



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

Featuring collections from the Western Reserve Historical Society and
The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

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

Series V: Writings, 1909-1963, undated.

Reel
179

Box
66

Folder
516

How can the schools and colleges foster democracy in the
student?, 1939.

HOW CAN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES FOSTER DEMOCRACY IN THE STUDENTS?

Democracy has every chance to succeed in the United States if we take sensible precautions and if we educate the rising generation into an appreciation of the purposes, the technique, the privileges and the responsibilities of democracy.

Ours is a long established democratic tradition and experience. With us it is not a luxury and we are not likely to surrender it. It is tied up with our concept of the importance of the individual and of his inalienable rights.

We have a wholesome capacity for self-criticism which some foreigners misunderstand. We are not given to national exhibitionism. We are ready to acknowledge mistakes and to reverse ourselves.

We have vast material resources. We are not a country, but a continent. Our people is not doomed by nature to a low standard of living. Poverty is the bitterest foe of democracy. In this country, with vision and intelligent management, we can abolish poverty.

Our political life is fortunately not fragmentized into numerous small political parties which make democracy unworkable. Ours is a two-party system of government with an occasional third party in the field. The need for a popular front in some of the countries of Europe indicates the bankruptcy of the idea of numerous political fractions, each with its own particularized and unyielding ideology. We do not belong to the past. We are not handicapped by hardened and intransigent racial or religious minorities. We have no threatening neighbors. More than any other people, we can pursue the even tenor of our lives and preserve the precious heritage of self-government and freedom.

By example in the classroom, by proper attitudes on the part of the teacher, definite democratic attitudes can be suggested to our young people - respect for the individual as an individual, freedom from all forms of religious and racial bigotry, tolerance for diversity, the right of descent and of independent judgment, and a sense of proportion, generosity and sportsmanship

which are at the heart of the democratic tradition.

We should immunize our youth against propaganda. Courses of instruction in the detection of spurious propaganda should be introduced in all our High Schools and Colleges. Propaganda must be brought out into the open and its bag of tricks exposed. Propaganda is today undoing much of the work of education.

We ought not to cheapen democracy in the eyes of our young people. It is good to be critical but not contemptuous. We cannot and we should not create in the minds of our youth a wild and violent romanticism for democracy. We should not mess up political thought with unbridled mysticism and emotionalism. Such romanticism like the "steely romanticism" of the Nazis, almost always goes hand in hand with despotism. There must be to the democratic way of life and thought, a quality of proportion and restraint, a classic discipline and romanticism. Democracy is not a light "that never was on land or sea". In a calm, proud and confident mood, we should speak to our young people about democracy, unfolding for them its difficulties and its shortcomings, but also its great and abundant blessings for man, and its still greater promises for the future. They should know that no nobler or more perfect substitute has yet been discovered. The ~~gix~~ glamorous achievements of which dictatorships boast today are like the Potemkin villages of Catherine the Great - false and improvised facades behind which lurk poverty, misery and smoldering discontent.

1/ Waves - ~~stems~~ - Play us. No boundaries -

Feel concern - Begun to talk still power to resist - Congressional

Curious eyes to South of us -

Heretofore - complacent - we knew that dictatorships - match - "Munich"
demon. retreated - leaving our form. broken & dismembered -

Afraid of growing strength -

2/ So that thatful - surveying - affraying our defenses -

A few facts: ① No D. country immune ~~from~~ ^{propag.} spread

D. being what it is - no way.

Anti-D - will exploit - Must tolerate, may protect. "Bread"

assists at its own undoing - sets the stage & provides the
weapons for its own assassination - Naive - Fundamentalist -

3/ ~~A most~~ ② Prop. to-day an ^{powerful} elaborate pseudo-sc. - "The driving power"

And how easily such hysteria - Orson Welles -

Of course the "educated" knew better - but the anti-D prop. ^{is} ~~is~~
not concerned with the "educated," ^{under-disappointed} ~~under-disappointed~~ ^{judgment} ~~judgment~~ ^{under} ~~under~~ ^{them}
into powerful step - hammer - shatter them - when strong enough
the powerful finance interest take it over -

4/ We learn, too, any D. can collapse - automatic survival -

Given same set of Circumst.

Cycles disadvantage - burdensome -

No immunity - "It can happen here!" -

5/ But we do not wish it to happen here.

In spite of all - inefficiency - wastefulness - corruption -

Higher standards of mat. well-being - intell. achievement, art, etc.

Ind. worth ~~freedom~~ - Sovereign whenever, persuasibility -

Freedom - autonomy, human mind -

These things we cherish - better away our exchange -

Transient to our children -

6). Have we a fair chance to succeed? Yes. - Certain advantages -

(1) Long estab. D. trad. & Exp. - 150 - crises -

Not a single - no roots - Slav - ~~water~~ ~~down~~ -

Teamwork - Discipline - Prohibitions.

Tied up - import. & Ind. - Unachievable rights

Dread loss - not luxury - Violence to an spirit

Will not surrender lightly - Bucket - well

(2) Capacity for self-criticism - In excess

Self-glorification - Exhibitionism - ~~"Blatant the world"~~ -

Ready to acknowledge mistakes - 1929 -

Reverse ourselves - "Prohibition" - "New Deal"

Experimentation - Resilience - "Pragmatism" in Phil

Hasty anger - head break.

(3) Natural Resources - Contentment - Low standard -

Poverty is bitterest foe - Can abolish poverty -

Intelligent management - Too much rather too little -

(4) Not fragmented in pol. life - 2 Party - Majority system

Small parties - unstable - Popular Front

(5) Young Nation -

Past belongs to us -

Not handicapped - anxieties - conquered mountains

No threatening neighbors

More > any other people -

Every chance to succeed -

7/ If we can make our children - love as we love it -

(1) By example - class at the time - school regimen -
(a) respect for ind. free individual.

- (a) freedom of opinion - right of dissent - doctrinaire - authoritarian
- open windows, as wider horizons
- (a) Tolerance for diversity - which is charac. of Amer. life -
- (a) Freedom from all forms - esp. of racial bigotry.
- (a) A sense of proportion, generosity, sportsman ship
- (a) encouraging ind. judgment - based on freedom & fullness
discussion, intel. & fully funded by one who is
also all a seeker, truth - and a lover of mankind.

(2)

Immense
(2) ~~the~~ immense task of the people - beginning - elementary
idea - idea has been made - and not too soon!

A new weapon has been forged against D - we have been
slow to forge the counter-defensive weapon - given D. a start!

Courses - detection spurious here to check up -
where to find - how to defeat counterfeit - How to
piece slogans - catch - words - to their inner
depths -

~~The~~ Propag must be put out into the open this lags
is truly exposed. -

(3) Respect for Method -

(4) Let us not cheapen it in their eyes -

Good to be critical - not contemptuous -

We cannot, we should not, give to our D. - wild & violent romanticism -

We should not mess up pub. that with unbridled mysticism

and emotion alone -

Such R. has been in hand with despotism like the 'Italy R.' - often
has been in hand with despotism.

There is, there must be, a classic quality of freedom & integrity to D.

a discipline & a rebuke is,

Am is not the light that never was on land or sea. It is the light
the ordinary day - but, oh, so bright towards hope & joy!

I in such a calm, proud confident mood let us hear, O. to our
70th - telling them, its difficulties & its shortcomings - but also
its great abundant blessings for man; and its still greater promise -
inspiring them that no nobler or more perfect substitute has as yet
been devised by man -

That glorious achievement, Ded. Pohamthis Village - for leaders
behind which heart poverty - discontent - & sorrowing retreat.

8). We go to Europe to be Amer - Emerson - Tuck -

We shall ride the storm to a safe harbor -



39-11

W
E
L
C
O
M
E

19 39

VRHS



NADW

NAPSG

Joint Formal Banquet



*National Association of Private
School for Girls
and
National Association of Deans of Women*



*Thursday, February twenty-third,
nineteen hundred and thirty-nine
seven o'clock*



*Grand Ball Room, Hotel Statler
Cleveland, Ohio*

P r o g r a m



Presiding - - - - HARRIET M. ALLYN
President of N. A. D. W.

SARAH B. WHITAKER
President of N. A. P. S. G.

*"How Can Schools and Colleges Foster Democracy
in the Students?"*

ABBA HILIEL SILVER,
Rabbi, The Temple
Cleveland

Music

HIRAM COLLEGE

Dinner



Fresh Fruit Cocktail



Essence of Tomato

Rose Radishes and Queen Olives



Roast Stuffed Vermont Turkey

Cranberry Sauce

Candied Sweet Potatoes

Brussels Sprouts



Combination Salad with Egg Dressing



Bombe Plombiere

Assorted Cakes

Macaroons

Coffee