



# BRIEFING POLITICIANS



SCOJeC representatives have met senior members of Government and other political parties to discuss a wide range of matters of concern to the Community.

Iain Gray, the Labour Leader, met us in his office at the Scottish Parliament, together with Ken Macintosh MSP, whose constituency in East

Renfrewshire has the largest Jewish population in Scotland. The local authority also has close links with the Community, and we talked about the outstanding work that communal organisations do, particularly in the fields of education and welfare.

Like Michael Moore MP, the new Secretary of State for Scotland, he was particularly interested in our outreach project, and events such as last year's Kosher Ceilidh. Both were moved to hear how we have often been able to connect people,

particularly in rural Scotland, who had lived nearby for many years without being aware of each other's existence.

On a more negative note, both politicians asked about antisemitism in Scotland. We told them that the number of reported incidents is thankfully relatively low, but there has been a disturbing increase in the last two years. The authorities recognise that it still contributes to people's sense of insecurity, even if it is because victims are more ready to report incidents, rather than because more have taken place. We were also able to update Michael Moore about the case of the Scotsman blogger, Mohammed Sandia, who had appeared in Edinburgh Sheriff Court only the previous day (see p.1).

Having had a foreign affairs portfolio when in opposition, Michael Moore was particularly interested to hear about the JPR report that we reported in the last issue on the range of views within the Community about the Middle East.

CLOCKWISE: SCOJeC REPRESENTATIVES EPHRAIM BOROWSKI AND LEAH GRANAT WITH SCOTTISH LABOUR LEADER IAIN GRAY AND KEN MACINTOSH MSP; DR MINI MISHRA, LINDA COCKBURN, AND THE SOLICITOR GENERAL, FRANK MULHOLLAND QC; MICHAEL MOORE MP, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND

Both meetings touched on concerns about the wording of the religion question in the 2011 census, which will ask what faith people belong to, rather than (as in the English census) what their faith is. In areas where there is no formal community, minority faiths could become invisible, and vulnerable individuals even more isolated.

The Secretary of State was interested in the difficulties that double summer time would cause for orthodox Jews. He assured us of his opposition to this proposal, saying that he remembered going to school in the dark during the last experiment, and that he had invited the proponents of the measure to spend their winter in the north of Scotland!

We also met the Solicitor General, Frank Mulholland QC, primarily to continue discussions about the use of non-surgical post mortem. He assured us that Crown Office are aware of their obligations to bereaved families, and they are preparing guidance for Procurators Fiscal and pathologists to remind them of this. Finally, Leah Granat, our Public Affairs Officer, attended the First Minister's reception at Edinburgh Castle to mark the 450th anniversary of the Reformation and held a meeting with Struan Stevenson MEP (see p.6).

To find out more about all of these meetings see <http://www.scojec.org/news/news.html>

## Do you know who you are?

A demographic and genealogical study may be coming your way!

The Jewish community of Scotland is predominantly of Lithuanian origin, with some minor adjuncts, such as an influx of some Sephardi merchants in the mid-19th century and the arrival of a number of German Jews after the Second World War. There was a clear trend of related families coming to Scotland within a comparatively short period at the turn of the 20th century, and this makes it easier to trace these families back to their East European roots and to identify the routes by which they came here.

Now the International Institute for Jewish Genealogy in Jerusalem, headed by Glasgow-born Dr. Neville LAMDAN, has proposed a comprehensive survey of the demographic and genealogical history of the Jewish community in Scotland, from its origins in the late 18th century, through its development in the 20th century, until its slow decline in recent decades. It would utilise, among other things, the extensive data and resources collected over the past twenty-five years by the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre and its associated researchers, which include a Historical Database of over 34,600 Scottish Jews and an Oral History Archive.

The study would bring to throw demographic light how many of the immigrants came direct to Scotland, how many came migrated from other places within in the British Isles and how many came with the intention of moving on elsewhere. It would also examine the dispersal and settlement patterns of those who stayed. From the 1950's, there was renewed outward migration for various reasons, The survey is likely to show that the Scottish-Jewish diaspora is as widely dispersed as the non-Jewish Scottish diaspora throughout the world. The genealogical part of the survey would focus on the family connections between them, as well as the kinship ties that gradually developed between Scotland's Jews themselves and with their co-religionists in other centres in the British Isles (and beyond).

Glasgow, being the largest community, would be the starting point of the survey. Since the development of its institutions is well-documented, the study would look at the elite groups, such as communal leadership, business dynasties, religious leadership, secular scholars, and the like, who were the main driving forces behind the emergence of this

ramified institutional structure. Yet another focus for research would be the integration of Jews into the wider community, whilst seeking to maintain a separate Jewish identity. Later, the survey would be extended to cover the whole of Scottish Jewry, from Edinburgh to towns such as Falkirk, Dundee, and Aberdeen, and to far-flung places - Oban and Lerwick, for example.

The outcome of the research would be unique - the first countrywide demographical and genealogical study of a self-standing Jewish community of some import. Concentration on the Scottish community has advantages because it is bounded by a reasonable period of time, the numbers are manageable and most people's origins are traceable. As a testimony to Scottish Jewry, the study would bring together and hugely advance the pioneering work already done in this field. Moreover, it could also serve as a pilot study for a much more ambitious study of a similar nature that is being contemplated of the whole of British Jewry.

DR NEVILLE LAMDAN