

JOHN COLES

From David Wolfson

SPEECH TO BOARD OF DEPUTIES OF BRITISH JEWS

The background to this speech is that the Prime Minister was invited a long time ago. With the deteriorating relations between the Jewish community, Israel and the British Government there was considerable pressure on Greville Janner (Labour M.P. and President of the Board of Deputies) to invite Harold Wilson or James Callaghan as a speaker as well. With some difficulty, he resisted this pressure on the understanding that this was not a political occasion, and not an occasion for a political speech. The Prime Minister would be speaking on the 220th anniversary of the foundation of the Board of Deputies, an organisation set up to represent to H.M. Government the interests and concerns of the Jewish community in Britain.

In the event Greville persuaded his colleagues to accept Manny Shinwell as the other speaker, but he, alas, has now refused at the last moment. Nonetheless, there will not be another political speaker and the speakers will be as follows :

Victor Lucas, to propose the toast to the City of London

Bernard Waley-Cohen, to reply

Prime Minister, to propose the toast to the Board of Deputies

Greville Janner to reply

One or both of the Vice-Presidents to propose the Guests, with Edgar Bronfman, Canadian head of the largest worldwide Jewish Organisation to reply.

I attended a lunch of the Board of Deputies not long ago when Greville was in the chair, and Harold MacMillan was guest of honour. Greville's brief speech mentioned the idea that the Board of Deputies, in representing the interests of one minority group of this Country, was, in fact, representing the interests of all minority groups. Harold MacMillan, without notes, took up this theme and detailed the special relationship of the Jewish community and British people, who both have a deep knowledge and understanding of the Old Testament. MacMillan of course went on to say how in his days as a child the Old Testament was the book which was read most in ^{EVERY} ~~the~~ home!

I think that the theme of Freedom and Justice for all,
under the law, ^{IS} ~~being~~ the protection of ^{BOTH} minorities and
civilisation is one that the Jewish community would understand.
If, however, the Prime Minister wishes to speak on another theme
I do strongly recommend that the speech does not attempt to be a
political defence of Government policy in the Middle East. This
would cause immense resentment of the Board of Deputies itself
which would very quickly spread throughout the community.

D.W.

P.S. Greville Janner would like a copy of the speech so as
to be able to tailor a reply. He is very anxious that the
occasion is entirely friendly.