



JUNE 1990

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## SEVENTH NORTH AMERICAN ZOROASTRIAN CONGRESS

The meeting of the Seventh North American Zoroastrian Congress will be held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Houston, Texas, from August 31 to September 3, 1990. The chairman of the organizing committee, Dr. Meherwan P. Boyce, informs FEZANA and the Zoroastrian Associations of North America that the principal theme of the Congress will be: "ZARATHUSHTI: MY PAST - OUR FUTURE." The Congress programme is aimed towards an ambience that will promote learning. It will provide a forum for Zoroastrians, young and old, to learn about their past in various aspects of history, culture and religion. It is planned to evolve an understanding of the present position of the community in North America, and to discuss ways and means of harnessing talent and creativity for the future. They plan to achieve these objectives through plenary sessions, panel and roundtable discussions and workshops. For further information, contact Dr. Meherwan P. Boyce, Seventh North American Zoroastrian Congress, 10555 Rockley Road, Houston, Texas 77099.

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## FEZANA'S MESSAGE TO THE FIFTH WORLD ZOROASTRIAN CONGRESS

We give below some excerpts from the address delivered by FEZANA's President, Rohinton Rivetna, to the Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress held in Bombay, January 3-7, 1990. In addressing the status of the North American Zoroastrians to the world community, he said, "We are deeply grateful. Most of us who have settled abroad and fared well feel compelled to give back in some measure at least a fraction of what we have received. Many of us would like to pledge that we stand ready - ready to serve our world community to the best of our ability wherever our services are needed."

Speaking of changes that one can see unavoidable in North America, he stated, "Just as in India and Pakistan, Zoroastrians have evolved differently from those in Iran, so also in time North American Zoroastrians may develop a distinct, but equally devout and dedicated character. Change is inevitable. We should not fight it, but rather, with a clear mind and with the guidance of Vohu Manah we should give a gentle direction to the course we are taking. We adapt and bend a little, as we strive to find ways to mould our traditions to our new environs without compromising the eternal and everlasting message of Zarathushtra.

After elaborating on the genesis and achievements of FEZANA, he proposed that "Since we now have Federations successfully functioning in India, Europe, North America and Iran, perhaps it is time to think in terms of a Union of Federations with a constitution somewhat similar to the constitution of FEZANA. We propose that a constitution convention be held in London in July of this year to plan such a Union of Federations."

Turning his attention towards spreading the awareness of Zoroastrianism in North America, he reiterated, "In North America, it is of the utmost importance that Zoroastrians make a special effort to reach out and present ourselves as a major religion among the various other traditions and faiths practiced there. Unless we take the initiative, we can easily be forgotten. We need to seek opportunities to present our religion, and actively participate in inter-faith activities, so that the word "Zoroastrian" is a recognized and respected word and our faith gets the place it so richly deserves alongside other great world religions."

Summarizing his views with a blueprint for survival in North America he emphasised the following issues:

- " .. Consolidate our people resource with the establishment of Associations and the Federation. Promote unity at any cost. Live by cooperation, not competition.
- " .. Provide a community focal point in all the major Zoroastrian communities. The Darbe Mehrs have proven to be a strong focus for drawing Zoroastrians together for prayer and communal activities.
- " .. Promote religious education at home and at the Centres, for children, youth and adults. Encourage high standards of education and enterprise.
- " .. Cultivate a new cadre of learned priests - to be the teachers and leaders of tomorrow.
- " .. Participate actively in inter-faith activities. Maintain close co-operation with other world religions.
- " .. Adapt to our new environment."

He concluded by expressing the awareness of the awesome burden upon the North American Zoroastrians to make the "Right Choice." He said, "We pray to Ahura Mazda for wisdom and courage . . . to keep the flame alive, so that in time it may once again burst into a roaring fire . . . across

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## A VIEW OF THE FIFTH WORLD ZOROASTRIAN CONGRESS JANUARY 3-7 1990

If the Congress was for the community at large a stage to present its achievements and vent its aggravations, it offered the North American community a rare opportunity to make acquaintance with other Zoroastrian communities present as its newest member. There was no doubt in anyone's mind that the North American Zoroastrian community had come of age and was ready to take its place among the other elder communities of India, Iran, and Pakistan. FEZANA was on everyone's lips. Much is expected of it and, in a sense, demanded from it - a significant contribution that it owes to the world community.

Witnessing some of the problems our other sister communities are facing, it is up to the young North American community to learn from their experiences:

- the recipe for survival from the Irani Zoroastrians
- the importance of demographics
- the necessity for welfare planning
- the value of traditions
- the need for strengthening the world body
- the involvement of youth
- the focus on education

and many other issues so vital to our continued growth.

Unlike other Congresses, this Congress was issue-oriented rather than focussing on discussion of esoteric topics. While copies of each paper were distributed to all the delegates prior to the presentations, the presentations themselves were a summary of the papers allowing plenty of time for questions and answers during each session. A compilation of all the papers presented at the Congress is planned by the organizers and will be available at a minimal cost. Those interested in obtaining copies of the papers should write to Mr. Jamshed Guzdar, Chairman, 5th World Zoroastrian Congress, Bombay Parsi Panchayet, 209 Dadabhai Naoroji Road, Bombay 400-001, India.

The presentations were divided into eight topics spread over three days: regional presentations by representatives from India, Iran, Europe, North America, South Africa and Pakistan; youth presentations by youths from India, Iran, and North America; contemporary Zoroastrian societies; strengthening community organizations; demographics, socio-religious concerns, religious education and survival of traditions. Out of the 40 papers presented, 13 were by FEZANA members, which in itself demonstrated the North American commitment to world affairs.

Besides these presentations, there were a number of events that were equally memorable. The Inauguration on January 3, 1990, by the Honourable Dr. Shankar Dayal, Vice President of India, was distinctly the highlight of the Congress.

At the inauguration, the welcome address was given by Dr. Aspi Golwalla, the president of the Federation of Anjumans of India and chairman of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet. Presentations by the Congress chairman, the Chief Minister and the Governor of Maharashtra followed culminating in Dr. Sharma's inaugural address. Dr. Sharma, a scholar of Sanskrit, with a knowledge of Avesta language, drew various parallels between Sanskrit and Avesta. He urged a wider understanding of Avestan scriptures among other Indian communities through translations, and among the followers through the study of Avesta. His praise for Zoroastrian contribution to India was noteworthy: he made particular reference to Madame Bhikhaiji Cama whose portrait he had recently unveiled on August 2, 1989, in the Central Hall of the Parliament in New Delhi. The unveiling of the portrait was the culmination of Dr. Minocher Contractor's years of effort under the auspices of the Surat Parsi Pragati Mandal. At the unveiling, Homi Taleyarkhan, member of the minorities commission, said "Madame Cama was the first woman crusader for India's freedom on foreign soil at a time when it was considered very foolhardy. She dared to defy the British might on British soil for keeping India in the throes of thralldom." The painting was by the late Coomi Dallas, a well known Zoroastrian artist of Bombay whose last will for her last painting was that it should be put up on the walls of the Parliament. The inauguration ended with scenes from a play based on the life of Madame Cama, produced by Shirin F. Darasha, principal of the J.B. Petit High School and performed by the students of her school. An exemplary production that soothed the mind and kindled the spirit.

Two other events were the banquet and a Gujarati Natak (play). The banquet, catered in the true Parsi style for 1500 delegates on the grounds of the Parsi Gymkhana, preceeded a "Song and Dance" variety entertainment performed by Shiamak Davar and his company. An immensely entertaining and talented performance of world class calibre. This was followed by "To 2000 and Beyond," a delightful fashion fantasy choreographed by Ratan Batliwala. The Gujarati Natak was a non-stop musical revue in memory of the late Adi Marzban, directed Dolly Dotiwalla. The performance was a series of skits and songs, bringing back old memories of Adi Marzban days. It appeared that the performers enjoyed getting together and performing just as much as the audience enjoyed watching and splitting their sides with laughter. A harbour cruise was arranged for the youth. About 200 of them participated.

There was a general feeling throughout the Congress of a lack of follow-up after the meetings. A major one that echoes was of a crying need for a World Body, to take up the cudgel and provide leadership. Measures were implemented by the organisers to correct this. Prior to the inauguration, a get-together between the chairpersons of different topics and the speakers was organized when interaction and coordination of activities between them during and after the sessions was discussed. Also, chairpersons and rapporteurs were requested to keep careful notes of all proceedings, and to present them to the delegates at the summing-up session, along with a list of action items. Dr. Farhang Mehr, who chaired that session, had diligently collected from all eight chairpersons a list of action items.

The day after the Congress a meeting of the various representatives from India, North America, Europe, Iran and Pakistan was held to discuss the mode in which the follow-up was to be organized. It was decided to form an apex body consisting of representatives of various regions: India, Iran, Pakistan, Australia, S.E. Asia, North America and Europe under the chairperson of the

Congress with the overall responsibility of monitoring all action items. Furthermore, four sub-groups to be called supervisory or specialized groups on (1) demographics; (2) youth; (3) education and (4) welfare each with a lead person were formed with the responsibility of directing the efforts of individuals in each of the four areas. Aspi Moddie and Jamshed Kanga, the architects of the entire Congress programme, were charged with the responsibility of breaking out all the action items into the four sub-groups and assigning those responsibilities to each of the lead persons of the respective group.

So we have the beginnings of a well-oiled, well thought out plan for follow-up activities. It is now up to the regional representatives to make the programme work. Also this activity is structured so that as and when the World Body is equipped it will be able to assume these responsibilities.

The mission of the representatives of FEZANA was threefold: (1) to create an awareness for a functioning world body; (2) to establish a task force to study the problem of our declining numbers, and (3) to propogate the idea of assisting our priests in the pursuit of higher religious education. Mr. Homi Homji also advocated the idea of a functioning world body quite vigourously. Homi Taleyarkhan was a great proponent of the idea as well.

At least six meetings were held before, through and after the Congress to discuss with the World Zoroastrian Organization (WZO) the re-structuring of the World Body. At one final meeting, where members of the Indian Federation, FEZANA, Europe Trust Funds, and Trustees of the Parsi Panchayet, and WZO were present, it was presented that all of the regions should be approached to delineate their thoughts and concerns on the matter and then those comments should be synthesised for review by all the regions. It could hardly be said that a conclusion was reached but at least the idea s planted and perhaps with FEZANA taking the lead we might in time see the emergence of a universally accepted World Body.

Creating an awareness of the reduction in our numbers, particularly in India, was one of the burning topics of the Congress. With the Bombay statistics down to 42,000 at the present time and expected to drop to 24,000 in the year 2020, it was time to take stock. It was recommended that a task force be formed of some eminent leaders of our community to publish a white paper listing the concerns and proposing solutions with implementation plans. It must be remembered that we the diaspora in North America are not entirely immune to this problem. It could happen in North America too if we do not take heed or it may even be happening now and we just do not know about it. Our FEZANA Census Committee should and must take up the task seriously and give us solace that here in North America it is not so. As our census committee under the leadership of Minu Patel, a noted statistician, gets into gear we urge that every man, woman and child co-operate to get an accurate count. It is of the utmost importance.

The third item, the importance of which is not immediately recognizable is the higher education of our priests in religious matters. Although this item was put across many times at the Congress it was not readily grasped by most; besides there were other pressing needs to address. The North American Zoroastrians generally appreciate the importance of this issue and are at least willing to consider it.

The Bombay chapter of the W.Z.O. had arranged a reception at the Cama Oriental Institute for all the North American visitors one evening just prior to the Congress. Some of the North American delegates made presentations to an audience of about 200. Questions and answers followed. The evening ended with a sumptuous dinner at the Radio Club. The delegates were indeed honoured by this gracious gesture and are very thankful to Zal and Roshan Contractor for arranging the function and to Dadi Engineer who presided over the meeting.

This report would not be complete without expressing our sincere thanks to Jamshed Guzder, the Congress chairman, Jamshed Kanga, the program chairman, assisted by Aspi Moddie and Homai Modi who tirelessly worked for months making all the detailed arrangements. Hats off to them for a magnificent, well-organized production.

All in all the Congress was a memorable event which the participants will always remember. The youth, in particular, had an impressionable four days. They not only imbibed what it is to be a Zoroastrian in the mother country but also came, first hand, face to face with what our community faces today and will face in the future when they will be at the helm of things.

Rohinton Rivetna  
President, FEZANA

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#### POST-CONGRESS DELIBERATIONS

At the end of the Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress (WZC) a group of regional representatives met on January 8, 1990, at the Parsi Panchayet office. The meeting was chaired by Jamshed Guzder and India, Iran, United Kingdom, and North American (Rohinton Rivetna and Homi Homji) were represented. An approach to the Fifth Congress recommendations prepared by Aspi Moddie for discussion included the following items.

1. Five year planning and management of financial resources.
2. A Central Task Force for future demographic studies.
3. Recommendations on the poor and aged - invite proposals and examine feasibility and cost.
4. Human Resources Development Trust to be studied by each regional task force.
5. A charter of Basic Zoroastrian Principles and Specialized Consultative Council of High Priests and authoritative laity to interpret doctrinal and ritual matters.

It was unanimously agreed to set up an inter-regional Zoroastrian Congress Council (IRZCC), as well as local and specialised groups to study some of the points outlined above. IRZCC may constitute a seminal group of a new World Body, in which all regions of world Zoroastrians will be represented.

In addition to those present attempts should be made to include Pakistan, Australia, Hongkong, Singapore, South Africa and the Gulf regions. For the present, the IRZCC will be chaired by Jamshed Guzder, the chairman of the Fifth Congress and its secretariat will be in India. This council will deliberate on where and when the next Congress will be held upon the receipt of formal application from appropriate regional bodies.

The seed money for this council may come from the surplus of the 5th World Zoroastrian Congress after consultation with the Federation of India, and donations from other regions. Iran pledged a contribution of Rs. 50,000.00, while FEZANA was willing to contribute about US \$1,000.00 per annum.

Specialized Groups were organised to examine the feasibility and cost of implementation of the recommendations that emerged from the Fifth World Zoroastrian Congress. A report of such studies should be submitted to the secretariat within about three months. The four groups were as follows:

1. Demographic Studies - Shirin Jejeebhoy and Aspie Moddie
2. Youth - to coordinate an inter-regional Youth group
3. Religious Education - to be organized by regional groups.  
The major needs to be focussed, were, education of children youth, and uplift of the knowledge of the priesthood.  
Attention must also be paid to increase in the number of priests and paramahs and the nature of their services to the community in future.
4. Social Welfare and the problems of poor and aged - Meher Nanavatty will coordinate this group with Huzan Kharas, Freny Gandhi, and Parveen Jehangir.

Mehraban Kushesh from Iran, suggested Iran as the venue for the next Congress. They will formally convey the details to IRZCC for consideration. The formation of IRZCC and discussion of the action items has in principle set up an intermediary mechanism to mark the continuity of the progress made at the Congress. The issues that emerge out of the studies by these specialized groups may well become the focal points for discussions at the next Congress.

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#### **EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP APPEALS**

In the absence of an Educational Trust Fund of North America, the following appeals are launched to the member Associations and to individuals at large for their consideration.

(A) An accomplished Zoroastrian social worker, Ms Huzan Kharas, has applied and secured admission to the University Manchester to pursue studies for a Ph.D. degree in the sociological aspect of the Zoroastrian community. She has received a B.A. and M.S.W. from the University of Bombay. Her Master's thesis has made a valuable contribution towards the study of Socio-Economic survey of Zoroastrian priests in the Bombay region. It was this study that impelled into existence the Athravan Educational Trust (AET) in Bombay, India.

The cost of the two year study at the University of Manchester with Professor John Hinnells is projected to be in the neighbourhood of U.S. \$30,000.00. Ms Kharas has been promised educational funds from the W.Z.O., London, and from the Anjuman of Hongkong amount to \$2000.00 each (about U.S. \$6800.00). Any Association or individual who wishes to assist this young Zoroastrian fulfil her goal should send their remittance to: Ms Huzan Kharas, "Corinthian", D-4, 17 Arthur Bunder Road, Bombay 400-005, India.

(b) A young Zoroastrian, aged 22 years, Faredun H. Pardiwalla, seeks financial support for higher education in the field of aviation. Having completed his B.Sc. at the University of Bombay, he has applied to the School of Aeronautical Studies at Daytona Beach, Florida, for further studies. The one year training period is estimated to cost U.S.\$26,800.00. Those interested in supporting this student with financial assistance should contact Mr. Faredun H. Pardiwalla, 5 Devidas Mansion, Balaram Street, Grant Road, Bombay 400-007. India.

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#### DASTUR MINOCHEHR-HOMJI'S LIBRARY

FEZANA's Journal has learnt from Rohinton Rivetna that the Zoroastrian community of North America is to be the beneficiary of the collection of books and manuscripts of Dasturji Navroz Dinshaw Minochehr-Homji. Plans are under way to transport six cupboards full of Zoroastrian literature to the U.S.A. The cargo is being reviewed for clearing, packaging, and shipping by N.S. Guzder and Co. in India. The collection will be initially housed in the Nania-Kanga-Patel Library of the Arbab Rustom Guiv Darbe Mehr in Chicago. In the future, however, when a National Zoroastrian Centre is built in Washington or elsewhere, the books will be transferred there for the use of all Zoroastrians.

At this point, a small hurdle that must be cleared is to collect the funds needed to transport these precious books to this country. Contributions towards the cost of shipping this valuable collection should be mailed to: FEZANA, 626 West 56th Street, Hinsdale, Illinois 60521.

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#### FEZANA DAY

At FEZANA's last annual general meeting held in March 1989, it was recommended that Member Associations hold a FEZANA DAY in their communities to discuss FEZANA's functions and activities and raise funds for FEZANA - \$1.00-\$5.00 per person was suggested.

A FEZANA committee member in your area will be glad to help arrange such a function.

FEZANA is now in its fourth year - three productive years that have seen much progress and activity among our North American Zoroastrian communities. FEZANA has much work to do and many expenses to cope with (Newsletter, education, seminars, etc.) and any financial assistance would be welcome.

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## Youth News

### ZYONA - Zoroastrian Youth of North America

#### YOUTH GEAR-UP CANADIAN STYLE FOR FOURTH ANNUAL ZOROASTRIAN YOUTH CONFERENCE . . .

Yes, once again it's that time of the year for Zoroastrian youth to gather and get a little closer. The Fourth Annual Zoroastrian Youth Conference is a little different from its preceding three conferences, because this time Zoroastrian youth residing in the U.S. will have to cross the border.

The Zoroastrian Society of Ontario (ZSO) will be hosting the fourth Zoroastrian North American Youth Congress on June 30, and July 1st and 2nd, in Toronto, Canada.

Each congress has been held in a variety of locales from camp-style settings to private residences each providing memorable experiences of their own. Once again participants will experience something new, as the Congress will be held at York University in North York, Ontario.

Participants of the Congress will stay in residence on campus for two nights. Meals will be provided for Saturday and Sunday, including a brunch on Monday, and a dinner/dance on Saturday. The price of the accommodation and meals is \$150.00, and participants should be between the ages of 13 and 30.

Although the deadlines to register for this year's congress have passed, information and any questions about the congress itself can be forwarded to the following contacts in Toronto:

Bina Behboodi	-	Tel: (416) 737-0825
Persius Kanga	-	(416) 229-2317
Armaity Homavazir	-	(416) 764-6667

## SECOND ANNUAL Z-SKI TRIP ANOTHER SUCCESS . . .

The Zoroastrian ski trip was an excursion all of us will remember for a long time to come. Similar to last year's goal of getting Zoroastrian youth together; we spent many late nights talking, meeting new friends, and last but not least, we had a great time skiing the northwest.

The fact that some of us were beginners and some were experts was of no real concern. We all had the same desire: to meet new friends and reestablish old friendships.

This year's trip was held at Smuggler's Notch in Vermont. The majority of our group came from Canada, and the group consisted of youth from the ages of 13-27 years old. On the first night some of us went skating, swimming, and sauna bathing just to break in our resort facilities. Mealtime was fun and unexpected as a group, in a sense that a group of people would prepare something for dinner.

Everyone would help out in one way or another either by cooking, washing, cleaning, and even entertaining (with being in charge of the music we listened to). We celebrated birthdays with dinner out at a Mexican restaurant and a surprise cake.

There was dancing in the lounge with a live band for everyone. We would also have our after-skiing ritual by enjoying some hot chocolate next to our warm fireplace in the condo's, and setting off the smoke detectors a few times. It was all teamwork, everyone helped out and participated in activities.

One important feeling I got from this trip was the closeness everyone felt, and the bond we all had as a group. Sure, we all do things with our other friends, but the feeling of friendship among other Zoroastrians is different from that which I have ever felt before.

In closing, I hope this annual ski trip continues to bring more and more Zoroastrians together. As an organizer of this ski trip I am encouraging all Zoroastrian families and associations to become more involved with the events and special occasions of our religion.

We need your help and support in order for these events to be successful. I've learned quite a bit from this experience, but do realize that one person cannot do the job alone. I am urging all Zoroastrians to become more involved in their local associations, because if we don't begin helping and involving ourselves now, how can we expect our future generations to do the same?

Ferzeen Jungalwala -  
Ski trip coordinator

### THREE YOUTHS REPRESENT FEZANA IN WZO . . .

Three North American Zoroastrian youth represented the western hemisphere for FEZANA at the World Zoroastrian Congress held last January in Bombay, India. The three youths were Zenobia Rivetna from Hinsdale, Illinois; Khurshid Modi from San Francisco, and Sarosh Motivala from Los Angeles.

"I wasn't expecting much, but I was proved wrong. I met many very friendly and interesting Zoroastrians," said Sarosh in a thank you letter to FEZANA President Rohinton Rivetna.

Approximately 1000 people were involved in putting the Congress together, and nearly 500 people filled Bombay's Birla Matushri Theater for the daily workshops and presentations.

Speakers and lectures were the primary focus of the congress during the day, while entertainment filled the list of things to do at night. "They kept us busy and always had something for us to do, and there was a lot of interaction between youth from all over the world," Zenobia said.

The two hundred and fifty youth were all treated to a cruise in which they enjoyed dinner, music and dancing. Among the many key guest speakers was the vice president of India. A play was performed by Zoroastrian youth from India, and there was even a fashion show in which the most modern of styles were shown off.

"It (fashion show) was choreographed well to the music, the acting was very well done, and overall the events were very professional," Zenobia said.

"It gave us a feeling that the eyes of the world were upon us. They were looking at us to provide the leadership and they have very high expectations of us," said Rohinton Rivetna.

From Khurshid Modi's point of view, the most productive part of the congress was in the youth programs. "I thought the most positive aspect was how the youth were aware of the needs of the community, and that's very important because if we don't do something about the problems our religion will just die out," Khurshid said.

A current problem facing the Zoroastrian community on a global scale is the demographics dilemma. Mr. Rivetna estimates the total number of Zoroastrians in the world to be between 120,000 to 175,000. He said there maybe almost 10,000 Zoroastrians in North America, and referred to an Iranian Census taken in 1986 which estimated approximately 90,000 Zoroastrians residing in Iran.

In other parts of the world Mr. Rivetna estimates almost 2000 to 3000 Zoroastrians, including Europe.

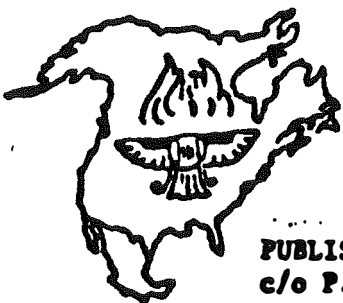
"The numbers are decreasing rapidly. There were 67,000 in India twenty years ago, and now there are a projected 30,000 remaining there. We need to be more aware of the trends, and make proper changes and adaptations to stop this receding population," he added.

Mr. Rivetna recommended the creation of a task force or committee on a global scale that could study the problem, and make some suggestions to arrest the decline "especially in India."

EDITOR'S NOTE: I would like to encourage other youth to help me with the production of ZYONA. The preparation of this section of the FEZANA newsletter requires a lot of information gathering, and as a college student I feel the work is sometimes too cumbersome for one person. ZYONA is just the start of something big, improving it on a consistent basis is up to all of us.

Please feel free to call: Jim Engineer at 708/983-7792

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