

Young Zionist

Tnua Bli Hafsaka

Sasha Gold

As we approach FZY's one hundredth year, it seems a good time to step back and evaluate what we, as a youth movement, are doing, what we stand for, and what values we are aiming to impart to our members. One hundred years ago the world was a very different place – technology that we rely on today did not exist, communication was limited to snail-mail and face-to-face, societal values and beliefs were very different, and, perhaps for us most importantly, the state of Israel had not yet been established. Therefore, the role and actions of a Zionist youth movement were of course different, being relevant to their time. It is likely that those FZYniks of the past would not even recognise today's movement, with its hundreds on summer programmes and its social status as the 'thing you do', a concept completely opposite to the original underground ethos of youth movements which saw themselves as pivotal to the development of the Zionist movement. Youth movements were instrumental in settling the land of Israel both before and after 1948, smuggling refugees into Israel in *Aliyah Bet* operations, and organising resistance in the ghettos and concentration camps. The work they did was important and foundational.

Today, however, while we still stress the centrality of Israel as British Jews (or Jewish Brits), the focus of FZY members seems to be on the whole a social one rather than something political and change-enacting. It seems that we are simply strengthening the status quo rather than fighting to change it. Would our predecessors look on us with shame? Or are we, just like them, a product of our time – a time where Israel is an established state, whose authority is, with a few exceptions, accepted by the world; a time where Zionism is an accepted tenet of the Diaspora Jewish society; a time where the battleground is as much on the Internet as it is on the ground. The IDF is now one of the most powerful armies in the world with conscription, so members of youth movements are no longer needed in the same way to perform underground operations. The land of Israel has been built, so we are no longer needed to settle the land. So, with this change in situation I want to ask... Is the time of the youth movement over?

I believe, as a proud product of a youth movement, that there is still much value to be gained from it – a value that cannot be attained from non-youth movement organisations such as Jewish schools and JSocs.

However, in order to access this, I think that we need again to believe in the power we have. Too often it seems to be forgotten that we are not just about providing a service, but about instilling values and beliefs that we believe in and live for, and this is what gives the youth movement its uniqueness, and this will never cease to be relevant. Although it is important to take Jews to Israel, this should not be our primary concern. We should be creating an atmosphere of dynamism and creativity on our programmes, inspiring *chanichim* (participants) through our *dugma* (example).

Bogrim (graduates of Year Course) should practice what they preach. If somebody does not agree with our ideology it does not mean that they are 'bad' or 'wrong', but that the place for

them is not FZY. We cannot expect everyone to commit themselves to the movement, but we should be a movement of committed members, and perhaps that means acknowledging that we must be fewer in numbers.

We need to live up to our motto – *Tnua Bli Hafsaka* (A movement that does not stop) – and be a constant hub of motion and activity. We should not only be FZY *bogrim* in the summer but all the time. Being a part of the movement should determine how we act and what life we aspire to. I envision a movement where all members, from the youngest *chanichim* to the oldest *bogrim*, are constantly involved in different projects and campaigns. In order to remain a youth movement we cannot let ourselves become top-heavy, but should be a place where everyone is involved. The *Tzedakah Va'ad* (Charity Committee) is a great testament to how this can be achieved. Through empowering all members, pooling our skills and creativity, we will create a space where we will really be achieving things of importance, just like the *chalutzim* (pioneers) of old. My vision is that the *bayit* (FZY office) will become somewhere where there are always members of all different ages hanging out, bouncing ideas off each other, having discussions, coming up with projects that they will carry out together, helping each other with whatever is going on, planning campaigns, reading books from the library or just watching Israeli films together. In this way, the spirit of the youth movement as something pivotal, counter-cultural and constantly active, will continue to live on! Sasha is the current Netziga for Leeds and Tarbut officer.