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A new President - a new outlook, 1929.

"A NEW PRESIDENT---A NEW OUTLOOK."

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER.

THE TEMPLE, SUNDAY MORNING,

MARCH 3, 1929, CLEVELAND, O.



Tomorrow the thirty-first President of the United States will be inaugurated amidst fitting ceremonial solemnity. To me there is always something very heroic and inspiring in the spectacle of a great democracy of 110,000,000 of human beings elevating to office a man of its own choice, who will during the term of his office be in possession of greater power than that possessed by any man on the face of the earth, but possessed of a power not usurped or autocratic but a delegated power, a power placed on consent.

It is the crown and symbol of democracy. This office of President has endured now for 140 years. It has weathered every conceivable storm, foreign wars and civil wars. It has endured even though all things have changed; from a small country of thirteen states on the seaboard this land has expanded during these 140 years until it has covered the continent; from a small people of some three millions it has increased until it is today the greatest democracy in the world.

One really does not realize the magnitude of this country, its sheer physical extent, until one has had an opportunity to cover this continent, as I have had in the last few weeks. This has been my second transcontinental trip. One is startled by the sheer size of this country. It is really not a country; it is a continent. When you

can travel some thirty hours in a straight line on a train moving thirty or forty miles an hour, and never get out of one state, you get a mental picture of the vastness of this empire. And yet the same office which held good when this country was a narrow strip along the Atlantic, still holds good without any change whatsoever in this vast land which it has now become. There must be something very resilient, something very wholesome and abiding in the structure of this democracy to have made possible this extension without a break, this extension without a snapping.

I say, therefore, to me the inauguration of a new President is an heroic symbol of the strength and quality of this democracy of ours. To be sure, the whole American people wishes the new President, Mr. Herbert Hoover, well, prayerfully wishes him well. All men and women, quite regardless of their party affiliation, pray for his health and success in the great office which has been placed upon his shoulders, for it is a hard and exacting office, that of the President of the United States. Many a man has broken under the weight of that tremendous responsibility. You see, the scope of that office was defined 140 years ago when this country was small, and his duties have not been circumscribed or delimited in any essential regard during this almost century and a half. So that it takes a man of great endurance of physical strength to carry on in this most critical and most important office of the world.

In welcoming the new President the American people is also at the same time bidding goodbye to the retiring President, Mr. Calvin Coolidge. We are too near to him and to his administration, I believe, properly to estimate his administration. When all is said and done, I believe we shall all agree that he served his country faithfully, earnestly, to the best of his abilities and his life. He may not have been a great president, but then greatness is something which does not come to a man by wishing. Certain men are born with exceptional endowments of mind and soul; others are not. One can only be censured for using the endowments which are his improperly, and I believe that Mr. Coolidge never employed his abilities improperly. His administration reflected the quality of the man,--a man not of great vision, a man not of great imagination, but a very practical man and altogether a steady man; not a great leader, not one who can enkindle the imagination of a people, but a very cautious guide.

I think, by and large, that Mr. Calvin Coolidge was exactly the type of a man for President that the American people--most of them--wanted him to be. Following the dramatic years of the war, the idealism of Wilson; following the intoxicated years after the war, and following the corrupt era of Harding, the American people, by and large, wanted a calm, cool, staid, practical, economical administrator, and that, I believe, Mr. Coolidge was. He was a business man's president. Under no

administration, in my recollection did the business men fare better and have easier access to control of government than during the administration of Calvin Coolidge.

I think, too, that the American people loved the simplicity of the man. There were some things about him which reminded the American people of older pioneering days. This picture of a President of the United States upon retiring from office moving into a duplex house and paying \$42.00 a month rent, has not alone its emotional value, but, I believe, its moral and spiritual value for a people. There is something essentially fine in it; and it is fine in the case of Calvin Coolidge, because it is not a pose; it is the man that reflects the essential simplicity, a certain sturdy quality in the man which the American people, in spite of its great and increasing wealth, still admires.

I believe that outside of the United States Calvin Coolidge will not long be remembered. How long he will be remembered within our country remains to be seen. But surely today, upon his retiring from office, the American people can be nothing but grateful to the man who gave of himself and of the best that was in him to a public, faithfully and with integrity.

What does the American people hope from Herbert Hoover? Hoover is a great engineer. His life has been devoted to monumental engineering tasks. He will have vast opportunities in the next four years to utilize

✓ his knowledge and his experience in tasks which partake of the quality of engineering; reorganization of the departments of our government, coordinating their functions, introducing greater system, greater economy, perhaps. He will have under his supervision actually great engineering tasks,--flood control; the building of Boulder dam, the final disposal of Muscle Shoals, and so forth. And I am sure that he will bring to this task a greater wisdom and knowledge and understanding than any president heretofore; and yet, somehow, I believe the American people hope for something more. The office of President is not an engineering job. It is the job of a statesman and a leader of men, and the American people will look to Mr. Hoover for leadership in moral problems.

It is my hope that Mr. Hoover, unlike his predecessor, will think a little more of the great masses of the American people and a little less of the classes, who can well take care of themselves. We have heard so much about the great prosperity of this country, and the stock market seems to have given everybody the impression that everyone in the United States is today a millionaire; and yet the statistics of our own federal department, made public by our own Secretary of Labor recently, indicate that 86% of the people of the United States are poor. There are of course degrees of poverty. Poor according to American standards; they are poor; they are constantly on the verge of penury; they have no economic reserve; a period of

emergency, of distress, and they have actually fallen into the abyss of poverty.

Progressively the wealth of this great nation of ours is being concentrated into the hands of the few. The same statistics indicate that some 60% of the wealth of the United States is in the hands of 1% of the people of the United States. Progressively the economic opportunities for the middleman are becoming less and less. The middleman is being crushed out. Now the strength of this country heretofore has been the middleman, and the great, inspiring fact about this country has been that a man could, with very limited capital, start in business, and after ten, fifteen or twenty years build up for himself and his family a competence, a business that would keep him in economic independence and his family. That is becoming less and less possible today as a result of these great mergers that are taking place in almost every industry.

I had occasion a few days ago to speak with a man who, perhaps more than any other man in the United States, has studied the trend of modern business, and understands what you may call the philosophy of business. He told me that it is becoming quite impossible today for a man, a small man, to obtain credit in a bank to enable him to open a small shop,--a grocery store, a tobacco shop, a drygoods store, a clothing store, a drug

store. Banks will not encourage any more the individual to enter upon such business, because it simply means that in two or three years or four years this man will have used up not only the credit of his bank but his own capital. The great mergers--they used to call them "trusts" twenty-five years ago in the days of Theodore Roosevelt; today we use a more delicate term,--these great business mergers are destroying the American middle class. We shall have, if this tendency continues unchecked, a vast class of employed and a very small and limited class of employers, who will have absolute control not only of the industry and the commerce of America, but because of that control ultimately also of the political life of America.

Now there is a challenge to the federal government. I don't know that this tendency can be checked, but surely the problem is bound to arise before very long. Can this government permit these vast amalgamations without demanding a certain control over them? In self-defense will not our federal government have to, before very long, exercise a certain supervision over business and industry in the United States? There is a problem to which Mr. Hoover and his cabinet ought to bring their wisdom and knowledge.

I believe that the American people expect that in his administration Main Street will have as easy access to the White House as Wall Street, and not only

Main Street but the side streets in every town and village in the United States. We want our government to think a little more about the toiler and the miner and the farmer, and the men who dig the ditches and do the hard work in this land; who cannot speculate; who can only labor. And we want our government from now on to be such that these men who constitute the backbone of America can look to the President of the United States as to a friend.

I believe the American people would like the forthcoming administration to be a progressive one. It was Disraeli who said that a conservative government is an organized hypocrisy. Well, I think there is a great deal of truth in that. All life is changing. You men and women know how swiftly life is changing all about us, especially our economic life; and in this world of swift change for a government to be conservative, stand pat, reactionary, is to underwrite its own defeat, is to become antiquated and serviceless. We want our government to be enterprising, to be progressive, to be anticipatory, to experiment, if necessary, with social legislation. We are a bit tired of the cautious hedging of the last administration.

And, too, the American people, I believe, hope that the next administration will liquidate all of the misunderstandings with our Latin-American neighbors,

especially our fiasco in Nicaragua. The conduct of the last administration in Nicaragua has been both culpable and ludicrous, and dishonest. We never should have gone in there in the first place; we had no business there, and we should not now be there, after we gave the Nicaraguans a solemn pledge that immediately after their election we would retire. Their election was held and we have not yet retired. Senator Borah made a magnificent statement not so long ago, speaking of the Central and South American states. He said, "God made our neighbors. Let justice make our friends." It is that policy which should, in the future, determine our relationship in those republics.

They are not to be treated as legitimate prey for the predatory instincts of America; they are not to be regarded as possible loot for looters. They are independent republics who have the same right to live, to protect their resources and to safeguard their independence as we have. It was a fine thing of Mr. Hoover to have made that tour of Central and South America. It was the first fine, friendly gesture of his administration. We hope that he will continue until a real bond of friendship will have been welded between those struggling republics and our own republic.

And, lastly, I believe that the American people should wish to see Mr. Hoover aggressively and affirmatively continue the work of establishing international concord and peace. He is a Quaker and he has an

exalted tradition among his Quaker folks of how peace can be achieved by sacrificing for it. The Quakers pledged themselves never to fight, and they were hounded and hated for it, and imprisoned for it, and mocked and spat upon for it; but they refused to fight, and it took greater strength and greater courage at times to refuse to fight than to join the mob and enter the fight; but they refused to fight,--The only one denomination in Christendom which lived up to the mandate of the Master of Christianity-- "When a man smites thee on one cheek turn thou the other one." They took that literally, and they lived up to it. And out of the last war all other denominations came out bankrupt; all other religions came out morally defeated, because during the last war all denomination became the lackeys and the tools of the state; that's all. They became propaganda agencies for the war departments in every country. The Quakers alone came out of the last war vindicated. They tended the sick, the wounded; they did not stand idly by in this universal catastrophe. They served in hospitals, tended the sick and distributed food among the hungry, friend and foe alike. They recognized no friend or foe, but they refused to fight.

Now, Mr. Hoover belongs to this sect. Of course belonging to a sect does not mean very much unless you really practice the tenets of that sect. But if Mr. Hoover will take into his administration that conviction that peace can be achieved only when nations are ready to

make certain sacrifices for it, he will advance the cause of international peace exceedingly.

I suppose that the Coolidge administration in future times will be remembered not for its thrift or its practicality but for the outstanding achievement of the signing of the Kellogg-Briand pact for the outlawry of war. That is a milestone in civilization; there is no doubt about it. But the effect of that pact has been seriously impaired by this enactment of the law for the building of fifteen additional cruisers, which our Congress enacted shortly after the adoption of the outlawry of war pact. Now it may have been necessary in the international game for the Congress of the United States at this particular time to authorize the building of fifteen additional cruisers, inasmuch as Great Britain has violated the spirit of the Washington Treaty by building cruisers. But if nothing is done before very long to check this competition in naval armament, the pact will become a scrap of paper, and we should begin right now to prepare for the next war.

The great opportunity of Hoover will be to follow up this declaration of principles with an act calling upon the great naval powers of the earth, especially Great Britain, to agree to a definite limitation of armament; and until that is done nothing has been done. Mr. Hoover has a vast international experience. He is internationally minded, and his knowledge of what is going on abroad will

undoubtedly help him in wrestling with these vast problems of peace and war.

These, my friends, to my mind, are the hopes of the American people for Mr. Hoover and his new administration. It is fine to have a man of the type of Mr. Hoover at the head of our government. It is a type of man who will inspire our youth; a man who rose by sheer ability and hard work to that high office. We shall expect of him, in the first place, a greater humaneness in office. We do not want a machine, not even an adding machine, in the White House. We want a great soul, sensitive to the spiritual and moral needs of our people; a man of vision, a man who knows that just as a man cannot live by bread alone, so cannot a nation live by bread alone,--and there are problems in American life other than those of prosperity; a man whose heart will beat in consonance with the heart of the laborer in the mill and the mine and the shop and the factory and on the farm, and the small business man. In a word, a man who will understand the masses of America and be their spokesman and their friend, their guide.

We want a President who will stretch out a hand of friendship to all of our neighboring states on this Western hemisphere, and to all the world. We are being accused abroad of moral turpitude. We say one thing and do another in our international relations. I am not so much concerned with what the world outside of us thinks of us. I am more concerned with what we think of ourselves and

what we want to think of ourselves.

I am deeply and profoundly concerned--and I believe that America is--that we retain a position of moral leadership in the world. I believe that we have been moulded by destiny to be a moral pathfinder in international relations. There is only one great danger, and it is this: that our tremendous wealth will make us so self-centered, so conservative, so selfish, so suspicious of others, that we will sink and wallow in the mire of our obesity and lose the historic opportunity of being a moral pathfinder in the world. We have already shut our doors. We no longer want the oppressed and the denied and the poor of the world who heretofore found a haven of refuge and a new life on these gracious shores. We no longer want them; we have shut our doors against them. And now if in this most important problem of international peace we shall also act the part of the selfish, the self-centered, the morally timid, we shall have lost much more than we could ever hope to gain through mere physical wealth and prosperity.

Let Mr. Hoover sound anew that idealism which was Wilson's, that international idealism which was Wilson's, and that national idealism which was Roosevelt's. We want a bit more of that in our life today. Our lives have become crass and materialistic and cheap and vulgar. We want to bring back again a few of those heroic accents in American life,--the square deal, the opportunity, the

chance for every young man and young woman in this land. We want to bring back a bit more of that magnificence which exalted us all during the days when we threw ourselves into a world war, in order to bring a little more of sweetness and love into the habitations of the world; a little more freedom to all other peoples; when we thought of other nations and concerned ourselves with those who were not as fortunate as we were, and were ready to sacrifice our substance and our blood for humanity.

Let us not become so practical and so utilitarian as to lose from our national life that splendor which was ours in the past.

That is our hope for the new administration. May God bless it and favor it. May God give to the new President of the United States strength of body and strength of soul, that he may lead this great nation, with the help of God, on to its appointed destiny.

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1. To-morrow - 3^{1st} - inaugurated amidst befitting -

① Something heroic & majestic - in spectacle

② Office has endured 140 yrs. - War & Civil War -
- crowning symbol -

③ Remarkable resilience -

2. Wish new Pres. well - scope first when he's small
- Hard, exacting -

3. For welcome new Pres - say my fare-well to retiring

① Wishing of gratitude - honest servant - best light

② Not great - ③ Good. understood. understanding

④ Replotted man - so the narrow - looking vision - practical

⑤ A bus. man - ^{- was - "the best bus. man in his day"} ⑥ Good Gov. people - simplicity

⑦ Outside of U.S. - \$32 -

4. What does Am. hope for?

① Engineers - Masses - Wall St. Main St. -

② 86% poor -

③ Unemployment -

④ Increasing opportunities -

⑤ Poor who will think of tools, farmers -

5. A Propaganda Adm. - "A conservation gift is an
org. conspiracy" Must keep pace.
- cautious hedging & C -

6. Latin-Am. - from - Brazil -

7. Peace - ^{Int. Experience} Disaster - Peace - Part - 15 Curses -

AN ABSTRACT OF THE ADDRESS
"A NEW PRESIDENT - A NEW OUTLOOK"

BY

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER
AT THE TEMPLE, MARCH 3d, 1929.

Herbert Hoover will undoubtedly bring to his administration his expert knowledge as an engineer which will undoubtedly help him in many of the problems which will confront him. The Presidency of the United States however, is more than an engineering job. It is a job of statesmanship and leadership.

The American people hope to find in the incoming administration those qualities of vision, leadership, and sympathetic understanding of the needs of the great masses of our country which were lacking in the previous administration.

We are entering upon an era of decreasing economic opportunities for the rank and file. The economically independent middle class is being crushed out of existence by the vast mergers which are going on at an amazing rate. We are facing the prospect of becoming a nation of employees, wherein a very small group will definitely control our industrial life and with it of course, our political life as well. How far shall this concentration of power go on? How shall the people be safeguarded against a possible abuse of such power? The American people hope for some guidance from the new administration in this vast perplexity. They hope that Main Street will have at least as easy access to the White House as Wall Street and that the toilers of the earth, the miners and farmers and mill workers will find in the new president at least as understanding a friend and guide as organized capital.

Eighty-six percent of the American people, by the testimony of the Secretary of Labor, are poor. The new president ought to concern himself

largely with these eighty-six percent. The others can pretty well take care of themselves.

The American people hope that the next administration will be a progressive one. "A conservative government," said Disraeli, "is an organized hypocrisy." A government must keep pace with the rapidly changing conditions in the economic life of a people or it becomes antiquated and a drag. We have had enough of the cautious hedging of the last administration. We want a bit of the courageous idealism, vision and enterprise of Roosevelt's day. We want to hear again the accents of real progressive thought in Washington. The East has had its spokesman in Harding and Coolidge. Let the progressive West now speak through Hoover.

The American people hope that the Hoover administration will liquidate our immoral campaign in Nicaragua and establish real bonds of friendship with all Central and South American republics. Mr. Hoover's recent visit to Central and South America was an act of fine statesmanship and promises a new deal in our relationship with these people. They must no longer be regarded as legitimate prey for our predatory interests, - loot for our looters. They are sovereign and independent states, entitled to protect their own resources and to safeguard their own independence. Senator Borah's magnificent phrase ought to guide the new administration: "God has made us neighbors, let Justice make us friends."

The American people hope that Mr. Hoover will continue the peace program of the last administration even more aggressively. The Peace Pact was an historic event. But it is not enough. It must be followed by concerted limitation of armaments or it will remain a scrap of paper. We are already in naval competition with Great Britain. If this is not checked there will be war. Mr. Hoover's greatest opportunity in the next four years will be to effect an international agreement for a radical limitation of

armament on land and sea. He is a Quaker. He knows the Quaker tradition about war. He knows that a people can not have peace without making some sacrifices for it. Shall we sacrifice for war and not for peace?

Mr. Hoover is internationally minded. He knows that no nation can go it alone. Building fifteen or fifty cruisers will not make us secure from attack or from defeat. We can not arm against the world. Nor can any other nation.

The American people hope that Mr. Hoover will bring back into our life a bit of the international idealism of Wilson's day. The American people is not tired of idealism.

