

May 1973

MJC STATEMENT ON KEY '73

The Milwaukee Jewish Council today issued the following statement regarding Key '73 and its potential impact on the Jewish community of Milwaukee.

Key '73 is a major interdenominational evangelical effort aimed at "calling our continent to Christ". While the Council statement is prompted by Key '73 it relates particularly to efforts to evangelize the Jewish community whether they be directly under the auspices of Key '73 or by other organizations and individuals seeking to evangelize Jews.

The Milwaukee Jewish Council affirms the right of all Christians or other groups to proclaim their witness. This is a right guaranteed to all Americans under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. At the same time, we believe that evangelism to the Jews is in large part based upon intellectual and spiritual ignorance of Jewish values and heritage. We do not believe that efforts to convert Jews will meet with success. However, we are concerned with the negative impact on relationships between Jews and Christians in our community which may flow from any effort to depict Jews as unfulfilled in their Judaism or holding to a set of religious beliefs which are invalid.

The Milwaukee Jewish Council welcomes the statements of concern by many of the religious leaders of Wisconsin about the consequences of evangelical efforts aimed at Jews. We hope their words will be heeded by all who are involved in the campaign for Key '73.

We are particularly concerned with radio and television programs aimed at the Jewish community which have been aired in other cities and which reflect invidiously on Jews and Judaism. Newspaper advertisements seeking to evangelize or convert Jews have also tended to cast aspersions upon deeply held Jewish beliefs. There will be statistics in the press put forward by overzealous "missionaries" to the Jews and by so-called "Jewish Christians". These will tend to be exaggerations of the facts.

Nevertheless, the Milwaukee Jewish Council urges the Jewish community to be sensitive to the First Amendment rights of those who conceive themselves to have a mission to the Jewish community. We urge that there be no over-reaction to their efforts. The Jewish community will maintain its dignity in the face of these efforts.

Ultimately, the response of the Jewish community must be to look inward to strengthen its own resources, to provide its own youth with the means of strengthening its ties to our community and to our faith.