

Zionism is alive and well

I WISH to comment on the debate (AJN 24/3) over the primacy of aliyah in Zionist thought and Israel-Diaspora relations. Although aliyah is the highest expression of Zionism, I have consistently stated that the Zionist movement's primary aim today is the strengthening of both Israel and the Diaspora through a partnership based on joint responsibility around the principle of the centrality of Israel in Jewish life.

As we have been saying for some years, if we carry out our task successfully, then for those that wish it, aliyah will indeed become the voluntary outcome of such efforts.

This means that we have the responsibility to assist in Jewish matters of survival and nourishment around the world and that

Israel has an increasing responsibility to assist Australian Jewry in matters of Jewish continuity here, which Israel does.

The address in these matters is not President Ezer Weizman. The body with the prime aim of helping the Diaspora is the World Zionist Organisation, now headed by Avraham Burg. It is to the WZO that we turn for assistance from Israel in financial, educational and inspirational terms.

The WZO's Australian office is the Zionist Federation and then in turn, the State Zionist Councils. It is the ZFA which can best continue to push the claims for Israel's input into our community and this it does.

No, we are not entering a "post-Zionist" phase. Zionism has already gone through a number

of stages and now we have entered a new one — one, I may add, which the Zionist movement recognised long before it became the media's fashionable plaything. The election of Avraham Burg is merely confirmation of the process. Mr Burg is no lonely peddler of radical thought. He expresses the status quo, feelings and actions of today's Zionism.

The Zionist movement of Australia looks forward to continuing its work together with him to ensure Jewish continuity.

Ron Welser
Co-President, Zionist Federation of Australia,
President, State Zionist Council of NSW

YOUNG UIA

FOR MONTHS Young UIA volunteers dedicated themselves to planning, organising and preparing the annual Young UIA gala dinner which this year attracted more than 600 guests. To make this satellite function successful UIA is very proud of the unrivalled dedication shown by younger members of the Jewish community of Melbourne.

The function is a social event, but it is very much Young UIA's main fundraising opportunity. Young UIA remains one of the main organisations in Melbourne to so successfully gather so many young Jews with the centrality of Israel as the common denominator. To enjoy oneself in the process only serves to make the occasions even more memorable.

It was therefore with great dismay that I read the *Jewish News* account (AJN 31/3) of the gala evening. The report, which was wildly inaccurate, attempted unnecessarily to deride the valuable and selfless efforts of so many committed members of Young UIA. The night was a notable success and the fundraising efforts for the evening will enable 138 Russian Jews to have the opportunity to start a new life in Israel.

Michael Vromen
Executive Director
UIA Victoria

AS THE UIA worker referred to in Margaret Safran's article "How it played at the Radisson" (AJN 31/3), I felt it necessary to provide *Jewish News* readers with a more balanced account of the evening.

The Young UIA gala dinner was first and foremost a fundraising event, which was extremely successful as the overwhelming majority of the 607 guests at the function completed their pledge

cards on the evening and the money raised represented an increase of approximately 25 per cent on funds raised last year.

To enable the function to be a successful fundraiser, the night was sponsored by generous members of Young UIA. These subsidies enabled the price of the tickets to be kept at a minimum to ensure that our guests were able to pledge their support to UIA on the evening. As for the guests having a good time, that certainly was the aim of the volunteers who spent hours organising the function.

What a terrific event where guests have a great time socialising with their friends, dancing, hearing an address from the Israeli prime minister and, most importantly, raising a significant amount of money for Israel.

Please be assured that the feedback received has been very positive and the night was indeed a success.

Aviva Banczewski
South Yarra

MARGARET Safran's report of the Young UIA Gala Fundraising Dinner left me wondering what function the writer attended.

I also attended the gala dinner which Ms Safran found so lacking. But I enjoyed a night of socialising, dancing, watching the satellite and pledging my money to Israel.

I thought the noise level during the fairly lengthy satellite was reasonable given the presence of over 600 mostly young viewers, and I managed to hear the broadcast perfectly well. I was well aware that I would be asked to make a pledge on the night, as this was why I was asked to attend and I did so happily, as did all the guests at my table.

I congratulate the Young UIA organisers for doing an excellent job, combining a successful

fundraiser with an enjoyable social event and handling the business side of the evening efficiently and tactfully.

There are few major social events in the young Jewish calendar and I think a little more support and a little less snide criticism would be welcomed by the extremely hardworking voluntary organisers of this one.

Trevor Friedman
Armadale

THE YOUNG UIA ball incorporating a live satellite hook-up to Israel was an impressive gathering of people from different backgrounds and ages. Over 600 people were there, pledging a total of close to six figures for Israel.

As this ball was the first Young UIA event I have attended, it highlighted to me the potential this organisation has for bringing unaffiliated Jewish young adults together in a social arena, while at the same time raising significant funds for Israel.

Regardless of the technical problems the organisers of the event encountered, such as lack of dance space, I cannot understand why your paper would not choose to support a venture, which to its credit achieved significant success on the night. Events of this kind have the potential of filling a void in our community, but community support is needed to ensure growth and continued success.

Boaz Herszfeld
Caulfield

CONGRATULATIONS to the organisers of the Young UIA function, not only for presenting a flawless evening to some 600 guests, but on your extraordinary fundraising results.

Odette Edelstein
East St Kilda

Hungary's Holocaust gift

I PROTEST strongly against the letter by John Ziltzer (AJN 31/3). Mr Ziltzer denigrated a valuable gift from the Hungarian government, denigrated their attempted reconciliation and expressions of shame at the Holocaust and, worst of all, denigrated the attempts by several Holocaust survivors to remind us and our children of those terrible days.

It is a great pity that a person can attend a function and hear only what he wants to hear.

At the Holocaust Centre, the Hungarian government's representative of today, not that of the 1943 government, spoke of his regret at the destruction of the Hungarian Jewish population. He pointed out that the present Hungarian government was helping the Jewish community with rehabilitation and restitution and that the Jewish community was now not only fully accepted, but thriving. The present Budapest government is trying to make up not only for the excesses of World War II, but also for the repressions under the Communist regime.

The guest speaker, a Holocaust

survivor, gave several case histories of other survivors as well as her own. The role of the Hungarian fascists was not "whitewashed".

The Holocaust Museum president, Bono Wiener, a most respected Auschwitz survivor, outlined the history of the Hungarian Jewish community and explained that it was not until 1944 when the German army invaded Hungary and deposed Admiral Horthy that the new government legitimised the fascist Arrow Cross who showed that they could "out-German the Germans" in the brutality of their antisemitism.

A European government has made an unsolicited donation of photos and documents to our Holocaust Museum, photos and documents that have only one purpose, to keep alive the memory of our slaughtered families (mine included). We should accept this donation gratefully and at face value. It should not become a forum to attack those who give their time and energies so that the world will remember.

Michael Balint
Cheltenham

Lesbians are family, too

I WRITE in response to Tuvya Rosengarten's letter (AJN 31/3). Tuvya states that Concert in the Park is a family event, where Jewish lesbians have no place. Perhaps he does not understand that lesbians are part of family. We are daughters, sisters, aunts, mothers and even bubbles.

My partner and I (both nice Jewish lesbians) attended the Concert with my mother, father, sister, brother-in-law, niece and nephew, all of whom would have been most offended at the suggestion that I should not have been there. Had Tuvya approached the stall at the Concert, he may even have met two members of our group, a mother and her adult daughter, both of whom are lesbians.

Tuvya states in his letter that lesbians do not have to be accepted by the community. The reality is, that lesbians are extremely active in all areas of Jewish communal life. Indeed, we work in every Jewish organisation in Melbourne, making an invaluable contribution to the community. We are vital members of this community, not some "fringe group".

It would be a great loss to the Jewish community if all lesbians were to withdraw our creative input and energy until we are accepted. Lesbians' contributions to the community are often invisible, or

unrecognised, for it is rare that we are able to "come out" in public. As one of the founding members of the Jewish Lesbian Group, (from which I shep naches), it was painful to have to decide not to staff the Jewish Lesbian stall at the Concert, because of the prominent position I hold in the Jewish community.

I find having to hide my lesbianism in the Jewish community as painful as if I were forced to hide my Jewishness in the non-Jewish community. I should be able to express my identity with pride.

Tuvya states that we have other forums to convey our message. I understood "In One Voice" to be a celebration of the diversity of Jewish life in Melbourne. Jewish lesbians are a vital part of that rich fabric. As such, our presence at the Concert was extremely appropriate. But if Tuvya wishes to suggest additional venues for our group, I would be most happy to hear them.

Hidden but Hopeful,
Caulfield
(name supplied but withheld on request)

MORE LETTERS p50

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