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### Some Statistical Data on Australian Jewry.

By RABBI Dr. ISRAEL PORUSH.

*(Read before the Society, 21st December, 1953.)*

That the Australian Jewish Community has undergone mighty changes, especially in the first half of the century, is a truism, which, as a fact, requires no elaboration. However, the extent of this transformation and its repercussions on the life of the community in its religious, demographic and organisational fields is a study yet to be undertaken. Such a study would yield much interesting material, which would help us to gauge the tendencies of our development.

The scope of this paper, however, is limited to a few aspects, those namely which reflect fundamental developments inside the community. If we have chosen, for instance, the incidence of inter-marriage in Australian Jewry as one of the subjects of this study, it is because we may see therein a barometer of the religious strength of the Community. Similarly, the distribution of the Jewish population in the various States and their Capital Cities will give us an indication of the tendency towards concentration which has been so flagrantly manifest in recent decades.

The data of this paper are mostly drawn from the official Census Reports of Commonwealth and States, and from various Year Books and records. The figures and the calculations based upon them are, we believe, correct, but the material is not always complete. Nonetheless, the relative deductions are quite safe.

In all, there were five censuses since Federation—in 1901, 1911, 1921, 1933 and 1947, though the first was still conducted by the States separately. This accounts for the fact that the information for 1901 is not uniform in all States. The censuses prior to 1901 were on a State basis, and not always held on the same dates.

All census questionnaires contained the item "Religion," but this information was optional, and no penalty was incurred if omitted. Until the New South Wales Census of 1841, the division of religions in the records was only as between "Protestants" and "Catholics." All other denominations were banded together as "non-Christians" or in similar terms. Nonetheless, information is available about the number of Jews in New South Wales in earlier days. Thus, the official record states that there were 95 Jews in 1828, out of a total population of 36,598, i.e. .26%; 345 Jews in 1833 out of a total of 60,724, i.e. .57%; 477 Jews in 1836 out of 77,096, i.e. .62%. Of the latter, 340, i.e. 71%, lived in Sydney.

Until 1921 inclusive, only a small percentage availed itself of the right to withhold information on religion in the questionnaire, but at the 1933 census it was resolved to notify the public that religion need not be disclosed. The percentage of the omissions and the "indefinites" in regard to religion increased suddenly to some 13% in 1933, and in 1947 this category amounted to almost 11%. If we, therefore, assumed that the percentage of Jewish "non-disclosures" approximated those among the non-Jews, we would have to add the respective proportions to the official figures of the Jewish population in 1933 and 1947, viz. 13 and 11 per cent.

One might also consider that some Jewish newcomers might have failed to disclose their religion either because they came, for various reasons, on non-Jewish papers, or because of the fear that such information might be used against them. It is not unreasonable to assume that the above corrections are therefore inadequate, especially in relation to the census in 1947, i.e. after the beginning of the considerable post-war flow of Jewish migrants into Australia. Thus, it was estimated by an officer of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, on the basis of the 1947 census, "corrected" as intimated above, and taking into consideration the "natural increase" of the community and the intake of migrants according to the records of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society, that in 1952 Australian Jewry numbered over 53,000 souls, of whom some 22,000 lived in New South Wales and some 26,000 in Victoria.

TABLE A (See inset).—This table contains information on the absolute and relative numerical strength of the Jewish Communities in the various States and areas

in the last fifty years, and, in the case of New South Wales, in the last century and more, as recorded in the official Census Reports. We must leave it to the reader to draw the necessary comparisons and conclusions. Only a few remarks are deemed necessary.

It is noteworthy that the relative strength of Commonwealth Jewry in the general community has varied very little over this long period. It has approximated throughout one-half of one per cent. The distribution of the Jewish population over the States shows greater variety.

The tendency for the Jews of Australia to concentrate in the capital cities has become more and more pronounced in the course of the years. It speaks volumes that in just over a century, for instance, the percentage of metropolitan Jewry in New South Wales grew from 68 to 91. Jews in the country either assimilated or migrated to Sydney for the sake of their children. The concentration reached its maximum in Melbourne in the 1947 census, and there is little doubt that the immigration of Jews since 1947 has followed the same trend. Very few of the newcomers have settled in provincial towns or rural areas. This development is also reflected in the defunct or disappearing provincial congregations strewn all over the Commonwealth.

The percentage of the Jews in the capital cities is about twice as high as generally in the States of the Commonwealth.

We have been able to furnish more data about New South Wales because of the greater accessibility of the records. But it is reasonable to assume that the conclusions drawn regarding New South Wales Jewry will apply equally to the communities in other States. It is obvious, for instance, that in the 'fifties and 'eighties of last century, and in the 'thirties of this century, there were considerable waves of Jewish immigration. The influx of Jewish immigrants since World War II, not yet recorded in censuses, was the mightiest ever.

Victorian Jewry is, certainly since 1947, the strongest in the Commonwealth, both in relation to other communities and relative to the general population of the State.

The data enumerated in the Table concerning the surplus of males over females are not complete. They are quoted only to show that the deficiency in females was, especially in the earlier period, more severe among Jews than among the rest of the population. This may be

regarded as a factor which contributed towards the high incidence of inter-marriage among Jewish men.

TABLE B (See inset).—This table furnishes information on the incidence of mixed marriages in the Commonwealth and the States. This information is unfortunately not available for other years, notably not for 1947, which could have provided us with a clue regarding the influence of immigration on inter-marriage. But even the limited data of the Table are most revealing, and entitle us to reach a number of conclusions.

The figures show, in the first instance, that the incidence of inter-marriage is rather high. Even as late as 1933, one man in five, for instance, was married out. The proportions mentioned do not reveal the full extent of mixed marriages, for the figures of the Table include neither those mixed marriages in which the non-Jewish partner had embraced the Jewish faith nor those in which the Jewish partner had forsaken his or her faith.

No statistics are available on conversions into Judaism in this country, which were probably not negligible in earlier decades and have become considerable since the emergence of Liberal Congregations in Australia. The former Rabbi of a Liberal Temple in Australia has had it recorded in print, that during his Australian ministry of less than ten years "about 100 Christians were accepted into the fellowship of the Jewish faith." Of course, not each of these represented necessarily a separate mixed marriage. One can gauge therefrom how much more serious the picture is than is reflected in the Table. Moreover, the respective percentages would be much higher if we were to compare the number of marriages instead of the number of married persons.

It is clear from the Table that throughout the period under observation many more men married out than women, generally about twice as many. The ratio was even higher in 1891 in New South Wales—the only State where this information is available for that census—probably because of the notorious shortage of women, which among Jews was even more pronounced than in the general population.

Generally one may conclude that the smaller the community the higher was the rate of inter-marriage. But there are interesting exceptions to this rule. Victoria, with an absolutely smaller (but relatively slighter higher) Jewish Community, had a lower rate of inter-marriage than New

South Wales. This discrepancy increased from 1911 over 1921 to 1933. Western Australia showed, apart from one instance (1933), the lowest rate of inter-marriage amongst the States. This was probably due to the composition and the "freshness" of that Community. Apart from the rather small Community of Tasmania, South Australia showed the highest incidence of inter-marriage. This is the only State of the continent which has suffered a decline of the Jewish population in the last fifty years. This decline is even more pronounced when one remembers that in 1891 South Australia had 840 Jewish souls, probably the maximum ever reached. As to Tasmania, it showed the most spectacular decline of the Jewish population, for in the 1854 census the number of Jews in Tasmania is given as 435 souls.

One may notice that in all States the maximum phase of inter-marriage is reflected in the 1921 figures, and that the 1933 figures show an improvement over both the 1921 and the 1911 figures. The former fact may be due to the after-effects of World War I., and the latter to the immigration in the 1920's.

In New South Wales and in Western Australia, where figures are available before 1911, it will be noted that there was a steady increase of inter-marriage until 1921; then followed the first decline.

It is regrettable that no information is available on inter-marriage in the official report of the 1947 census. However, as a substitute we have prepared TABLE C (see inset), which, apart from its general information, allows us, we believe, to draw certain conclusions regarding inter-marriage. It seems to us that this Table indicates a continued steady decline of inter-marriage beyond 1933.

Let us study, for example, the following comparative figures : The average Jewish population, assuming gradual growth, in the period 1911-1920, was 19,726. The average of Jewish "unmixed" (Synagogue) marriages in that period was 106, i.e. 54 per 10,000; the respective figures for the period 1921-1932 were 22,584, 114 and 51 per 10,000; for 1933-1946 the figures were 27,766, 205 and 74 per 10,000. If we were to assume that the Jewish population in Australia (without the "correction" by reason of "non-disclosures," which was also discarded in relation to the other figures in this calculation) was in 1952 approximately 47,000, then the average Jewish population in 1947-1952

was on this basis 39,510, the average "unmixed" marriages in this period 376—that is, 96 per 10,000. The conclusion would then be justified that the decline in inter-marriage, begun after 1921, continued in appreciable degree to the present day.

This study can be extended over the whole of Table C. It is, in the first instance, clear from a comparison of the third column with the fourth column of each part of the Table that Jews contracted fewer Synagogue (i.e. "unmixed") marriages than their relative numerical strength in the general community would warrant. But this discrepancy, generally speaking, diminishes with the time to such an extent that in latter years it has disappeared altogether. To obtain more accurate conclusions, it is suggested, because of the yearly fluctuation of marriages, that we consider periodical averages between census and census. Thus the average of the relative strength of Jewish marriages for the decade 1871-1880 in New South Wales was 29 out of 10,000, whilst the whole Jewish population constituted 48 out of 10,000 of the general population. Similar calculations may be undertaken for the periods 1881-1890, 1891-1900, 1901-1910, 1911-1920, 1921-1932, 1933-1946, and 1947-1952. It will be seen that there has been an improvement, though not a steady one, in regard to "unmixed" marriages.

When reading this paper before the Society, we added some data concerning the birthplaces of the Jews and concerning their education. But as this information was rather incomplete it is not included in the Tables. But the few data available are worth mentioning in passing. The percentages of those born in Australia among the general population, according to the censuses of 1911, 1921 and 1933 were 82, 84 and 86; whilst the respective figures in the Jewish Community were 59, 60 and 56. This reflects again the immigration of European Jews in the 'twenties of this century. No such data are available in the 1947 census.

The age distribution is reflected in the following figures: In the general population the percentages of those of 20 years and over (or of 40 years and over) for the years 1911, 1921, 1933, 1947 were 58, 60, 63, 67 (28, 27, 32, 36); in the Jewish population the respective figures were 67, 68, 71, 77 (—, 33, 39, 45). This proves conclusively that the Jewish Community has more "old" people

than the general community. Whether this is due to the scarcity of Jewish births or to the fact that most Jewish migrants, who form a greater part of the Jewish population than migrants do in the general population, came to this country at an advanced age—this is a matter of conjecture. Probably both explanations are valid.

It will come as a surprise to most of us to learn that the incidence of divorce seems to be higher in the Jewish Community than in the general. Thus in the censuses of 1911, 1921, 1933 and 1947 the number of Jewish divorced persons is respectively given as 65 out of a general Jewish population of 17,837, 93 out of 21,615, 163 out of 23,553, and 376 out of 32,019; whilst for the general population the corresponding figures were 4,508 out of 4,455,005, 8,528 out of 5,435,734, 21,113 out of 6,629,839, and 52,393 out of 7,579,358. A transformation into percentages reveals that the number of Jewish divorced persons is relatively higher than is the corresponding number in the general population.

Without going into detailed figures, the writer has also established that, wherever such information is available, the percentage of illiterates (unable to read or write) is lower in the Jewish Community than in the general population.

Finally, the writer has been able to confirm the assumption that in the Jewish community the proportion of "employers" and "self-employed" in the whole Jewish working community was higher than in the rest of the community, whilst in the category of "employees" the percentage of Jews was considerably lower than in the general population.

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## **The Jews of the Lachlan District, 1861-63.**

By M. Z. FORBES, B.A., LL.B.

*(Read before the Society, 21st December, 1953.)*

In the course of his recent researches into the history of the Macquarie Street Synagogue, Mr. D. J. Benjamin found some references in the Synagogue Minutes of 1863 to the Forbes or Lachlan Congregation. I do not think that we have had any previous knowledge of a Jewish community in the Western areas of New South Wales, and it therefore comes as a surprise to learn that almost a