

## JEWS IN VICTORIAN POLITICS 1835-1985

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In 1860, just four years after Responsible Government came to Victoria, Nathaniel Levi became the first Jew to sit in the Victorian Parliament. In the intervening 125 years, 21 Jews have served in the Parliament, of whom eight served varying terms in the Cabinet, and one, Sir Archie Michaelis, became Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. On two occasions, both brief, in 1900 and in 1935, two Jews served simultaneously in the same State Cabinet. Of the 21 Jewish parliamentarians since 1860, 15 were elected in the forty years prior to 1900 and only six Jews have been elected since that time.

Following my own retirement from Parliament in March 1985, there was no Jew currently serving in the State Parliament. This is only the third occasion in all of the fifty Parliaments elected in Victoria since 1856 that neither the Legislative Assembly nor the Legislative Council has had a Jewish Member. The only other occasions in which there was no Jewish representation were in the very first Parliament from 1856-1859, and in the 39th Parliament from 1952-1955 following the defeat of Sir Archie Michaelis for the seat of St. Kilda and the election of Baron Snider for the same seat, three years later.

The Jewish contribution to the Parliamentary life of Victoria, particularly in the latter part of the 19th century, was notable in terms of both involvement and achievement. Similarly in the municipal sphere from the earliest days of local government and organised civic affairs, Jews have played a prominent role highly disproportionate to their low numbers in the total community.

In fact, from the commencement of white settlement on the shores of Port Phillip Bay 150 years ago, Jews have been prominent not only in the political, municipal and civic life of Victoria — and particularly during the pioneering days of the 19th century — but also played a significant and influential role in the areas of commerce and industry.

The events leading up to and following the gold discoveries of 1851, which transposed Victoria from a small pastoral colony to a State with a great industrial future, were frequently highlighted and at times dominated by Jewish initiative and entrepreneurial enterprise. As the State began to grow and flourish, so did the need for political and municipal structures that would ultimately enable full and effective self-government. In all of this development, Jews showed a remarkable degree of leadership, inspiration and courage. The fact that the Jews in early Victoria were so few in number and were, by distance, so isolated from other Jewish centres, undoubtedly accounted for their relatively high level of solidarity on most of the significant issues of the day. For these reasons in particular, it is perhaps not by accident that most of the early Jewish aspirants for parliamentary and municipal honours were also very prominent in Jewish communal and synagogue development as well as being in the forefront of the business and commercial life of the colony and later of the State.

During the mining booms and country prosperity of the mid-19th century Jews, as with so many other citizens, were attracted in large numbers to country districts.

It is interesting to note that in 1861, of a total Jewish population in Victoria of 2,903, only some 700 lived in what is now the Melbourne metropolis whilst the remainder were well spread over the thriving provincial centres and country areas. For example, 240 Jews lived in Ballarat, 287 were in the various mining camps in that district, 208 lived in Sandhurst and 145 resided in Geelong and Newtown. There were also many communities of up to a few dozen Jews in each of the numerous other towns such as Ararat, Castlemaine, Beechworth, Avoca, Kilmore and Warrnambool, whilst a large floating population kept migrating from one town to another according to their prosperity and their economic requirements.

This was the background to the remarkable contribution made by Jews in local government in the 19th century — a contribution which was to continue in a more diluted form — into the present century. Some of the prominent Jewish personalities who became municipal mayors in the 1800s included Phares Phillips in the Shire of Warracknaheal, Jonas Levin in the Drysdale Shire, Moritz Cohn in Amhurst, Charles Dyte in Ballarat, Jacob Kohn in Bendigo and Simeon Cohen in Fitzroy, whilst Benjamin Benjamin and Edward Cohen served terms as Mayor of Melbourne.

Into the 20th century, Isaac Solomon, who was born in the goldfields town of Majorca in 1876, served as Mayor of Maryborough on three separate occasions, whilst Zillah Crawcour, whose father, Abraham Levy, had twice been Mayor of Ballarat East and later first Mayor of the then newly united city of Ballarat, was to become Mayor of Newtown in 1963 and create history by being Victoria's first woman mayor. In 1973 Irvin Rockman became Lord Mayor of Melbourne, the youngest person ever to hold that office. In the past fifty years, numerous metropolitan and country municipalities in Victoria, and certainly not less than on twenty-four occasions, have been served by a Jewish mayor.

At least one individual of Jewish origin was concerned in the actual foundation of Victoria. He was Joseph Solomon of Launceston, in Van Diemen's Land, a prominent storekeeper and landowner who was ultimately associated with John Batman in the first settlement on the shores of Port Phillip Bay. Joseph Solomon, incidentally, was the brother of Judah Solomon, who presented to the small Jewish community of Van Diemen's Land part of his Hobart land holdings for the construction of the first Hobart synagogue. However, the real beginnings of Jewish settlement in Victoria date from 1839 when the first immigrant ship, *Hope*, arrived from England. In the preceding four years, there had been a few Jews who had previously come from New South Wales, South Australia and Van Diemen's Land.

In considering the personalities and the pattern of Jewish involvement in the politics of early Victoria, it is pertinent to view the contribution in the context of the beginnings of the Jewish community itself and in the light of the Jewish communal scene from which the aspiring Jewish politicians emerged.

The first recorded Minyan was for the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services in 1840, when the Jewish residents of the four year old colony gathered in the store of Solomon Benjamin, in Collins Street. Amongst those present was Michael Cashmore, then aged 24 years, who was to become the first President of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation in the following year and who conducted the first Jewish funeral in Melbourne in 1840. Other future Presidents of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation who were present on that historic occasion were Asher Hart, President in 1843, Solomon Benjamin, 1846, Samuel Lazarus, 1865 and Edward Hart, who was to become President in 1894.

In the first forty years of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, four of its presidents were, at various times, to also serve as Members of the Victorian Parliament.

They were Edward Cohen, Benjamin Benjamin, Nathaniel Levi and Ephraim Zox. In 1846, Michael Cashmore became the first Jew to be elected to the Melbourne City Council, and in that year the Jewish population in the Port Phillip settlement reached 117. The Jews were actively contributing to the prosperity of the colony through their prominence in commerce in which they were particularly industrious as drapers, clothiers, storekeepers, auctioneers and hotelkeepers. Displaying enormous pride in the young colony and in expressing their overwhelming confidence in its future, the small Jewish community in that first twenty years of Port Phillip settlement played a significant role in establishing numerous civic and public institutions, such as the Melbourne Hospital and the Mechanics Institute, most of which were to flourish in the years to come.

By 1851, the Jewish population had grown to only 364, but by 1854 — just three years later — the number had increased dramatically to 1547. Just two years later in 1856, the Jewish population was almost 2000. This was the year in which responsible Government came to Victoria with the election of the newly created State's first Parliament following the constitutional separation of the Port Phillip district from New South Wales.

Understandably, during this period, the ties between England and her colonies were extremely close and it was therefore not surprising that the pattern of the Jewish community in Victoria conformed, more or less, to the design that was prevalent in Britain.

Significantly, and concurrently with the moves for a new self-governing Colony of Victoria, there was a totally unrelated movement under way in England to bring about the parliamentary emancipation of the Jews in that country. This movement was being led by two crusading and persuasive Peers, Lord Lyndhurst and Lord John Russell, who were strong advocates on behalf of the Jews of England and who were achieving considerable political success and support in their championing of the cause of religious liberty generally. When the first reports of the resultant parliamentary emancipation of the Jews in England in 1858 reached Australia, the Jewish community celebrated with great excitement and joy. This initial news of the emancipation had a particular impact in Melbourne, and when the more detailed reports arrived that Jews in England were now able to sit and vote in the House of Commons, a large and influential celebratory meeting was held in the vestry of the Melbourne Synagogue in Bourke Street on 24 October 1858. This meeting was chaired by Michael Cashmore and unanimously carried a motion of appreciation and gratitude to Lord Lyndhurst and Lord John Russell for their efforts on behalf of English Jewry.

The parliamentary emancipation in England greatly inspired the Jews of Victoria and in 1859, just one year later two Jews, Nathaniel Levi and Daniel Tallerman, stood for the Legislative Assembly. Both were unsuccessful. However, in 1860, the thirty year old Levi became the first Jew to be elected to the Victorian Parliament in extraordinary circumstances.

The Attorney-General, Richard Ireland, had been involved in a legal case for which he had received fees while holding the position of Attorney-General. He was required to resign his seat and submit himself for re-election. It was a very dirty by-election campaign that followed with frequent references to Nathaniel Levi's Jewish identity and to his so-called "alien" background. On a show of hands, as was the custom in those days before secret voting, the Returning Officer declared in favour of Ireland despite strong protests by Levi and his supporters. The Press, over the next two days, raised so much doubt about the declared result, that another poll was

ordered to be held at which Levi won by the clear margin of 166 votes. Following the new declaration announcing Nathaniel Levi as the elected Member, there were threats of petitions to have him removed on grounds of alleged bribery but Levi withstood these threats and went on to be re-elected by a greater majority in the general election of 1861. This was the real starting point of Jewish interest and practical involvement in the parliamentary politics of Victoria.

Nathaniel Levi, who was to spend almost nineteen years in Parliament of which the last twelve were in the Legislative Council, arrived in Melbourne in 1854 where he ran a store for a few years before joining the firm of John Levey & Son which had extensive interests in many parts of the colony, including Maryborough. Levi represented the Maryborough constituency for four years until 1865, then transferring to the electorate of East Melbourne for two years until he lost his seat in the general elections of 1867. Between 1868 and 1881, he unsuccessfully re-contested the Assembly seat of East Melbourne on seven occasions and also stood unsuccessfully for the Assembly seat of West Melbourne in the 1883 and 1886 elections. He then, with great persistence, continued his attempts to regain a seat in Parliament by standing for the Legislative Council South Eastern Province in 1886, South Western Province in 1889 and the North Yarra Province in 1891. Finally, he was successful in winning the North Yarra Province seat in 1892, which he held successfully until 1904. Levi's talents and public contribution extended well beyond the State political arena and Jewish communal areas. He became personally involved in huge commercial undertakings to open up the coal fields at Cape Patterson with a view to making Victoria self-supporting in coal. He pioneered Victoria's sugar beet industry, became President of the Chamber of Manufactures and occupied numerous other important offices until his death on 11 September 1908. Levi's historical entry into Parliament in 1860 was soon followed by London born Edward Cohen who arrived in Melbourne from New South Wales at the age of 20 years in 1842. Although Levi had first stood for Parliament unsuccessfully in 1859 and became the first Jewish Member of Parliament in Victoria in the following year, it was Edward Cohen, in fact, who was the first Jewish parliamentary candidate in Victoria, having unsuccessfully contested the seats of Melbourne in 1857 and West Melbourne in 1858. Edward Cohen was elected for the seat of East Melbourne in 1861 and from 1872-1875 held the portfolio of Trade and Customs which, of course, in those days was a pre-Federation Victorian Government responsibility. Cohen was well known and respected in Melbourne's philanthropic, commercial and social life. He was honorary treasurer of the Melbourne Hospital and held office in numerous Jewish and general organisations. As a member of the Melbourne City Council, he strongly advocated that the mayor should not be chosen by the Council but should be elected by the citizens at large, an echo which is still reverberating amongst Town Hall reformers today — 123 years later. When he retired from his term as Mayor of Melbourne in 1863, Cohen created social history for Melbourne by hosting the first mayoral ball. And what a ball it was! More than 2,300 invitations were sent out for the occasion, which was held in fancy dress at the Exhibition Buildings. The following morning's *Argus* newspaper gave eight columns to a description of the ball describing it as 'the gayest and most imposing event which has occurred in the colony — the festivity will make the mayoralty of Mr. Cohen ever memorable in the annals of Melbourne'. This proved to be a very true statement because the occasion is still being recalled.

In the 1866 general election, Edward Cohen did not stand and Nathaniel Levi, who had lost Maryborough in the previous year, won Cohen's East Melbourne seat. However, in 1868, Cohen opposed Levi in East Melbourne and defeated him by 42

votes. Levi was to remain out of Parliament for 24 years before re-entering as a Member of the Legislative Council in 1892.

Cohen, who became Mayor of Melbourne in 1862, was a successful business partner of his brother-in-law, Benjamin Benjamin who also served as Mayor of Melbourne in 1888 and who was a Member of the Legislative Council from 1889 to 1892. Benjamin Benjamin was the first Jew to receive a knighthood in Victoria and his death in 1908 brought to an end a very distinguished philanthropic, political and Jewish communal career.

Edward Cohen was succeeded in his constituency of East Melbourne by another Jewish politician, Ephraim Zox who, like Cohen and Benjamin, also served as a president of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation. As was the case with Nathaniel Levi, Zox achieved a high profile and was a very visible and prominent spokesman for the Jewish community, both within and outside of Parliament. He was a colourful personality, both in appearance and manner, and he played a leading role in the establishment and development of numerous Jewish organisations, notably the Montefiore Homes.

Other prominent Jewish politicians of the 1860s and 1870s included Charles Dyte who represented East Ballarat for six years from 1864. Dyte had a mercantile training background and arrived in Melbourne from London in 1853. A sharebroker and chairman of the Ballarat Mining Exchange, Dyte became chairman of the first borough council of East Ballarat and also served as president of the Ballarat Hebrew Congregation. He also played a major role in the framing of the resolutions which were put to the historic meeting of the Eureka Stockade survivors, which was held on Bakery Hill on 6 December 1854.

Jonas Felix Levien, who was the first Jew to be born in Victoria, at Williamstown on 28 March 1840, became the Member for South Grant in 1871 when he defeated Eureka hero, Peter Lalor, in a hard-fought election. He was to serve in the Parliament for a total of thirty-three years — the longest period of any Jewish parliamentarian in the Legislative Assembly of Victoria.

In 1893 Daniel Lazarus, a prominent Bendigo mining director, was elected as the Member for Sandhurst. Lazarus was the first locally born mayor of Bendigo, and in 1897 he served on the Royal Commission into State Forests. Benjamin Fink, the Member for Maryborough and Talbot from 1883 to 1889, and who had migrated from the Channel Islands in 1861, was the older brother of Theodore Fink who also served in the Victorian Parliament as Member for Jolimont and for Richmond from 1894 to 1904. Theodore Fink served a very brief term as a Minister without Portfolio in 1900. One of the many achievements of Theodore Fink in public life was the gaining of admission of women doctors as members of the staff of the Melbourne Hospital.

A long serving Member of the Legislative Council during this period was Joseph Sternberg who served a total of thirty-seven years as the Member for Northern Province and later the Bendigo Province until his death in 1928. He was a member of several important Royal Commissions, and he had extensive agricultural, mining and wine growing interests in the Rochester and Bendigo districts. He had a remarkably close involvement with a host of communal organisations in his electorate, including the Bendigo Hospital, Bendigo Art Gallery, the Campaspe Irrigation Trust and the Rochester Agricultural Society.

Emanuel Steinfield served a brief one year term in the Legislative Council in 1892, whilst Phares Phillips, who was born at Mount Blackwood, was elected to the Legislative Council Province of North-Western in 1896. In 1901 he was briefly a Minister

without Portfolio in the Turner Government, resigning at the time of Federation to represent Wimmera in the Federal Parliament until 1906. Phillips was also long associated with local government, having been president of the Shire of St. Arnaud on three occasions and also for some years a councillor of the Borung Shire.

The two remaining Jews to have been elected to the Parliament before the end of the 19th century were Isaac Isaacs and his brother John. Isaac Isaacs, first elected as the Member for Bogong in the 1892 elections, soon became a leading member of the Ministry, a prominent framer of the Australian Constitution, a foundation member of the first Federal Parliament, Attorney-General of Australia, High Court Judge, Chief Justice and finally the first Australian-born Governor-General of Australia. Isaacs' career has been well documented and admirably recorded in two biographies by Jewish authors. The first biography was written in 1963 by Max Gordon, a former President and long time stalwart of the Victorian Branch of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, whilst the second biography was a scholarly work in 1967 by Professor (now Sir) Zelman Cowen, who was to become the second Jew to assume the highest office in the land when he was appointed Governor-General in 1977.

The obituaries and tributes which followed Isaac Isaacs' death on 11 February, 1948 adequately recorded the rare intellectual capacity, legal skill and distinguished service of a humble man who achieved greatness. Prime Minister Ben Chifley said: "Isaacs' great public services and his scholarly attributes made him one of Australia's greatest citizens". Opposition Leader Robert Menzies said that Isaacs was one of the most remarkable men in Australia's history. "Both in the law and in public affairs, he had uncommon powers of clear thinking and lucid expression," added Menzies. Despite the resentment which Isaacs provoked in the Jewish community as a result of his strong and outspoken opposition to political Zionism in the 1940s, his attachment to Jewish ideals and his life-long defence and advocacy of Jewish rights were very much a mark of his career both before, during and subsequent to his influential role in Victorian politics. I believe that some commentators and writers of the Isaacs period are inaccurate when they claim that Isaacs tended to put aside his Jewish affiliation in political and public life. On the contrary, there are numerous instances, both within and outside of Parliament when Isaacs was instrumental in enabling a positive response to Jewish representations or where he initiated action to protect or advance a Jewish interest.

As far back as 1872 — twenty years before he entered the Victorian Parliament — Isaacs' interest in Jewish education motivated his major role in obtaining government subsidies for the Melbourne Hebrew School. In 1882 he was honorary secretary of the Melbourne Jewish Young Men's Russian Relief Fund. On numerous occasions he made his expert legal advice freely available to the Jewish community, whilst his very special interest in Jewish education and Jewish religious instruction greatly contributed to the establishment of the first general Jewish Education Board and later the United Jewish Education Board of which he was the first President whilst occupying the office of Victorian Attorney-General in 1895. He frequently responded to anti-semitic utterances and attacks with anger and always displayed his Jewish identity with pride on both public and private occasions. His controversial role in the 1943 public debate on political Zionism did, regrettably but perhaps justifiably, leave a blemish on his reputation but it was a blemish that should be viewed in the context of the time and not totally outside the framework of a very long and distinguished life.

Isaacs' departure from the Victorian Parliament in 1901 to enter Federal politics brought to an end a proud and notable era of Jewish participation in Victorian poli-

tics. The increasing involvement of Jews in parliamentary politics which followed Nathaniel Levi's first election in 1860 culminated in the remarkable achievement of 1894 when seven Jews were elected to the Legislative Assembly of 96 seats, in addition to the four Jews whose membership of the Legislative Council included the years 1892-1894. For a small community comprising less than 0.5% of the population to have gained by popular vote some 7% of the parliamentary representation was indeed a truly notable achievement.

There were three additional Members of Parliament in the 19th century who have in some writings, been referred to as Jewish. These were George Levey, Member for Normanby from 1861 to 1867, Albert Harris who represented the Gippsland area between 1883 and 1910, and Samuel Samuel who was the Member for Dundas for three months in 1892 but who died before taking his seat in the House. However in each case, there is no evidence to substantiate any claim to a Jewish identity. Levey, who was born in Washington USA, arrived in Melbourne in 1851. He became a proprietor and editor of *The Herald* in 1863 and later editor of *The Age* in 1868. He departed for England in 1882 where he became the London correspondent of *The Age*. He had no known formal contact with or any membership of any Jewish organisation, and newspaper references at the time of his death in 1919 provided evidence to suggest his attachment to the Presbyterian Church.

The name of Albert Harris appears to have been often confused, in historical references to the period, with several prominent Jews of the same name including Abraham Harris who was very active in Jewish affairs and in particular, with the East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation of which he was President on two occasions. Abraham Harris had also been closely associated with a number of Jewish MPs on several community issues and together with Isaac Isaacs and Theodore Fink, was foundation committee member of the United Jewish Education Board. The Parliamentary references to Albert Harris would indicate that he was Church of England.

Samuel Samuel, despite his name and the frequent references to him at the time as "The Scottish Jew", does not appear to have any claim to Jewish identity or association. Born in Ireland in 1834, he moved to Scotland at a young age where he was educated before emigrating to Victoria where he worked in a store in Bendigo before qualifying as a solicitor, later becoming senior partner in the Hamilton legal firm of Samuel and Horwitz. He stood for Parliament on five occasions until finally winning a seat, but unfortunately died before the Parliament assembled following the 1892 election. He was hurried as a Presbyterian. Ironically, the Horwitz half of the Samuel and Horwitz legal partnership was Louis Horwitz, a Jew who maintained active associations with the Jewish community. Louis Horwitz had been elected to the Hamilton borough council when he was only 22 years old. Two years later he was elected Mayor, the youngest person ever to be elected to such a post. He was the son of Henry Horwitz, who was President of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation in 1863. Louis was highly conceited, a social pusher and destined to finish up in serious trouble later in life. Nevertheless, as a young man he was highly talented, being the youngest person up to that period to have passed the final law examination and to have won the Victorian chess championship by a record 11½ games out of a possible 15. Incidentally Louis, whilst Mayor of Hamilton, married a daughter of Isaac Hart, one of the founders of the Melbourne Jewish community in the 1840s.

Louis Horwitz was one of the many non-parliamentary politicians to actively promote the federation of the Australian States. A prominent public speaker and author of several articles on that subject, Horwitz published a four-page supplement in the

*Jewish Herald* of a lecture he delivered under the auspices of the Australian Natives Association on 26 August, 1891 entitled "Federation: What Is It: What It Portends".

Other non-parliamentary Jews who actively worked for Federation included M.A. Rapken, who sat as a member on the General Council of the Australian Federal League. Rapken was very active in the Jewish community, particularly in the field of education. In the general community, he served as a Councillor for the City of Northcote and was a member of the Board of Advice to the Education Department for the Northcote district. Maximilian Hirsch, who was later to be elected in 1902 to one term in the Victorian Parliament, was another strong Jewish advocate for federation. He emigrated to Victoria from Cologne in 1890 and very quickly became the State's leading exponent of free trade and a system of a single land tax on market land values. Hirsch stood unsuccessfully for the Federal Parliament at its first election in 1901 and again was unsuccessful in an attempt to win the seat of Wimmera in 1906. He also served on the committee of the Australian Federal League with M.A. Rapken and Theodore Fink.

Other Jewish non-parliamentary political personalities in Victoria who were active in various crusades at the close of the 19th century included Joseph Hyman, a member of the Executive and at one time President of the Trades Hall Council, also serving as president of the Eight Hours Day Movement. With Max Hirsch, Hyman also served on the Government's Unemployment Board. He was a strong supporter of women's suffrage in which Vida Goldstein was taking the most prominent and active role. M.M. Phillips and H.F. Barnet joined with Hirsch in his campaign for free trade, and as senior members of the Free Trade movement, they were valued advisers to the Council of the Australian Free Trade and Liberal Association. Barnet was also an influential and active member of the Australian National League. However, the principal Jewish advocate for federation was, naturally, Isaac Isaacs, who by virtue of his senior position in the Victorian Government and as a delegate to the Federal Convention to draft the Federal Constitution, played an historic role in all of the events, both parliamentary and organisational, that ultimately led to the Commonwealth coming into being on 1 January 1901.

One interesting sidelight worth recording is related to another Jewish delegate to the final session of the Convention held in Melbourne on 20 January, 1898. The delegate concerned, Vabian Solomon, from South Australia, upon his arrival in Melbourne, informed the forty or more delegates and dozens of advisers present that, as he observed the Sabbath and had to attend the synagogue, he would not sit on Saturday sessions of the Convention. Despite the fact that the Convention programmes had been finalised and the agenda timetable was well-advanced in preparation, the Convention, in deference to Solomon, resolved not to sit on Saturdays at all.

During the latter part of the last century, whilst so many Jews were playing a prominent part in the State parliamentary scene, Jews were continuing their active and often leading participation at the municipal level. Several Jews, notably Jacob Marks and Ber Rapiport, were following in the footsteps of Edward Cohen and Benjamin Benjamin as members of the Melbourne City Council, whilst Joseph Levi at St. Kilda, Morris Gross at Fitzroy, Edwin Crawcour in Richmond and M.A. Rapken of Northcote were foremost amongst new Councillors in the metropolitan municipalities. In the country, Leon Rosenbloom became Mayor of Rutherglen and Morris Silberberg was elected President of the Shire of Portland. Sigismund Jacoby, a brother-in-law of Louis Horwitz, was Mayor of Hamilton in 1875-76 and, remarkably, was to later become Mayor of St. Kilda on four occasions between 1892 and



1908. This list of Jews who acted as mayors is not intended to be complete, but rather, to indicate the extent and diversity of involvement. Whilst so many Jews had come from the relatively small Jewish community to occupy important political and civic positions, especially in the years between 1860 and 1900, it is noteworthy that at least four Jews in the same period achieved diplomatic recognition. They were Moritz Michaelis, who acted as Prussian Consul in Victoria; Henry J. Hart who was the Consul for the United States of America; Alexander Marks who for many years was Japanese Consul in Australia and on his retirement Honorary Consul for Victoria and Tasmania, and Lewis Sanders who held the honorary appointment of Consul-General for Liberia.

Following the turn of the century, it was to be twenty-one years before the next Jew, Henry Isaac Cohen, was to be elected to the Legislative Council, and thirty years before the Legislative Assembly was again to have a Jewish Member with the election of Archie Michaelis as Member for St. Kilda. When Henry Cohen was elected as the Member for Melbourne Province in 1921, Joseph Sternberg, who had been in the Legislative Council since 1891, was the only Jewish member of the Parliament. Cohen, who was born in 1872, built up a successful law practice in civil and arbitration cases. He was appointed a King's Counsel the year he was elected to Parliament, and in 1928-29 he was government leader in the Legislative Council. In 1923-24, 1929 and 1935, he held a number of Cabinet posts, each for short periods of time, during a period of government instability. In 1929, Henry Isaac Cohen was joined in the Legislative Council by Brigadier Harold Edward Cohen, a grandson of Edward Cohen who had been the Member for East Melbourne. H.E. Cohen was not related to H.I. Cohen. Like his namesake, Harold Cohen had also graduated in law and held a number of company directorships. He was a member of the State Cabinet from 1932 to 1935 and was joined in Cabinet by H.I. Cohen for the final three weeks of the Argyle Government in March 1935. Harold Cohen retired from the Legislative Council at the 1935 elections to become the Member for Caulfield in the Legislative Assembly until his defeat at the polls in 1943. Outside of his successful business activities, Harold Cohen served with great distinction as an officer in the 1914-18 War and in the Second World War as the Honorary Red Cross Commissioner in the Middle East. He was the first President of Melbourne Legacy, Chief Commissioner of the Boy Scouts, and from 1937 to 1946 he was President of the Victorian Jewish Returned and Ex Servicemen's Association, now known as V.A.J.E.X. He died in 1946.

Archie Michaelis, who held the Legislative Assembly seat of St. Kilda for twenty years until his defeat in 1952, was a grandson of Moritz Michaelis, the founder of the St. Kilda Hebrew Congregation in 1872. Archie Michaelis was perhaps the most prominent Anglo-Jewish personality of his time. Totally integrated into the life of the Australian community, he nevertheless had very close attachments and equally strong ties with the Jewish community, which he viewed entirely and demonstrably as a group to be distinguished within the wider community solely on the basis of religion and mode of worship. Like Harold Cohen, he strongly subscribed to a traditional Anglo-Jewish doctrine and was openly hostile to any concept of political Zionism which came into conflict with the prevailing policy of the British Government. Nevertheless, and in contrast to the public stand which Michaelis took against political Zionism in the 1940s, he had a long record of public support for a national homeland for the Jews consistent with the Balfour Declaration. Michaelis had been treasurer of the Palestine Restoration Fund and gave generously for the relief of overseas Jewry as far back as the end of the First World War. Throughout the

1930s in particular, Archie Michaelis was the most visible spokesman for the Jewish community by virtue of his parliamentary office and his official status within the Jewish community. He was President of the Victorian Jewish Advisory Board (forerunner of the Board of Deputies) in 1939-40, a Trustee and Past President of the St. Kilda Hebrew Congregation and Foundation President of the Victorian branch of the Australian Jewish Historical Society. He was also a Patron of the Society for a number of years. Michaelis was a Minister without Portfolio in the seven weeks Macfarlan Government in 1945, and from 1950 to 1952 was the first and only Jewish Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. Knighted in 1952, Sir Archie continued to be active in public affairs following his defeat at the polls in October of that year. He died in 1975.

Following more than seventy years of Jewish prominence in municipal politics, and in particular throughout the provincial and thriving country regions of Victoria, Jews were continuing to be active in local government on a wide front. Between the two World Wars in metropolitan Melbourne, the City of St. Kilda had two Jewish Mayors in J.B. Levi in 1924-25 and Alfred Levy in 1936-37, whilst Joseph Redapple acted as Mayor of Brighton also in 1936-37. Joseph Waxman, long prominent in Jewish affairs, continued to serve as an Alderman of the Brunswick Council of which he was Mayor in 1912-13. Since the end of the Second World War, some of the prominent Jewish municipal councillors who served as mayors of metropolitan municipalities included Julius Pollack in Malvern, Les Kausman in Hawthorn, Harold Weinberg in Heidelberg, Maurice Sloman and Charles Lux in Prahran, Martin Solomon in Kew, and Brian Rudzki in Caulfield. There was also Harry Samuel in Mordialloc, Howard Nathan in South Melbourne, whilst in Geelong, Morris Jacobs followed in the footsteps of his father, Solomon Jacobs, who served that city as mayor on five occasions. Irvin Rockman had been elected to the Melbourne City Council and soon followed in the footsteps of Edward Cohen and Sir Benjamin Benjamin by being elected the third Jewish Lord Mayor of the city, for three years from 1977 to 1979. Rockman was widely regarded as one of the most industrious and progressive Lord Mayors with wide sights and long term vision for city development in all its aspects. In the State legislature, Sir Archie Michaelis' successor as Member for St. Kilda was defeated three years later in 1955 by Baron David Snider, whose uncle, Leon Snider, had for many years been a member of the Legislative Council in New South Wales.

Born in 1917, Baron Snider grew up in Melbourne where as a youth he was actively involved in the 3rd St. Kilda Jewish Boy Scouts and other Jewish youth organisations. Following extensive experience in the organisation of industrial safety both in the USA and in Australia, he established his own management consultancy business in Melbourne in 1951. On entering Parliament, Baron Snider quickly became a forthright public advocate of Jewish causes and firmly established himself as the liaison between the organised Jewish community and government. He was closely associated with the Jewish National Fund projects and actively promoted the involvement and support of politicians and other public figures in the Menzies, Blamey and other forest projects in Israel. Baron Snider led a Commonwealth Trade Survey to Israel in 1963, and at the State elections in the following year, 1964, he transferred from the Assembly seat of St. Kilda to the Legislative Council Province of Higginbotham which he held until his premature death in December 1966.

In 1964, I joined Baron Snider in the Parliament as the Member for Hawthorn, the seat I was to hold for seven successive general elections until my retirement from the Parliament after 21 years service in March 1985 — the longest service of any Member to represent Hawthorn since responsible Government in 1856.

For nine years prior to my election, Baron Snider had been the only Jewish member of the Victorian Parliament and he had demonstrably relished the unique role which that position had afforded him both within the Jewish community and within the Parliament itself. My election was clearly not a time of rejoicing for Baron Snider. I was not only in the same Parliament, but I was also a member of the same party, which meant that in future, his hitherto exclusive representation of Jewish interests might have to be shared with another parliamentary colleague. I had come into the Parliament following a long and intense Jewish communal experience in which I had been president of several important Jewish organisations and, at the time of entering Parliament, I was an elected member of the Jewish Board of Deputies under the then direct representation scheme.

My friendship with Baron Snider had extended back over many years and had always been one of complete trust and cordiality. On the day of my election, however, our relationship suddenly changed to one of strict formality and it was very clear to me that Baron Snider resented my intrusion into his domain. For the next twelve months, we maintained a distant but courteous relationship in which we each responded independently to any Jewish representations which we received. All this changed on 1 May 1966, when the first serious public anti-semitic incident to occur since my entry into Parliament took place during the May Day March in Melbourne. Men dressed in Nazi-style uniforms marched through the streets carrying anti-Jewish banners and shouting anti-semitic slogans.

On that evening Baron Snider phoned me and suggested we should get together the following morning in order to prepare a strong and united submission to the Acting Premier at the time, Arthur Rylah. This we did in a spirit of absolute co-operation, and on the following day our joint representations resulted in a full-scale police investigation which led to identification of the individuals and groups concerned, with effective follow-up action by the State Special Branch and appropriate Federal authorities. On the following Friday, 6 May 1966, the *Australian Jewish News* in a strong editorial on the seriousness of the incident said . . . "it was left to two Jewish State parliamentarians to induce the Acting Premier to police investigation . . . one could be excused for pondering what would and could happen if there were no Jewish Members of Parliament . . .". From that incident onwards, Snider and I enjoyed a remarkably close political, communal and personal relationship in which we acted as one on all issues which had any bearing on matters of importance to the Jewish community. Unfortunately, this partnership in Parliament was to be short-lived with Snider's premature death prior to the 1967 elections. I was then to be the only Jewish representative in either House for the next 18 years, except for a brief period following the 1970 elections when David Bornstein, who had little involvement with the Jewish community, held the seat of Brunswick East.

In 1967, three years after entering Parliament, I was appointed Chairman of the All-Party Select Committee on Road Safety. It was in this capacity that I made my greatest contribution as a Private Member by initiating, chairing the enquiry and later recommending to Parliament legislation for the compulsory wearing of seat belts in motor vehicles. This report was adopted by the Government.

I also had the honour of being the first Jew to be appointed Secretary of the State Cabinet in 1973, and three years later of being the first Minister of Ethnic Affairs in Victoria. In subsequent years, I was privileged to hold other portfolios before my decision to retire at the 1985 general election. As I look back on my many years in the Victorian Parliament, I recall numerous incidents and events that bear a remarkable similarity to the experiences of my Jewish forebears in the Parliament during the

19th century. There was barely one week in my career, particularly in government, when I was not involved in at least one significant intervention to prevent or to counter some action or proposal about which Jews or the Jewish community would have had understandable or justifiable concern. More often than not, these interventions were prompted by my own knowledge of the event and before outside Jewish interests had become aware of it. In addition, of course, there were the almost daily representations from Jewish organisations and individuals on matters which affected them as Jews or related to the Jewish community as a whole.

The Jewish Member of Parliament, throughout Victorian history, has been the victim on occasions — fortunately few and far between — of derogatory and unparliamentary references to his Jewish origin or association. I experienced the brunt of such attacks on just three occasions, and in each instance, the offending Member had shown a prejudice that was uncharacteristic of the Parliament and was clearly isolated by his remarks. By the same token, the Jewish Member of Parliament throughout 150 years of Victorian history has also been the subject of generous tributes, high respect and admiration because of the traits displayed through his Jewishness and his loyalty to his beliefs and his community. Time has scarcely changed the experiences of a Jewish MP and the relationship between him and the Jewish community and, more importantly, his obligation to it. The strong ethic of Nathaniel Levi, more than 120 years ago, is just as strong today, and the protests that a Jew could raise in those days are regrettably the same protests that only a Jew could raise today.

There is no doubt that because of the influence of the Jewish mind, the Jewish attitude and feeling on the Victorian Parliament since its inception 129 years ago, the legislature has been the richer and its laws have been the kinder and more responsive to those most dependent upon them. In both parliamentary and municipal spheres, Victorian Jews have contributed much to the advancement of the State and its people.

#### **CURRICULUM VITAE OF THE HONORABLE WALTER JONA, A.M.**

**Parliamentary:** Minister for Community Welfare Services 1979-82  
Minister of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs 1976-79  
Assistant Minister of Health 1976-79  
Parliamentary Secretary of Cabinet 1973-76  
Shadow Minister of Education 1982-84  
Member of Legislative Assembly for Hawthorn 1964-85  
Deputy Leader, Australian Delegation U.N. Conference on Crime and Treatment of Offenders, Caracas 1981  
Chairman, Joint Parliamentary Select Committee on Road Safety 1967-73  
Deputy Chairman of Committees, Legislative Assembly 1970-73  
Deputy Chairman, Joint Parliamentary Committee on Social Development 1982-85  
Chairman, Government Party Health Committee 1967-70  
Chairman, Government Party Transport Committee 1970-73  
Member, Joint Standing Committee on State Policy 1973-82  
Member, Standing Orders Committee, Legislative Assembly 1967-70  
Member, Privileges Committee, Legislative Assembly 1982-85  
**Community:** President, Asthma Foundation of Victoria since 1983; Director since 1966  
Director, Victoria State Opera Company 1975-80  
President, Hawthorn City Brass Band since 1973  
President, Hillel Foundation of Victoria 1965-69  
Vice-President, Swinburne Technical School 1969-79  
Member of Council, Swinburne College of Technology 1972-80  
Vice-President, Hawthorn Australia Day Association since 1973

Chairman, Kozminsky Trust since 1985; Trustee since 1981  
 Member of Council, Victorian Institute of Secondary Education 1982-85  
 Member of Council, Rossbourne House School since 1985  
 Trustee, Victorian Autistic Children's Association since 1970  
 Patron and Trustee, Hawthorn Citizens' Youth Club since 1967  
 Patron, Victorian Boys' Choir since 1974  
 Member, Gallery Society of Victoria since 1982  
 Chief Patron and No. 1 Member, Hawthorn-East Melbourne Cricket Club since 1982  
 Patron, Hawthorn Football Club since 1978  
**Commercial:** Director, Walter Jona and Associates Pty. Ltd. since 1984  
 Associate Director and Consultant, John P. Young and Associates (Aust.) Pty. Ltd. since 1984  
 Consultant, Meldrum Burrows & Partners since 1984  
 Consultant, Aura Levin Partners since 1984  
 Chairman, Gandel Charitable Trust since 1985  
 Assistant Secretary, Nicholas Pty. Ltd. Australia 1954-60  
 Development Administrator 1960-64  
 Accident Claims Manager, Atlas Assurance Company 1950-54  
 Associate, Australian Institute of Insurance  
**Clubs:** Naval and Military  
 Melbourne Cricket Club  
 R.S.L.  
**Military Service:** R.A.A.F. (South West Pacific) World War II  
 Pilot Officer R.A.A.F. Reserve  
**Recreation:** Cycling  
 Tennis  
 Watching football and cricket  
**Educated:** Glenferrie Primary School  
 Scotch College  
 University of Melbourne  
**Personal:** Married January 1972, Alwynne Burley  
 Home Address: 11 Kildare Street, Hawthorn East 3123.  
**Jewish Community:** Chairman of Committees, Magen David Adom since 1966  
 President, 1984 Jewish Welfare Appeal  
 President, Hillel Foundation of Victoria 1965-69  
 President, Australian Federation of Jewish Ex-Service Associations 1964-65; Patron and Life Member since 1967  
 President, Victorian Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women 1958-60; Life Member since 1962  
 Member, Board of Governors, Tel Aviv University since 1985  
 Patron, Friends of Tel Aviv University since 1976  
 Consultant Member of Board of Management of Executive Council of Australian Jewry 1981-85  
 Member, Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies 1955-64  
 Trustee, National Council of Jewish Women Foundation since 1983  
 Trustee, A. Kozminsky Trust since 1961; Chairman since 1985  
 Member, Young Men's Hebrew Association since 1946  
 (Baron Snider Award 1976)  
 Member, Australian Jewish Historical Society since 1955  
 Executive Committee, Jewish Museum of Australia since 1985  
 Patron or Member of numerous other Jewish communal organisations and projects.