

Speaking up for refugees

THANK you for referring to my comments at the last JCCV meeting regarding "boat people" (AJN 5/5). Unfortunately what I said either was not expressed clearly enough or was misunderstood.

The Australian public has the perception fostered by the media that Australia is subjected to a massive invasion of "boat people" — that is illegal queue jumpers who arrive uninvited, are a drain on the economy and a threat to the "Australian" way of life.

But the statistics from our own government do not support these myths.

The question for the Jewish community is where we stand on the

government's draconian legislation, supported by the Opposition, that will now subject all "boat people" to deportation (except if the Minister of Immigration exercises his discretion.)

The statistics clearly reveal that a large number of "boat people" arriving in the last five years are "bona fide" refugees as defined by the United Nations Conventions.

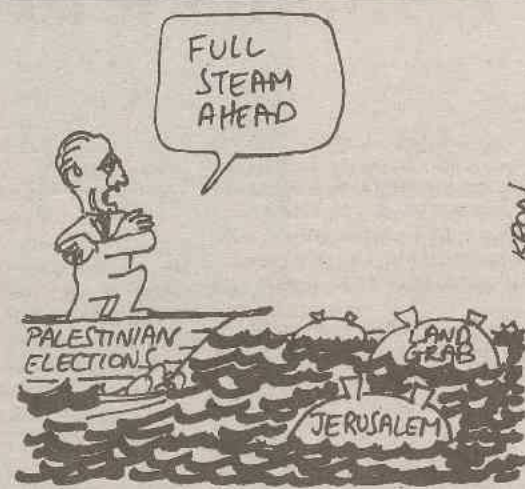
It is simply not good enough, therefore for us, the remnants of the Shoah, to stand by idly and not to protest vigorously against legislation that can result in refugees being returned to countries that they have fled, knowing that their lives and welfare are at risk.

We seek the general public's support for racial vilification legislation. If we are to retain the moral high ground as a community we must act consistently.

Our leadership should therefore pursue immediate changes to the legislation so that every person arriving in Australia should at least have the opportunity to be fairly adjudicated before being subjected to deportation. Surely the price of administration of justice in a proper manner is not too great when measured against the value of an individual's life.

Joe Krycer
South Caulfield

KRON'S VIEW



Never again, again

IN AUSTRALIA, as well as in other parts of the world, Holocaust Museums and exhibitions exist to inform the public about genocide, perpetrated against our people by the Nazis. It is assumed that those who visit will be so deeply moved that they will resolutely determine "never again."

The slogan "never again" came into being after World War I, and after World II the United Nations declared that "never again" must we tolerate the scourge of war. Since then, there has been a total of 150 wars (including civil wars) resulting in the death of over 20 million people.

As war museums, exhibitions and books showing the futility of war have had little impact, why do we assume that teaching the Holocaust will prevent it from happening again to Jews and other people?

I am not proposing that we abandon the teaching of the Holocaust. But the former Chief Rabbi Lord Jakobovits warned us against "nurturing and breeding a Holocaust mentality of morose despondency among our people, especially our youth".

When presenting Jewish history, especially to children, persecution should not

be the dominating theme. Greater emphasis should be placed on our magnificent contribution to civilisation in medicine, music, literature, art and science and, of course, through our Talmud.

We must never forget the victims of the Holocaust. But our ancestors set limits to honouring and remembering the martyrs. They gave priority to life over death.

As an ex-serviceman of the British Army, I will never forget those of my comrades who fought and lost their lives. I believe, however, that most of the living ex-servicemen, whilst never forgetting, are prepared to forgive the Germans, particularly the new generation of Germans born after the war. Finally, there is a more urgent task. John Keegan, the *London Daily Telegraph* defence editor, has warned that extremism — in religion, nationalism or crazy politics — threatens a dark world of disorder and savagery, dominated by the cruel and the fanatical. We need to concentrate more on securing the future rather than on being too obsessed about the past.

Eric Briskman
Ormond

Carn the mighty mergers

POOR Graeme Samuel. His recommendations for mergers between AFL clubs have been greeted by the football clubs with the same enthusiasm as the Jewish schools had for his merger proposals between the schools. As JCCV Commissioner for the Future and AFL Commissioner, Graeme has struck out twice with the same formula.

Perhaps third time lucky. Maybe he should now suggest mergers between the AFL clubs and the Jewish schools. Such mergers would result in our schools obtaining greatly needed sporting facilities and our footballers obtaining greatly needed education.

Think of the possibilities!

— The school that merged with Fitzroy would be renamed "The Lions of Judah".

— The Adass Israel with their white shirts and long black coats are an obvious choice to merge with Collingwood. They would be called the Kasher Pies (under strict supervision).

— The Bialik Bombers and the Temple Tigers have a certain resonance, whilst for our saintly ladies of Beth Rivkah, the choice is clear.

— Yavneh with its affiliations with the National Religious Party would be good candidates for the Yavneh Hawks.

In deference to this community's geographic roots and my own personal bias, I would insist on a Yeshivah-Carlton merger. Can you imagine the power of a Groner-Parkin combination at half-time (on Sundays only)?

There would only need to be a few changes to really effect the merger. On Shabbos morning the prayer for the Royal Family would begin "May he who giveth salvation unto Kings and dominion unto Princes Park!" (Optus Oval doesn't fit in too well). The Musaf Prayer would still begin with Yekum Purkan, liberally ("small 'l'") read as Yakum Parkin — "Let Parkin stand up".

For their part, Carlton's Kernahan could shorten his name to Kohan and for obvious reasons in a Yeshivah merger Sexton and Christou would also change their names.

The only problem I can foresee is, that a merger between the Jewish schools and the football clubs would inevitably start a public outcry to "Give Back the West Coast."

Anyway, Graeme keep punching or *paynikin* (Yiddish for "make them suffer").

Hersh Cooper
East St Kilda

EUTHANASIA

I WISH to correct two points in the AJN's presentation of the Halachic view on euthanasia, as I attempted to state it at the recent panel discussion. (AJN 12/5).

It is true that the Halachah prohibits active euthanasia on the grounds of the sanctity of life, which stems from the "little bit" of the Creator in the soul. But it does not follow that "killing someone was like killing" the Creator, for both the soul and its Creator are eternal and indestructible. It should also be pointed out that Torah teaches that not only the soul, but also the body, is the possession of its Creator, and one is not free to do what one wants with it.

At the same time Torah permits a passive euthanasia. But here specif-

ic conditions apply. According to Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, a person in the last months of an ostensibly incurable, terminal illness has the choice to refuse drugs which can only prolong life in pain without any outlook of cure. If, however, the prolongation of life could mean consultation and treatment by a greater, or even another, doctor who may be successful, the life-prolonging treatment is to be applied.

A private discussion to explore the Halachic perspective on euthanasia has been arranged for Wednesday evening, May 24. Those interested are welcome to contact me on 9522-8222.

Rabbi Shimon Cowen
Kollel Menachem Lubavitch

HOMOSEXUALS

I AM writing with concern for our society at large and in particular for those Jewish men and women who have accepted the values of the broader community.

The words "rights", "democracy", "compassion", "freedom of choice" all strike a chord of "yes" within us. They have a soothing, almost hypnotic ring to them.

The issue of homosexuality is already a fait accompli. But let us examine what has been achieved. A minority group with an abnormal sexual preference has grown into a much larger group due to the validation of its stance by society.

One outcome of the wide acceptance of homosexuality has been not only the increase in the incidence of AIDS amongst homosexuals, but its spread throughout society. Hospitals, doctors and dentists have changed their practices to deal with the AIDS threat, as I discovered recently when I was in hospital having a baby. Rigorous checking of identification of mothers and babies and other preventive nursing measures highlighted the dangers.

One of the bases of public policy is that the only reason to limit someone's freedom of choice is if it will harm another. (J S Mill in *On Liberty*). This argument was used in the debate on homosexuality. The result has been that society has accepted that consenting adults should have the freedom to choose their partners and sexual preference.

But as we now know, it is not only the consenting partners who are at risk, but the whole society. Surely we should re-examine the rationale allowing infectious disease of any nature to proliferate to such an extent.

We should indeed be compassionate towards homosexuals. But we need to extend education and healing. Perhaps those who have chosen the homosexual lifestyle should re-consider whether the benefits of it are so great and worth the risks. Whatever facilities necessary should be provided to assist them to return to the mainstream with dignity so that they may, in the Jewish tradition, choose life and not its opposite.

Miriam Gallo
East St Kilda

HAVING BEEN on the outskirts of the debate on gays and lesbians in the AJN, I now feel pressed to use my voice.

The concept of "In One Voice" speaks to me of a community united, not divided. Apparently I am wrong. Certain opinions seem to say that it is only for certain Jews.

Unless 12 years of Jewish education have failed me, I seem to recall that part of being a good Jew is being a good person, and that as well as our duties to God, we also have duties to our fellow humans.

Tolerance does not come with a "get back in the closet" attitude. We cannot teach people that as Jews they have a voice and must use it to counter prejudice, but as homosexual Jews, they must be silent.

To hide the existence of homosexuality from our children will prevent them from learning their duty to accept other people, and especially other Jews. To assume a person will become gay merely because they are exposed to it is to ridicule the complexity of emotions involved in one's sexuality.

Lesbianism may have as little to do with expressing one's Jewish identity as displaying artwork done by various community members. The point is not how they are Jewish but that they are Jewish.

Sharon Offenberger
Lower Templestowe

EVA BUGALSKI (AJN 28/4) asks how sexual preference relates to one's Jewishness. As an outsider (I am not a Jew but I am a lesbian) who attended Concert in the Park, it is clear to me that any minority group has to be proud and visible to be recognised and acknowledged. With such a high attendance the concert was an excellent way to show that lesbians are part of the community.

The assumption is that people are heterosexual. If it were the other way around would Ms Bugalski not want to clarify her identity? If she were assumed to be a Christian, would she not want to have her real identity known?

The Jewish women at the stall identify as lesbians. It is their human right to do so in whichever public arena they wish. It is denigrating to list types of behaviour such as wife-swapping and masochism as akin to lesbianism.

AJN readers are surely aware that

gays as well as Jews were put to death by Nazi Germany. All minorities need to unite to fight oppression.

Vickie McKenzie
Fairfield

THE SPATE of letters in your paper over the tiny and almost invisible Jewish Lesbians' presence at the recent Concert in the Park demonstrates how profound are the divisions in this Jewish community on basic cultural and social rights for a minority within its own midst.

The fear of people who are different shows that the issue of sexuality is one over which it is all too easy to resort to prejudice and exaggeration.

The Society for Humanistic Judaism (USA) in its *Guide to Humanistic Judaism* (1993) states that "sexual behaviour is a private matter and that all persons, regardless of sexual orientation, possess the right and deserve the freedom to live their own lives, provided they do not harm any other person or the welfare of the community. Gays and lesbians have the right to the dignity accorded to all human beings."

I hope that those in the community who identify with other Jewish traditions are prepared openly to support such a statement in order to oppose the religious and cultural bigotry being promoted in recent correspondence.

Larry Stillman
St Kilda

This correspondence is now closed. The Editor.

CORRECTION

IN THE letter from Sue Pamplin last week (AJN 12/5) the reference to "their current and future property" should have read "their current and future progeny." We regret the error.

LETTERS' POLICY

WE welcome letters to the editor. But we give preference to short letters of no more than 300 words. Letters may be cut for length, or edited for style and clarity. We only consider letters which include the sender's street address, day contact phone number, and full first name (not an initial) and surname. In common with standard newspaper practice we do not advise writers whose letters are not published.

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