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Are We Marching toward Peace?, 1924.

"ARE WE MARCHING TOWARD PEACE?"

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER.

THE TEMPLE, SUNDAY MORNING,

MAY 11, 1924, CLEVELAND, O.

WRHS

AMERICAN JEWISH
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JOSEPH T. KRAUS
Shorthand
Reporter
CLEVELAND

This day is Good Will Day throughout this land, and in our own community thousands of women will march for peace. This day and this event thrust some thoughts to the fore. I regard it as highly significant--and of course as highly commendable--that the women of our city, and of other cities, are organizing for peace and are demonstrating for peace. That augurs well for the cause of peace. If the women of this land will show the same amount of determination, the same amount of resolution, the same amount of earnestness in behalf of peace as they display in behalf of, say, their suffrage, peace will come appreciably nearer to realization. If they gained suffrage, if they gained political equality without the aid of the men folks, they might even gain peace without the aid of the men folks.

I know of no cause that should command the interest and concern of womanhood more than the cause of peace. They are, to my mind, more spiritually alert, more sensitized to the higher social values and the higher ethical values; they are nearer to the mainsprings of life; they nurture life and care for life and preserve life, and the ultimate tragedies of the battlefield are brought home and find their final lodging place in the heart of yearning motherhood.

So that I regard it as particularly the province of womanhood to work for peace. Man sought his

glory from time immemorial on the battlefield, in competitive enterprise. Man has always been the hunter and the warrior, and has always delighted in the pomp and show and circumstance of war; he has always been moved and thrilled by the rattling of the bows in his quiver. But the heroes of womanhood are very seldom the Amazons, and even the Joan of Arc. The heroes of womanhood, from time beyond reckoning, were humble, consecrated souls, who built home and protected life and pursued the sacred arts of peace. So that by tradition and history woman is closer to peace than man is. But largely because woman has confined her sphere until comparatively recent times to the home. She was easily misled, as far as war is concerned. Woman is easily attracted by the pomp and circumstance of war, and warriors and heroes of the battlefield have a certain glamour about them and a certain fascination about them which intrigue and tantalize the imagination, more so of women folks than of men folks. And not only that, but being further removed from the sources of accurate information, being removed from the scene of action, as woman was at all times, not knowing the machinations behind a political situation which leads to war, she was easily victimized by propagandists, by war breeders, at all times. No one is so easily persuaded by rumor, by lying propaganda of war breeders, by the most preposterous stories of conspiracies and cruelties in warfare, and all the program and content of imperialistic propaganda, as woman is.

And so it is most desirable that woman today is organizing to educate womanhood, to train the women of this land and of other lands to think critically as regards international problems, to be able to sift the true from the false, the fact from the rumor; to educate women into what is patriotism and what is chauvinism, what is loyalty to principles and what is loyalty to prejudice. And that is a desperately needed task today.

But there are some other thoughts that come to our mind as we think of this peace day and peace parade, not the least of which is this: that woman ought not to dissipate her energies. Peace is no longer a question of sentimentalism, of unbridled and unrestrained emotionalism. Every man you meet, if he is right-minded, is in favor of peace. Even the war profiteer and the munition manufacturer, if you ask him about the general thesis of international peace, will be glad to subscribe to it. But by means of an expression, an unfocused, undirected desire and longing for peace, peace will never be attained.

Peace is not a namby-pamby sentimentality which can be brought about by just yearning for it. Peace is the most difficult, the most involved, the most colossal task of this age, and it requires the application of the finest minds of mankind to work out the program for peace, the technique for peace, the manner and method whereby peace can be achieved; the agencies, the institutions. So that

when women are spending a tremendous amount of energy merely to demonstrate that they want peace, without pointing the way to some program, to some definite, specific enterprise which will bring peace just a little bit nearer, it is, to my mind, dissipating their very valuable energy. For that reason I was very lukewarm about this peace parade this afternoon. It was not focused, it was not directed at anything. If this parade had been synchronized with, say, some measure pending in Congress--the world court, or the convoking of another international assembly for the limitation of armament, and the women utilized that opportunity to bring the force of public opinion to bear upon Congress to pass this specific measure, then it would be highly commendable and highly worth while. As it is, the citizens of this city, the newspapers of this city, have sensed the futility of the enterprise, and have treated it rather lightly, airily, instead of treating it as they would have if it were driving at something very vital and immediate, quite seriously, quite liberally.²

It is highly important that the fine women who work for peace, here and elsewhere, conserve their spiritual energies. They dissipated a great deal of it this year; they dissipated a great deal of it in popularizing it the Bok peace plan, and in voting for, and in distributing ballots for it--a great enterprise, which from the very start would result in nothing of appreciable value.

The women of this city, and of America,

must make up their mind, first of all, what they want with reference to peace. Just what program have they in mind whereby peace can be brought a step nearer? And then they must organize politically to achieve that specific thing. If they want the United States to join the world court, let them make that the issue; if they want the United States at the present time to assemble another international conference to take up the question of limitation of air armament and undersea armament, let them make that a real issue, and then bring their splendid organization, their public opinion, to bear upon it. Let them make it part of the national platform of the two parties; let them pledge every senator and every congressman to that specific thing. Then they will be achieving something. That is exactly how the prohibition forces of America won. For years men talked about the desirability of driving the saloon out of existence; for years they even had a political party, which meant nothing, which did not get them anywhere, until they determined upon the very simple device of organizing politically in every precinct and in every community and in every state, and forcing the local and state and national parties to pledge themselves to their program, and shifting their organized unit to one party or to the other, as the one party or the other backed their program.

And that is the only way to achieve anything in a democracy, and that is what the women folks in America ought to do. The men who busy themselves stupidly

in the years to come in voting for the Republican party or the Democratic party, or the Democratic party or the Republican party, they will busy themselves with politics as though it means anything. Let the women folks, who are closer to life and to the real problems of life, who want to preserve and perfect and beautify human life,--let them take up this major problem of the twentieth century--Peace--and let them plan, deliberately, constructively, thoughtfully--let them plan, step by step, to carry it through.

Of course no one program that an organization of women will adopt will win universal approval; no program will be accepted by all. Woman suffrage was not accepted by all--not even by all the women. But you must make up your mind what you want, what you desire, what you think the American public will subscribe to--the minimum, if necessary, to do, and then see it through, carry it through, work for it. Let those who wish to oppose you, oppose you.

Now, I would not have you think for a moment that I underestimate the value of education for peace. I would by far rather see the women of Cleveland march for peace than march for war; I would much rather see them shout for peace than grow hysterical at the blare of the trumpet and the waving of martial banners. I believe in the education of the minds of men to want peace, to think in terms of international cooperation. I said some time ago that the Bible of the peace movement is the public school

primer; that education for peace should begin in the cradle and in the kindergarten and in the elementary school; that mankind needs today a broadening, a more embracing horizon; that the youth of America must be given a different kind of history to study; that in our educational program we must lay much more emphasis upon human interdependence instead of national self-sufficiency; upon economic interrelations instead of the economic dependency and self-dependency of a respective unit of the world. We must begin to stress in our public schools through precept and example the ideas of universalism of humanity. From such an education and such an educational and emotional content, there will spring in the years to come, inevitably, leagues of nations, international conferences and courts of arbitration, which will ultimately resolve in the ultimate agency for universal peace.

I believe in education, and I believe in this kind of public opinion; but this, too, is something very definite and something very specific. It has to do with text books, and it has to do with kinds of instruction; it is a definite program which educators can work out and effect and put into practice in the public schools and in the high schools of America. It is not merely marching for peace; it is not a vague thing.

I said a moment ago that I looked upon this parade as a rather futile thing. I did until a few days ago. I do not regard it as futile at all today; I

think it is a very vital thing today because of the opposition which has developed. I am generally in favor of anything the Chamber of Commerce in Cleveland opposes. I think the issue today is no longer whether it is practical for women to march today for peace or not; the issue today is whether marching for peace is in itself an act of disloyalty to America. That is the issue that has been thrust forward by the opposition of these bodies. Shall the man or the woman hereafter working for peace and marching for peace and speaking for peace be damned publicly as disloyal and unpatriotic? For that is clearly the implications of the resolutions adopted by the Legion and the Chamber of Commerce.

I say, if this parade today were to fail, if the women folks of Cleveland were to be intimidated and the parade had been called off, it would not alone have been a serious reflection upon the earnestness of the women in Cleveland who work for peace, but it would have been a most serious discouragement of peace efforts in our community in the years to come. I can readily understand an organization like the American Legion being opposed to a peace parade. I have never yet known a soldier's organization that did work for peace, that did care for peace, except the peace with armament, which means peace with competitive armament, which means war.

But for an august and reverential body like the Chamber of Commerce of Cleveland, representing

hundreds of thousands of level-headed business men in our community, to have yielded to such a mendacious bit of chicanery, is, to say the least, reprehensible. When I first read the resolutions of that body, I was staggered. I thought really that they must have discovered some very important documents which were unknown to the rank and file of the community, which led them to conclude that this parade was instigated by a group of international bolsheviks and pacifists and radicals. I assumed that no representative body would jump to conclusions without giving this thing a thorough investigation, a thorough analysis, and I waited for the presentation of this proof, and when the women's organization challenged the chamber to produce the proof, the Chamber of Commerce referred that body to a certain reserve officers association of Cleveland, which does not even exist in our directory and in our telephone book, and when this body or the president of this body was consulted and asked to produce the proof upon which the chamber based its resolution, the president confessed that they had no documents and no proofs, except that a certain fellow in Columbus, who was said to know and who ought to know, said something to them once upon a time, and they passed it on to the Chamber of Commerce. Now, I believe the women folks of Cleveland ought to be congratulated upon having made a laughing stock of that august, reverential body.

The issue today, as I see it, is a fundamental issue. Shall we be allowed to work for peace,

or shall we not? Shall our loyalty and our devotion to America come under suspicion just because we want to save this nation and mankind a repetition of the horror which came upon it during our ^{own} lifetime in the last few years? Is anything making for mutual confidence and mutual respect among nations to be condemned in this land? Are we to become so incrustrated, so narrow, so chauvinistic, so self-centered, so cheap, that we can no longer speak for the great ideals of mankind and work for them without being nagged at and denounced?

One of the most ridiculous statements in this controversy was the statement of this very chairman of this reserve officers association. He said, quite innocently, "Marching for peace, if it is at all effective, would lessen our national defence." In other words, he has no objection if our marching for peace is not effective, but as soon as our talking for peace and marching for peace becomes effective--as soon as we bring international peace a little nearer, then it is not desirable at all; it is to be denounced.

So that I think, this being the issue today, the women of Cleveland, all of them, ought to march--march for the glory of kingdom come; march and demonstrate that in this city, at least, the men and women mean to be free, and mean to speak courageously for the things which require courageous speaking and thinking. At no time was the world more ripe for a real effort for peace as it is

today. The world is still impressed with the tragedies of the last war; it is still too enfeebled and too weakened and too drained to think and plan another universal war; it is still impressed with the fact of the universal disaster, which no nation, victor or victim, escaped in the last war. It is ready at the present moment to consider peace. It may not be ten years from today when it will have been hardened and congealed again, and settled. And then the great powers abroad are today in the hands of governments which are favorable to peace. England today is in the control of a labor government, which is a pacifist government--and I use the word "pacifist" in the real sense of the word--a government seeking peace, resolving to strip itself of every means of self-defense. MacDonal refused to proceed with the militarization of Singapore in the last two months, that base in the Pacific which means very much for the militaristic policy of England; that Singapore base would protect the highways of trade which yearly carry five billion dollars worth of trade, would have protected the British possessions in the Pacific; and yet MacDonal, in order to vindicate his peace program, refused to proceed with the fortification of Singapore. Now, that is an indication that at least one government today is reasonably tractable with reference to peace.

One of the greatest, perhaps the greatest, menace of the peace of Europe has been cast into outer darkness by the recent elections of France, and the labor party

will be in control of France--a peace loving party. Russia wants peace; the great powers of Europe are ready to discuss the most feasible program for the present. We cannot hope to have a maximum peace program today, or this year, or this decade. Peace is not the problem of our own day, and will not be solved in our own day only; peace is a program for generations to come. Now, if the United States is earnest in its desire to serve the highest interest of mankind, if the United States really wants to retain or resume its moral leadership of the world, and point the way to international reconciliation, international good will, the United States ought to affirmatively and aggressively and forcibly present a program to the nations of the world.

WRHS I believe the United States should join the world court at once. The world court has been indorsed by both parties; the world court has had the sanction of the late President Harding, and of President Coolidge; the world court has the overwhelming sentiment of the American people back of it. It does not mean entanglement with foreign affairs; it is a voluntary act on our part to join a court of arbitration which will have a little more power than the Hague tribunal, which may, in the course of time, develop an international code of law, and by gaining the proper prestige and recognition will exert a great force to minimizing occasions of war.

I believe the United States should before very long summon another international conference for the

limitation of armaments. You recall that I said the Washington Conference failed at the time when most men thought it was a tremendous achievement. I said then that only those armaments were limited which were practically no longer of use in modern warfare; that the real instruments of war in the future--air, undersea and chemical warfare--that these things were not at all limited by the Washington Conference. And the nations of Europe, and our own nation, are quietly, vigorously, proceeding with a program of expansion of air armament, submarine armament and of chemical armament. Now, a supplementary conference should be convoked in the immediate future to limit that dangerous competition in armament which will bring about another war, and which will make that other war more destructive and more horrible and more life-consuming and civilization-ravaging than any war to this day.

I concluded my address a year or so ago on "Why the Washington Conference Failed" with the following words--and I can think of no others with which to conclude my address this morning. I said then:

"I think America came out of this conference perhaps the only nation that ought to come out with a sense of pride. I believe that America made an honest effort, just as it made an honest effort three years ago. I believe that in the main it has failed, but I do hope that our president, that our people, will continue to work for it, to urge it, to insist upon it. It is our duty

and our obligation and our especial privilege. America must lead the world. And what I say now to you men and women is not in terms of peroration or eulogy. It is a fundamental conviction of my life that the whole hope of the world, if we are not to fall into the brink of anarchy and barbarism-- that the whole hope of the world for reconciliation and mutual understanding and cooperation lies with America. We are the most powerful, we are the most prosperous nation in God's earth today; we have suffered least; we have no ancient grudges and no ancient antipathies, and we have been bitten least by the lust of imperialism. We have within these shores the whole world in microcosm, a makeup of all the races and all the peoples. We can understand the problems of the world, and we should in deep consecration of soul and mind devote ourselves in the generations to come--for it is the task of generations and not of today--to the supreme national policy of American life--peace! Perfect peace! Peace without armament; peace without navies; and peace without submarines, and peace without airplanes--just simple, Godly, healing peace among the peoples of the earth."

That is my vision for the days to come.

I do not believe that tomorrow we can or should have peace without armies and navies; I do not believe that America may or dare disarm without a concerted and uniform effort on the part of all other nations. That would be inviting aggression and inviting national suicide. But I do believe that we should, as we have in the past, constantly urge upon the

peoples of the world, mutually, concertedly, to limit their armaments to a minimum; to give more and more power to existing agencies which are courts of settlement and arbitration, for the difficult and perplexing problems of international relationship.

We ought to lead the world in a program of education of our youth, and through us of the youth of the world, to seek peace and to pursue it. That was the virtue of Aaron, which I read to you this morning from the sayings of the fathers--not only to seek peace but to pursue it. It is a tremendously difficult enterprise; it means thinking and planning and building; it means sacrificing; it means suffering; it means a reorganization of our thinking; it means a sloughing off of our ancient prejudices and of our ancient likes and dislikes; it means thinking ourselves into a new world point of view.

That is our problem today; and if this peace parade this afternoon will help the men and the women of our community in the days to come, inspire them to identify themselves with some one specific, pacific, peace-making effort, and work for it and slave for it and suffer for it, then it will not have been in vain.

May God, who is the source of peace, the King of Peace, bless and prosper the earnest efforts of men and women everywhere who go out upon the highways of life seeking peace and pursuing it.

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