

To endorse or not to endorse

The JLC Board met, and we all vented and we all left feeling as if we resolved the problem, so why am I feeling uncomfortable? I like and respect everyone there. They are all good, decent, committed people. There is very little difference in the way we view the world. We were not arguing for the sake of arguing. It had to be more than nuance.

The issue: Should the Boston JLC have endorsed the JCRC-CJP sponsored pro-Israel rally that took place August 7. The meeting tried to deal with the process that resulted in the endorsement, and then the pros and cons of our participating in such a rally. It was generally agreed that a poor job was done to get the Board's input. In the future the Board will be consulted, either by calling an emergency meeting if time permits, or a conference call. But when time does not permit, the chairs and the director are empowered to take a position, in keeping with past decisions.

With regard to endorsing, we were pretty much split down the middle. Only one of us spoke out in enthusiastic support of the action Israel took in Gaza. The two-co-chairs and the director explained that they came to their decision after much agonizing, believing that our goals were best served by standing with the organized Jewish community. Those who felt we should not have endorsed saw our endorsement as supporting the Netanyahu government's worst policies, use of overwhelming force, disregard for the killing of civilians, and undermining a two-state solution. The "non-endorsers" are as committed to Israel as the endorsers.

It is amazing how the issue of Israel has become so divisive in the American Jewish community. It has almost always been the case. Though Gaza and Viet Nam are in no way similar, in some respects, the occupation of the West Bank, the settlements, the massive retaliation to Hamas rockets and tunnels, have become Israel's Viet Nam. And those (Jews and non-Jews) who supported America's involvement in Viet Nam, support Israel in its response to Hamas. The American Jewish community runs the spectrum from crazies on the left who oppose a Jewish State (including Satmar Hasidim), and those who support BDS, and always see the Arabs as victims, to crazies on the right who believe every criticism of Israel reveals anti-Semitism, and who see every Arab as a terrorist.

Whatever the issue, there are left and right, doves and hawks, liberals and conservatives. When I worked for AFSCME, which had gone through a bitter political dispute in which I was not involved, I did not have the same animosity to the opposition. I was asked if I was a "lover" or a "fighter." Can I be both? Can I sometimes be a hawk when I think Israel or the US is threatened, and a dove when I question the validity of Israel or the US's position? I do not go along with "my country right or wrong." I do not believe in always rallying around the flag, the red, white and blue, or the blue and white.

I am a big advocate of rallies, demonstrations, and picketing (RDP). Over the years, I have taken part and even organized countless RDP's. But I don't think that I, or the organization I am a part, should support RDP's simply because they are taking place, if I

have reservations about the issue. An interesting dilemma: A long time ago, a friend of mine said he would not support a RDP, even for a cause he supported, if it was organized by the Communist party, an organization he can not support. I am feeling I should not support a RDP for a cause I do not support, even it is organized by an organization I support.