

Interview with Water Commissioner
Prof. Dan Zaslavsky August 22, 1991

1. Refused to evaluate the performance of his predecessor Tzemah Ishai, but implied that the personal performance was not professional, quite poor.
2. As the brand new Commissioner (was appointed on August 19, 1991, had not yet had the opportunity to make any major operational decisions in the Water Commissioner. The only major decision was to cut drastically the overall water use; the brunt of the cut was to be born by the agricultural sector. The total allocation for 1991 is 1470 MCM, the farmers will receive 870 MCM. There would be no cuts in the territories.
3. Refused to provide figures for the water production and usage in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It is against the policy of the Civil Administration to provide this type of data, because of past misuses.
4. On the whole, the Comptroller's Report provides a fair view of the water problems of Israel as well as the share of the past Water Commissioner in creating the problems. Prof. Zaslavsky suggested that the Comptroller's Report should be used as a basis of any discussion of the water problems in Israel. Since his appointed was so new, he did not have any additional comments on the problems of water in Israel, beyond the very detail discussion in the Comptroller's Report.
5. The major priority of his administration would be to restore the aquifers that were degraded in such during the previous decade. Since the restoration of the aquifer is a national priority, the agricultural sector would have to become secondary in the goals of water management. The drastic cut that the Water Commissioner ordered a first step towards implementing this policy.
6. The overall water planning (needs, goals, etc.) are based on the 1988 Master Plan. There would be some modifications of the assumptions of the Master Plan, because of changing needs due to immigration. However, at this stage (August 1988), the modifications have not been worked out yet. One of the problems in the estimating new needs, and overall planning is the lack of certainty with regard to the total number of new arrival until the year 2000.
7. The Water Commissioner expressed grave reservations with regard to the data used in the paper presented by TN at the World Bank. The paper was related to him by Yeshua Schwartz, and after reviewing the data Prof. Zaslavsky "could not understand the logic in the numbers or the source of the data". In his opinion, the data made no sense from a professional point of view, which lead him to speculate that it was used for "political reasons".