

## CONGRESS AND THE SWIG LEGACY

Whether your candidate won or not, there's some heartening information about Congress and Israel - and it has much to do with Ben Swig.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) interviewed congressional candidates, as it does every election time. In 1978, 93 per cent of the congressional candidates believed that American strategic and economic interests required a strong and secure Israel. This time around, 99 per cent of the candidates so believe.

Even more significantly, more than 98 per cent of the candidates today want to send Israel the military and economic assistance necessary for its defense and economy. That is higher than it has been in the past. And it is about 24 points higher than the percentage who support foreign aid in general.

Only 2 per cent of the congressional candidates support Arab demands for Israel's return to its pre-1967 borders. Only 7 per cent favor an "independent Palestinian state." And only 2 per cent believe that the PLO should be involved in the peace negotiations. Those figures have never been so low.

So much for Arab propaganda; not that we can sit back and take it easy. We have to continue doing whatever we have been doing, to assist the logic of world events--and even more intensely as the anti-Israel offensive from some quarters becomes more intense. But right now, whatever happens in the Oval Office, Israel has critical support in the Congress.

Ben Swig was probably more responsible for that important fact than any other single person in San Francisco. To begin with, he understood better than most that Israel's security depended on the political activity of those Americans who

support Israel. And he was personally active in countless political campaigns across the country.

But he also understood that something more than personal political activity was needed. He understood the importance of *communal* activity. Two men started AIPAC in this area, almost 30 years ago. One was Ben Swig, the other Dan Koshland. We lost Dan Koshland earlier this year. Now we have lost Ben Swig. But the many creations in which he was involved, not the least of which was AIPAC, will endure.

AIPAC is one of the reasons that there is so much support in Congress for Israel. It is a non-tax-exempt lobbying organization, operating mainly on the Congressional hill. Over the years it has worked daily with Congressmen to persuade them of Israel's importance for American national interest.

Ben Swig was not only a founder of AIPAC nationally; he helped create AIPAC's first regional organization: the Northern California chapter of AIPAC. He understood that attention needed to be paid Congressmen on their home base, if the AIPAC work in Washington was to be most fruitful. So, the Jewish communities of Northern California have been in systematic communication with the 17 Congressmen of Northern California. And the voting record of the Northern California Congressional delegation, on Israel, has consistently been much better than that of the Southern California or national delegations.

Ben Swig also understood that, aside from its other purposes, a strong Jewish Welfare Federation, as the evidence of a strong Jewish community, was a matter of political significance.

Earl Raab  
"Congress and the Swig Legacy"  
page 3

And, having lived through them, Ben Swig comprehended the failures of the Jewish community in the 1930s. With his legendary generosity, he supported most of the Jewish organizations in town. He knew the value of pluralism. But he insisted that when these various Jewish organizations engage in public affairs activity -- say, with Congressmen -- they do so not singly, but *together*, as a *community*. He knew that organizational cupidity could wreck Jewish effectiveness, and endanger Jewish lives as it had once before.

As a person, as a great Jewish heart, Ben Swig is irreplaceable. But his sense of community and political wisdom can live on in the communal habits he helped to inculcate, and in the institutions he helped to create. Political astuteness and communal strength -- through AIPAC and the Jewish Welfare Federation -- are part of Ben's legacy to this Jewish community. So he did not leave us alone. We will be leaning heavily on that <sup>personal</sup> legacy -- and, if we are smart -- building on it, in the fateful years ahead.