

Australia

AUSTRALIA continued to expand economically and industrially. Wool, the main export, brought in during the 1950-51 season the record amount of \$1,414,000,000, largely owing to stockpiling by the United States and other countries. Corresponding figures for 1949-50 and 1946-47 were \$637,000,000 and \$204,000,000. There was no unemployment in the land in spite of considerable immigration. The weekly basic wage—i.e., the legal minimum wage, computed every quarter on the basis of certain staple commodities—rose by no less than 30 per cent in the period under review. Since 1945 the basic wage had risen from \$11 to \$20, while average weekly earnings for males mounted from \$14.4 to \$27.1. Prices went up steeply; inflationary tendencies represented the most formidable economic problem faced by the government.

Political Developments

In March, 1951, both the House of Representatives and the Senate were dissolved, because the latter body, in which the Labor opposition had a majority, refused to pass bills accepted by the former. An election took place in April, 1951, and the coalition of the Liberal and Country parties was returned with a majority in both houses (though with a reduced one in the House of Representatives). The government announced an extensive program of legislation, foremost in which were a reform of the Commonwealth Bank direction, a Defense Preparation Bill to control resources and industry, and a referendum to empower the government to ban the Communist party. The Anti-Communist Bill passed by all parties in the parliament on October 19, 1950, was declared unconstitutional by the High Court on March 9, 1951.

The terms of the Japanese Treaty drew some criticism, whereas the Pacific Pact with the United States and New Zealand was generally welcomed; these were among the outstanding events in foreign affairs.

There was not a single Jewish member in either of the federal houses. In all thirteen state parliaments there were three Jewish members.

Jewish Population

The total population of Australia on December 31, 1950, reached a figure of 8,315,400. The Jewish population was estimated on the basis of the census of 1947 immigration statistics, and the rate of natural increase, to be between 50,000 and 52,000, or about 6 per cent of the entire population.

The composition of the Jewish community underwent a radical change in recent years. The Jewish population doubled in the period beginning with 1935, when Nazi oppression caused large numbers of immigrants to come to Australia. Roughly some 8,000 Jewish immigrants entered the country before the war; quite a few came from the Far East during the war; during the same period internees (afterwards released) were sent over from England; and over 15,000 arrived after the end of the war.

This increase had a marked influence on the life of the community, whose needs grew considerably. New congregations sprang up and new organizations were formed. Among the immigrants, increasingly of late, there was a strictly Orthodox element from Hungary and Slovakia which concentrated in Sydney and Melbourne; for the most part they maintained separate congregations and even had their own shehitah in both Melbourne and Sydney. Their influence, however, was not confined to their own narrow circle.

Discrimination and Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitic propaganda mailed from abroad to individuals in Australia continued to arrive in considerable quantities. The Postmaster General intimated that he had no legal authority to refuse to handle such material. A vicious pamphlet printed in Australia, *Mugs Wake Up*, containing a scurrilous attack on Jewry, was distributed throughout the land. The Councils to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism co-operated with the Boards of Deputies in fighting this material.

The Melbourne community was perturbed when youth members of Kadi-mah, a Jewish cultural and social society, were singled out for interrogation by the police in May, 1950. Questions concerning this were raised in June in Parliament, and the Prime Minister, R. A. Menzies, replied that no Commonwealth security police were involved. The Executive Council of Australian Jewry made representations to both federal and state authorities; the replies were not satisfactory. But in August, 1950, the premier of Victoria wrote: "The Jewish community need have no apprehension regarding the police in this State. . . I am satisfied that Jewish citizens were not singled out intentionally for special police attention." The Executive Council then stated that it was prepared to regard the matter as closed.

The relatively few Jewish DP's who entered Australia under the International Refugee Organization scheme—they were estimated in 1950 to number less than 200—often met with unpleasant experiences among their non-Jewish fellow immigrants in camps and hostels, many of whom were anti-Semitic. Dossiers on about forty-one former Nazis among the immigrants were submitted to the government in June, 1951, by the Executive Council of Australian Jewry.

The Executive Council at its conference in June, 1951, resolved to urge the government to enact legislation giving effect to the Genocide Convention, and to support inclusion of the right of petition of individuals and organizations under the Covenant on Human Rights.

Community Organization

Australian Jewry participated in the Conference of British Commonwealth Communities held in London in July, 1950. The Australian delegate strongly urged the British and the South African Boards of Deputies officially to affiliate with the World Jewish Congress, but without success.

Rev. Dr. M. Perlzweig visited Australia on behalf of the World Jewish Congress in October, 1950. His purpose was to collect funds for the Congress and to acquaint the community with the Congress's work.

Jewish Education

Jewish education continued to make progress in Australia, especially as regards Jewish day schools. Mount Scopus College in Melbourne, which opened a new wing in January, 1951, had an enrollment of almost 400; the waiting list was so large that plans were being prepared for the enlargement of the school and the building of a Jewish high school. Land was purchased and a five-year plan adopted entailing a future expenditure of over a million dollars; this plan was intended to make possible a student body of 1,200.

In Sydney, foundation stones for two independent Jewish primary day schools were laid in May and June, 1951, one by the North Bondi Jewish Kindergarten and Day School Committee, and the other, for the Hillel College, by the New South Wales Board of Jewish Education. Building operations were to begin in August, 1951; when completed, the two schools were expected to accommodate 600 pupils.

A small yeshivah established in Shepparton, Victoria, was transferred to Melbourne, where it was expected that its activities would be much enlarged.

The so-called Hebrew classes continued to meet on Sunday mornings and week-day afternoons, but there was a growing realization that this system was inadequate. Most of these classes did not provide even the minimum requirement of five hours per week of Jewish education. The shortage of trained Hebrew teachers was felt everywhere. Educational budgets grew considerably, but income did not, so that the situation of these institutions was the cause of much anxiety.

The Jewish Youth Council in Melbourne, after much public discussion, reversed its original decision to participate in the Communist-sponsored Third World Festival of Youth and Students for Peace, held in Berlin, in August, 1951.

The New South Wales Board of Jewish Education established a camp for its pupils which proved a great success during its first season.

Religious Life

There were in all some thirty Orthodox congregations in Australia, almost half with small memberships and no permanent synagogue buildings. In

addition, there were two Liberal congregations with large memberships, one in Sydney and one in Melbourne. The total membership of Australian Jewish congregations was estimated at 9,000.

The suburban congregations, in particular, made good progress during the period under review, and several of them laid plans for building synagogues and educational centers.

The Congregational Committee of the Board of Deputies in New South Wales took steps to organize regular visits by ministers to the smaller Jewish settlements in the country. Two such tours were held during the period under review.

The Jewish community was looking forward with expectation to the announced pastoral tour of the Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth, Israel Brodie. Rabbi Brodie was scheduled to arrive in Australia early in 1952 to visit all communities there and in New Zealand. A number of important conferences were planned, including one of ministers.

SHEHITAH

An electrically operated casting pen for ritual slaughtering, approved by the Health Commission and also by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, was installed in the Melbourne abattoirs in October, 1950, by the Jewish community. There was no agitation against shehitah after installation of the pen. The communities in other states had not at time of writing followed suit.

Zionism and Relations with Israel

Australia's position on the internationalization of Jerusalem underwent a change. Whereas in 1949-50 her representative to the United Nations was the prime mover for internationalization, in 1950-51 Australia agreed with Britain that this policy was not practicable.

Australia joined other nations in June, 1951, in protesting to Egypt against her interference with cargoes passing through the Suez Canal to Israel.

There was an increase in the exchange of goods between Australia and Israel; prospects existed for an even greater trade between the two countries in the future. In 1950 exports from Australia to Israel totaled £840,000 (\$2,352,000); imports were £53,000 (\$1,484,000).

The Minister for Israel, J. I. Linton, who arrived in Sydney in July, 1950, made a tour of most of the Jewish communities in Australia and also in New Zealand, where he presented his credentials.

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry, the official lay representative body of the entire community, at its annual conference in June, 1951, made a strong appeal to the community "to carry its share of responsibility in the work of the ingathering of the exiles and in the development of Israel."

The United Jewish Appeal for 1950 yielded the sum of \$275,000. The 1951 appeal was conducted by Chief Rabbi L. I. Rabinowitz of Johannesburg and R. Medzini, chief Hebrew commentator on the United Nations radio. The

response was better than that of 1950. The campaign, still going forward at time of writing, was expected to show an increase of a third over 1950. In addition, 260 crates of clothing valued at \$60,000 were sent to Israel.

Australia decided to send four delegates to the Zionist Congress: two General Zionists, and one representative each from Mizrachi and Poale Zion.

Habonim celebrated the tenth anniversary of its foundation in Australia, evidence of the strong root it had taken in the youth. The hakhsharah agricultural farm had twelve young people in permanent training for two years.

Social Services

The recently instituted Community Chest in New South Wales (*see* AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, 1950, p. 254), which joined together some ten organizations in raising funds for local needs, was only partly successful in 1950, raising less than half the amount of money it needed. But there was no doubt that it had established itself and would grow in importance in the years to come.

The New South Wales Jewish Hospital opened its doors in May, 1951. It was the first Jewish hospital to be established in the country.

RELIEF

The United Jewish Overseas Relief Funds in New South Wales and Victoria, founded in 1944, continued to send funds and supplies abroad, and also to assist DP's and new arrivals not sponsored by the Welfare Societies. Assistance was provided during the first twelve months after the immigrant's arrival.

Since their inception, the United Funds had raised the sum of \$244,000 in New South Wales alone; counting donations in kind the amount was \$335,000. In addition, it acted as agent for the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) in dispatching goods abroad, the total value of which was \$580,000.

The Funds allocated sums to ORT, OSE, and the Federation of Relief Organizations in London. The Funds also sponsored an orphanage, Sydney Home, in Bucharest, as well as a number of orphans in Sydney, and granted loans to professional and businessmen to the extent of \$8,000.

Cultural Activities

In Melbourne the Yavneh Institute was established early in 1951 as a center of higher Jewish studies. It announced a three years' schedule of courses in the Bible, Talmud, Hebrew, Jewish history, and philosophy.

The Jewish Folk Center, a Yiddish-speaking cultural institute founded by J. Steinberg, celebrated its tenth anniversary; it opened its new home in April, 1951.

In Sydney a Library Association was functioning, with a part-time Libra-

rian, which co-ordinated five Synagogue and organizational libraries through a joint catalogue. It had a reading room in the Jewish War Memorial and lent books to all the members of the community.

The Australian Jewish Historical Society held an exhibition of interesting documents, records and appurtenances, (the latter mainly from the Great Synagogue) at its annual meeting in December, 1950.

There were three weeklies in Australia and several congregational and organizational monthlies, such as the *Zionist* and the *YMHA News*. The weekly luncheon lectures at the Sydney and Melbourne YMHA's have continued over several years. R. Avinoam, a Hebrew poet from Israel, visited Australia in March-April 1951, and lectured on modern Hebrew literature in English, Yiddish, and Hebrew.

Immigration

The government continued vigorously to support immigration, recognizing the necessity of populating Australia as early as possible with Europeans. There was a possibility, however, that immigration would be curtailed as a measure to check inflation. The year 1950 saw an increase of the population through permanent immigration by 152,505; of these, 49,512 were of British, and 1,486 of German nationality. During the period 1947-50, 439,700 immigrants settled permanently in Australia, among them 204,400 from Great Britain. The flow of displaced person (DP) immigrants virtually ceased.

There was no change in government policy in regard to granting permits for Jewish immigrants. Relations between the Department of Immigration and the Jewish Welfare Society remained friendly. The number of Jewish immigrants entering Australia between June, 1950, and June, 1951, was approximately 3,500. Of these, the Federation of Welfare Societies stood as guarantor for about 1,200; the rest were sponsored by private individuals. Since 1948 the Federation had applied for 5,350 permits of entry for some 9,870 people; 4,242 of these applications for permits were granted, covering 7,800 people. Cancellations and refusals accounted for some 1,200. The vast majority of Jewish immigrants settled in Sydney and Melbourne; the smaller communities benefited little from the influx.

There were sixteen hostels for Jewish immigrants in Australia, most of them purchased from and maintained by JDC funds.

The economic situation of the immigrants continued to be good, as there was a severe shortage of labor; apart from the sick and elderly, all immigrants were able to find employment. The greatest difficulty faced by immigrants was that of finding homes, a problem equally acute for the Australian citizen.

A stricter security check of immigrants was instituted gradually in the spring of 1950. Applicants were required to have been living outside of Russian-dominated countries for some time before permits were granted. Applicants living inside such countries had to have parents, brothers, or sisters who were residents in Australia in order to receive a permit.

IMMIGRANT PHYSICIANS

Some relief was given to immigrant physicians settling in Australia. In New South Wales, such doctors, except for a few specialists, were still obliged to repeat the last three years of the medical course at the Sydney University. But the maximum of eight foreign born and trained doctors to be admitted in any one year was abolished in July, 1950. Victoria, where no relief had been given immigrant doctors, adopted the New South Wales practice in January, 1951. Queensland's regulations were the same as those of New South Wales, except that doctors who fought with the British army were required to repeat only the last year of study. Tasmania allowed doctors who served in government hospitals to be registered in the government service.

GERMAN IMMIGRATION

The Australian government looked for non-British sources of European immigrants, Holland, Italy, and Germany being chiefly considered. The two former countries had concluded agreements with Australia for assisted migration, but so far there was no agreement with Western Germany. German immigration on a large scale was a controversial matter. The Minister for Immigration, H. E. Holt, announced in January, 1951, at the Second Commonwealth Citizenship Convention dealing with the problems of assimilating immigrants, that the government planned to bring in 100,000 German immigrants during the next four years. This caused great consternation and not only in the Jewish community. The fears of those who had cautioned the government against this were thus realized (*see AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, 1951, Vol. 52, p. 258*). The only prominent Jew who publicly approved of the new policy, provided that satisfactory screening took place, was Archie Michaelis, Speaker of the Victorian State Parliament. The assurance of the minister that effective screening would take place in Europe prior to granting permits was discounted as an impossibility. This assurance was contradicted by a number of cases of Nazi immigrants which had already been brought to the notice of the authorities, and by the experiences of Jewish DP's among their fellows. No objection was made to bringing German orphans into Australia, but only to the bringing in of those who had been subjected for years to Nazi indoctrination. The argument that displaced Germans from Eastern Europe would be the first to benefit from the government's scheme, was met by the objection that the Volksdeutschen had proved themselves to be disloyal to the countries of their adoption in the days of Hitler.

In reaction to the minister's announcement, many protest meetings were held in the capital cities, attended by large audiences. At the Sydney Town Hall meeting on February 26, 1951, which was attended by more than 5,000 people, Herbert V. Evatt, foreign minister of the old Labor government and now leader of the opposition, aligned himself in unmistakable terms with L. Haylen and Senator Justin O'Byrne against German mass migration.

The former Minister of Immigration, Arthur Calwell, now deputy leader of the Parliamentary Labor party, as well as other Labor leaders, expressed

misgiving about the plan during the election campaign. But the Labor party as such took no steps to challenge the government's policy. Most of the press supported the government, but criticism was voiced from time to time. The revival of neo-Nazism in Western Germany spurred the rallying of opposition to the government's scheme. But population needs outweighed all other considerations with the government. In its correspondence with the Executive Council of Australian Jewry over the course of two years, the government had promised no change of policy; however, it was considered most unlikely that the goal of 25,000 German immigrants for 1951 would be attained.

An additional cause of anxiety was the fact that apart from the German immigrants brought in by the government under its scheme of assistance, there were many who were brought in by German firms under government contract obligating them to provide their own workers. At least 1,500 such laborers were recently brought to Australia, and, it was said, with no or insufficient screening. It was generally assumed that most of these workers would remain in the country.

Personalia

Rabbi I. L. Swift of London was appointed minister of the Central Synagogue, Bondi Junction, Sydney. Rabbi Dr. H. Freedman of Elwood, Melbourne, accepted a position in New York.

M. E. Zeffert of Perth, Western Australia, was awarded the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire on the King's Birthday in recognition of his work in the cause of ex-servicemen.

Zelman Cowen, a former Vinerian Scholar at Oxford, was appointed Professor of Public Law and Dean of the Faculty at the Melbourne University at the age of thirty-one. This writer was appointed lecturer in post-Biblical Hebrew at the Sydney University.

A. Coppel was appointed Acting Judge of the Supreme Court of Victoria.

Statues in honor of the late General Sir John Monash, Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Forces in World War I, were unveiled both in Melbourne and Sydney on Remembrance Day (November 11, 1950) and Anzac Day (April 9, 1951), respectively. The former was dedicated by the Governor-General, W. J. McKell, in the Melbourne Domain, and the latter by the New South Wales Governor, General Sir John Northcott, at the New South Wales Jewish War Memorial.

NECROLOGY

The Australian Jewish community lost a prominent member in Aaron Patkin, Zionist leader and writer and editor of the Melbourne *Zionist*. Before coming to Australia Patkin had been a lawyer in Moscow and had played a leading role in Kerensky's government in 1917.

Isaac Gottlieb, former president of the Zionist Council of New Zealand, died in an air accident on his way to Israel.

Mrs. Marjorie Saulwick, former president of the Australian Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO), died in Melbourne early in 1951.

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