Jewish Students in Their Fight Against Discrimination — Hillel Foundation Active on Campus

ance at the dances of the Memorial Union showed a tremendous decrease. Commenting upon such a situation, The Capital Times, local newspaper, printed the following open letter in its editorial columns:

"TO THE APEX DANCING CLUB  
"Dear Students:

"Any group of students at the university has a right to organize in a social way to suit themselves and their narrow, snobbish instincts. It is unfortunate, however, that the organization of the Apex Dancing Club among fifteen fraternities at the university had its inspiration in the presence of Jewish students at Memorial Union dances. It would seem that intelligent students would acknowledge in such a place at least, the fact that thousands of Jewish young men laid down their lives in France, and the Memorial Union is to commemorate their valor and bravery, too. Our observation has always been that the campus snobs who are the most uppish and nose tilted usually come from hick backgrounds and surroundings, and haven't much in the 'social' inventory. This whole business is opposed to the ideals and traditions of a great state university—supported by ALL of the people of Wisconsin with the understanding that there shall be no discrimination because of race, creed, or color."

The club's activities this year have been minor ones; for a time optimism thought that anti-Semitic feeling had died down. The formation of the Pot Pourri Club, an anti-Semitic organization, soon dispelled such illusions. No matter what clubs have been formed, or are to be formed, of this kind, the attitude of any officials is a silent one. "They are out of town." As a result of this apathetic attitude on the part of officials, the Wisconsin Student Independent, an independent, radical student magazine, attacked them.

"Dean Goodnight's (Dean of Men) refusal to discuss the affair (Apex Club) may be interpreted as a desire on his part to allow an unhealthy situation to die from neglect", it said. "The Daily Cardinal saw fit to devote only one editorial to it in which the writer condemned The Capital Times for having given publicity to it. Nothing has been heard from Solomon Landman (rabbi, and director of the Hillel Foundation, (the Jewish social centre.)"

As a solution many Jews offered the opinion that if the Jews would stay at Hillel instead of mixing among the Gentiles, there might be a more amicable feeling among everyone. Rabbi Landman has been praised and blamed alternately for much good and bad feeling.

As an organizer, Dr. Landman is admirably well fitted for his task. He makes the Jewish student, especially one from a great distance, feel at home. In the few years since he has been here, Doc, as he is affectionately called, and Mrs. Landman, have been father and mother to many a homesick freshman away from home for the first time. If a needy student is in difficulties, Doc tries to fix the matter up.

His attitude is found failing, however, when it comes to situations that demand a strong and sturdy stand. His attitude like that of the school authorities, has become one of interested watching instead of guided directing. Such an outlook on his part, as a Jewish official, is hardly healthy, many students say.

Whether Wisconsin, the new home of the Jew, will have to battle against further inroads of anti-Semitism, is a mooted point. Perhaps the decision of the board of regents when Dr. Glenn Frank returns will be an indication.