

# Bar-Lev tells Knesset: Gov't not dragging its feet on Ma'ale Adumim settlement

Jerusalem Post  
6.3.75

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The Knesset yesterday struck off its agenda four urgent motions on last Sunday's settlement bid at Ma'ale Adumim, by 54 votes against 37.

Three more scheduled motions, from the ex-Rafi wing of Labour, from Mapam and the Independent Liberals, were withdrawn at the demand of the Alignment faction. But Yehuda Ben-Meir of the NRP refused to obey Coalition discipline and withdraw his motion. So NRP Knesset Members either supported Ben-Meir, or stayed away from the chamber.

The ex-Rafi wing of Labour, whose Mordechai Ben-Porat had spoken with great vehemence at the faction caucus the night before, acted with restraint during the session, and voted with his party. Mapam demonstrated its displeasure with the Government's stand by abstaining on the Moked motion instead of voting it down, and it was joined by Labour's Aryeh Eliav.

Replying to the four motions, Commerce Minister Haim Bar-Lev said there was no need to urge the Government to more rapid progress in developing the industrial site on the desert highway between Jerusalem and Jericho.

He said the Government would stand firm against groups trying to create a *fait accompli* at Ma'ale Adumim.

The Government had decided, after studying four alternatives,

that Jerusalem's industry must go up at Ma'ale Adumim. It had allocated IL10m. in the 1975/76 Budget — not a large sum, he noted, but adequate for the infrastructure.

Many enterprises, attracted by the incentives, had already applied to build at the site. But the Government would only approve "serious" enterprises which could make a significant contribution to the capital's economy without hurting other development areas. The housing ordered, at a cost of IL4m., would be ready for occupation in a few months' time, the Minister said.

Bar-Lev denied charges that he had objected to the Ma'ale Adumim scheme. "Check your press sources," he told Ehud Olmert (Likud) and Yehuda Ben-Meir (NRP).

He said that since there were so many candidates in the settlement group the larger families with several children in school would be asked to wait their turn.

Ehud Olmert (Likud-Independent Centre) said in the first motion that many Cabinet Ministers had aired conflicting versions of the Government's intentions at Ma'ale Adumim. Some saw the site as an ordinary urban settlement; others defined it as industries-with-workers'-housing-attached. Olmert charged that the Government was working both sides of the street. It had decided to develop the site but put men in charge who would sabotage the scheme, he said.

Yehuda Ben-Meir (NRP) said

that the Government's various decisions on Ma'ale Adumim were praiseworthy, but their implementation was dubious.

Regrettable hitches had delayed the scheme, Ben-Meir said, and the settlers had got much more encouragement from the Israel Lands Administration than from the Housing Ministry. He was glad that Sunday's decision had corrected Housing Minister Avraham Ofer's interpretation of the meaning of the housing plans. Idealists like the young settlers of Ma'ale Adumim should be encouraged and not stifled, he said.

Meir Wilner (New Communist) said the Government was intensifying its annexationist programmes around Jerusalem. The Government's policy was both short-sighted and irresponsible. It might bring on a new war. Wilner said perhaps some Ministers in fact wanted a new war, so they could win back what they lost in the Yom Kippur War.

Meir Pa'il (Moked) said the settlers did not really want to settle. They were a political tool. A lot had been said about the military and economic importance of settling the site, but in fact the political considerations were uppermost.

Pa'il said the settlers were backed by elements who wanted to make sure that all possible options with the Arabs were closed, involving the future of East Jerusalem — and this went for Jordan as well as for the Palestinians.