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AIPAC National Political Leadership Training Seminar Briefing Materials

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# AIPAC National Political Leadership Training Seminar Briefing Materials

*The following pages were part of a set of briefing materials distributed to the participants in the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) National Political Leadership Training Seminar held in College Park, Maryland, 20–21 July 1985. The annual seminars gather together college students from across the U.S. for training sessions in pro-Israel campus activism.*

## *Tips for Leaflets and Posters*

1. **BE PROFESSIONAL.** Get your lines straight, your margins not too close, don't handletter it (if you must make sure it's legible). If you have no experience in graphics, try to find somebody sympathetic who does.

2. **USE GRAPHICS, BUT DON'T BE VULGAR.** Pictures can make a boring list come alive; they can catch the attention of people on the go; they may just get your leaflets read. Beware the gross propaganda-type pictures of shot-up corpses, etc., which the other side sometimes uses; they tend to come off badly and hurt your case more than they help it.

3. **AVOID HYSTERIA BUT ALSO AVOID TOO MUCH SUBTLETY.** A

serious, factual tone probably is most credible, and so best. Remember that the goal of leaflets, as with all propaganda response, is to convince the probably ignorant and bored third parties in the audience. Do not go so far in your passion that you alienate these neutrals. On the other hand, say something, not just "come to the vigil." Use the opportunity to make a point.

4. **BE CREATIVE.** Your chief problem is getting people to read the damn things. Don't simply slap a couple of lines of type on a page. Take time preparing it if you want them to take time to read it.

5. **EITHER INFORM OR STARTLE OR BOTH.** You can either try to cram lots of information (a damaging bio of the speaker, atrocities of the PLO, etc.) into your leaflet or go for one big effect: a catchy headline and picture or one somewhat detailed gruesome incident. The trade-offs are that nobody reads the long lists and people don't get much out of the shock-effect ones. Try one of each, but no more than two or three total.

6. **DON'T DO THEIR JOB FOR THEM.** Leaflets and posters are for those attending only. Don't promote their event beforehand.

Hatem Husseini  
is speaking at  
Phelps Hall today.  
He is a member  
of the PLO and  
we are protesting  
his visit. Vigil  
at 7:30 outside.

HATEM HUSSEINI  
speaks for the  
PLO

—On April 12, 1984, a bus with  
15 passengers was blown up in  
Tel Aviv. The PLO took credit.

—On August 9th, 1983, the village  
of Ein Achar was fired on by the PLO's  
Soviet Katyusha rocks. 11 died.  
Do not dignify them by attending.  
If you go wear an armband in protest.

Question-and-answer sessions are an opportunity to embarrass a bad speaker and at least make your point with a good one. You will never convince the speaker of the rightness of your position; your target is the audience, and that should always be foremost in your mind.

Have your questions prepared in advance, but try to memorize and not read them. NEVER lose control. Do not get flustered if he interrupts you—just keep trying in a calm voice and he will look foolish. Do not expect him to have a heart attack if your question nails him; at best he will get flustered, but do not be surprised if he twists and turns away.

Think of the question as a few seconds (never speak so long that the audience gets restless) of *your* time, enough to make one point that might put his harange in perspective for the audience.

### *Bad Questions (however well-meant)*

1. You say all these things about Israel, but isn't the PLO just as bad? (Never give them the opportunity to define the terms of the debate.)

2. Aren't the PLO terrorists? (Never make vague accusations which leave a clever speaker room to evade the issue. Avoid general terms; wherever possible stick to specifics.)

3. You kill innocent women and children! (impassioned outburst) (Never lose your cool. Always control yourself, using passion only in small doses to make a particular point. Otherwise, a good propagandist will easily portray you as a hysteric, and you will lose the audience.)

### *Good Questions*

1. In an interview on April 3, 1982, Yasir Arafat said "The Zionists are our eternal enemies. We will never give up the armed struggle until they are banished from all of Palestine." Do you agree with him? (Use specific, hard-hitting quotes from top PLO figures. This particular one is made up, but there are many which are just as damaging if not more so. Confront them with a documented statement which they cannot escape.)

2. If the PLO wants peace and is willing to accept Israel, why has its charter never been amended and the several implicit references to the destruction of Israel been removed? (The facts of the case support your side; emotion cuts both ways. Avoid the latter, pile up the former—use their own record against them.)

3. Same as 2.  
(Follow up questions which the speaker does not respond to. If he will not let you, have the next questioner from your group repeat the question.)

### *Meeting Your Member of Congress*

A face to face meeting with one's Member of Congress provides a unique opportunity for direct communication between constituent and legislator and can have a valuable impact on the success of any legislative campaign. The following pages describe in detail the steps involved in conducting a successful meeting with one's Congressman.

There are six people you should try to meet with during your visit to Capitol Hill:

- Your two Senators.
- The person on each of their staffs who is responsible for foreign policy issues.
- Your Representative.
- The person on his/her staff responsible for foreign policy-related matters.

Meeting with the legislator's foreign affairs staff person can have a greater impact on a legislative decision than a cursory visit with the Congressman.

### *Before the Meeting*

1. Make appointments well in advance, and confirm them on the day that the meetings are scheduled.
2. Be punctual and well dressed.
3. Prioritize and outline the salient points of your argument.
4. Know your facts thoroughly.

### *During the Meeting*

1. Don't be awed by the Congressman or their staff—Be confident.
2. Be friendly, and a good listener—answering your legislator's questions point by point.
3. Begin your meetings by discussing issues that the Member of Congress cannot fail to agree with at the beginning of your "pitch," moving on to the more controversial points afterwards.

4. Don't assume that a Member of Congress is opposed to your views if he/she is asking questions that seem hostile. He/she may only be trying to determine how he/she will answer the questions of your opponents.

5. Request a particular action on the part of the Congressman.

6. Ask the Member of Congress for a commitment, unless you are sure that he/she is totally opposed to your views.

7. Keep the conversation focused on your issue. If the topic should stray, bring it up in a tactful manner.

8. Be sure to show your appreciation to a Member of Congress if he/she agrees with you.

9. Leave behind an information sheet on your issue as a tangible reminder of your visit. Put your name and address on it.

### *After the Meeting*

1. Review in your mind what was said, and put in writing anything that your Members of Congress agreed to do in support of your issue.

2. Send a letter to the person you met with (whether it was the Member of Congress or an individual on his/her staff) thanking them for their time. If the Member of Congress agreed with you, be sure to praise him/her and encourage them to continue or start to be active on the issue. If he/she did not, reiterate your key arguments in a tactful way.

3. If your visit resulted in an article in your school or community press, be sure to send a copy to the legislator.

4. Return to your community, and encourage others to write letters to the Congressman on the issue. The generation of letters from several different constituents will show the Member of Congress that a wide base of support exists for your issue.

5. Provide AIPAC with a report of all meetings. Be sure to include information

on any commitment made, the arguments which had the most impact on the Member of Congress and any pertinent personal observations. This type of report is of significant help to AIPAC in its efforts to monitor the statements and actions of all Members of Congress.

### *Special Tips for Group Meetings*

1. Have a preparatory meeting to determine the agenda for the meeting. It should be typed up and presented to the Member of Congress.

2. Appoint an individual who will act as informal chairman for the group in the capacity of liaison with the Member of Congress, as well as introduce the fellow participants to the legislator.

3. Decide who will make the various presentations to the Member of Congress. Every person present should participate in the meeting in some way.

4. If the group is composed of representatives from different organizations working in a coalition, give a list of those present to the Member of Congress to show the variety of sources of support for your issue.