

Israel's Economic Year

BY JERRY CHESLOW

Whereas one hundred percent inflation would be considered an economic tragedy in most Western countries, for Yigal Hurwitz and Yoram Aridor, the two finance ministers who ran the Israeli treasury over the past year, it was an unattainable goal.

The year 5741 came in with a world oil price shock and adverse trade conditions, which posed a serious threat to the country's balance of payments. Israel imports 40 percent of her resources as well as all of her fuel since the return of Egypt's Sinai oilfields. These problems, compounded by an annual inflation rate of 120 percent, led finance minister Yigal Hurwitz to implement a tough austerity program claiming that Israel's economic problems stemmed from the fact that the country as a whole spent more than it earned.

Accordingly, he slashed subsidies on basic commodities, initiating weekly and sometimes daily rises in the prices of essential food items. The gross national product, which had been growing by ten percent a year, was reduced to almost zero growth by the end of 1980.

For the first time since 1967 there were pockets of unemployment, a five percent reduction in real wages, and a seven percent drop in private consumption in the first half of 5741. At the same time defence imports grew by 20 percent, mainly due to the redeployment of the army under the peace treaty with Egypt. This drove the balance of payments deficit up by 250 million dollars, even though the civilian deficit decreased by 200 million. The drop was in spite of a 700 million dollar rise in the price of imported oil, making Israel one of the few countries which successfully absorbed those price hikes.

The Hurwitz policy, which included severe cuts in public services, ran into stiff opposition from various other cabinet ministers, including David Levy, who reportedly said life in Israel was "turning into a hell." There was talk of a record number of Israelis emigrating. Labor unrest was widespread with numerous strikes in the public sector. One of them, by the teachers, eventually led to Hurwitz's resignation. Other ministers backed the educators'

demand for the implementation of the findings of the government's Etzioni commission on the status of the teacher. This included increases in wages and benefits for the teachers. Hurwitz, claiming that there was no money in the state coffer to cover this, regarded this affair as the last straw, and left the Government and the treasury.

It was against this atmosphere of gloom and doom that Yoram Aridor took over the finance portfolio, with the economy in what is called a cost inflation: the prices of raw materials cost more, driving up the price of finished goods and services. This was coupled with massive public buying to offset price hikes, another factor in the spiralling inflation.

To restore confidence in the economy, Aridor brought down the prices of some durable goods such as televisions, cars and refrigerators, by reducing purchase tax. In spite of the rapidly devaluing Israeli shekel, he kept the prices of most essential foods down by compensating with an increase in subsidies.

Indeed, in the first 6 months of 1981 the balance of payments deficit soared by 600 million dollars, private consumption jumped by 12 percent and the government printed 70 percent of the money it had planned to put in circulation in the entire year. Investment in industry dropped by 25 percent and exports were down by 10 percent. All of these according to Aridor, were the price Israel had to pay for curbing economic enemy number one, inflation.

How did all this affect the average Israeli? Although the shekel is worth less than half what it was last Rosh Hashana and inflation is still well over one hundred percent, average wages grew by more than the rise in the COL index. Israelis, who during the Hurwitz era appeared to be groaning under the yoke of the economic sacrifices demanded of them, somehow found the money to buy tens of thousands of color televisions and thousands of new cars, when the purchase tax was reduced. And half a million Israelis travelled abroad during the past year.

The Feminist Year

BY HADASSAH BAT HAIM

From the 18 feminist groups in Israel and a large number of unaffiliated people more than six hundred women took part this year in the Fourth Annual Congress of Feminists in Israel. There was much feeling of support and encouragement and people got a great refreshment of spirit, which reinforced their determination to carry on the feminist struggle.

Besides most of the problems that beset women in other countries Israeli women have additional difficulties stemming from the particular kind of society they live in. One delegate described it as a secular state which is nevertheless largely influenced by ultra orthodox minorities to whom the status of women is determined for eternity by Jewish Law. The Labor Party, Israel's largest political party, is formally dedicated to the principles of equal rights but when in power was unwilling to enforce them. The Kibbutzim, once the proud upholders of the liberation of women from the kitchen, are now accused by some feminists of tending to relegate most of their female members to services and child rearing.

More than half Israeli citizens come from Near East and North African countries where women are lucky if they are pampered at home. In many of these countries slavery is still rife. Polygamy is legal. Education for poor people is minimal and if they are women, less than that. The Jewish State, while outlawing slavery, child marriage and polygamy, nevertheless excludes women from holding religious office and from being counted in a minyan.

The Congress brought together large numbers of immigrants from the sophisticated technologies of the West who admitted they found communication difficult with their sisters from more primitive backgrounds. The daughters of the first untried female immigrants are relatively free in most aspects of their life. They go to school, to the army and to work. They are better equipped to withstand families pressures regarding marriages and education but they are still a long way from understanding their secondary roles in a male dominated society.

There was complete accord in the resolutions to press for equal pay, for equal job opportunities especially in the armed forces and the police. National service in one or the other is compulsory for everyone, but too many women serve in kitchens and services. Non-orthodox women also agreed to pressure the established religious bodies for a more active part in worship. Though not a high priority for everyone it was obviously important to those who brought it up.

Heavily supported by all delegates was the call to expand and improve the women's shelters. That wives and children are beaten and abused is not easily acceptable to the general public but these abuses not only exist but are increasing. About 80% of the women coming to these refuges are precisely those of the uneducated tradition-ridden women who have never been reached before.

It is there they begin to perceive their dignity and worth to themselves as well as to the community. There, liberation begins to have a meaning. But the real problem of the Israeli feminists is how to reach the average Israeli woman - underprivileged as a person and oppressed as a woman in her daily life and work.



VIDEO

SILVER STATE

RENTALS
MEMBERSHIPS • SALES

Rental Club
LIFETIME
MEMBERSHIP
FEE.....\$25

RENTALS AS LOW
AS \$3.00 PER TAPE

3 FREE
RENTAL TAPES
WITH RENTAL
MEMBERSHIP
CLUB

LOW MONTHLY
MEMBERSHIP PLANS

WIDE SELECTION

- ★ CURRENT RELEASES ★ CLASSICS
- ★ MAJOR MOVIES ★ CONCERTS
- ★ KIDS FILMS ★ SPORTS ★ ADULT
- ★ PLUS MORE

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK

Monday Thru Saturday 9:00 A.M.-9:00 P.M.
Sunday 10:00 A.M.-7:00 P.M.

1907 N. DECATUR BLVD.
DECATUR-LAKEMEAD
SHOPPING CNTR

646-1660

HAPPY NEW YEAR



ALTA - HIGHLAND
Dry Cleaning & Laundry

ALTERATIONS & TAILORING
513 So. HIGHLAND

DOTTIE / MARTHA
TELE. 384-3726



Larkin

PLUMBING

24 HOUR SERVICE & REPAIR

SAME HOURLY RATE 7 DAYS A WEEK

382-2410

LARKIN GIVES YOU THE BEST WITH CASH PURCHASE



PLAN A WEDDING OVERNIGHT

500 WEDDING GOWNS IN STOCK

MELAIRE offers you fall and winter merchandise arriving daily as featured in National Ads Bridal Service Gifts Portraits by infinite images and

The most beautiful selection of formals from \$45 to \$200

Sizes 3-20 in stock
We order to size 44 in bridal gowns & formals
We manufacture our own beautiful bridal hats, mantillas and veils

Tall girls note, we order extra lengths
Childrens Party Frocks sizes 3-14
Festive Holiday Gowns arriving Daily

OUR TUX DEPARTMENT features PALMBEACH and AFTER SIX Both Rentals & Sales


BRIDAL & FORMAL SHOP
 1131 E. TROPICANA
 University Plaza
 736-2867
 Established for 18 Years

If Your Business Cannot Afford To Advertise, Then Advertise It For Sale In The LAS VEGAS ISRAELITE!

OUR ADS
PAY OFF
FOR RATES

CALL
876-1255