



## Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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### **MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.**

Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

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The American and Cleveland scene, 1943.



Sunday - January 17

"THE AMERICAN AND CLEVELAND SCENE"

concluding lecture in series

"As I Look Back Over 25 Years"

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As I look back over twenty-five years, I shall endeavor to define the progress which our country has made during this last quarter of century. The American people have learned to love their country and appreciate its institutions and ideals. What has happened abroad has shaken us out of our cynicism and complacency. We are now resolutely determined to defend our free institutions. But we must do more than conserve our ideals and institutions for ourselves. We must share them with the old world, which needs a renovation at the hands of the new. This war calls for more than a military crusade on our part; it calls for a political and spiritual crusade so that the old world may have a new birth of freedom.

As I look back over the American scene I find it impossible to evaluate the progress our country has made in the past quarter of a century. Progress is checked in wartime, and it is necessary to wait until after the war before a proper appraisal can be made. Nevertheless, I believe that the American peoples have registered very definite advances and learned definite lessons during the past 25 years.

First, we have learned the dangers of false prosperity. The crash of 1929 was a frightful shattering and disillusioning experience in which our financial geniuses turned out to be not only false prophets and shabby thinkers but financial crooks. We learned that it is not enough to possess great technological resources and man power. We learned that something else is necessary, namely, a just sound system of sharing the things that are produced.

Out of the wreck of the boom era came the New Deal. The American people resolved that there must come about a new conception of economic life. The New Deal has been denounced by plutocrats who have the New Deal to thank that they are still plutocrats, who in the depths of the depression called on the government to save them. The future of American life lies along those lines which were forged out of the emergency, the crisis of the '20's and '30's and the New Deal, the aim of which was to put America's economic house in order, is the American way of solving our problems without resorting to Communism, Fascism or Bourbonism. Our Industrial life is not moving smoothly even now. We have not yet found the complete answer to the problem of industrial conflict, and unless we do find the solution our democracy is in danger of being wrecked, because it is failure to resolve the industrial struggle which brings on Fascism.

Our government has set up machinery for the arbitration of industrial disputes which has, in many cases, won the gratitude of both labor and management. But frequently this machinery has been disregarded. Too often neither party has exercised the discipline and self-restraint or the respect for the public at large which the situation required. There are too many men both in the chambers of commerce and in the labor unions who are all too ready for a showdown, a knockdown, drag-out fight. It is persistence in this tendency which destroys democracy. A new philosophy is needed which will displace doctrinaire theories that labor is always right or capitalism is always right.



As I look over the situation in Cleveland in the last twenty-five years,  
Cleveland has been a good city to live and work in and its leaders of  
thought had not lost their heads .....

(from here on, the radiators clanked and  
I could not hear - sorry.....

bw





1/ Impossible - in midst of abnormal conditions <sup>war</sup> - to evaluate the progress which Am. has made during last 1/2 C - <sup>in</sup> all normal processes are checked <sup>a stopped</sup> in war-time. New emergency conditions are created which have no relation to what has preceded. Our present-time progress prior to this war must.: wait till after the war - for its proper appraisal.

2/ But I do believe that Am. people registered certain very def. advances since 1917 - when it entered first world war. And it learned certain very valuable lessons - which it has never tried to put to good use.

3/ First. The danger of false prosperity. Wald has followed by a decade of gilded fancy, giddy boom days. But pretensions were made <sup>became</sup> unhindered by the thousands unknown - speculation was <sup>unchecked</sup> a nat. past-time. Stock markets became our sort of gambling house. Spiral

Then came the crash - in '29. - The gilded era slithered into the dark, dark, desperate depression era - of broad lines, of 15 m. unemployed men. Shops & factories <sup>idly</sup> stood <sup>like</sup> barbs <sup>of</sup> poisoned barbed wire. It took us years - to climb out, and that only partially, from the pit, econ. desolation into which we had fallen -

We boasted a few bricks - It is not enough to have <sup>vast</sup> resources, technology, & man power. A nation must have a just system of production & distribution. Based on solid foundation of all people sharing equally in what is produced. To ~~production~~ which ~~exists~~ When a people's marketing power does not keep pace with its production capacity - an econ. collapse is inevitable. When profits



are channelled into hands of relatively few - while machines  
econ. glut - market prodn. unprofitable - factories close down  
those who receive excessive profits - unable to put them to  
work - invest - anticipate rise.

Out of Wreck of Brown era. New Deal -  
A new conception of econ. life - Govt. relation to it.  
Its aim - put our econ. house in order.

Put men back to work - Raise wages & income, Mass

Public works take up econ. lag.

Extend help to farmers, small bus. men, workers.

Check Speculation & run-away markets

Protect ag. monop. & Big Business

Regulate labor conditions - Machinery

Govt. shift in -

Some measures - inspiring - Unvalidated - Others

ag. ravages & re-current econ. disasters

New Deal damaged - Plutocrats - propaganda



Then an econ. position. Future - every line of principle<sup>(3)</sup>  
and down by her Deal - which is another location not  
too econ. Barbarism - but the new way of making  
econ. progress to benefit all -

Important means, social security. Butchered.  
Now generally accepted. Beverly Plan. Nothing fixed.

There is enough for all! and all should share in it.

After this war - Freedom from want! Econ. security  
added to pol. freedom.

3). Learned also from Prohibition era - 1919 Prohibition  
a bandage <sup>affected</sup> <sup>way of</sup> which led to great evils - Did not make sense!  
Did not work! Cracked under era planned became an era of anarchy  
Prohibition - Prohibition - Prohibition - Prohibition - Prohibition  
Repeal! Could not be enforced. I saw men in trouble  
and self control. Harder way - but only way.

4). Industrial Conflict. Coal & Steel Strike - 1919-20-21.  
Threatened period until war. Right to org - closed shops  
attempt made to destroy Trade Union -  
Take itself split - Take Prohibition made two appeals  
Have not yet learned the lessons - They would destroy  
Govt. has set up machinery - Repeal - but self restraint  
A union does not dry out fight - inspired by one or the other  
would bring to an end -  
Call for new Industrial State manipulation & new labor leadership



3/19/21  
4/ ~~Interviews~~ - ~~as an~~ ~~weapon~~.

Red Scan & Rots in 1919. - Cleveland, May 1919

A. Mitchell Palmer - Red hunt -

Communist menace exploited by labor-busting interests  
just as Anti-Semitism " - weapon in Econ. Struggle

K. K. K. - ~~Darkness~~ <sup>then</sup> ready Nazi-inspired

Am. people is learning - dangerous uses to what total is  
put - ahead -

5/ last 10 years  
Armed & giving direction to Am. - Am. way 1 h/o  
are determined order to defend it -

Refused an action on themselves for Am. with to lead - Old world  
new  
money

What has happened abroad - shook us out of our comfidence

How precious is his heritage - gives it to world 1 -

More 7 ford - send our ideas crusading than the world - 150 yrs ago

6/ Cleveland -

Jewishly - Gained in number - character - unlike other  
well-organized - full - complement - J. Comm. Council

- J. Welfare Fund - Fairly armed - big leadership  
Charity not enough new-democratic

More attention to Religion - J. Culture - H.V.C

Self-education - Adult education - Always ready



1.) Impossible, in midst of the abnormal conditions of war, to evaluate the progress which America has made during last quarter century. For all normal processes are checked or deflected in war-time. New emergency conditions are created which have no relation to what has preceded our peace-time progress prior to this war. Must: wait till after the war for its proper appraisal.

2.) But I do believe that American people registered certain very definite advances since 1917 when it entered first World War. And it learned certain very valuable lessons which it has tried to put to good use.

3.) First - The dangers of false prosperity. World War followed by a decade of gilded, gaudy, giddy boom days. Vast fortunes were made. Millionaires by the thousands were . Speculation became a national past-time. Stock-markets became one vast national gambling house.

Then came the crash - in '29. The gilded era slithered into the dark, dank, desperate depression era - of bread lines, of fifteen million unemployed men, shops and factories idle, banks failing, business bankrupt, financial wizards exposed as crooks. It took us years to climb out, and that only partially, from the pit of economic disaster into which we had fallen.

We learned a few lessons. It is not enough to have vast resources, technology and man-power. A nation must have a just and ethical system of distribution: Based on political foundation of all people sharing equally in what is produced. When a people's purchasing power does not keep pace with its productive capacity, an economic catastrophe is inevitable. When profits are channelled into hands of relatively few, while machines economic makes production unprofitable, factories close down. Those who receive excessive profits unable to put them to work - invest - artificial rise.

Out of wreck of boom era - New Deal - A new conception of economic life. Government relation to it. Its aim - put our economic house in order. Put men back to work. Raise wages and incomes of masses. Public works take up economic lag. Extend help



to farmers, small business men, workers. Check speculation and run-away markets.  
Protect against monopolies and big business. Regulate labor conditions, machinery.  
Government shift in.

Some measures imperative - invalidated. Others against ravages of re-current economic disaster.

New Deal damned. Plutocrats forgotten.

They are economic . Future - lines and principles  
laid down by New Deal - which is neither Socialism nor economic , but the  
American way of making economic progress to benefit all.

The important meaning of social security. Bitterly . Now generally  
accepted. Nothing final.

There is enough for all! And all should share in it. After this war, freedom  
from want; Economic security added to political freedom.

3.) Learned also from Prohibition era, - 1919. Kept it a laudible . Appealed to  
many of us. Always led to great evils. Drastic measures did not work. Created worst era  
of lawlessness America has ever known. Bootlegging, racketeering, speak-easies -  
organized gangsterism. Repeal! Could not be enforced! Train men in temperance and self-  
control. Hardest way, but only way.

4.) Industrial . Coal and steel strikes - 1919-20-21.

Throughout period until war. Right to organize - closed and open shop. Attempt made to  
destroy trade unionism. Labor itself split. Labor racketeers made their appearance . Have  
not yet learned the answer - may wreck Democracy. Government has set up machinery - Respect  
self-restraint. A knock-down and drag-out fight inspired by one or the other will bring  
Fascism to America. Call for new industrial statesmanship and new labor leadership.

5.) Spread of intolerance. Red scare and riots in 1919 -- Cleveland, May, 1919.

A. Palmer - Red hunt.



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Communist menace exploited by labor-busting interests.

Just as Anti-Semitism exploited -- weapon of economic struggle.

K.K.K. -- Dearborn - More recently Nazi-inspired.

American people is learning dangerous uses to which intolerance is put abroad.

6.) Last ten years aroused a growing devotion to Americanism. American way of life

A determined resolve to defend it.

Rekindled an active enthusiasm for American and ideals -- Old words and new meaning.

What has happened abroad startled us out of our complacency.

How precious is this heritage -- Give it to the world!

More than food - Send our ideas crusading through the world -- 150 years ago.

