

Extremist Movements - 1981

Issue

Basic liberties and freedoms guaranteed in the Constitutions of the United States, Canada and in other nations of our worldwide federation are threatened in the name of religion and conservatism. With full respect to their right of expression and dissent, we must recognize threats posed by individuals, organizations and movements that are destructive to the concept of the separation of church and state, freedom of expression and right of privacy.

Background

Extremist groups including the “religious,” new or radical right, whether working independently or in coalitions, have created an effective but destructive force in contemporary life. These groups tend to fall into three main categories:

1. Religious groups who attempt to impose their theological point of view on others through legislative action and government control;
2. Coalitions of formerly single issue groups mobilizing for concerted efforts to restructure the U.S. Constitution for the purpose of limiting individual freedom and liberty;
3. Political arch-conservatives who advocate platforms antithetical to social and civil rights positions of NFTS and Reform Judaism, such as:
 1. A United States constitutional amendment prohibiting all abortions and abortion funding,
 2. Defeat of the ERA,
 3. Legalization of capital punishment,
 4. Defeat of Gay Rights and the right of sexual preference,
 5. Defeat of legislators with “liberal” voting records,
 6. Restoration of prayer in the public schools,
 7. Spread of bilingualism in Canadian schools as a strategy for separatism.

Resolution

Judaism teaches: “Thou shalt not utter a false report; put not thy hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou bear witness in a cause to turn aside after a multitude to pervert justice. (Ex. 23:1-3). In this spirit we urge that United States Sisterhoods establish programs of education and action to safeguard the enduring American concepts of basic liberties and freedoms including the separation of church and state guaranteed by the Constitution.

Likewise, we urge NFTS Sisterhoods in every country to further the advance of liberties through sensitivity to extremisms. Furthermore, we urge Sisterhoods to use their platforms to encourage members: to be concerned, not apathetic, and active, not passive, in exercising their rights to vote; to participate at all levels in government to forestall extremism, censorship, and in countries where applicable, violation of separation of church and state; and above all, to vigorously express the prophetic mandate of Reform and Progressive Judaism.