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Correspondence concerning contributions, books for review, and all editorial matters should be addressed to Nathan M. Kaganoff, Editor, American Jewish Historical Society, 2 Thornton Road, Waltham, Massachusetts 02154.

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**AMERICAN JEWS AND THE
LABOR MOVEMENT**

**The First in a Series of Special Issues of the
AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORICAL QUARTERLY**
commemorating

the

BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS

by examining

**The Jewish Contribution to the American
Historic Experience**

Edited by

NATHAN M. KAGANOFF and IRWIN YELLOWITZ

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Editor's Foreword

At a meeting held in October, 1972, the Publication Committee of the American Jewish Historical Society (subsequently subsumed by the Academic Council established in 1973) recommended that plans be made for several issues of the *Quarterly* to be devoted to specific themes which would fit in with the forthcoming Bicentennial observances, and which should appear during 1976 and 1977.

The recommendation further noted that, although the primary responsibility for these issues would remain with the Editor, distinguished scholars working in various areas of American history be invited to serve as Associate Editors for each of these issues. Unlike our usual procedure, it was also suggested that individuals be commissioned to prepare papers on various aspects of each subject.

We are pleased to present the first of a series of these special publications which is devoted to the theme of American Jews and the Labor Movement. We also feel honored and privileged that Dr. Irwin Yellowitz, of the City College of the City University of New York, has served as the Associate Editor for this special issue. The resultant product is due in great measure to his efforts; he was very much involved in planning the manner in which the subject should be treated, in contacting most of the authors who participated, and seeing to it that the several contributions arrived in time to meet the publication deadline. Dr. Yellowitz has also provided a most useful introduction, evaluating the present status of research in the field and what remains to be done.

The articles presented on the following pages not only provide us with a fresh approach and new insight into the history of American Jewish labor, but place this phenomenon in its proper relationship to the story of American labor in general.

Nathan M. Kaganoff

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American Jews and the Labor Movement

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CONTRIBUTORS

Dr. Robert Asher, who obtained his doctorate from the University of Minnesota, teaches labor history and United States social history at the University of Connecticut. He is the author of articles on the history of industrial accidents and workmen's compensation that have appeared in *Labor History*, *Business History Review*, *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* and *Minnesota History*.

Dr. Selma Berrol obtained her doctorate from the City University of New York and now serves as an Associate Professor of History and Assistant Dean of the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Baruch College of the City University of New York. She specializes in the history of New York City, American immigration and urban education.

Prof. Sheila Stern Polishook, Associate Professor of History at Queensborough Community College of the City University of New York, specializes in labor history and has contributed articles to the *Journal of Higher Education* and the *AAUP Bulletin*.

Dr. Ida Cohen Selavan teaches Yiddish at the University of Pittsburgh. Her special area of interest is the history of the Jewish community of Pittsburgh, on which she has published a number of articles in the *American Journal of Nursing* and the *YIVO Annual*. She is also co-editor of *Ethnic Groups in America: Their Morbidity, Mortality and Behavior Disorders*.

Dr. L. Glen Seretan obtained his doctorate from the University of Toronto and has taught in the University's Department of History. His area of specialization is labor history.

Dr. Irwin Yellowitz, Professor of History at the City College of the City University of New York, is the author of *Labor and the Progressive Movement in New York State, 1897-1916*, *The Position of the Worker in American Society, 1865-1896*, numerous articles and reviews on labor history that have appeared in various scholarly journals, and serves also on the Editorial Advisory Board of the Samuel Gompers Papers project.

American Jewish Labor: Historiographical Problems and Prospects

By IRWIN YELLOWITZ

The history of American Jewish labor has been a subject of inquiry and discussion for over a half century. Yet one must conclude that major problems in concept and method have not been resolved, and that a definitive and comprehensive history of American Jewish labor remains to be written.

Perhaps the most basic problem faced by historians of American Jewish labor has been the precise nature of the subject.¹ Most historians have limited their interest to the American Jewish labor movement, often without discussion of the implications of such a step. As in other areas of historical inquiry, leadership and institutions have received extensive attention. However, the unorganized aspects of the subject have been largely ignored. In part, this flows from the availability of materials, which are generated and preserved mainly by institutions and their leaders. Yet the movement is not synonymous with American Jewish labor, and thus significant areas of study remain.

The scope of American Jewish labor is also important even when one studies the institutional component. Traditionally, historians have studied the Jewish leaders of trade unions and socialist movements as representatives of Jewish labor. However, the membership of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union was no longer predominantly Jewish by the 1920's, while the workers in the men's clothing industry were never predominantly Jewish. Is there not an assumption of identity that goes beyond number, and which links these leaders to a fundamental Jewish consciousness?

The boundaries of American Jewish labor should be defined by the influence of Jewish identity and concerns upon leaders and institutions, and, in turn, the impact of these major figures and their organizations upon the Jewish community in general and Jewish workers in particular. Clearly the trade unions in the needle

¹ Nathan Reich, "The Organization of the YIVO History of the Jewish Labor Movement in the United States," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science*, IX (1954), 389; Hyman Berman, "A Cursory View of the Jewish Labor Movement: An Historiographical Survey," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, [=*AJHQ*], LII (December, 1962), 79-82.

trades have served significant numbers of Jewish workers, and these organizations were in constant touch with the major issues that faced the Jewish community in general. Moreover, the attempt of the Jewish labor movement to create a distinct sub-culture within American Jewry significantly affected workers and the entire Jewish community.² Yet one must not forget that this same leadership had a strong commitment to socialism, which led them to build bridges out of the ethnic community. Trade union leaders, such as Benjamin Schlesinger, Morris Sigman and David Dubinsky of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, Sidney Hillman and Jacob Potofsky of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and Max Zaritsky of the United Cloth Hat and Capmakers' Union, desired to integrate Jewish workers more fully into the larger American labor movement—which they hoped would ultimately become socialist. The socialists Morris Hillquit and Meyer London believed in a universal working class, and they opposed tendencies and movements within Jewish labor that might elevate ethnic or national concerns above class identification. However, this position was modified by their involvement in the activities of political groups and trade unions that were closely related to Jewish workers.

The boundaries of American Jewish labor are also defined by who is excluded. Samuel Gompers was of Jewish origin, but clearly should not be placed within the confines of American Jewish labor.³ Gompers' activities generally had little direct effect upon Jewish workers or the American Jewish community. He operated within the broader American labor movement. Although Robert Asher's article in this volume indicates that Gompers' Jewish origin was not forgotten by other labor leaders, it was of little importance in the decisions that he made. In this connection, Sheila Polishook's comments on Gompers' attitude toward Zionism are quite instructive.⁴

Similarly, the United Federation of Teachers (New York City), which has a large number of Jews in its leadership, plus a membership that is heavily Jewish, has not identified itself with American Jewry, nor has the union had an appreciable influence upon the Jewish community. In this respect, the United Federation of

² Arthur Goren, *New York Jews and the Quest for Community: The Kehillah Experiment* (New York: 1970), pp. 19-20 and ch. 9.

³ On Gompers, see Bernard Mandel, *Samuel Gompers: A Biography* (Yellow Springs: 1963); William Dick, *Labor and Socialism in America: The Gompers Era* (Port Washington: 1971); Stuart B. Kaufman, *Samuel Gompers and the Origins of the American Federation of Labor, 1848-1896* (Westport: 1973).

⁴ See the article by Sheila Polishook, below pp. 228-244.

Teachers differs from the unions in the needle trades during an earlier generation. In both cases, the leadership represented their members, as workers, but the unions in the needle trades also had a significant effect upon the Jewish community. With the exception of the school strike of 1968, and its continuing consequences in some local school districts, the United Federation of Teachers has not had such an impact upon its members as Jews or upon the Jewish community.⁵ The differences between unions that represented first and second generation Jews and unions, often of a professional or white collar type, that contain Jewish leaders and members today, reveal much about the changes that have taken place in American Jewry in the last half century.

The complex interaction of Jewish, American, trade union and socialist concerns deserves further study. We need a clearer statement of the impact of labor leaders, such as Sidney Hillman and David Dubinsky, upon workers as Jews, and upon the Jewish community as a whole.⁶ The same holds true for Morris Hillquit and Meyer London. The existing studies stress broader concerns, in the case of Hillquit, or the work in print is inadequate, as is true for London. Both men desired an American socialism, yet both had their political base within the Jewish community. In addition, we have no biography of Abraham Cahan, one of the most significant of the Jewish socialist leaders. He played a central role in harmonizing the universalism and the ethnic concerns and identity of the first generation Jewish community in America.⁷

⁵ The strike of 1968 produced severe stress between Jews and Blacks in New York City, which intensified the already existing ethnic tensions in the political life of the City. For a discussion of religious identification as a variable affecting militancy within the United Federation of Teachers, see Stephen Cole, *The Unionization of Teachers: A Case Study of the UFT* (New York: 1969), pp. 79-84.

⁶ On Sidney Hillman, see Matthew Josephson, *Sidney Hillman: Statesman of American Labor* (Garden City: 1952). On David Dubinsky, see Max Danish, *The World of David Dubinsky* (Cleveland: 1957). In chapter 22, Danish gives some attention to Dubinsky's attitudes toward, and involvement with, Jewish issues; also *Labor History*, IX, Special Supplement (Spring, 1968) which was devoted entirely to Dubinsky.

⁷ On London, the only complete account is Harry Rogoff, *An East Side Epic: The Life and Work of Meyer London* (New York: 1930); a shorter sketch appears in Melech Epstein, *Profiles of Eleven* (New York: 1965), pp. 159-187; Gordon J. Goldberg is at work on London's career, and hopefully a full-length scholarly book will result; see his "Meyer London and the National Social Insurance Movement, 1914-1922" in *AJHQ* LXV (Sept., 1974), 59-73. On Hillquit, see Ira Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement, 1897-1912* (New York: 1952); David Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America* (New York: 1955); James Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912-1925* (New York: 1967); Epstein, *Profiles of Eleven*, pp. 189-231; Robert Iversen, "Morris Hillquit: American Social Democrat," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1951; Norma Pratt of U.C.L.A. is at work on Hillquit, including his relationship to Jewish issues. On Cahan, see Epstein, *Profiles of Eleven*, pp. 49-109 and Ronald Sanders, *The*

In an article in this volume, L. Glenn Seretan presents a perceptive analysis of the effect of Jewish identity upon Daniel DeLeon.⁸ Seretan's use of the theme of the Wandering Jew as an interpretive tool in analyzing DeLeon's career is innovative methodologically, and it provides new insights on the relationship between ethnic factors and DeLeon's activities and policies. Specific attention to the impact of ethnic factors upon other socialists of Jewish origin should produce valuable material on the complex relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish factors within the American context.

The literature on American Jewish labor has also traditionally included the studies of unionism in the needle trades. However, most of this work focusses on the growth of unions and labor-management relations in these trades, with only sparse reference to the impact of ethnic factors.⁹ The work on trade unionism in the needle trades by persons who were themselves involved as participants offers little more on this score.¹⁰ There is still need for an examination of how the trade unions in the needle trades were affected by their large Jewish membership.

One barrier to such studies has been the relative paucity of material on the Jewish worker as distinguished from trade unions that contained such workers.¹¹ This has been true for labor history

Downtown Jews (New York: 1969); Leon Stein presented a paper on Cahan at the meeting of the American Historical Association in December, 1975. Zosa Szajkowski, *Jews, Wars and Communism* (New York: 1972) is a rich source on Jewish socialists generally.

⁸On DeLeon, see Howard Quint, *The Forging of American Socialism* (Indianapolis: 1953); Don McKee, "Daniel DeLeon: A Reappraisal," *Labor History*, I (Fall, 1960), 264-297; L. Glenn Seretan, "The Personal Style and Political Methods of Daniel DeLeon: A Reconsideration," *Labor History*, XIV (Spring, 1973), 163-201.

⁹J.M. Budish and George Soule, *The New Unionism in the Clothing Industry* (New York: 1920); Louis Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers: A History of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union* (New York: 1924); Charles Zaretsky, *The Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America: A Study in Progressive Trades-Unionism* (New York: 1934); Earl Strong, *The Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America* (Grinnell: 1940); Wilfred Carsel, *A History of the Chicago Ladies' Garment Workers' Union* (Chicago: 1940); Joel Seidman, *The Needle Trades* (New York: 1942). Seidman devotes some attention to ethnic factors; see chapter 2 and pp. 49-50. Other works on the needle trades are Charles Green, *The Headwear Workers* (New York: 1944); Donald Robinson, *Spotlight on a Union: The Story of the United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers International Union* (New York: 1948); Philip Foner, *The Fur and Leather Workers Union* (Newark: 1950); and Jesse T. Carpenter, *Competition and Collective Bargaining in the Needle Trades, 1910-1967* (Ithaca: 1972). A good review of this literature is contained in Berman, "A Cursory View of the Jewish Labor Movement."

¹⁰James Oneal, *A History of the Amalgamated Ladies' Garment Cutters' Union, Local 10* (New York: 1927); Benjamin Stolberg, *Tailor's Progress* (Garden City: 1944); Harry Haskell, *A Leader of the Garment Workers: The Biography of Isidore Nagler* (New York: 1950); Marx Lewis, *A Half Century of Achievement: The History of Millinery Workers' Union Local 24* (New York: 1960).

¹¹On this point see Henry David, "Jewish Labor History: A Problem Paper," in Moshe

generally. However, in recent years, historians such as Herbert Gutman have stressed the need for studies of the context in which organized labor operated.¹² The culture, economic situation and broad attitudinal structure of American workers have received increasing attention. A similar need exists for American Jewish labor.

Lloyd Gartner provided a model for such studies in 1960.¹³ His book on Jewish immigrants in England covers the totality of life. There are discussions of trade unionism and radical political activity, but most of the volume discusses the slighted areas of occupation, housing, health, welfare institutions, domestic life, crime, education and religious affairs. Thus Jewish labor is examined within the context of the total community.

Moses Rischin has done a similar work on the Jews of New York City.¹⁴ When compared to Gartner's work, Rischin's book gives more attention to the labor and radical movements and to political developments in general. There is less emphasis on subjects such as education, religious affairs and Zionism. Yet Rischin's volume is most valuable in developing the life of Jewish immigrants in their major American center. His chapters on the economic situation, housing, crime, sanitation, cultural developments, and the conflict between German and Russian Jews provide the background against which trade unionism and socialist politics must be viewed.

In an article in this volume, Selma Berrol adds to this work on the life of the Jewish immigrant community by examining the much discussed relationship between mobility and education. She concludes that education may have been less important than previously thought for the first and second generation of Jewish immigrants. Her study points to other avenues of mobility. It is the kind of work that is needed on the basic life experience of the Jewish community.

Beyond the confines of New York City, even the institutional side of American Jewish labor history has been barely touched. In general, American Jewish labor has been studied as though it were equivalent to New York Jewish labor. Developments in Chicago are perhaps the single exception to this fascination with the largest Jewish community in America. Yet as Jews from beyond the Hudson River never tire of repeating, the experience of Jews in New

Davis and Isidore Meyer, *The Writing of American Jewish History* (New York: 1957), pp. 83-88 and Berman, "A Cursory View of the Jewish Labor Movement," pp. 82, 94.

¹² Herbert Gutman, "Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America, 1815-1919," *American Historical Review*, LXXVIII (June, 1973), 535-537.

¹³ Lloyd Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England, 1870-1914* (London: 1960).

¹⁴ Moses Rischin, *The Promised City: New York's Jews, 1870-1914* (Cambridge: 1962).

York City does not necessarily reflect the situation elsewhere in the nation. We will not know if Jewish workers in smaller cities followed a similar path to those in New York City until Jewish labor is studied around the country. Once again sources are a major reason for this particular lacuna in the study of American Jewish labor. Unlike New York City, Jewish workers in smaller cities were less able to create institutions which they led, or in which they were a major constituent, and thus the history of Jewish workers tends to become part of the general labor history of the area.¹⁵ Within the Jewish community of these cities, the institutional record is left largely by communal organizations or leaders, not by the labor movement.

Progress in this area is possible, however, through the use of census materials and oral history. In recent years, historians have used computers to help analyze large bodies of quantitative data. In addition, the possibilities of the manuscript census records have become clearer as a resource for studying the living conditions of workers.¹⁶ At the opposite pole from quantitative data, oral history adds to the traditional historical record. A recent oral history of Jewish workers in Pittsburgh indicates that such material can become a valuable resource.¹⁷

Ida Cohen Selavan's contribution to this volume is a rare effort to discuss Jewish labor in a medium-sized American city. She combines oral history material with more traditional sources in exploring the almost unknown world of Jewish workers outside New York City. It should serve to stimulate further work of this type.

Students of American Jewish labor have stressed the uniqueness of the trade union policies and political activities carried through by the Jewish labor movement. Although the unions in the needle trades did not follow identical policies, as a group they pioneered in the use of impartial umpire systems for settling grievances; they had concern for the economic health of their industries, including use of the unions to control competition among employers; they used the contract process to build up job control for the unions; they developed a wide range of welfare programs that included banks, health institutions, leisure facilities and social insurance;

¹⁵ This is clearly seen in Sara Cogan, comp. *The Jews of San Francisco and the Greater Bay Area, 1849-1919: An Annotated Bibliography* (Berkeley: 1973).

¹⁶ For the use of census materials in an earlier period, see Sophia M. Robison, *Jewish Population Studies* (New York: 1943).

¹⁷ National Council of Jewish Women, Pittsburgh Section, *By Myself I'm a Book: An Oral History of the Immigrant Jewish Experience in Pittsburgh* (Waltham: 1972).

and they took an active role in politics, with the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union particularly active in this respect.¹⁸ While none of these features were unique to the unions in the needle trades, the complete range produced a distinctive brand of unionism within the American labor movement. How does one account for this distinctive type of unionism?

An explanation must be fashioned from three interconnected themes. First, the socialist background and commitment among the leadership of the unions in the needle trades; second, characteristics of the Jewish community which significantly affected trade unionism and the Jewish labor movement generally; and third, the economic structure of the needle trades.

The socialist leadership hoped that the Jewish labor movement would become a distinct sub-community within American Jewry. Such a sub-community would have a socialist and secular ideology, its own communal institutions, and a distinctive culture. Vigorous trade unionism in the industries that employed a large portion of the Jewish work force was part of this labor movement, as was solidarity with other American workers and an emphasis on political action. Yet socialism did not operate independently within the Jewish community: it constantly was modified and influenced by traditional cultural, religious and social attitudes. Ultimately these restraints, the impact of the Americanization of the immigrant, and changes in the political attitude of the leadership—produced by the weaknesses of socialism as a political movement and the appearance of a revitalized reform impulse in the New Deal—ended the attempt to build a socialist community within the larger Jewish population.

A number of scholars have investigated the relationship between the socialists and the larger Jewish community. Moses Rischin has pointed out that the secular Jewish socialists really did not escape the religious past of the Jewish people. Instead they developed a "folk religious ethic" that combined socialist ideology, and an emphasis on industrial exploitation, with scriptural references.¹⁹ C. Bezalel Sherman has suggested that there is a connection between

¹⁸ Selig Perlman, "Jewish-American Unionism, Its Birth Pangs and Contributions to the General American Labor Movement," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, XLI (June, 1952), 297-337; J.B.S. Hardman, "The Jewish Labor Movement in the United States: Jewish and Non-Jewish Influences," *ibid.* (December, 1952), 98-132; Moses Rischin, "The Jewish Labor Movement in America: A Social Interpretation," *Labor History*, IV (Fall, 1963), 234.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 236.

the messianic image in Judaism and the attraction of the messianic aspects of socialism for Jews.²⁰ On a more concrete level, Abraham Cahan opposed the efforts of some Jewish socialists to attack traditional religious practices. He feared such attacks would hinder the ability of socialists to reach Jewish workers.²¹ Several scholars have stressed that most Jewish immigrants remained loyal to the religious practices that they had brought from Europe, and Sherman has claimed that such identification interfered with the efforts of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union to organize the Jewish workers in the trade.²² Yet he also notes that socialism attracted many Jews, who were seeking the status denied to them within the traditional Jewish community. Socialism gave these persons the opportunity to gain self-esteem through their identification with the course of history and their role in the creation of a Jewish labor movement that would further the ultimate transformation of society. Thus the American Jewish labor movement not only protected the concrete interests of workers, but it also provided purpose and meaning through identification with the ultimate victory of socialism.²³

Even at a less millennial level, Abraham Menes has suggested that strikes were affected by intangible psychological factors that flowed from the position of the worker within the larger Jewish community. Strikers often walked out to win recognition as individuals of worth, who had some influence in the economic world, even if they lacked such impact within the larger Jewish community.²⁴

One must also consider the competing loyalties of class, as demanded by the socialists, and of place, as found in the *landsman-schaften*. So strong was this sense of geographical identity that the socialist Workmen's Circle had to make a place for *landsman-schaften* within its ranks. In addition, the Jewish labor movement faced the constant threat of the individual's desire for material success, which weakened his commitment to socialism and unionism.

The complexity of these issues only enhances their interest and importance. Although valuable work has been done, it has been in

²⁰ C. Bezalel Sherman, "Labor in the Totality of Jewish Life," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science*, IX (1954), 384.

²¹ C. Bezalel Sherman, "Nationalism, Secularism and Religion in the Jewish Labor Movement," *Judaism*, III (Fall, 1954), 356-357.

²² Abraham Menes, "The East Side-Matrix of the Jewish Labor Movement," *Ibid.*, p. 369; Goren, *New York Jews and the Quest for Community*, ch. 9; Sherman, "Nationalism, Secularism and Religion," p. 356.

²³ Sherman, "Labor in the Totality of Jewish Life;" Menes, "The East Side".

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 377.

shorter, basically interpretive pieces, or as part of studies that are devoted primarily to other subjects. If work proceeds on the nature of the workers' lives within the immigrant Jewish community, the raw material will emerge for a full-scale assessment of the relationship between major characteristics of that community and the Jewish labor movement.

The economic structure of the needle trades themselves is also a vital factor in explaining the activities of the unions in these industries. Some of the policies adopted by the garment unions relate directly to the need of both employers and workers to control non-union shops; to the relatively small size of enterprises in the needle trades when compared to companies in major American industries; to the seasonality of production, which made job control even more crucial an issue; to the lack of welfare capitalism on the part of the small employers, which left the field open for unions; and to the relatively mild impact of strikes in the needle trades upon the general public.²⁵ This last factor, combined with the poor labor conditions in the industries, roused considerable support from reformers, and even led to some positive response from conservative sources. When such considerations are combined with the ideology of the leadership, and the characteristics of the Jewish work force, the total picture is before us. The best synthesis of these factors to date is by Melvyn Dubofsky for the period 1910-1918 in New York City.²⁶ Work of this type for other periods and places needs to be done.

Jewish labor must be studied not only within the broader Jewish community, but within the larger American scene as well.²⁷ The Jewish labor movement may have influenced the practices of American labor unions, but influences from beyond the Jewish community were also important in the activities of the unions that contained the bulk of the organized Jewish work force. Jewish labor leaders always planned to integrate their unions fully into the larger American labor movement; but their socialist ideology, and in the case of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the problem of dual unionism, slowed this development.²⁸ Such an inte-

²⁵ Carpenter, *Competition and Collective Bargaining*; Melvyn Dubofsky, *When Workers Organize: New York City in the Progressive Era* (Amherst: 1968); Selig Perlman, "America and the Jewish Labor Movement: A Case of Mutual Illumination," in Davis and Meyer, *The Writing of American Jewish History*, p. 95.

²⁶ Dubofsky, *When Workers Organize*.

²⁷ On this point, see Hardman, "The Jewish Labor Movement in the United States," especially pp. 122-130; Perlman, "America and the Jewish Labor Movement," p. 100; Berman, "A Cursory View of the Jewish Labor Movement," p. 94.

²⁸ C. Bezael Sherman, *The Jew Within American Society: A Study in Ethnic Individu-*

gration ultimately did take place as the radicalism of Jewish labor leaders cooled by the 1930's while the climactic events of the Great Depression led the American labor movement to a greater acceptance of industrial unionism, political action and other features of unionism in the needle trades. Today Jewish labor is American labor—one can make no real distinction.²⁹ However, examination of the relationship between Jewish labor and the broader American labor movement, in the years when there was a separate identity, can be most useful.

Jewish workers created a defineable labor movement, but so did the Germans. A study of differences and similarities would be rewarding. The Finns shared many of the characteristics of Jewish labor, but they did not dominate an industry. As a result, the Finns failed to achieve control over a national labor organization. How many of the differences between Jewish labor leaders and the heads of the craft unions—who were often of English or Irish origin—flowed from differences in the experiences of the ethnic groups? What portion of the differences is related to conditions in specific industries or to changes in the American economy as a whole? Is the continued leadership of the unions in the needle trades by Jews, even after the work force has become largely non-Jewish, as significant a development when it is viewed against the broader situation? Irish and German labor leaders also continued to maintain leadership despite changes in the ethnic make-up of their unions. Clearly, a study of Jewish labor, within the broader American situation, is a valuable conceptual tool.

To date relatively little has been done in this area. Melvyn Dubofsky's fine study of New York City in the Progressive era is based upon a comparison of the Jewish trade unions and other labor organizations.³⁰ John Laslett has provided us with a valuable comparative study of socialism in a number of American unions including the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.³¹ The comparative approach once again provides insights that would

ality (Detroit: 1961), pp. 166-167. Will Herberg has pointed out that the rank and file of Jewish workers sought acceptance within the larger American community. However, America often failed to reciprocate. See Will Herberg, "Jewish Labor Movement in the United States: Early Years to World War I," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, V (July, 1952), 523.

²⁹ This point was strongly made in the 1950's. See the remarks by David Saposs (pp. 371-372) and by Philip Taft (p. 387) in "Proceedings of the First Session of the Editorial Advisory Council of the YIVO History of the Jewish Labor Movement in the United States (Sept. 13, 1953)," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science*, IX (1954).

³⁰ Dubofsky, *When Workers Organize*.

³¹ John Laslett, *Labor and the Left: A Study of Socialist and Radical Influences in the American Labor Movement, 1881-1924* (New York: 1970).

not appear in studies that focussed only on one or another of these unions.

Two articles in this volume seek to continue work on the relationship between Jewish labor and the broader American labor movement. Robert Asher discusses the role played by the needle trades unions within the American Federation of Labor. He believes that their influence within the organizational structure of the A.F.L. was minor even though, by virtue of size, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union should have had a greater role. Asher clearly indicates the reasons for this lack of influence, and he surveys the complex relationship between the American Federation of Labor and the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. The article reveals once again the usefulness of viewing the Jewish labor movement within a larger framework.

Sheila Polishook's contribution to this volume explores another aspect of the relationship between the American Federation of Labor and Jewish labor. She discusses the little known support of Zionism by the A.F.L. in 1917, and the reasons for such a step when the socialist Jewish labor leaders opposed Zionism on ideological grounds. The analysis of Samuel Gompers' motivation, and the relationship between the activities of organized labor and the policies of the Wilson Administration, is most valuable. The importance of the connection between Jewish and American concerns becomes quite apparent. Thus one can only renew the calls made over the last two decades that more serious attention be devoted to the relationship between Jewish labor and the general American labor movement.

In the literature on the American Jewish labor movement, only two books have attempted to provide a comprehensive account. The history of the early Jewish labor movement, edited originally by Elias Tcherikower, and later translated from Yiddish and abridged in the English version by Aaron Antonovsky, is a fine scholarly effort that connects the institutions of the Jewish labor movement to the conditions of Jewish workers, both in Europe before the passage and after their arrival in the United States.³² Unfortunately, it ends in 1890, and efforts to continue this history have thus far failed to produce the remaining volume.³³

³² Aaron Antonovsky, *The Early Jewish Labor Movement in the United States* (New York: 1961). On the European background, also see Ezra Mendelsohn, *Class Struggle in the Pale: The Formative Years of the Jewish Workers' Movement in Tsarist Russia* (Cambridge, England: 1970).

³³ See footnote 29. In the late 1960's, Ezra Mendelsohn tried to bring together a number of scholars, under the auspices of YIVO, to prepare a companion volume to the original one edited by Tcherikower. To date, this volume has not appeared.

In the absence of a comprehensive scholarly account, Melech Epstein's two volumes remain as the only work that presents the total history of the American Jewish labor movement.³⁴ The volumes have the virtues of completeness in time coverage, and attention to the full breadth of the Jewish labor movement. This includes not only trade unions and radical parties, but fraternal organizations and the press. However, the weaknesses are also quite clear. The books are overly descriptive and so poorly foot-noted that they provide little basis for further scholarly investigation. In addition, the focus is squarely on the Jewish labor movement—not Jewish labor—with only minimal connections to the broader characteristics of the Jewish community or the American labor movement. Thus after more than a half century of work on American Jewish labor, we still await a comprehensive, scholarly and definitive treatment. Hopefully we will not have to wait much longer for such a volume to appear.

³⁴ Melech Epstein, *Jewish Labor in U.S.A.* (New York: 1969). This revised edition contains the two volumes originally published in 1950 and 1953 plus a new Preface that updates the work.

Jewish Unions and the American Federation of Labor Power Structure, 1903-1935

By ROBERT ASHER

Although labor historians have analyzed in great detail the policies and activities of the American Federation of Labor, they have not systematically investigated the character of the power structure of the AFL. This paper attempts to shed some light on the nature of that power structure in the years between 1903 and 1935 by focusing on the modest question: During these years, was the representation of the Jewish unions¹ in the AFL's power structure roughly proportional to their size? In answering this question this paper will hopefully broaden the historian's understanding of the relationship between the Jewish and the larger American labor movement. Particular attention will be given to the interaction between Samuel Gompers and the leaders of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, the largest Jewish union in the AFL throughout the period under consideration.

The two most important bodies in the AFL power structure were the Executive Council, elected by the delegates to the annual convention, and the convention's Resolutions Committee, which was appointed by the President. All of the elected officers of the AFL — the President, the Secretary, the Treasurer and the Vice-Presidents — were members of the Executive Council, which was the most powerful group in the AFL. Governing the AFL between conventions, the Executive Council settled jurisdictional disputes, directed organizing activities, designated forms to be placed on the boycott list and formulated recommendations on policy issues that were referred to it for study by the annual convention.²

Second in importance was the Resolutions Committee, since virtually all important convention actions, particularly those

¹ We have defined Jewish unions as those unions with a substantial number of Jewish members that are led by Jewish officers.

² Several historians have pointed to the crucial importance of the Resolutions Committee. See William M. Dick, *Labor and Socialism in America* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1972) p. 129; Irving Bernstein, *Turbulent Years: A History of the American Worker 1933-1941* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), p. 365, 396; Walter Galenson, *The CIO Challenge to the AFL* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 623; *Executive Council Minute Books*, held by the Secretary-Treasurer of the A.F.L.-C.I.O. in Washington, D.C.

dealing with basic policies, were submitted to the Resolutions Committee for consideration. The recommendations of the Resolutions Committee exercised considerable influence on the convention delegates because the Committee reports determined the manner of debate on controversial policy questions. These recommendations were also important because the Committee members were known to reflect the opinions of the President and the Executive Council.

For most of the period under consideration there were three Jewish unions in the AFL: The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (I.L.G.W.U.), the International Fur Workers' Union of the United States and Canada, and the United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers. (The Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America was not admitted to the AFL until 1933.) After having been totally excluded from positions in both groups from 1903 to 1933, the I.L.G.W.U. was placed on both the Executive Council and the Resolutions Committee in 1934. The Fur Workers and the Cloth Hat Workers were such small unions that one would not normally have expected them to have been part of the governing circles of the AFL. The I.L.G.W.U., however, was a major AFL union during this period, being one of the five largest between 1911 and 1919, and one of the ten largest from 1920 to 1928. The battle between the Communists and the Socialists for control of the I.L.G.W.U. from 1928 to 1933, together with the effects of the Depression, decimated the union. It was not until the passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act that the Ladies' Garment Workers' began a period of rejuvenation. In 1934 the I.L.G.W.U. was the third largest union in the AFL, and it maintained the same position in 1935. Assuming that the Federation should have accorded power and influence within its organization to all major unions, the long-term exclusion of the I.L.G.W.U. from its power structure was not in accordance with the principle of democratic representation. Additional analysis is necessary, however, to determine whether the I.L.G.W.U.'S long period of isolation was unique.³

Between 1903 and 1933 the AFL's Executive Council consistently included representatives of unions that were not among the fifteen largest unions in the Federation. (See Chart I). Since the Executive Council never comprised more than eleven members during this period, many of the largest fifteen unions in the Feder-

³ The size of the AFL unions was computed by the number of votes allotted to each union at the annual convention. All data on officers of the AFL, members of the Resolutions Committee and voting strength was taken from information in the *Report of Proceedings* of the annual AFL conventions. (Hereafter cited as AFL, *Proceedings*).

Chart I

UNIONS ON THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL NOT AMONG THE FIFTEEN
LARGEST UNIONS IN THE AFL

<i>Year</i>	<i>A. Number of Unions Below Rank of Fifteenth Largest AFL Union</i>	<i>B. Number of Members of Executive Council</i>
1903-4	4	11
1905-8	3	11
1909-11	5	11
1912-13	5	11
1914-16	5	11
1917	4	11
1918	5	11
1919-22	6	11
1923	4	11
1924-7	5	11
1928	2	11
1929	2	11
1930-33	2	11

ation were obviously not part of the Council. (The Resolutions Committee, on the other hand, contained fifteen members for most of this period.) It would have been surprising if these positions had been filled solely on the basis of union size. Clearly, talented labor leaders who were officers in medium and small sized unions should not have been excluded from the top positions of the Federation. Still, it does appear somewhat strange that a major union should not have been represented over such a long period of time. Chart II lists the names of the largest individual unions in the AFL from 1903 to 1933. Of Group A, only the Painters and the I.L.G.W.U. do not appear on the Executive Council. But while the I.L.G.W.U. was also excluded from the Resolutions Committee, the Painters were represented on this Committee in 1908 and from 1916 to 1933. Of Group B, only the Railway Clerks were not represented on the Executive Council, nor were they appointed to the Resolutions Committee. And of Group C, both the Bricklayers and the Brewers were completely excluded from the two groups. In addition to the I.L.G.W.U., there were therefore only three major unions that were not represented on the Federation's power structure between 1903 and 1933. Further comparison indicates that the Brewers were among the fifteen largest unions for 15 years, the Bricklayers for 17 years, the Railway Clerks for 11 years and the Ladies' Garment Workers for 18 years. However, neither the Brewers, the Bricklayers nor the Railway Clerks were ever among

Chart II

GROUP A.	Unions among the top five AFL unions in membership for at least five years.
	United Mine Workers, United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, International Association of Machinists, Brotherhood of Painters of America, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Brotherhood of Railway Carmen, Street and Electric Railway Employees' Amalgamated Association, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.
	Total-8
GROUP B.	Unions among the top ten AFL unions for ten or more years.
	All of Group A.
	Brotherhood of Railway Clerks, American Federation of Musicians, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, International Typographical Union.
	Total-12
GROUP C.	Unions among the top fifteen AFL unions for ten or more years.
	All of Group B.
	Cigarmakers' International Union, International Union of Brewery Workmen, Bricklayers, Masons & Plasterers' International Union of America, United Garment Workers of America, Hotel and Restaurant Employees International Alliance, International Molders' Union of North America.
	Total-18

the five largest unions in the AFL, while the I.L.G.W.U. was in that category for nine years. The inescapable conclusion therefore is that between 1903 and 1933 the I.L.G.W.U. was the only union of such size that was completely excluded from the governing bodies of the AFL, a phenomenon that requires explanation.

The Jewish unions in the AFL had a predominantly Jewish leadership and a membership composed largely of Jews, Italians and other "new immigrant" workers. The Jewish labor leaders were almost all Socialists, and these unions regularly endorsed proposals for large scale industrial union organizing, government sponsored social insurance programs and independent labor political action, usually by supporting the Socialist Party. These features distinguished the Jewish unions from the majority of the AFL unions, which were led by and whose membership consisted of native stock and "old immigrant" Irish Catholics and Protestants. The latter usually favored craft unionism, opposed social insurance, advocated the drastic limitation of the "new immigration," dabbled either in Democratic and Republican Party politics or supported the Federation's non-partisan political policy, and were vehemently anti-Socialist. Consequently, to the typical AFL labor leader the

Jewish unions represented an amalgam of all the groups and ideologies he despised.⁴

It is difficult to find instances of strictly "racial" or religious anti-Semitic reactions to the Jewish Labor movement. The existing histories of Jewish trade unions emphasize the economic and nativist basis of the hostility of "old immigrant" and American born workers and labor leaders towards Jewish workers and Jewish unions.⁵ In 1918 and 1919 David Saposs conducted a large number of field interviews with Jewish and non-Jewish labor leaders as part of a study of the impact of immigrants on the American labor movement. Several of the Jewish labor leaders interviewed appear to go out of their way to deny that "racial" anti-Semitism was behind the hostility of many AFL leaders towards Jewish immigrant workers. These views coincide with the conclusions of historians who have noted that urban anti-Semitism in the United States was based primarily on economic and status anxieties. But as John Higham has indicated, as the rate of the "new immigration" greatly increased in the first two decades of the twentieth century, "a strong group consciousness crystallized among old-stock Americans" and "concrete hostilities fused into a broadly racist ideology."⁶ With racial and ethnic prejudice against "new immigrants" so rampant in the United States after 1900, it is likely that "racial" anti-Semitism, based upon popular stereotypes of Jews and the identification of Jewish immigrants with the "inferior," "new

⁴ Marc Karson, *American Labor Unions and Politics 1900-1918* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1958).

⁵ Melech Epstein, *Jewish Labor in the U.S.A.* (New York: KTAV, 1969); Louis Levine, *The Women's Garment Workers* (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1924); Joel I. Seidman, *The Needle Trades* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1942); James Oneal, *A History of the Amalgamated Ladies' Cutters' Union Local 10* (New York: Local 10, 1927); Donald B. Robinson, *Spotlight on a Union: The Story of the United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers International Union* (New York: The Dial Press, 1948).

⁶ Interview with H. Schneid, December 20, 1918; interview with Mr. Schoolman, December 24, 1918, interview with S. Skolnik, March 12, 1919; Box 6, David Saposs Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin; Oscar Handlin, "American Views of the Jew at the Opening of the Twentieth Century," in Leonard Dinnerstein, ed., *Antisemitism in the United States* (New York: Hold, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), pp. 48-57; John Higham, "American Antisemitism Historically Reconsidered," *ibid.*, pp. 63-77. In 1918 and 1919 David Saposs was the chief field investigator for William Leiserson, who had been commissioned to write a book on immigrants in the labor force for the Carnegie Corporation's Study of Methods of Americanization. The materials gathered by Saposs were hardly utilized by Leiserson in his book *Adjusting Immigrant and Industry* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1924). Saposs analyzed his material in an unpublished manuscript, "The Immigrant and the Labor Movement," dated September 18, 1919. There is a copy in Box 6 of the Saposs Papers.

immigrant" races from Southern and Eastern Europe, contributed to the anti-Semitism of many union leaders.

In a 1967 oral history interview, David Saposs provided two excellent examples of the anti-Semitism of Irish-Catholic AFL trade union leaders. At the 1922 AFL convention Saposs and Benjamin M. Selekman were sitting at the back of the meeting hall. In Saposs' words

. . . practically all the building trades fellows were sitting there, and we knew them, we'd go to the conventions regularly so we knew them. Gompers made some sort of a decision which displeased them . . . Of course, they were intolerant so they burst out amongst themselves "the goddam shenee." And they knew that Ben Selekman and I were Jews and they knew that we wouldn't be offended. You see, that's their lingo, and so Ben and I said, "well, why do you keep on electing Gompers for President?" "Well, they said, "we haven't anybody else that could do the job."⁷

Saposs also notes that the Irish leaders of the AFL opposed Socialism because the Catholic Church opposed Socialism. The Irish unionists

also became pretty largely enraged because the socialists were much more articulate and made life unpleasant for them in any kind of conference that took place and so on. And the only one who was sufficiently alert and well-informed and had what they would call the gift of gab to protect them was Gompers. So they accepted Gompers as their leader although Gompers tells a lot of stories about how they privately abused him because he was a Jew.⁸

The official AFL position favoring a literacy test to restrict immigration has been well documented by historians.⁹ The period from 1900 to 1920 is also replete with examples of individual craft unions which refused to organize or to admit already organized groups of "new immigrant" workers. The basis for this attitude was a desire to monopolize all high paying jobs in the trade, fear that the inclusion of immigrant workers would lower trade standards (especially wages), or the belief that immigrant workers were poor trade union material who would not keep up their dues payments. Equally important was the concern of many craft union leaders that "new immigrant" workers were untrustworthy and uncontrollable because of their belief in or suscepti-

⁷ "An Interview with David Saposs," conducted by Alice M. Hoffman, 1967. Box 26, Saposs Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land, Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925*, (New York: Atheneum, 1963).

bility to radicalism. Incorporating such workers into the craft unions might threaten the established policies and the leadership positions of the officers.¹⁰

Since the Jewish-led, Socialist-oriented Jewish unions did organize these "new immigrant" groups, the Jewish unions and their leaders were suspect in the eyes of many union leaders. They consequently did not want avowed Socialists and advocates of the militant organization of "new immigrant" workers to gain access to the power structure of the AFL.

The formation of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America by militant Jewish labor leaders and workers who seceded from the United Garment Workers probably also influenced the attitudes of AFL union leaders towards the Jewish unions that remained within the federation. The Jewish unions supported the Amalgamated's challenge to the legitimacy of the United Garment Workers leadership at the 1914 AFL convention. President Gompers and the overwhelming majority of union leaders, on the other hand, fearful of secession movements by dissident elements within their own unions, adamantly opposed the recognition of the "dual unionism" of the A.C.W.A.¹¹

It is very likely that the election, in 1918, of Thomas A. Rickert, the president of the United Garment Workers, to the Executive Council, constituted a demonstration of support for the principle of "legitimate" trade unionism and was a symbolic rejection of the "dual unionism" of the A.C.W.A. With Rickert seated, the addition of a second union from the needle trades (in which the Jewish unions were concentrated) became less likely since the Executive Council usually did not include two unions from the same general craft. Challenges to membership on the Executive Council were infrequent. Because the leaders of the Jewish unions, and particularly the I.L.G.W.U., knew that the chances for a candidate from the Jewish unions successfully opposing Rickert for the "needle

¹⁰ For example, see Jere L. Sullivan, General Secretary Treasurer of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' International Alliance to David Saposs, November 7, 1918; Ralph V. Brandt, Secretary-Treasurer of the Wood, Wire and Metal Lathers International Union to David Saposs, November 14, 1918; John P. Burke, President-Secretary of the International Brotherhood of Pulp, Sulphite and Paper Mill Workers to David Saposs, November 20, 1918; Interview with Phillip Zausner, Secretary, Painters, Paperhangers and Plasters District Council, New York, New York, March 13, 1919; interview with George W. Perkins, President International Cigar Makers Union, Chicago, December 23, 1918; interview with J.E. Roach, head of New York office, AFL, February 17, 1919; Box 6, Saposs Papers.

¹¹ Epstein, *op. cit.*, vol II, pp; 48-9; Matthew Josephson, *Sidney Hillman* (New York, Doubleday, 1952), pp. 96-106.

trades" seat on the Executive Council were virtually nil, they did not risk the possible backlash of a direct challenge to Rickert.

Prior to 1934, the Jewish unions did not publicly comment on their exclusion from the AFL power structure. At the 1934 convention of the I.L.G.W.U. the delegates endorsed a resolution calling for the enlargement of the Federation's Executive Council to include the major unions that had been excluded from the ranks of the highest governing body of the American labor movement. In the same year, the AFL increased the size of the Executive Council and the convention elected David Dubinsky, president of the I.L.G.W.U., to this group.¹²

The decline in hostility towards the Jewish labor unions may be attributed in part to changes in the policies of the national unions in the Federation and also to the new public image of the Jewish unions. By 1934 the AFL had virtually abandoned its earlier philosophy and now supported unemployment insurance and government intervention in the collective bargaining process. The Jewish unions, therefore, no longer appeared to be as radical as they had before. Equally important was the hard, successful battle waged by the Socialist leaders of the two major Jewish unions, the I.L.G.W.U. and the A.C.W.A., against Communist elements, which helped establish their credentials as anti-extremists. The leaders of the immigrant unions had demonstrated their "Americanism."¹³

Despite the I.L.G.W.U.'s exclusion from the AFL's power structure from 1911 to 1933, the I.L.G.W.U. leaders worked hard at maintaining amicable relations with the Federation, especially Presidents Gompers and Green. The Rosenberg-Dyche administration (1908-1914) was committed to the political and economic programs favored by Gompers. In 1912 the conservative leaders of the I.L.G.W.U. backed Gompers in repelling the challenge of Socialist Max Hayes for the presidency of the AFL and also voted with the Gompers forces on the issue of industrial unionism. But the Socialist leaders who came to power in the I.L.G.W.U. in 1914 were deeply committed to a program of industrial unionism, social insurance and independent political action that differed sharply from the policies of the AFL administration. Still, from the very

¹² I.L.G.W.U., *Proceedings*, 1934, p. 96.

¹³ Irving Bernstein, *The Lean Years: A History of the American Worker 1920-1933* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966), pp. 492-503; Philip Taft, *The AFL From the Death of Gompers to the Merger* (New York: Harper, 1959), pp. 35-37; Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, *The American Communist Party* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), pp. 245-251; Philip Taft, "David Dubinsky and the Labor Movement," *Labor History*, IX (Spring, 1968 Special Supplement), 28-29.

beginning the I.L.G.W.U. Socialists pursued a program of minimum confrontation with the top officers of the Federation.¹⁴

Although favoring industrial unionism, the I.L.G.W.U. avoided the biting, personality-oriented sarcasm used by Socialists like Victor Berger, Max Hayes and Adolph Germer when debating the issue with the pro-Gompers forces. In 1914, the I.L.G.W.U. delegates to the AFL convention voted unanimously in favor of a resolution calling for eight-hour day legislation. But when it became clear that the Federation would not adopt this recommendation, the I.L.G.W.U. avoided a confrontation with Gompers on this issue by abstaining from the vote at the 1915 convention. Despite the unpopularity of Samuel Gompers' views on trade unionism among the rank-and-file of the I.L.G.W.U., the union's delegates supported Gompers at the 1921 AFL convention when John L. Lewis ran against him for the presidency.¹⁵

At the I.L.G.W.U.'s conventions, the Socialist majority led by Benjamin Schlesinger and Morris Sigman resisted the attempts of the left to pass resolutions criticizing the AFL. Thus, in the aftermath of the unsuccessful strike of New York City transit workers in 1916, the radical delegates at the I.L.G.W.U. convention, enraged because the AFL had not called for a general strike to support the transit workers, introduced a resolution criticizing the policies of the AFL Executive Council as "timid, conservative, inefficient and inconsistent." These delegates also demanded that at the next Federation convention the I.L.G.W.U. introduce a resolution calling for "a more radical agitation of the principles of industrial general strikes . . ." Schlesinger opposed the resolution and defended the Executive Council. The I.L.G.W.U.'s Resolutions Committee was asked to rework the resolution, but the proposal was not reported back to the floor. Similarly in 1922, the Resolutions Committee blocked a recommendation instructing the I.L.G.W.U.'s delegates to the AFL convention to vote against all candidates for office who were members of the National Civic Federation.¹⁶

The Socialist leaders of the I.L.G.W.U. minimized their conflicts with AFL officers because the former needed and received considerable support from the latter. In 1903 Gompers assisted the

¹⁴ AFL, *Proceedings*, 1912, pp. 311-312, 374-375; David Saposs, *Left Wing Unionism* (New York: International Publishers, 1926), pp. 37-47, argues that the non-confrontation policy of the Socialist unions and the Socialist Party began after World War I.

¹⁵ AFL, *Proceedings*, 1911, pp. 217-258; 1914, 443-444; 1915, 492-503; 1922, p. 416; I.L.G.W.U., *Report of the General Executive Board*, 1922, p. 100; David Saposs, "The Line-Up at Cincinnati," *Labor Age*, II (September, 1922), 18-20.

¹⁶ I.L.G.W.U., *Proceedings*, 1916, pp. 104-5, 155-6; 1922, p. 70.

I.L.G.W.U. in unionizing corset makers in the Midwest and then halted an attempt by the corset makers to secede from the I.L.G.W.U. Two years later the Executive Council sent an AFL organizer to Cleveland to work for the I.L.G.W.U. During the bloody reefer makers strike in New York City in 1907, Gompers utilized his position as head of the AFL to successfully mediate the dispute. The recognition that the I.L.G.W.U. gained from this victory provided the momentum that led to the 1909 and 1910 events that firmly established the I.L.G.W.U. as a major force in the women's clothing industry in New York. The vital assistance tendered by Gompers and AFL Secretary Frank Morrison to the I.L.G.W.U. in the 1910 dressmakers strike has been well-documented by Melvyn Dubofsky and Hyman Berman.¹⁷

Assistance from the AFL continued after 1910. In 1914, Gompers spoke at I.L.G.W.U. strike rallies in Philadelphia; in 1915, he assigned an organizer to Michigan to unionize ladies garment workers, and also helped the I.L.G.W.U. organize the women's cloak makers of Chicago. One year later Gompers assisted the I.L.G.W.U. during the major strikes that followed the collapse of the Protocol of Peace in New York by advising Schlesinger on strategy, appearing at strike rallies, securing money from the Executive Council to fight the conspiracy prosecutions of the New York strikers, and taking a personal hand in the negotiations that ended the strikes on terms favorable to the Ladies' Garment Workers. In 1917, he helped the I.L.G.W.U. win a strike in Chicago by personally making a case for union recognition in a talk with Julius Rosenwald, the head of Sears, Roebuck and Company.¹⁸

In 1921 Gompers pressured both Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover and Secretary of Labor James J. Davis to help the I.L.G.W.U. in its confrontation with the clothing manufacturers of Philadelphia. Since the increasing use of non-union out-of-town shops by

¹⁷ Samuel Gompers to Charles H. Stolp, August 3, 1903; Gompers to Bernard Braff, August 15, 1903; Braff to Gompers, September 15, 1903; Herman Grossman to Samuel Gompers, June 11, 1907; Correspondence with Affiliates, A.F.L.-C.I.O. Archives, Washington, D.C. Epstein, *op. cit.*, vol II, pp. 383-384; Levine, *op. cit.*, p. 127; Hyman Berman, "Era of Protocol, A Chapter in the History of the I.L.G.W.U., 1910-1916," (doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1956); Melvyn Dubofsky, *When Workers Organize: New York City in the Progressive Era* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1968), pp. 48-60.

¹⁸ Gompers to AFL Executive Council, September 12, 1914; Frank Morrison to Morris Sigman, March 31, 1915; Benjamin Schlesinger to Gompers, September 29, 1915; Gompers to Schlesinger, June 27, 1916; Gompers to J.P. Mitchell, July 3, 1916; Schlesinger to Gompers, September 29, 1916; Gompers to Schlesinger, April 11, 1917; Correspondence with Affiliates, A.F.L.-C.I.O. Archives, Washington, D.C.; I.L.G.W.U., *Report of the General Executive Board*, 1916, p. 60.

clothing jobbers threatened to undermine the I.L.G.W.U.'s strength in New York City, the AFL's field organizers and central labor bodies were in a position to help the I.L.G.W.U. in areas where it could not afford to maintain its own men.

Throughout the struggle between the Socialists and the Communists for control of the I.L.G.W.U., Presidents Gompers and William Green (who became president of the AFL after Gompers' death in 1914) and the Executive Council sided with the Socialists. With the I.L.G.W.U. in desperate financial straits after the disastrous, Communist-led 1926 strike in New York, the Executive Council helped raise \$25,000 for the I.L.G.W.U., and also lent the union \$9,600 to pay its per capita tax for 1927, enabling the delegates of the I.L.G.W.U. to take their seats at the Federation's annual convention.¹⁹

Although Benjamin Schlesinger and Morris Sigman, who led the I.L.G.W.U. from 1914 until 1932, were Socialists they were also pragmatic trade unionists. They disagreed with the political and economic policies of the AFL but they well understood Samuel Gompers' famous dictum: "The overshadowing problem of the American labor movement has always been the problem of staying organized."²⁰ The I.L.G.W.U.'s leaders realized that their union needed a "respectable" image to convince employers that the union, despite its radical political and economic pronouncements, was trustworthy. Gompers and the AFL, with their image of conservatism and respectability, were therefore of great value to the I.L.G.W.U. As executive officers of a union that exercised many entrepreneurial functions (to maintain the stability of the women's clothing industry) Schlesinger and Sigman were accustomed to compromising and appreciated the benefits to be gained from dealing with employers in a civil, evenhanded way. Thus, they were psychologically prepared for working with Gompers and the AFL on a cordial, pragmatic basis.

The Socialist leaders of the I.L.G.W.U. also went out of their way to praise Samuel Gompers for the aid he and the AFL gave to the women's garment workers. At the 1920, 1922 and 1924 I.L.G.W.U. conventions they characterized Gompers as "our friend

¹⁹ Fannia M. Cohn to Gompers, October 7, 27, 1921; William Green to Abraham Baroff, September 8, 20, 1927; Correspondence with Affiliates, A.F.L.-C.I.O. Archives; Washington, D.C.; I.L.G.W.U., *Report of the General Executive Board*, 1924, pp. 28-9; 1928, p. 323; David Saposs, "Out of the Beaten Path: The Denver Convention of the American Federation of Labor," *Survey*, XLVI (July 16, 1921), 514; Taft, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.

²⁰ Josephson, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

and constant supporter" and thanked the AFL for the assistance it rendered "whenever we have called upon them in time of need." In a revealing article in the November 1922 issue of *Labor Age*, Benjamin Schlesinger defended Gompers against criticism from the left by noting that as a fraternal delegate to the 1922 Trade Union Congress he observed that British labor leaders admired Gompers as a capable labor leader. He also pointed out that British trade unionists tolerated the different policies of the AFL because they understood that conditions in the United States were not the same as those in Great Britain.²¹

In keeping with the I.L.G.W.U.'s policy of not seeking confrontations with the trade unionists of the AFL on issues that did not seem resolvable, the I.L.G.W.U. simply ignored the New York State Federation of Labor (N.Y.S.F.L.). The latter maintained close ties with the Democratic Party in New York, while the former supported the Socialist Party. Rather than participate in the affairs of an organization they regarded as a tool of Tammany Hall, the I.L.G.W.U. and the other Jewish unions did not bother to send delegates to the annual N.Y.S.F.L. convention and relied upon the Socialist Party to work for progressive labor legislation in New York. It was not until 1935 that the I.L.G.W.U. sent two delegates to the N.Y.S.F.L. convention.²²

Until the period of the 1930's, the Jewish unions were largely in, but not of, the mainstream of the American labor movement. Recognizing their differences with the AFL, the Jewish unions co-

²¹ I.L.G.W.U., *Proceedings*, 1922, p. 172; 1924, p. 173. In 1920 the *Report of the General Executive Board*, p. 71, praised Gompers and Frank Morrison for their co-operation and noted that "while differing in principle with many of the fundamental concepts of the leading minds of the Federation, we are an integral part of the great labor movement of America, which knows no color, sex, race or creed." Benjamin Schlesinger, "Personal Glimpses of British Labor," *Labor Age*, II (November, 1922), 19.

²² New York State Federation of Labor, *Proceedings*, 1900-1940. A. H. Raskin, "Dubinsky: Herald of Change," *Labor History*, (Spring, 1968 Special Supplement), 18-19. When the Cloth Hat and Millinery Workers merged with the United Hatters in 1934, the new union sent delegates to the conventions of the N.Y.S.F.L., as the Hatters had done previously. Thus Jewish labor was represented in the N.Y.S.F.L. beginning in 1934. An important example of the ill-feeling that existed between the Jewish unions and the N.Y.S.F.L. was the physical assault by N.Y.S.F.L. President James Holland on I.L.G.W.U. vice-president Jacob Heller at a meeting of New York City unions on September 10, 1920. The Jewish unions were particularly annoyed with Holland because in the Spring of 1920 he had launched a militant anti-immigrant, anti-radical crusade in New York. Oneal, *op. cit.*, pp. 246-249. Abraham Baroff to AFL Executive Council, October 2, 1920, Gompers to Baroff, October 6, 1920, Correspondence with Affiliates, A.F.L.-C.I.O. Archives, Washington, D.C.

operated with the Federation when they could, but went their own way politically and in their attempts to build a welfare state through union institutions and trade agreements with employers. Between 1914 and 1934 the Jewish unions drifted slowly towards the right while the AFL moved towards the left. By the end of the period under discussion there had been enough convergence to allow for the admission of the A.C.W.A. into the AFL and for the entrance of representatives of the I.L.G.W.U. into the AFL power structure. The accomplishments of the New Deal Democratic Party accelerated this process, and the Jewish unions moved from support of the Socialist Party to a close alliance with the Democratic Party, which had enacted a flawed, but significant social insurance program. Union leaders in both the AFL and the CIO became as deeply involved in partisan politics as the Jewish unions had been before the 1930's, and enlarged the trade union movement, incorporating many previously neglected "new immigrant" ethnic groups with militant organizing campaigns reminiscent of the drives led by the Jewish unions in 1910, 1914, and 1918-1919. The Jewish labor movement had become "Americanized" and the American labor movement had assimilated many of the "foreign" ideas and practices of the immigrant Jewish labor movement. By 1940 the Jewish labor unions were part of the mainstream of the American labor movement and had been admitted to the power structure of the AFL and the CIO.²³

²³ The most recent analysis of the welfare programs of the Jewish unions is Daniel Nelson, " 'While Waiting for the Government': The Needle Trades Unemployment Insurance Plans," *Labor History*, XI (Fall, 1970), 482-499; Josephson, *op. cit.* When the I.L.G.W.U. rejoined the AFL in 1940, it immediately placed a representative on the Resolutions Committee. In 1946, David Dubinsky, president of the I.L.G.W.U., was elected to the Executive Council. Between 1941 and 1946 the I.L.G.W.U. continued to have a representative on the Resolutions Committee. AFL, *Proceedings*, 1940-1946. From the CIO's inception, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, as one of the largest unions in that organization, was part of the CIO power structure. The A.C.W.A. had a seat on the Committee on Resolutions and A.C.W.A. president Sidney Hillman was elected as one of the three vice-presidents of the CIO. CIO, *Proceedings*, 1938, pp. 28, 272.

The American Federation of Labor, Zionism, and the First World War

By SHEILA STERN POLISHOOK

In several respects the First World War marks a new period in American labor history. Never before had the relationship between government and organized unions become as immediate and mutually dependent. The American Federation of Labor recognized that organized labor had for the first time become a major element in the nation's history. In part this was due to the demands of modern warfare, which required a maximum effort by working people to provide the needs of a total military effort. In addition, the United States' position as the source of supplies for the Entente Powers elevated labor's importance to the same degree that the disruption of war in Europe reduced the productivity of the belligerent countries. There seems little doubt that both the United States government and the American Federation of Labor were well aware of the newly acquired power of the labor movement.¹

Labor's response to the world crisis invited an assessment of its opportunities. President Samuel Gompers of the American Federation of Labor needed no encouragement to adopt a pragmatic attitude during the initial period of neutrality and the ensuing era of warfare. Labor had much to gain under the circumstances. The right to organize, extension of the eight hour day, official participation in government agencies and commissions, repudiation of unilaterally imposed contracts by employers under war emergencies, maintenance of the laws safeguarding women and children, equal pay for women, these and other goals dominated Gompers' thinking when he prepared the way for labor to strengthen its position during this time of crisis. In turn, Gompers was well aware of the fact that earlier conflicts had impeded the progress of organized labor. "In no previous war has the organized

¹ Marc Karson, *American Labor Unions and Politics, 1900-1918* (Carbondale, Ill.: 1958), pp. 94-95; [AFL], *American Labor's Position in Peace or in War* (Washington, D.C.: 1917), pp. 1-8, adopted on March 12 by the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, plus representatives of the national and international unions of America, and the railroad brotherhoods, Samuel Gompers Pamphlet File, Library, AFL-CIO Building, Washington, D.C.

labor movement taken a directing part," the AFL Executive Council emphasized in the spring of 1917. "Previous wars, for whatever purpose waged, [only] developed new opportunities for exploiting wage-earners."² The hallmark of organized labor's attitude was to exploit the war situation in order to reinforce its gains of the previous decade.

President Wilson was also aware of the political advantages he might gain from labor support. Major opposition to America's aid to England and its Allies came from forces influential within the labor movement. This was particularly true because labor had in its ranks disproportionate numbers of strongly motivated anti-war ethnic groups, unions sympathetic to a pacifist position, as well as Socialists whose ideological preferences were opposed to both groups of belligerents on the European continent. The government needed labor to help in its efforts to persuade Irish-Americans and German-Americans to support America's posture which strongly favored Great Britain. Of similar advantage was labor's ability to counteract the effect of ideological movements that made Wilson's belligerent neutrality controversial and difficult to sustain. Labor, in other words, was uniquely placed to assist the government where it was weak, while at the same time the government had an unprecedented opportunity to confirm and advance the objectives of the labor movement. The American Federation of Labor, speaking as it did for organized and unorganized workers,³ had a central role to play in labor's novel position of being able to profit from developments in American foreign policy.

The impact of anti-war groups within the American Federation of Labor was substantial. During the First World War labor unity required that AFL support for Wilson's diplomacy be made credible and popular. Among many union locals ethnic and religious forces were powerful and sometimes divisive. The difficulties with Irish-Americans and German-Americans were profound. Even more problematic were the obstacles facing those who tried to secure support for the war among Jewish trade unionists.⁴ The

² [AFL], *American Labor's Position in Peace or in War*, pp. 2-3; Dallas Jones, "The Wilson Administration and Organized Labor, 1912-1919" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cornell University, 1954), pp. 322-384; Ronald Radosh, *American Labor and United States Foreign Policy* (N.Y.: 1969), pp. 3-149.

³ [AFL], *American Labor's Position in Peace or in War*, p. 4.

⁴ There is no single volume which deals with the subject of the labor movement and ethnic problems. Important insights can be obtained from Melvyn Dubofsky, *When Workers Organize; New York City in the Progressive Era* (Amherst, Mass.: 1968); John Laslett, *Labor and the Left; A Study of Socialist and Radical Influences in the American Labor Movement, 1881-1919* (N.Y.: 1970); and Karson, *op. cit.* The religious group

fact that the American Federation of Labor endorsed a Jewish national state in Palestine as a consequence of its interaction with United States diplomacy during the First World War was entirely unexpected.

Labor's position on the so-called "Jewish question" forms a consistent part of its response to ethnic and religious problems within its membership. The American Federation of Labor, for instance, had a uniform record of opposition to prejudice at home and abroad,⁵ which it reaffirmed periodically at the request of various ethnic and religious groups as well as union locals. Its condemnation of anti-Jewish prejudices, therefore, was not unusual. One of the strongest statements came at the 1915 National Convention in San Francisco. The delegates, articulating sensitivities already manifest for others, called on the working class everywhere in the world and foreign governments "to cease discrimination wherever it exists and is now practiced against the Jewish people." A similar pronouncement was made by the AFL Executive Council on February 22, 1916 and reiterated by the National Convention held in Baltimore. Labor's leadership firmly denounced "the injustice and the discrimination inflicted upon the Jewish people."⁶ More specific resolutions occasionally were passed deploring notorious outbursts of anti-Jewish prejudice. In 1919, just after the World War had ended, the AFL denounced "the massacres and brutalities committed upon the Jewish populations of Poland, the Ukraine and other parts of eastern Europe," characterizing them as "inhuman deeds" which deny "full civil and political rights and protection" to the Jews as a national minority.⁷

Associating its condemnation of anti-Jewish prejudice and perse-

most often studied is American Jews. One might consult Elias Tcherikower *et al.*, *The Early Jewish Labor Movement*, translated and revised by Aaron Antonovsky (N.Y.: 1961); Melech Epstein, *Jewish Labor in U.S.A.* (N.Y.: 1950-1953); Hyman Berman, "A Cursory View of the Jewish Labor Movement: An Historiographical Survey," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, LII, 2 (Dec., 1962), 79-93; and Moses Rischin, "The Jewish Labor Movement in America: A Social Interpretation," *Labor History*, IV (Fall, 1963), 227-247.

⁵ There is disagreement on the question of Gompers' and the AFL's views regarding Orientals (Chinese and Japanese) and blacks. Differing positions may be found in Bernard Mandel, *Samuel Gompers* (Kent, Ohio: 1963) and Philip Taft, *The AFL in the Time of Gompers* (N.Y.: 1957).

⁶ Resolution No. 113, *Report of Proceedings of the Thirty-Fifth Annual Convention of the AFL*, 1915, pp. 461-462; Minutes of the Feb. 22, 1916 AFL Executive Council Meeting, Office of the Secretary-Treasurer, AFL-CIO Building, Washington, D.C., pp. 14-16, 48; Resolution No. 118 and report substituted for it, *Report of Proceedings of the Thirty-Sixth Annual Convention of the AFL*, 1916, pp. 392-393.

⁷ Resolution No. 133 and report of the Committee on Resolutions, *Report of Proceedings of the Thirty-Ninth Annual Convention of the AFL*, 1919, pp. 231, 321.

cution with a denial of the "national" rights of the Jewish people represented a new development in labor policy. Never before had the labor movement found a clear connection between the oppression of Jews and the absence of a Jewish national existence. The victims of persecution were now seen as victimized by their lack of statehood. Within this context the American Federation of Labor made an unequivocal if little remembered commitment to a Jewish homeland in Palestine as part of its program of support of the United States entrance into the First World War.⁸

There can be little doubt that the AFL sponsorship of a Jewish national state grew out of its position in favor of national autonomy for oppressed minorities. This stand on the nationality question had many advantages for labor. It provided a vehicle whereby domestic ethnic groups might be motivated to support the war. More importantly, it gave the war effort a moral fervor by connecting the end to the historic persecution of European minorities with the autonomy and statehood of subject peoples. At its 1917 Buffalo Convention, the AFL gave "unqualified support" to America's entry into the war "to secure for the small nationalities the right to live their own lives on their own soil, and to develop their own culture under free national auspices."⁹ This was entirely consistent with Gompers' own stated position in which the self-determination of oppressed peoples became a crusade for a new world order.

The 1917 resolution also set the pattern for labor's traditional support of Jewish statehood. The Buffalo delegates recognized "the legitimate claims of the Jewish people for the establishment of a national homeland in Palestine on a basis of self-government,"¹⁰ an historic position in its time not only because it applied the doctrine of self-determination to Jews, but also because it placed the locale for that determination in the Middle East. By an overwhelming vote the convention urged President Wilson to negotiate articles of peace ending the great war that would honor the right of the Jewish people to their own homeland. The Buffalo Convention initiated the first stage of organized labor's long-standing commitment to Zionism.

One essential fact in the adoption of these resolutions on Jewish statehood and the creation of a Zionist homeland in Palestine is

⁸ "Report of the AFL Executive Council concerning American Alliance for Labor and Democracy," *Report of Proceedings of the Thirty-Seventh Annual Convention of the AFL*, 1917, p. 100.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

that AFL policy was not governed by the predominance of Jewish leaders within the ranks of organized labor. Although most resolutions dealing with anti-Jewish discrimination were introduced by Jewish delegates, in each instance they were approved by conventions overwhelmingly composed of Roman Catholics and delegates of other Christian denominations.¹¹ A majority of the membership of the AFL consisted of foreign-born peoples who had come over to America in the most recent waves of Irish, German and Eastern European Catholic and Jewish immigration. At least half of the officers of the AFL Executive Council and the presidents of sixty-two international unions between 1906-18 were Roman Catholic. The only member of the AFL Executive Council of Jewish origin was its President, Samuel Gompers, a significant fact in this instance only if one could find evidence of some form of Jewish identification.¹²

Jewish trade unions as well as Jewish workers generally supported all types of resolutions demanding equal treatment for persecuted ethnic and religious minorities. These demands for equal rights most often affected non-Jewish interests, but were universally supported by locals throughout the country. The non-Jewish AFL delegates and leaders, however, had little problem endorsing the 1917 resolution regarding Jewish statehood. Perhaps, surprising in retrospect, there was no similar agreement among Jewish trade unionists on this issue.

In fact, the leading Jewish trade unions adopted different positions at their own conventions and most of the Jewish delegates in Buffalo were opposed to the Zionist resolution that passed so readily in 1917. The AFL's 1917 declaration clearly recommended the re-creation of a sovereign Jewish state in Palestine. Many Jewish trade unionists were opposed to Zionism, and instead took positions which ranged from complete indifference to calls for an autonomous settlement of Jews who might wish to return to a

¹¹ The 1915 resolution was introduced, among others, by Benjamin Schlesinger of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union; Max Zaritsky and Max Zuckerman of the United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers of North America; and representatives of the Bakery and Confectionary Workers' International Union. The resolution proposed at the Feb. 22, 1916 meeting of the AFL Executive Council was presented by two representatives of the U.S. Workmen's Committee on Jewish Rights, B. Charney Vladeck and J. B. Salutsky. The 1916 and 1919 convention resolutions were introduced by delegates of the ILGWU. The *Jewish Communal Register of New York City, 1917-1918* (N.Y.: 1918), p. 697, reports that the ILGWU was the third largest international union affiliated with the AFL, with eighty per cent of its 140,000 members Jewish. Otherwise, the Catholic majority in the AFL is well documented in Karson, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4, 221.

¹² Karson, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

province within a federated Ottoman Empire. Only a small minority of Jewish trade unionists were Zionists at this time. Those who favored the idea of an autonomous Jewish identity in Palestine believed the Zionist posture was utterly utopian; others opposed Zionism because of the difficulties that might result with the indigenous Arab populations. Most American Jews had little interest in a Jewish state. The maximum position taken by Jewish trade unions other than the minority who were Zionists favored a physical center of Jewish life and culture within Palestine.¹³

When the Zionist resolution was passed at the AFL Convention on November 19, 1917, the most prominent Jewish leaders, Benjamin Schlesinger, President of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, and Max Zaritsky, Assistant General Secretary of the United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers of North America, failed to participate in the vote as a demonstration of their opposition. Only Max Zuckerman, General Secretary of the United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers of North America, voted affirmatively. President Gompers later recalled that "a few vociferous delegates" dominated by representatives of the ILGWU cast almost the entire proportion of the 402 dissenting votes. While presiding, Gompers pointed a finger of accusation at Rose Shapiro of the ILGWU, whom he villified as a "little girl," suggesting that she led the opposition to the entire AFL program in support of the war and the position favoring a Jewish national state which was a part of this program.¹⁴ In each instance, Gompers denounced those opposed to the pro-war policies he favored as followers of "Prussianism."¹⁵

¹³ Among the unions which supported an autonomous Jewish cultural settlement within the Ottoman Empire were the ILGWU, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (not in the AFL), and the United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers of North America. In the case of the latter, a Jewish union, the circumstances of its 1919 convention are indicative of the position of most Jewish unions on questions relating to Zionism. A resolution was considered which endorsed Ireland's national aspirations and the establishment of a Jewish national homeland in Palestine on democratic foundations, including the guarantee of equality for all inhabitants, and self-determination for all national minorities. The section of the resolution on Ireland was supported. The part dealing with Palestine was amended to substitute the words "national autonomy" for "homeland." With these changes made, the joint resolution passed unanimously. *Report of the Proceedings of the 12th Biennial Convention of the United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers of North America, The Headgear Worker, June, 1919*, p. 170. See also *Report and Proceedings of the 14th Convention of the ILGWU, May 20-June 1, 1918*, p. 201; *Documentary History of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, 1916-18*, p. 193.

¹⁴ *Report of the Proceedings of the Thirty-Seventh Annual Convention of the AFL, 1917*, p. 304; *The N. Y. Times*, Nov. 20, 1917, reported that the ILGWU, under the leadership of Rose Shapiro, was the only organization which refused to go on record in the roll call vote.

¹⁵ President Gompers' Remarks at the Executive Council Meeting of the American Alliance for Labor and Democracy, Feb. 21, 1918, Stokes Papers, Butler Library, Columbia

Representatives of the Zionist movement were present at the 1917 AFL Convention in Buffalo. They campaigned arduously for the adoption of the statement on Palestine and reported their success immediately in a telegram to the *Yiddisher Kemfer*, the official organ of the Poale-Zion organization.¹⁶ It seems likely that they came to the convention at Gompers' own suggestion in an effort to generate support for the war among delegates who were pacifists. Furthermore, the Zionist resolution had originally been adopted by the American Alliance for Labor and Democracy in September, under Gompers' presidency, and as part of a larger pro-war platform presented to the convention with the recommendation of the AFL's Executive Council. It is certain that Gompers himself was an active proponent of this Zionist position. This is one of the rare instances in which Gompers seems to have taken a positive stand on a matter largely of concern to Jews.

Gompers' position on Jewish questions was generally consistent. He appears never to have identified himself as a Jew either in religious matters or in his official offices in the labor movement. With virtual unanimity biographers have found no connection between Gompers' Jewish heritage and the accomplishments of his life work. The circumstances attending this Zionist resolution may be an exception.

Throughout his life Gompers responded to many efforts to relieve oppression resulting from religious and ethnic prejudice.¹⁷ Prior to the First World War, he did not relate the establishment of a Jewish state to the elimination of Jewish persecution. His own beliefs, in fact, were contrary to Zionist ideology. In 1913 Gompers suggested that although he understood the longing of the Jewish people for national realization, he could not agree that "Zion" had to be a specific or biblical place, namely Palestine. For him, "Zion" was more a "condition, a relation that may be established in any land where the heart and the spirit are free."¹⁸ Since

University. Gompers made clear he was referring to the United Cloth Hat workers as well as the ILGWU.

¹⁶ The American Poale-Zion was a Jewish Socialist workingmen's organization of 6,000 members, with no official connection to the AFL.

¹⁷ For examples of Gompers' humanitarian involvements in the aftermath of the war which were directed toward relieving the impact of ethnic and religious oppression see "List of Organizations in which President Gompers holds membership"; "Address by Samuel Gompers . . . under the auspices of the Armenian Committee for the Independence of Armenia, March 20, 1920"; "The World War and International Peace by Samuel Gompers"; and *Jewish Tribune* (N.Y.C.), Oct. 24, 1921, Samuel Gompers [Scrapbooks containing articles by and about Samuel Gompers], 1902-24, Microfilm, Reels 1, 3 and 4, New York Public Library.

¹⁸ Address Delivered by Samuel Gompers at Banquet of United Hebrew Trades in New York City, Jan. 25 celebration of their 25th Anniversary, *Ibid.*, Reel 1.

Gompers believed that freedom was attainable in America, he expected Jewish workingmen to remain and become citizens of this land; they needed no other "Zion." By November, 1917, however, the telegram from the "Special Poale-Zion Delegation" contained Gompers' reported promise that he "would help in urging the American government to promulgate a declaration within the spirit of the adopted resolution."¹⁹

The Zionists certainly viewed Gompers as having become friendly to their cause. But the question does remain to what degree his support of Zionism may have been influenced by a residual Jewishness. Gompers never belonged to any Jewish or Zionist organization, although his name and efforts were used during and after the war in the interest of various other groups. Later in life Gompers called attention to his Jewishness indirectly by observing that he was under no obligation to demonstrate that being Jewish was a disqualification (as many believed) for effective trade union leadership. "I think that in some respects the allusion to the AFL's failure to recognize ability simply because a man belongs to any particular faith . . . is not justified," he remarked in 1922. "I think that I speak advisedly that in my own person that is not a justified statement."²⁰ References to Gompers' Jewishness began to appear during the First World War period. *The Maccabean Magazine*, the official organ of the Zionist Organization of America, took pleasure in describing Gompers as having a positive Jewish commitment in contrast to such anti-Zionist activists as Morris Hillquit and Judge Jacob Panken. Little known today is the fact that President Wilson designated January 27, 1916 as Jewish Relief Day in honor of Samuel Gompers' birth date, something Gompers kept to himself, possibly because of modesty. However, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise recalled his life-long role as Gompers' "minister in days of joy and in days of sorrow," when

¹⁹ Telegram, "The Special Poale-Zion Delegation" to the *Yiddisher Kemfer*, Labor Zionist Organization of America, Correspondence and Miscellaneous Items, July 30, 1917-Dec. 17, 1917, Microfilm, Manuscript Division, YIVO Institute, New York City. The Poale-Zion described Gompers as a friend of "Jewish freedom" and "Zion" as well as "a champion of Jewish labor's interests in the general aims of Zionism," Letter, Poale Zion to Samuel Gompers, Jan. 12, 1918, *Ibid.*, Dec. 17, 1917-March 6, 1918. Gompers was credited with supporting the purposes of the Poale-Zion "at the Convention of the American Alliance for Labor and Democracy, held in Minneapolis, and also at the American Federation of Labor Convention, held in Buffalo." Letter, Chairman, Jewish Socialist Labor Party (Poale-Zion) to Samuel Gompers, New York, May 17, 1918, *Ibid.*, May 6, 1918-August 5, 1918.

²⁰ Address of Samuel Gompers at Bon Voyage Dinner Tendered to Benjamin Schlesinger, President, ILGWU, by the New York members of the General Executive Board on the evening of his departure for Europe, New York City, Aug. 12, 1922, Gompers [Scrapbooks], Microfilm, Reel 2, New York Public Library.

he delivered the panegyric at Gompers' funeral. Without exaggerating its importance, there is indirect evidence which suggests that Gompers' Jewish heritage was an element in his willingness to support the AFL's commitment to a Jewish state in 1917.²¹

More significant, however, was the nationality question and its place among the war aims of the United States. Gompers' non-labor Zionist contacts were vital in this respect, because they provided direct communication with the White House. Men like Louis D. Brandeis, Felix Frankfurter, and Stephen S. Wise were well known advocates of a Jewish state who also offered the opportunity for interchanges with the Administration. No doubt they helped convince Gompers to alter his position on a Jewish homeland. Equally important was the continuing pressure these men exerted on Gompers to support Wilson's diplomacy before and after American entry into the World War. If labor needed government support during a time of expected challenge and danger, the government similarly recognized the advantages of an AFL counter-attack on deeply entrenched anti-war elements within its ranks. The Wilson position favoring national autonomy for the subject peoples of Europe was a key item in the mutually reinforcing objectives of government and labor.

When President Woodrow Wilson raised the nationality issue as a principal war objective of the United States, he properly calculated the great impact it would have on public opinion. Within the labor movement, national autonomy and political independence were extraordinarily popular issues. Gompers constantly reaffirmed his conviction that the First World War was different from all previous hostilities. Self-determination had turned the Great War into a crusade which would see the birth of a new world:

As the butterfly never to return emerges from the chrysalis into a more beautiful being, so we are upon the threshold of national and international developments in which there shall be new concepts of human rights and human life It is for the Buffalo AFL Convention to sound the keynote for the future.²²

²¹ "Zionists and American Patriotism," *The Maccabean Magazine*, XXX (Sept., 1917), 337; "Address by Dr. Stephen S. Wise at Dinner in Honor of William Green, President of the AFL, for Leon Blum Colony in Palestine," p. 23, Max Zaritsky Papers, Tamiment Library, New York University; Panegyric at Samuel Gompers Funeral, 1924, Gompers [Scrapbooks], Microfilm, Reel 1, New York Public Library; Rose Pesotta to Isadore Laderman, February 3, 1949, Rose Pesotta Papers, New York Public Library; Epstein, *Jewish Labor in U.S.A.*, vol. II, p. 60; An exploration of Gompers' Jewishness in later life is provided in Sylvia Kopald, "Gompers: Symbol of an Era," *Menorah Journal*, XI (1925), 241-252.

²² Samuel Gompers, "Buffalo's Momentous Convention," *American Federationist*, XXIV (Nov., 1917), 989-990.

The keynote, indeed, came from the President of the United States himself, speaking for the first time at a convention of the American labor movement at Gompers' request.²³ Wilson's dramatic appearance had the effect of a "master-stroke," as Gompers had anticipated, solidifying support behind the government.

The attractiveness of the promise of national self-determination was directly tied to the ethnic and religious character of the membership of the AFL. Rabbi Stephen Wise ascribed this to the origins of the workers themselves, who have

come to us from the little lands, Servia, Bulgaria, Rumania, Armenia, Poland, the lands that lie under the shadow of German militarism and despotism—that these men feel that the winning of the war means deliverance for the nations from whom they spring. The workers know that when the President speaks of the rights of nations . . . he is frankly stating the highest purposes of the war which are his own.²⁴

Independence for the so-called subject nations was anticipated after an Allied victory, and it was in this perspective that the matter of Jewish nationhood became a concern of organized labor.

One reason for the relative obscurity of the 1917 AFL resolution on Palestine is the fact that it was included as part of a larger report by the organization's Executive Council dealing with the American Alliance for Labor and Democracy.²⁵ The latter body was a patriotic organization established in July, 1917, primarily at Gompers' initiative, to foster pro-war support. Labor ranks were badly divided at this time over Wilson's policies and various groups were formed, each claiming to speak for the American worker. As Gompers complained, these impromptu labor-directed organizations "seemed to be under the domination of forces out of harmony with our government" and were generating divisive positions harmful to the labor movement. Gompers was referring specifically to the United Hebrew Trades and other Jewish-oriented unions, located in New York City, which took the lead in oppo-

²³ Western Union Telegram, Samuel Gompers to Joseph P. Tumulty, Buffalo, Nov. 9, 1917, Samuel Gompers Letterbooks, vol. 240, Microfilm, Butler Library, Columbia University; "President Wilson's Address," Nov. 12, 1917, *Report of Proceedings of the Thirty-Seventh Annual Convention of the AFL, 1917*, pp. 2-5; this was also the first time Wilson had left Washington to make a public address since America's entry into the war; Jones, "The Wilson Administration and Organized Labor," p. 334.

²⁴ Stephen S. Wise to Josephus Daniels, Aug. 28, 1918, Carl H. Voss, ed. *Stephen S. Wise: Servant of the People; Selected Letters* (Phila.: 1969), p. 83.

²⁵ Frank L. Grubbs, Jr., "Council and Alliance Labor Propaganda, 1917-1919, *Labor History*. VII (Spring, 1966), 156-172, fails to take note of the resolution on Palestine. Other historians mention it but none discusses its origins or implications adequately; see Epstein, *Jewish Labor in U.S.A.*, vol. II, p. 83; Karson, *op. cit.*, p. 104; Hillel Rogoff, *An East Side Epic: The Life and Works of Meyer London* (N.Y.: 1930), p. 191.

sition to President Wilson. In response to this development, Gompers, in combination with the Central Federated Union of New York City, formed the American Alliance for Labor and Democracy. Recognizing its potential on a national level, Gompers quickly altered the character of the American Alliance by giving it a country-wide role and recommended that its first national conference be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on September 5, 1917, primarily as a counterbalance to the prospective gathering of the anti-war People's Council.²⁶ The comprehensive document in favor of American involvement in the First World War, ratified by the AFL Buffalo Convention, was initially drafted and adopted at the September 6, 1917 session of the American Alliance for Labor and Democracy, and the section on Palestine was added during the Convention debate in Minneapolis.

The Zionists were heavily represented at the American Alliance sessions. This had been pre-arranged. Jacob de Haas, Executive Secretary of the Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs, selected five New York Zionists to attend "Gompers Patriotic Convention" to offset the influence of socialist and pacifist Jewish labor activists. This was considered essential to control some elements within the labor movement and also to impress European radicals with the pro-war spirit of the American workingman.²⁷ While present, the Zionists pressed for the passage of a resolution endorsing a Jewish state of Palestine similar to other nations that were to be established in Eastern Europe. Although the resolution was not accepted initially when presented before

²⁶ Samuel Gompers to the President, Washington, D.C., Aug. 24, 1917; Woodrow Wilson to Gompers, Washington, D.C., Aug. 31, 1917; Statement by Samuel Gompers, *Report of Proceedings of the Thirty-Seventh Annual Convention of the AFL*, 1917, pp. 95-97, 302-307; Samuel Gompers, "Labor and Democracy," *American Federationist*, XXIV (Oct., 1917), 837-842; *The Minneapolis Journal*, Sept. 2, 4-8, 1917; *The N. Y. Times*, Sept. 2, 3, 1917.

²⁷ There is no certainty as to the specific additional number of Zionist Organization of America people at the Minneapolis meeting of the American Alliance for Labor and Democracy. Five were requested at one point, two at another, just prior to the sessions. A telegram, Jacob de Haas to Hon. Louis D. Brandeis, de Haas Collection, Microfilm, Reel 2, Zionist Archives and Library, New York City, states "Gompers Patriotic Convention . . . Request Us to Appoint 5 Delegates Officially Representing Zionist Organization of America to Attend their Convention . . ." Also reported in Justice Brandeis, Records, Microfilm, vol. 10, *Ibid.* Brandeis responded affirmatively. See also Jacob de Haas, *Louis D. Brandeis* (N.Y.: 1929), p. 84. We do know the names of some of the Zionists present at the American Alliance meeting from articles in *The Minneapolis Journal* and copies of telegrams sent to the American Alliance headquarters at the Hotel Andrews in Minneapolis. Telegram, Jacob de Haas to Dr. Stephen S. Wise, c/o Hotel Andrews, Minneapolis, Sept. 5, 1917, de Haas Collection, Microfilm, Reel 3, Zionist Archives and Library, New York City; *The Minneapolis Journal*, Sept. 2, 6, 8, 1917; and Zosa Szajkowski, *Jews, Wars, and Communism* (N.Y.: 1972), vol. I, pp. 164, 520, 523.

the American Alliance resolutions committee, the Palestine declaration was presented directly on the convention floor and passed easily. A Zionist publicist, A. H. Fromenson, eagerly implored delegates to support the Zionist declaration and characterized its reception as "so enthusiastic as to be startling." He and others were busy making arrangements for what they expected might be a difficult struggle by summoning "as many local Zionists as possible." "But this pre-arrangement proved to be entirely unnecessary," Fromenson told de Haas with evident relief. "The entire convention broke into applause; and the adoption of the resolution having been moved by Mr. Nicholas Klein, of Cincinnati, a non-Zionist, it was passed with a rising unanimous vote."²⁸

George Creel, Chairman of the government's Committee on Public Information, took an active but covert part in arranging the American Alliance conference and "putting the last touches to the Minneapolis meeting."²⁹ In a letter to John Spargo, one of the most prominent Socialist intellectuals, Creel urged that the American Alliance formulate a compilation of war aims that might later be used to appeal to labor dissidents. Creel also pressured Frank P. Walsh, the American Alliance temporary chairman and head of the federal Industrial Relations Commission, to prepare a formal and comprehensive resolution on the war which would insure labor's support. "Put the Alliance back of the President squarely," Creel proclaimed, "and make this resolution—or manifesto—an explicit statement . . . [so] that we can use it in leaflet form in all languages." Creel indicated great concern about the items to be covered in the resolution and by major speakers, especially the government's record on labor, war aims and the Irish question. His final advice to Walsh stated: "Stick close to Gompers. See that the program runs with zip."³⁰

Even President Wilson was marshalled to assist in planning the

²⁸ Report, Jacob de Haas to Political Committee, Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs, N.Y., Sept. 11, 1917, Justice Brandeis, Records, vol. 10, Zionist Archives and Library, New York City. Fromenson reported the names of people who helped him, especially mentioning the assistance of Louis Wallis of Chicago, one of the directors of the Fels International Federation, to whom he attributed "a good measure" of the "success" of the resolution. This is worth noting, because Joseph Fels was a wealthy philanthropist who often contributed to Socialist and radical causes. See also *Daily News* (Chicago), Sept. 8, 1917, Stokes Papers, Butler Library, Columbia University.

²⁹ George Creel to Frank P. Walsh, Sept. 1, 1917, Frank P. Walsh Papers, Aug.-Oct., 1917, New York Public Library.

³⁰ Creel to Spargo, Washington, D.C., Aug. 29, 1917, John Spargo Papers, Special Collections, Guy W. Bailey Library, University of Vermont, Burlington; Creel to Walsh, Sept 1, 1917, Frank P. Walsh Papers, Aug.-Oct., 1917, New York Public Library.

convention. Though the President was unable to be present in Minneapolis, he wrote publicly of his feelings of "real pride" on learning of the "devotion to country" of the American Alliance delegates. George Creel also intervened to guarantee the successful outcome of the meeting. After the Minneapolis convention had completed its work, he implored Cyrus McCormick and others to finance the organization so that it might be able to "stand on its own feet."³¹

Since the resolutions adopted by the American Alliance and the AFL were regarded as President Wilson's unofficial domestic response to the anti-war socialists and other pacifists, it has often been assumed that labor simply acted as the government's official voice on these issues. Although probably true insofar as the general war aims of the United States are concerned, it is not at all clear that a Jewish state in Palestine was originally an objective of the Wilson administration. The evidence suggests that labor's endorsement of the Zionist position, even after the Balfour Declaration, was not necessarily in conformity with President Wilson's own preferences.

There is, in fact, evidence to the contrary. The President had apparently not made up his mind on what to do with the Ottoman Empire, even after the November meeting of the American Federation of Labor. Wilson's alter-ego, Colonel Edward M. House, kept the President carefully informed of British Middle Eastern policy. Twice, on September 4 and 7, he indicated to Wilson that the British government was being pressured for a declaration of commitment to the Zionist cause. House suggested that the British were anxious to have, even unofficially, some hint of the President's reaction to such a declaration. "Have you made up your mind regarding what answer you will make to [Lord Robert] Cecil concerning the Zionist movement?" House asked. "It seems to me that there are many dangers lurking in it and if I were the British I would be chary about going too definitely into that question." The President did not respond to Colonel House until October 13, 1917, well after the American Alliance convention. At that time he said he found the memorandum about the Zionist movement in his "pocket." "I am afraid I did not say to you that I concurred in the formula suggested by the other side," Wilson admitted to

³¹ Wilson to Gompers, Washington, D.C., Aug. 31, 1917, *Report of Proceedings of the Thirty-Seventh Annual Convention of the AFL*, 1917, pp. 96-97; Cyrus H. McCormick to George Creel, Chicago, Dec. 3, 1917; George Creel to Cyrus H. McCormick, Dec. 6, 1917, Committee on Public Information, American Alliance for Labor and Democracy, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

House. "I do, and would be obliged if you would let them know it."³² Colonel House formally acknowledged the President's tardy response and informed the British government that their formula regarding the Zionist problem met with United States approval.³³

It should be emphasized that President Wilson's delay did not go unnoticed. The American government's hesitation was a matter of the utmost concern to individuals closest to the Zionist movement. On September 19, 1917, Jacob de Haas opened a cable addressed to Louis Brandeis from Chaim Weizmann advising that the Balfour Declaration had been approved by the British Foreign Office and the Prime Minister was submitting it to the War Cabinet. Weizmann cautioned that he was fearful that opposition from Jewish assimilationists in England was expected and might inhibit the British government from making the final, open commitment. For this reason he believed strong support from Brandeis and President Wilson was urgent. Brandeis moved quickly to speak with the President, and was delighted to find Wilson privately "is in entire sympathy with [the prospective Balfour] Declaration." Soon afterwards Weizmann wrote again to Brandeis expressing fear that the United States government had reservations about the timing of a statement on behalf of a Jewish homeland. Any delay was threatening and impeded what Weizmann believed "were necessary preparations" for any eventuality in the Middle East. "I have no doubt that the amended text of the Declaration will be again submitted to the President," Weizmann revealed, "and it would be most invaluable if the President would accept it without reservations and would recommend the granting of it now."³⁴ The British pronouncement was finally made public on November 2, 1917 in the form of a letter from Arthur James Balfour to Lord Walter Rothschild. It was issued without the public endorsement of President Wilson. Wilson's views on the Zionist declaration were actually not made known until August 31, 1918, when he wrote to Wise expressing his satisfaction with the progress of the Zionists in establishing a Jewish state.³⁵

³² House to Wilson, Sept. 4, 7, 1917, Wilson to House, Oct. 13, 1917, Woodrow Wilson Papers, Microfilm, Series 2, Reel 91, Butler Library, Columbia University.

³³ Colonel House to President Wilson, Oct. 16, 1917, "unpublished Diary of Colonel House," vol. XI, p. 265, Yale University Library, quoted in Ezekiel Rabinowitz, *Justice L.D. Brandeis, The Zionist Chapter of His Life* (N.Y.: 1968), p. 73.

³⁴ Chaim Weizmann to Brandeis, Sept. 19, Oct. 7, 1917, Brandeis to Weizmann, Sept. 24, 1917, de Haas Collection, Microfilm, Reel 4, Zionist Archives and Library, New York City.

³⁵ Wilson's letter, though clear in retrospect, was not entirely satisfactory to the American Zionists at the time; Wilson to Wise, Aug. 31, 1918, Ray Stannard Baker,

The conclusion is therefore inescapable that although the American Alliance for Labor and Democracy and the AFL positions on the war were brought into line with government policy, the resolution on Palestine did not conform to this. This does not preclude Samuel Gompers' private knowledge of the President's personal opinions, but it does indicate that organized labor did not follow every direction provided by President Wilson. It is conceivable that Wilson may have been testing public sentiment, particularly Jewish opinion, through the vehicle of the labor movement, but it is much more likely that the government, needing labor support, now found itself tied to labor's commitment to the Zionist cause.

As for Samuel Gompers, he was doubtless under various pressures that permitted the American Zionists to seize the ethnic advantage in return for their willingness to support the war. For some Zionists, such as Dr. Nachman Syrkin, a pro-war position was contrary to the policies of the Poale-Zion organization he represented. But Syrkin chose to advance the most important cause, the creation of a Jewish state.³⁶ Other Zionists, especially Rabbi Stephen Wise, Joseph Barondess, a former labor organizer and Commissioner of Education in New York City, and William Edlin, a socialist who was editor of the non-socialist Yiddish *Day*, worked hard to generate Jewish support for the war so that Zionism might become associated in the public mind with patriotism. In each instance the onrush of events resulted in Gompers' willingness to transform organized labor's traditional sympathy for the Jews into a position favorable to the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.

One of the ironies of this series of events was the prevailing conviction of most contemporaries that the Jewish masses did not

Woodrow Wilson: Life and Letters (N.Y.: 1939), vol. VIII, pp. 372-373. Jacob de Haas observed that the President, according to Colonel House, approved the Balfour Declaration but had reservations about a public endorsement at that time. See de Haas to Louis D. Brandeis, N.Y., Oct. 16, 1917, Justice Brandeis, Records, vol. 10, Zionist Archives and Library, New York City.

³⁶ Marie Syrkin, *Nachman Syrkin: Socialist Zionist* (N.Y.: 1961), pp. 162-163. Syrkin writes that her father was committed to the Allied cause as early as 1915. In February, 1917, the Central Committee of the Poale-Zion denounced the "imperialist" war; the *Yiddisher Kemfer*, official organ of the Poale-Zion, continued to attack "Wall Street's war" in traditional Socialist fashion after American entrance. In July a referendum of the membership produced a majority against conscription. The next month the Poale-Zion wrote to the anti-war People's Council of America for Democracy and Peace asking how to join and indicating plans to attend its convention. Throughout the war the Poale-Zion appealed for Socialist support for a Jewish state in Palestine as fully compatible with internationalism. Syrkin suggests that an increasing minority, while against the war on ideological grounds, was beginning to doubt the wisdom of the party's course.

necessarily place a high priority on the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. Most, in fact, were indifferent, believing that Zionism was one of those idealistic notions that had little direct relevance to their everyday lives. The vast outpouring of pro-war literature intended for Jewish readers in Yiddish and English contained no mention of the government's sympathy for the establishment of a Jewish state. Even the "Declaration of Principles" adopted by the American Alliance for Labor and Democracy in Minneapolis, when distributed as a Yiddish pamphlet, excised the two paragraphs dealing with Palestine. Oddly enough, attempts to influence the Jewish community focused largely on other issues, especially the impact of the Bolshevik Revolution, and the newly created opportunities for democracy, national autonomy, and an end to religious persucution in what had been Czarist Russia.³⁷ United States involvement in the First World War was decidedly unpopular among the many Jews who were anti-Czarists, pacifists, or socialists, and the vocal and powerful German ethnic minority.³⁸ The Zionist success was of minor interest except within the labor Zionist movement and among Jewish intellectuals.

After the issuance of the Balfour Declaration and the victories of General Allenby in the Middle East, the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine became a real possibility. On occasion those formerly among the ranks of the dissidents on the war found ways to call attention to this achievement as one of a longer list of favorable wartime developments. Algie M. Simons, an influential

³⁷ Most of the effort generated by government agencies on behalf of the war for Jewish audiences, which included 10,000 columns of newspaper publicity, 1,198,000 pamphlets, and 200 mass meetings, centered on the Russian Revolution and the opportunities for Jewish progress in the absence of the Czar. The publications of the American Alliance (including their reported figure of four million pamphlets) gave no attention to Palestine. No mention of the Balfour Declaration appeared in the most important Yiddish newspaper in New York City, the *Forward*, until the negative comments which were printed on Nov. 24, 1917. Abraham Cahan, Socialist editor of the *Forward*, was anti-Zionist at this time, reflecting the general position of many Jewish trade unionists. On Nov. 24, 1917, an article by A. Litvin commented that the Balfour Declaration was made in the interest of Great Britain. The support of the Rothschilds and Jacob Schiff appeared to Litvin "to be evidence that Jewish capital was interested in the [Zionist] venture for its own reasons, namely profit and exploitation."

³⁸ Concern about generating a Jewish commitment to the First World War was constant for both the government and Jewish leaders. The opening of a Jewish Bureau by the national government on the lower East Side of New York City, the hiring of Jewish linguists to translate pro-war literature into Yiddish, the distribution of 438,000 Yiddish pamphlets between Oct. 1 and Dec. 30, 1917, and the election of a Committee of Fifty by the American Alliance New York City chapter to promote the war among Jewish workers are all evidence of the major campaign waged to promote Jewish "loyalty" and pro-war sentiment.

Socialist and a founder of the American Alliance, wrote satirically of the alleged "Death-Bed Conversion" of anti-war socialists, threatened by governmental persecution, who were finally discovering reasons to support Wilson's diplomacy. To this limited extent public recognition of the Zionist accomplishments surfaced as a positive achievement of the Great Crusade that had so bitterly divided the American people.³⁹

Organized labor's first commitment to a Jewish homeland turned out to be a permanent involvement which has strengthened over the years. During the desperate period after the Arab attack on Israel in the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the AFL-CIO provided the most immediate and effective support for the Jewish state within the United States. However, the AFL's initial endorsement of a Jewish homeland was only a part of a larger story of interaction between government and labor, and one in which labor led the way. The sources of support for a Jewish Palestine were deep in the American past and for labor it grew out of consistent sympathies for persecuted ethnic and religious minorities. The history of this era should not be rendered meaningless by viewpoints about so-called Jewish power and labor subservience which even in our present era are of questionable value.

³⁹ *AALD Bulletin*, June 26, 1918, Committee on Public Information, American Alliance for Labor and Democracy, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Daniel DeLeon, "Wandering Jew" of American Socialism: An Interpretive Analysis

By L. GLEN SERETAN

No student of American socialism or the American labor movement who surveys the twenty-five year period preceding the onset of the first World War can fail to note the significant part played by Daniel DeLeon in major developments. From 1890 to 1914, he dominated the Socialist Labor Party, which until 1898 was the only nationally constituted party of socialism in America. As lecturer, debater, editor, organizer, propagandist, theoretician, delegate to meetings of the Second International, translator of Marxist literature and frequent candidate for public office, DeLeon made his presence felt in virtually all sectors of party activity. Not content to confine himself solely to party work, he also became deeply involved in labor organizations as a forceful opponent of Samuel Gompers' "pure and simple" unionism. Serving as a delegate to the Knights of Labor's General Assemblies from 1893 to 1895, he fervently sought to fashion the Knights into a socialist alternative. Failing in this endeavor, he turned to organizing that alternative himself in the form of the ill-fated Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance. Later he emerged to assume a key role in a somewhat more successful challenge to Gompers, the Industrial Workers of the World.¹

Even greater was DeLeon's impact in the realm of revolutionary theory. As the best-known proponent of DeLeonist Marxism, Eugene Debs "evoked a greater response than has yet come to another American labor radical" in his five campaigns for the Presidency on the Socialist ticket. Moreover, J.B.S. Hardman has correctly noted that "the later radical wings of socialism and of communism in the United States took their cues" from DeLeon, as evidenced especially by the case of Louis Fraina, one of the founders of the American Communist Party. Nor were manifestations of DeLeon's importance and influence as a revolutionary thinker lim-

¹ A useful sketch which provides details of the important events in DeLeon's life and career can be found in William J. Ghent, "Daniel DeLeon", *Dictionary of American Biography*. The best of the more extensive treatments is David Herreshoff, *American Disciples of Marx* (Detroit: 1967), pp. 106-172.

ited to the United States. For example, in the British Isles his writings nurtured the militancy of a young Aneurin Bevan, later the fiery spokesman of the Labour Party's left-wing, and struck a responsive chord among workers in Clydeside and on the Dublin docks. And in the newly-born Soviet Union, V.I. Lenin, upon reading some of DeLeon's pamphlets, was impressed by the extent to which the American's theories had anticipated his own, particularly with regard to the structure of the soviet state.²

However, despite his significance, very little is really known about DeLeon. To be sure, adequate summaries and surface analyses of his life and career have been written, but they have tended to stereotype the man rather than explain him. What has been lacking is an understanding of motivation and causation, and more generally, an interpretive scheme that renders comprehensible a very complex and enigmatic figure. To a considerable degree the problem has been one of sources, which have a feast-or-famine character. Primary material on DeLeon's public career in the socialist movement, as can be imagined from the sheer pervasiveness of his activity, is more than abundant; indeed, his writings alone consist of several thousand individual pieces, ranging from brief articles and editorials to multivolume translations. Having to confront such a confusingly extensive mass of data has caused scholars to retreat too often to simplistic and erroneous generalizations derived from the tendentious observations of DeLeon's contemporaries. The difficulty is compounded by the extreme sparseness of the documentation needed to put the public man in perspective. The "Daniel DeLeon Papers" deposited at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, for instance, do not really comprise a personal correspondence, but rather letters, reports and articles largely written by others and addressed to the Party organ, or to DeLeon in his official capacity as its editor. And reliable information about his childhood, his youth, his formal education and his pre-socialist professional and political involvements is scattered and quite fragmentary.³

² *Ibid.*, p. 186; Arnold Petersen, *Daniel DeLeon: Social Architect* (New York: 1941-1953), vol. I, p. 135, vol. II, pp. 367-369; J.B.S. Hardman, "Daniel DeLeon", *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*; Paul Buhle, "Louis C. Fraina. 1892-1953" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Connecticut); Lenin to N.I. Bukharin, late summer, 1920, in V.I. Lenin, *Lenin on the United States* (New York: 1970), p. 536.

³ For a discussion of the weaknesses in the literature, see L. Glen Seretan, "The Personal Style and Political Methods of Daniel DeLeon: A Reconsideration", *Labor History*, XIV, 2 (Spring, 1973), 163-201. Solon DeLeon, Daniel's son, has informed the author that his father did not, as a rule, retain letters or documents (letter, December 9, 1972),

To escape the limitations imposed by incomplete data it is necessary to adopt a unifying interpretive concept as a guide to intelligent surmise. In recent years historians have crossed disciplinary boundaries in search of such concepts, and they have made fruitful use of many borrowings from the social sciences. Less attention has been paid to the possible insights to be gained from the humanistic disciplines, particularly literature. However, it is from a literary theme that an extremely useful conceptual tool for analyzing DeLeon can be taken. That theme is the Legend of the Wandering Jew, which has permeated European folklore and literature in many forms and contexts for about sixteen hundred years. The Legend is based on:

... the tale of a man in Jerusalem who, when Christ was carrying his Cross to Calvary and paused to rest for a moment on this man's doorstep, drove the Saviour away . . . , crying aloud, 'Walk faster!' And Christ replied, 'I will go, but you will walk until I come again!'

Two motifs, the Legend of Malchus and the Legend of St. John, constitute the central threads of the theme. The first emphasizes the resultant suffering and anguish of the offender, condemned as he was, to wander until the Second Coming; while the second stresses waiting, with the implication that redemption may not be far off. In both variants, though, the Wandering Jew commences his journey as an accursed, tormented figure, alienated indefinitely from permanent spatial and temporal referents.⁴

Of special interest to the present study are two forms the Legend assumed in literature in the nineteenth century. One, responsive to the upsurge of nationalism that characterized the age, identified the Wandering Jew specifically with the Jewish people. The other, developed in Eugène Sue's celebrated left-wing novel, *Le juif errant* (Paris, 1844-45), saw him instead as a champion of the proletariat against the depredations of its oppressors, "the rich, the idle, the arrogant, and the Jesuits." Through these forms the interpretive scheme intersects that which it interprets, for Daniel DeLeon was directly and deeply affected, it would appear, by the forces that produced the Jewish people version, and by the content of the Sue novel itself.

The aptness of viewing DeLeon as an incarnation of the Wandering Jew can begin to be appreciated by comparing the personal at-

and on the basis of a large number of inquiries made by the author, it is clear that very few DeLeon letters exist in the manuscript collections of others.

⁴ George Kumler Anderson, *The Legend of the Wandering Jew* (Providence, Rhode Island: 1965), pp. 11, 13-14.

tributes and biographical details of the legendary figure, as he has appeared most frequently in the imaginative writing of roughly the last three centuries, with those of the socialist leader.

The Wandering Jew, typically given the name, "Ahasuerus", is usually "about fifty years old, or at least of indeterminate middle age." DeLeon had a "venerable appearance [which] had no necessary relation to his age. At 35 (according to photographs of that period) he was already . . . grey."⁵

The Jew displays a profound knowledge of history since the Crucifixion; "hence he is ready at any time to step into the role of world-chronicler . . . He is questioned by scholars and always shows more knowledge than they can hope to possess". John W. Burgess, who was one of DeLeon's law school professors and later his colleague at Columbia, described him as "remarkably well-informed," and as a scholar who "knew more international law and diplomatic history than any man of his age I had ever met."⁶

"Into whatever country he may go, he [the Wandering Jew] is able to speak the language of that country fluently." The same was probably true of DeLeon, who was fluent in German, French, Spanish, English, Dutch and the classical languages.⁷

"[Ahasuerus] . . . accepts little or no money and is primarily charitable and abstemious." Waldo Frank reviewed DeLeon's pecuniary position and attitude thus:

. . . frequently not drawing his weekly wage of \$15 or \$20 as editor of *The Weekly People* or *The Daily People* because the treasury could not afford it; refusing pay for his innumerable lectures; refusing to contribute to the capitalist press; declining invitations to Europe because he did not wish to drain the comrades' thin resources; in his tenement . . . sharing . . . the poverty of the people.⁸

To this socialist Ahasuerus:

No honest man . . . and no intelligent man . . . will consider that anything he may have to give to the Socialist movement is a sacrifice . . . When you meet anyone who talks about others making or having made

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 224-226, 248-249, 231-239, 48; Petersen, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 15.

⁶ John W. Burgess, *Reminiscences of an American Scholar* (New York: 1934), p. 182. DeLeon's intellectual attainments were commonly recognized by his contemporaries, friend and foe alike. J. Schlossberg, "Daniel DeLeon—Fighter for Socialism in the American Labor Movement" (Tamiment Library translation from the Yiddish by Louis Lazarus, New York: 1960), pp. 10-11; Morris Hillquit, *Loose Leaves from a Busy Life* (New York: 1934), p. 45.

⁷ Oakley C. Johnson, "Foreword", to Carl Reeve, *The Life and Times of Daniel DeLeon* (New York: 1972), p. 3.

⁸ Waldo Frank, "The Lesson of Daniel DeLeon", *Commentary*, IV, 1 (July, 1947), 46.

sacrifices, stop him short; when you meet one who makes such a brag himself, put him down as a crook, and give him a wide berth.⁹

"[The Wandering Jew] . . . has a wife and child (or children), whom he must abandon because of the curse." And DeLeon's experience corresponds here as well, with the agent of separation being death; his first wife passed away as a young woman and three of his first four children died in infancy.

More generally, DeLeon, like the legendary Jew, was very much a wanderer, even, in a sense, before he was born. His ancestors, Sephardic Jews exiled from Spain at the end of the fifteenth century, made their way first to Holland and then to the Dutch Caribbean possession of Curaçao. Salomon DeLeon, his father and a Dutch military surgeon, continued the tradition of geographical movement, practicing his profession in many places in Europe and South America. Leaving Curaçao at the age of fourteen for an education in Europe, Daniel DeLeon commenced his own meandering course, which led him initially to a *Gymnasium* in Hildesheim, Germany, and later to the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. In 1872 he came to the United States where he lived at a number of addresses in the New York City area and for a brief time in Brownsville, Texas. As a socialist his wanderings took him back and forth across the North American continent several times on lecture tours and organizing drives and as a delegate to the conventions of the Socialist Labor Party, the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, the Knights of Labor and the I.W.W. Hence, few close followers of DeLeon's activities would have been surprised to find him turning up, for example, as a Labor Day speaker in Rockland, Maine, a Party organizer in Independence, Kansas, a socialist lecturer in Los Angeles or an I.W.W. organizer in Tonopah, Nevada. Moreover, he was no stranger to the conclaves of socialists in Europe, representing his party at meetings of the International in Zürich (1893), Amsterdam (1904), Stuttgart (1907) and Copenhagen (1910).¹⁰

⁹ Daniel DeLeon, quoted in Herreshoff, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-116.

¹⁰ Melech Epstein, *Jewish Labor in U.S.A.* (New York: 1969), vol. I, p. 243; Isaac S. and Suzanne A. Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles* (New York: 1970), vol. I, p. 428; Herreshoff, *op. cit.*, p. 108; Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-10; Thomas C. Brophy, "Editorial Notes", *The Socialist Annual for 1894* (Boston: 1894), 31; Bertha C. DeLeon, "When First We Met", in Socialist Labor Party, *Golden Jubilee of DeLeonism* (New York: 1940), p. 10; Alfred G. Sanftleben, *Appreciations* (Los Angeles: 1907), pp. 10-16; Herbert T. Shaw, "DeLeon at Tonopah", *Industrial Union Bulletin*, April 6, 1907; Eric Hass, *The Socialist Labor Party and the Internationals* (New York: 1949).

In ideological and organizational terms as well, DeLeon appeared the image of Ahasuerus. Throughout his life he was a compulsive joiner and activist, and his movement in relation to the organizations to which he belonged and the positions to which he adhered often seemed to have a frenetic quality about it. As a teenage student at the University of Amsterdam he went through what may very well have been a very harsh two-week initiation period to become a member of the fraternity-like *Amsterdams Studenten Corps*. Not long after arriving in New York he became involved with a group of exiles as associate editor of a Spanish-language sheet devoted to winning Cuban independence. In the early 1880's DeLeon joined and actively participated in Columbia University's Academy of Political Science, a scholarly body composed of interested law and political science graduates, serving as its president for the 1884-1885 academic year. At about this time he immersed himself in American politics by taking part in the mugwump campaign against the 1884 Republican nominee for President, James G. Blaine, and was committed enough to that faith to later name a son after Blaine's Democratic opponent, Grover Cleveland. By the autumn of 1886, this political wanderer had made his first appearance in a labor-oriented movement, Henry George's campaign for mayor of New York, and, as an activist in George's post-campaign United Labor Party, he remained a convinced proponent of the single-tax theory for about a year. Disillusioned with George by 1888, DeLeon joined a local assembly of the Knights of Labor. And the following year, enthralled by the utopian socialism of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, he was among the charter members of New York's first Nationalist club and became one of the Nationalist movement's most dedicated figures during his short tenure in it. DeLeon finally entered the Socialist Party in 1890, where he was to stay until his death in 1914, but his wandering did not really end here. His views on a number of important questions underwent profound and often sudden change in these years, and had the Party not followed him in making corresponding ideological alterations, it is quite likely, judging from his past, that he would have left it to take up membership in yet another political organization.¹¹

¹¹ Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-5; M.W.H. Schreuder, International Institute of Social History, to author, May 4, 1973; Herreshoff, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-113; R. Gordon Hoxie, *A History of the Faculty of Political Science, Columbia University* (New York: 1955), pp. 41-43; Lewis Hanke, "The First Lecturer on Hispanic American Diplomatic History in the United States", *Hispanic American Historical Review*, XVI, 3 (August, 1936), 401; Lester Luntz, "Daniel DeLeon and the Movement for Social Reform, 1886-1896" (un-

Propelling DeLeon in his somewhat erratic course over geographical, organizational and ideological space was, it seems, the painful awareness of a "curse" upon him, and in this he shared the plight of his folkloric analogue. The curse was, as he appeared to perceive it, his Jewish identity, the burdensome "Legend of Malchus" quality which he probably first sensed as a student in Europe from 1866 to 1872. In this period that saw the unifications of Germany and Italy, Europe seethed with a nationalistic fervor which resolved for many of the continent's peoples a collective identity crisis resulting from the demise of the *ancien régime*. For Jews, however, the era posed formidable problems. Although they benefited from the passing of a medieval order under which they had suffered restriction and prejudice, self-definition in national terms was difficult, because, unlike most other European nationalities, they lacked a distinctly secular culture and had no claim to a territory. Moreover, as a minority residing in the lands of others, they were easily stigmatized as an outgroup, and anti-Semitism often became the companion of national awakening.

It is likely that Daniel DeLeon was deeply affected emotionally by the very real dilemma facing Jews. As the product of a vital Curaçao Jewish community, he probably identified himself fully with Judaism, and for that felt all the more isolated. It is also reasonable to assume that he was especially vulnerable to a feeling of alienation and insecurity at this juncture. Two brothers died in an epidemic three years before he left for Europe, and he lost his father, from whom he had received his early education, the year previous. He did not himself enjoy good health and quite possibly suffered a degree of culture shock as well upon being transported from the Caribbean to the heartland of Europe. And with a sensitivity heightened by his youth and his native intelligence, he would not have been in a position to parry this assortment of blows easily.¹²

Direct evidence of DeLeon's internal ferment over his Jewishness appeared in a two-and-a-half column letter he wrote to *The Reformer and Jewish Times* early in 1879, some seven years after arriving in the United States and ten years before avowing his commitment to socialism. The letter was a rejoinder to a piece in *The Reformer* by Felix Adler, who had argued that Jews should ab-

published M.A. thesis, Columbia University); Arthur Mann, *Yankee Reformers in the Urban Age* (New York: 1966), pp. 12, 20-23. (DeLeon's name appeared too on the membership roster of the Bellamyite Boston Society of Christian Socialists, p. 91).

¹² Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 449-452; Olive M. Johnson, *Daniel DeLeon: American Socialist Pathfinder* (New York: 1935), p. 10.

stain from Christmas festivities on the grounds that the holiday commemorates their sufferings and the birth of a man not recognized by them as the Savior.

DeLeon fully agreed that the Jews had indeed endured historic oppression, but in his remarks a note of defensiveness mingled with proud ethnic indignation, and a clear perception of Jews as alien wanderers was revealed:

[T]he pyre on which those devoted victims, those stalwart pioneers of a spiritual creed were placed, often blazed . . . [P]etulant, bigoted rage . . . [vented itself] against the unarmed, the defenceless Jew . . . [Yet] amidst eloquent tongues of fire, the Jew asserted the superiority of his convictions and of his race above *the brutalized masses among which he sojourned*, and with his ashes and his own heart-blood recorded his protest against *the surrounding surges of heathenism*. (emphasis added)¹³

However, it did not serve to dwell on injustices "illustrative only of the spirit of . . . barbarism of the age in which they were perpetrated." The problem of the present seemingly was to resolve a gnawing crisis of identity, and to this end he proposed that:

the advance guards of the Jews and Gentiles join hands together, both agreeing upon the sublimity of the character of Jesus . . . while both repudiat[ing] the idea of his Jehovahship . . .

In this fashion the centrality of Christ to the travail of a collective Ahasuerus would be avoided, permitting Jew and Gentile to celebrate Christmas together. Such a theological synthesis, with the identity integration that it implied, was contrasted with Adler's suggestion that the Jews counterpose to Christmas the feast of Esther, which DeLeon described as:

a factitious . . . precarious feast . . . [that] could hardly tend to anything else than to keep alive *painful reminiscences*, and to foment the . . . mutual hatred of races . . . stubbornly disposed on both sides. (emphasis added)

Rather, the Jew should be seen as "one of the elements out of which the future American type is to be formed," and thus he should observe Christmas along with the vast majority of his countrymen, thereby "contributing his share toward ushering in *that longed for era* when hostility between race and race shall cease, and the *amalgamation between them* shall be accomplished" (emphasis added).

¹³ Daniel DeLeon, "Should the Jews Celebrate Christmas?", *The Reformer and Jewish Times*, X, 51 (February 14, 1879), 5.

This ambiguous vision of a basis for a broader and more satisfying self-definition finally crystallized as socialist universalism. Probably of prime significance in the process was Eugène Sue's *Le juif errant*, a work with which DeLeon was certainly familiar and whose influence can be detected in his writings. That he held Sue in especially high regard as an author is clear from the fact of his extensive translation of the Frenchman, his most ambitious effort in this area. Between 1904 and 1911, Sue's nineteen-novel series, *The Mysteries of the People, or A Proletarian Family across the Ages*, was run serially in the Party organ and subsequently published in book form.¹⁴

That he was influenced by the novelist registers most clearly when it is remembered that *Le juif errant's* principal villains are the Jesuits, who are depicted as unscrupulous conspirators closely identified with the rich and powerful enemies of the working class and its benefactor, Ahasuerus. Although clerics of many denominations in DeLeon's day took to the pulpit and the printed page to polemicize against socialism, he devoted particular attention to returning the fire of Roman Catholic spokesmen, Jesuits prominent among them. In *Fifteen Questions about Socialism* (1914), a collection of editorials DeLeon wrote for *The Daily People*, he replied sharply and at length to hostile questions asked in one issue of the Providence, Rhode Island, *Visitor*, a Catholic publication. *Father Gassoniana, or Jesuit "Sociology" and "Economics" at the Bar of Science and History* (1911), a pamphlet comprising nineteen editorials, critically focused on an anti-socialist speech given by Father Thomas I. Gasson. And *The Vatican in Politics*, a posthumously published anthology spanning DeLeon's career in the socialist movement, develops the theme that the Church is little more than a reactionary political machine clothed in religious vestments. Indeed, so suspicious was he of the Church that he fully expected it to be capitalism's last resort when the revolution was at hand:

... [T]he great political conflict that is coming to a head is wiping out all intermediary political expressions and is bound to leave extant just two ... types of ... opposing forces—the Socialist political body as the type ... that make[s] for progress, hence, freedom; and the Roman Catholic equally political body as the type ... that make[s] for retrogression, hence, slavery.¹⁵

¹⁴ Oakley C. Johnson and Carl Reeve, *Writings by and about Daniel DeLeon: A Bibliography* (New York: 1966), pp. 7-10. Seventeen of the nineteen were translated by DeLeon, and the others, by his son, Solon.

¹⁵ Daniel DeLeon, *The Vatican in Politics* (New York: 1962), p. 42.

Having established the strong possibility that Sue's use of the Wandering Jew had a major impact on DeLeon, the question of why it might have remains. The answer lies in a closer examination of the details of the French author's treatment of the Jew, which corresponds to the "St. John" variant discussed earlier. As stated by a recent historian of the Legend:

... [Sue's Wandering Jew] sees ... hope for a brighter future for the workers. When that happy day shall have come ... he will be ready to die. In fact ... [he] believe[s] that things have progressed so far, by the time of the final scene, that [he] ... can begin preparations for [his] ... end. He has worked to help the wage slave ... [and] *has so identified himself with the workingman, in fact, that Christ's curse has struck not only him but the workers also, through him. This is how it has been for centuries, but now a new day is coming, and with it the release of Ahasuerus.* (emphasis added)¹⁶

Such would have suggested to DeLeon a compelling mode for surmounting the personal crisis he faced as a member of an international people emotionally adrift in an era of nationalism. It would have rendered specifics for the attainment of that inchoate "amalgamation" objective for which he had expressed a desire in 1879. Like Ahasuerus, he could cast his lot with the proletariat, a nation-less body of historic fellow-wanderers in whom hope for the future redemption of all could be seen to reside. If, in the present, this meant becoming part of little more than an amorphous community of oppression, it was nevertheless involvement in an embracing one of immense proportions with potential for acquiring coherence through revolutionary struggle. A painful Jewish identity would be submerged and lost in the more comprehensive and sustaining identity concept of the proletarian, its final interment awaiting only the "new day" to follow.

There were several manifestations of self-effacement in DeLeon's behavior as a socialist which can be interpreted as resulting from a conscious attempt at complete immersion in the working class. For example, he never held a major national office in the Party, although given his importance in its councils, he certainly could have had one had he wished. As a speaker, he did not cultivate "celebrity" status for himself in the movement, registering impatience at the applause and adulation that frequently attended his impressive platform performances. He made a deliberate effort to break up the naturally scholarly tone of his writing with slang expressions and further sought to underplay his superior educational attain-

¹⁶ Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

ments by protesting against being addressed as "professor" by respectful Party comrades. And, although his family constantly hovered on the brink of destitution, he bore the material impoverishment of his chosen status without complaint.¹⁷

Logically enough for one who may now have perceived himself in new terms, DeLeon went well beyond his earlier ambivalence to deprecate and specifically reject Judaism as a legitimate identity and as a meaningful concept in socio-political discourse. Striving for emancipation "not as man, but as Jew" was in his view a "false posture", as was "philo-Semitism in general," for "Semitism" (i.e. Judaism) was not a genuine social entity, being "... [w]ithout a principle or mission, unique and born from its own spiritual womb, and without a unique, exclusive ethnic basis..." That connoted by the appellation "Semitism," according to DeLeon, was nothing more than a perverse reflex of Gentile theology without which "the bottom and the bonds on which Semitism stands and that hold it together, fall out and melt away..." And in light of this, he held that those who still defined themselves as Jews manifested an aspect "of human nature that finds a morbid delight in glory, even if its halo be borrowed, or even if, at times, the halo may turn into a thorny crown." Predictably, DeLeon concluded that the only viable alternative was complete identification with the workers, which to him was synonymous with a commitment to the political philosophy that best expressed their aspirations:

Socialism, with the light it casts around and within man, alone can cope with these problems [of racial-ethnic hatred]. Like the sea that takes up in its bosom and dissolves the innumerable elements poured into it from innumerable rivers, to Socialism is the task reserved of solving one and all the problems that have come floating down the streams of time, and that have kept man in internecine strife with man.¹⁸

And if two major nineteenth century forms of the Legend of the

¹⁷ John Timm, "Daniel DeLeon as a Campaigner", in *Socialist Labor Party, Fifty Years of American Marxism, 1891-1941*, (New York: 1941), p. 26; Bertha C. DeLeon, "The 'Nineties with DeLeon", *ibid.*, p. 22; Schlossberg *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3; Herreshoff, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

¹⁸ Daniel DeLeon, *Anti-Semitism: Its Cause and Cure* (New York: 1921), pp. 14-26; Daniel DeLeon, "Preface", to John H. Halls, *Woman and Her Emancipation* (New York: 1909). So hostile did DeLeon become toward Judaism that he expunged it totally from his past. When asked about his origins, he concocted a fanciful tale about being born into a wealthy, aristocratic Venezuelan family of Spanish Catholic stock, thoroughly obscuring the truth from even his closest friends and associates and never discussing it with his own son (Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 9; Petersen, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 13; Schlossberg, *op. cit.*, p. 9; Solon DeLeon to author, December 9, 1972).

Wandering Jew illuminate the process by which DeLeon came to the labor movement and to socialism, it is the "Malchus" motif of the Legend which probably best captures the tragedy of his ultimate failure in life. Despite his fervent and repeated efforts to broaden the base of his party and extend its sway into the heart of the labor movement, his last years saw him completely isolated and without influence. Moreover, cruel ironies dogged his path: an antagonist of the Jesuits and the Church hierarchy, he was compared by some contemporaries to Loyola and dubbed a "pope" by others; in flight from Judaism, he found his largest and most loyal following among Jewish workers. As a widely misunderstood and therefore widely disliked figure, DeLeon experienced grave disappointment in personal relationships, often being "forsaken and abused," according to his friend, Joseph Schlossberg, "by men in whom he had full trust, and who had risen to prominence in the socialist movement by virtue of his aid." Nor did his family provide a true sanctuary from the adversity that plagued him in public life: political disagreements with his eldest son led to an irreparable breach, and several of his other children can only remember their father with bitterness for the material deprivation wrought upon them by his total preoccupation with socialist politics. Little wonder, then, that Schlossberg believed "DeLeon died a sad and lonely man" and that "failure hastened his death." Like the classic Ahasuerus and despite the hopes that may have been raised in him by Sue, Daniel DeLeon had to "endure his fate, no matter how terrible his lot."¹⁹

¹⁹ Schlossberg, *op. cit.*, p. 15; Socialist Labor Party, *Disruption and Disrupters* (New York: 1935), p. 16; Rudolph Katz, "With DeLeon since '89", in Socialist Labor Party, *Daniel DeLeon, The Man and His Work: A Symposium* (New York: 1969), vol. II, p. 151; Martin A. Cohen; "Jewish Immigrants and American Trade Unions", (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Chicago); Abraham Meyer Rogoff, *Formative Years of the Jewish Labor Movement in the United States (1890-1900)* (New York: 1945), p. 53; Harry Rogoff, *An East Side Epic: The Life and Work of Meyer London* (New York: 1930), p. 12; Moses Rischin, *The Promised City: New York's Jews, 1870-1914* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1962), pp. 225-226; Epstein, *op. cit.*, vol. I pp. 251-252; Joseph Schlossberg, *The Workers and Their World* (New York: 1935), pp. 88, 192; Solon DeLeon to author, April 13, 1973, February 8, 1973.

Education and Economic Mobility: the Jewish Experience in New York City, 1880-1920

By SELMA C. BERROL

The birth of the United States two hundred years ago has justifiably been seen as a great milestone in man's long struggle for a better life. Among other beneficial results, the historic events we celebrate this year created a nation which has provided a haven and a chance at a better life for millions of emigrants from less fortunate lands. About two million of these newcomers have been Jews, most of whom have benefited greatly from the freedom and opportunity America has provided.

Although about 75,000 Sephardic and German Jews came to the United States in the first two centuries of its existence, the greatest portion of the American Jewish community arrived after the Civil War. In the seventies, a cholera epidemic in Lithuania, a famine in Poland and a pogrom in Odessa stimulated the emigration of some 40,000 Jews. They were the advance contingent for 200,000 more who came after the violence and repression which followed the assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1880, the 300,000 who arrived in the nineties and the million and a half who left Russia, Poland and the Austro-Hungarian Empire for America in the period just before the first World War.¹

For most of these men and women, their destination was New York, "the Promised City." In 1900, there were 510,000 Russian- and Austrian-born Jews in New York, an increase of 280,000 over the number reported in 1890. By 1910, there were more than a million Jews in the city, about two-fifths of whom were first generation Americans born of parents who had made the long voyage from Eastern Europe in the previous four decades.²

The community created a century ago has never lacked for chroniclers. The life of the Eastern European Jewish community on the Lower East Side has been exhaustively treated in poetry, drama and prose. Much of what has been written has been romantic and loving and has pictured heroic men and women who labored

¹ Moses Rischin, *The Promised City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 20.

² Ira Rosenwaike, *Population History of New York* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1972), p. 94. Polish Jews are included in the statistics for Russians.

in the sweat shops by day and studied in the public schools by night to emerge, after much hardship, both educated and economically secure. Although such a portrait is a great oversimplification, there are elements of truth in it. The hard work of the first few generations of Eastern European Jews resulted in a higher standard of living for many of them and their children have done even better. While there still are a number of Jewish manual workers in New York—perhaps as much as one-fifth of the entire Jewish male labor force—four-fifths are white collar workers, professionals, managers and entrepreneurs. There has been a steady process of deproletarianization and, although not everyone has “made it,” the economic and social movement of the New York City Jewish community as a whole has been clearly upward.³

Much of the credit for this mobility has been attributed to the love affair carried on between the community and the public schools. Jews, it is said, have a passion for education and as a result have fully utilized all the educational opportunities the city could provide. According to this view, Jewish students have been both motivated and talented, have done very well in school and have made extensive use of the College of the City of New York, the “proletarian Harvard.”

Over the years, the belief that Jewish students make good schools has grown even stronger and rentals and real estate prices in school districts that are predominantly Jewish have reflected this. To most observers, there is a strong connection between the fact that a Jewish family of today will want to live in a “good” school district and at the same time, have the income such a choice requires. The Jews are said to have moved into the middle class via the education route and are willing and able to pay whatever is necessary so that their children may do even better.⁴

But *has* Jewish economic advancement been built primarily on successful use of the schools? To what extent did the Eastern European Jews utilize free public education in New York? Is it possible that the widespread use of higher education is mostly a

³ Nathan Glazer & Daniel Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1970), p. 144.

⁴ Interviews with several realtors on the South Shore of Long Island who contrasted the lower real estate values in School District 13 (Valley Stream and predominantly non-Jewish) with the substantially higher ones in District 14 (Hewlett-Woodmere and predominantly Jewish). District 15, (Lawrence-Cedarhurst-Inwood and just about evenly split between Jews and non-Jews) has real estate values that vary with the elementary school zone in which the property is located. Those houses located near schools with a totally Jewish student body are more costly than a comparable house in another section of the district.

third generation phenomenon made possible by the economic security earned by other, non-educational routes?

There are few clear cut answers to these questions. Surely, some Jews did go from an airless railroad flat on Hester St. to a roomy West Side apartment because they took advantage of New York's educational opportunities and translated their schooling into profitable professions. But, as the following pages will show, this could not have been the way up for most of the community, certainly not for the immigrant generation, and until 1910 or so, not for most of the second generation either. Conventional wisdom may have placed Jewish school success and economic progress in a causal relationship that needs closer examination.

To begin with, the extent to which the Eastern European Jews used the public schools varied with the time of their arrival in New York City⁵ because both educational requirements and opportunities changed greatly in the period under consideration. Until 1903, for example, only four years of schooling (ages 8-12) were required and working papers were easy to obtain. After that date, the age limit was raised, first to 14 and later to 16; the minimum grade to be completed became at first the 6th and later the 8th and working paper procedures became much more complex.⁶ These changes in educational requirements paralleled the expansion of educational opportunities.

Until well into the first decade of the 20th century, the inefficient and inadequate New York City system was not able to provide very much schooling for children anywhere in the city. Educational problems, however, were most serious on the Lower East Side where most of the Jewish immigrants had settled. The school buildings in the area below 14th Street were old, small and terribly overcrowded. In 1894, as part of the battle to reform the schools, Board of Education member Charles C. Wehrum made a survey of physical conditions in East Side schools. He found that at P.S. 2 on Henry Street, P.S. 4 on Rivington Street, and P.S. 20 on Chrystie Street, almost 1,000 children had been turned away for lack of room, while at P.S. 7 at Hester and Chrystie Streets, a brand new building was so overcrowded that an annex had to be organized immediately.⁷

At the same time, Lillian Wald said that classes of 60, sitting three to a seat, were not unusual. Other evidence indicates that she

⁵ Until 1898, New York City meant Manhattan alone.

⁶ Jermy Felt, *Hostages of Fortune* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1965).

⁷ Charles C. Wehrum, *Description of Grammar and Primary Schools in the City of New York and their Requirements* (New York: 1894), 10-12.

underestimated the situation and that there were classes of 100. Jacob Riis' famous picture of the Essex Market school, taken about 1895, shows students jammed into pew-like rows, without desks or any other amenities. During this time, because there were no vacant seats at all on the Lower East Side, fifty to sixty thousand children a year were denied admission to the primary grades. Each September the newspapers would report many instances of overcrowding and in 1897, the *Times* described a riot at P.S. 75 on Norfolk Street which occurred because 500 children could not be admitted to the first grade.⁸

The crisis was the result of the "dumbbell" tenement boom which trebled the population of the Lower East Side. In spite of this increase in residents, there were the same number of schools in the Tenth Ward (Lower East Side) in 1892 as there had been in 1884. For fiscal and political reasons, until 1902 the Board of Education was not able to build the additional schools which were required. As a result, crowded conditions on the East Side did not improve until after 1910 and then mostly because some of the original settlers moved across the river to suburbs like Brownsville and Williamsburg. At that point, the new schools built in the previous decade provided enough space for both the newcomers who continued to arrive and those older families who had not moved away.⁹

For most of the period of heavy Jewish immigration to New York, therefore, educational requirements were minimal and educational opportunity was limited by the lack of seats. As a result, many of the newcomers received much less schooling than is commonly assumed. For example, although the normal entry age was 7, the shortage of space meant that many children did not begin school until they were 8 or older. This, coupled with the fact that for two-thirds of the period working papers could be acquired at age 12, resulted in thousands of children leaving school with only minimum literacy. The non-English speaking child who was placed in first grade regardless of his age was even more likely to leave after only a few years. This was also true for the "holdover," the low achiever who, under the strict promotion policies of the day, could be left back indefinitely.

Even the successful student who completed all eight grades and could afford to stay off the labor market had very limited secondary school opportunities. Until 1898, New York City had no high schools at all and even in 1914, there were only five in Manhattan

⁸ *New York Times*, September 15, 1897, p. 12.

⁹ Rischin, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

and the Bronx. A small group of gifted students were admitted to a preparatory year at CCNY and Hunter College and some others could attend private schools like the Eron Preparatory School on East Broadway, but for most students, formal schooling ended with the 6th grade or, at best, the 8th. Pragmatically speaking, for much of the period under consideration, the absence of adequate secondary school facilities made it impossible for most of the Jewish immigrants to use education as the main road to upward mobility.

The question, of course, remains to what extent they did use what *was* available. In the primary grades, apparently a good deal. According to the figures of the U.S. Immigration Commission, in 1908 about one-third of the 673,466 children in the New York City school system were Jewish, a ratio corresponding to the number of Jews in the population at large at that time. What is more revealing, however, is the fact that over half of the Jewish children in school that year were in grades 1-3 while the rest were scattered, in declining numbers, through the other five grades. There were only a small number in high school.

The most precipitous drop occurred between the 6th and 7th grades because many children left school after completing the mandatory 6th year. Thus, while there were 25,534 Jewish students in 1st grade, there were only 11,527 in 7th. The high school figures are even more dramatic. There were 2,549 Jewish pupils in their first year of high school but only 488 in their last year. From these figures it would appear that, at least in 1908, the great majority of Jewish school-age children were not fully utilizing the opportunities offered by the free public school system.¹⁰

Further confirmation of this comes from other sources. A survey done at CCNY in 1951 showed that of all the fathers of City College students born in 1910 or earlier, (a majority of whom were Jewish), 90% had received *some* formal public school education in New York, but only 17% had completed 8th grade and only 11% had finished high school.¹¹ Additional evidence can be found in the ethnic make-up of the graduating classes at the first New York City high school, De Witt Clinton, from 1902 to 1922. The proportion of Jewish graduates at Clinton increased each year in this 20-year period but did not reach one third of the total until 1910. Most of these students, moreover, were German Jews, presumably

¹⁰ U.S. Congress, Senate, Immigration Commission, *Children of Immigrants in School*, 61st Congress, 3rd Session, 1911, vol. 4, p. 626.

¹¹ Morris Friedman, "The Jewish College Student: 1951 Model", *Commentary*, XII (September, 1951), 307-308.

from an older migration. Russian or Polish names do not predominate until 1916 and thereafter. From the addresses of the graduates it is clear that whether German or Russian, the Clinton graduates were young men who lived in good neighborhoods like the West Side of Manhattan or later, the Concourse area of the Bronx, and whose families, having reached middle class status by other, most likely non-educational routes, could afford to keep them in high school.¹²

An analysis of the *Alumni Register* of the College of the City of New York from 1883 to 1923 demonstrates a similar pattern. The proportion of Russian and Polish names increased from less than 1% in 1883 to 11% in 1923 but German Jewish names out-numbered all others throughout the period. Admittedly, establishing origins by surnames is far from exact. With allowances for errors, however, it seems quite probable that Russian, Polish and Austrian Jews did not graduate from "City" in very large numbers in the years under examination. Among other factors, the graduating classes at CCNY in this period were very small. In 1903, for example, there were only 193 graduates and even in 1913, only 209. As with education in New York City generally, it would appear that there were not enough seats at City College at this time to make it a route of upward mobility for very many. Not until the thirties were there very large classes, which were overwhelmingly Jewish and about 50% of Russian or Polish origin. We can therefore conclude that German Jews attended CCNY in the eighties, nineties and well into the 20th century because their families, having come to America earlier, had established themselves enough to support their sons through college. It took another 20 years before the later arrivals from Eastern Europe could do the same.¹³

The question of school utilization can be answered in other ways as well. According to the U.S. Immigration Commission in New York City in 1908, more than 10% of the foreign-born and 7% of the native-born Jewish children aged 6-10 were working at home and not attending school. A different volume of this massive report indicated that 38% of all the clothing workers in New York City in 1908 were Jews aged 14-19. This, unlike the first set of figures, does not indicate child labor but does show that a substantial number of Jewish youngsters did not go beyond the 8th grade.¹⁴

¹² *Clintonian*, vols. 1-20.

¹³ Donald Roberts, ed, *Alumni Register of the College of the City of New York* (New York: 1946).

¹⁴ U.S. Congress, Senate, Immigration Commission, *Immigrants in Industries*, 61st Congress, 2nd Session, 1911, vol. 73, p. 352.

Even more explicit were the results of a study made by two statisticians for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company which indicated that 36.6% of all the working papers issued in New York City in 1914-15 went to Jewish children. This was twice the number issued to Italians and four times the number issued to Germans or Irish. These startling figures may only indicate that Jews were more inclined to fulfil the legal procedures required for working papers while members of other ethnic groups dropped out unofficially; but, nevertheless, these statistics do show that as late as 1915 over 3500 Jewish youngsters terminated their education at the elementary level.¹⁵

There were, of course, over one-hundred evening schools in the city and it was entirely possible, and after 1903, essential, for a youngster who had gone to work at age 14 to continue his education at night. In 1906, there were about 100,000 students enrolled in the evening division—in elementary, high school and Americanization classes. The last of these was by far the most active. The Superintendent's report for 1908 said that 50% of all the students in the evening schools of New York were aliens learning English and preparing for citizenship. He added that the teaching of English to foreigners in the evening schools had come to be regarded as their most important branch of instruction.

The evening high schools, the most logical place for those preparing for college, were the least important part of the evening school division. This is not surprising since very few people were willing or able to deal with the classical secondary curriculum after they had done a full day's work. Even the regular elementary level classes were too difficult for most and, as a result, although enrollment figures were high, attendance was not.

Student fatigue was not the only reason. Physical conditions in the night schools were most unsuitable for the grown men and women who had to cram themselves into child-sized seats and read by gaslight. The teachers were mostly male day school instructors accustomed to dealing with younger children and unable to adapt to the needs of the older students. The classes met five nights a week from 7 to 10 p.m. which made it impossible for many of the students to have dinner. All things considered, it took an unusually able and determined student to utilize the evening schools for more than basic English literacy and as a result, it does not seem

¹⁵ Lee Frankel and Louis Dublin, *Heights and Weights of New York Children Fourteen to Sixteen Years of Age* (New York: Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, 1916), p. 22.

to have been an important route upward for most Jewish New Yorkers in this period.¹⁶

All of the data presented, while not conclusive, does demonstrate a somewhat limited and selective school utilization by the city's Jewish population in the years under discussion. At the same time, however, the economic status of the community was improving. An 1890 study of Jewish occupations in three Lower East Side districts demonstrated that 60% of the employed males and females were needle trade workers, 15% were artisans (bakers, carpenters, painters), 11% were peddlers, 8% were retail entrepreneurs and 1% were professionals. This report did not mention common laborers but a study based on U.S. Census occupation figures for 1900 estimated that 10% of New York City's Jewish workers were in that category.¹⁷

Other evidence, descriptive rather than statistical, reinforces the overall impression that, in the period under examination, most Jews were manual workers. The report of the U.S. Immigration Commission, however, demonstrated that even by 1908, there had been considerable economic improvement for the New York City Jewish community. While 12% of all New York City Jewish workers were classified as laborers, 7.3% of these were first-generation Americans and only 4.7% were of the second generation. Similarly, 56.7% of all skilled workers were of the first generation and only 27.4% were of the second. Most interesting was the white collar category in which only 36.9% were of the first generation but 60.2% were of the second. Clearly, the move by Jews from poorly paid, lower status manual labor to better paid and higher status occupations was well underway by 1908.¹⁸

As changes in housing and neighborhood patterns make clear, this upward mobility continued. Although the Lower East Side was still home to thousands of Jews in 1920, many had been able to move to apartment houses on the West Side of Manhattan or Lower Harlem and others had created pleasant new communities in Brooklyn and the Bronx. Undoubtedly, some Jewish families experienced these improvements because the breadwinner or his children had completed an 8th grade education, all that was needed

¹⁶ New York (City) Department of Education, *First, Third, Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, Twelfth Annual Report of The City Superintendent of Schools*, 1899, 1902, 1905, 1906, 1907, 1910. Reports of the Associate Superintendent for the Evening Division.

¹⁷ Nathan Goldberg, *Occupational Patterns of American Jewry* (New York: Jewish Teachers Seminary and Peoples University Press, 1947), p. 11; Rischin, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

¹⁸ U.S. Congress, Senate, Immigration Commission, *Abstract of the Report on the Occupations of the First and Second Generations of Immigrants in the U.S.*, 1911, p. 57.

for many of the white collar jobs of the day. There was also a smaller group who had completed secondary school and even college and had moved into the professions. The evidence of limited school utilization presented earlier, however, makes it clear that educational achievements could not have been the prime cause of status improvement for the first few generations of East European Jewish families. It is much more likely that the community did well because so many of the newcomers brought skills and experiences which were exactly right for the needs of the city at the time they arrived.

New York has almost always offered considerable economic opportunity for the enterprising but this was particularly true during the years of major East European Jewish immigration. New York was the greatest entrepôt in the United States, the most important center for banking, credit and securities, the nation's leader in jobbing and distributing and had "retail market opportunities [which] beckoned to the humblest . . ." Although high land and transportation costs made large scale industry impractical, the city was a center of light manufacturing such as the woman's clothing industry which in 1914 accounted for 98% of the total value of New York State manufactures.¹⁹

Clearly, the bustling metropolis offered promise of some employment for everybody but opportunities for skilled workers or for people with prior experience in trade seemed particularly good. According to a report based on the Russian census of 1897, a great many Jews from Russia and Poland came to America with exactly that kind of occupational background. 37.9% of the Jews in Russia in 1897 were artisans, engaged in manufacturing; 31.6% were in commerce and another 19.4% who were in personal service occupations were really also small businessmen. Even the 3.2% engaged in transportation were usually entrepreneurs. Many Jews, of course, combined several occupations; the skilled worker, for example, was often at the same time a retailer.²⁰

A breakdown of the kind of manufacturing most favored by Russian Jewish artisans confirms the point: 39% made clothing, 17% worked in leather and fur, 11% were in food processing, 10% were in the wood and metal trades and the rest were scattered among the building supply, textile and paper goods industries.²¹

¹⁹ Rischin, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.

²⁰ U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, *Bulletin of the Bureau of Labor*, XV (1907), 522.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 494.

Furthermore, skills were not the only advantage the Jews brought with them. Unlike the vast majority of their fellow immigrants, a great many of them had prior experience in urban living. In 1897, 42% of all Lithuanian Jews, 44% of all Russian Jews and 61% of all Polish Jews, lived in cities. Some of these "urban centers," it is true, were really small commercial villages serving the surrounding countryside but the Jews living in them practiced urban trades and thus came to America with greater occupational sophistication than did most of the newcomers. A study of the trades practiced by Jewish, Italian and Irish immigrants entering the U.S. between 1899 and 1910 revealed that 67% of the Jewish newcomers were skilled workers while only 35% of the Italians and 13% of the Irish were similarly trained.

There is still more evidence to explain the successful economic adjustment of the East European Jews in New York City. Jews constituted only 12% of the population of the "Pale," the area of Russia and Poland to which they were restricted, but they comprised 20% of all the factory workers there and 75% of those in commerce. In Lithuania and White Russia, 90% of the commerce was run by Jews. These Jewish entrepreneurs were not prosperous; competition was keen and there was little chance of capital accumulation. But when they emigrated they brought with them something as valuable as capital—experience in occupations that prepared them for roles in an expanding modern economy such as that found in New York.²²

Another way of testing the proposition that schooling was not central to upward mobility is to examine the experience of those East European Jews who remained in Britain instead of coming to the United States. According to Lloyd Gartner, who has studied the East European immigrant in England from 1870 to 1914, no more than 10 to 15% of the East European graduates of the state elementary schools went on to secondary schools and only a very few continued on to the University of London or any other institution of higher education. In spite of this, the group as a whole *did* succeed in improving its economic and social status. It would seem that school utilization was not a central factor in upward mobility for most of London's Jews.²³

Because the schools were not adequate and because economic

²² Stephen Steinberg, *The Academic Melting Pot* (New York: Carnegie Foundation, 1974), p. 80. Steinberg uses data from the Russian Census of 1897.

²³ Lloyd Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England, 1870-1914* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1960).

opportunities were plentiful, it was not the primary road upward for most New York Jews either. But a great many people, Jewish and otherwise, feel it was. Why has such a mistaken impression persisted? First of all, much of the writing about Jews has been done by other Jews who *did* use education as a route to success. They have generalized from their own experience and forgotten the classmates and neighborhood children who did not accompany them to high school and college.

Secondly, those Jewish youngsters who did stay in school usually did very well, both in absolute terms and in relation to their contemporaries in other ethnic groups. As Oscar Handlin has noted, immigration to New York City has resembled the "two by two" pattern of Noah's Ark. Like the Irish and Germans who preceded them and the Blacks and Puerto Ricans who followed, the Italians and Jews were "greenhorns" in the city together. This made it possible for contemporary observers to compare their school adjustment and the result of such comparisons was to further the image of the successful Jewish scholar.

A frequent comment was that the young Italians were less school-minded than their Jewish contemporaries. A teacher in a predominantly Italian school said:

Italian children were usually more crude in manner, speech and dress than non-Italian children . . . It was common for Italian boys and girls to leave school to help out the family income . . . These children, especially the boys, were a source of constant irritation for the teachers . . . they created difficulties for the schools.²⁴

Kate Claghorn, professor at the New York School for Social Work, investigated the immigrant child at school in New York and found that " . . . Italian children are . . . more or less difficult to discipline and are irresponsible . . . They are fair students, better than the Irish, but not as good as the Hebrews and Germans at book work. They show great talent for manual work, drawing, etc. One defect that they have is lack of application."²⁵

This observation was part of a larger report of the U.S. Industrial Commission which was, in general, less harsh. "Coming under the influence of the public schools, they [Italian children] are generally satisfactory pupils, mainly in the line of manual work and the industrial arts, however, rather than in bookwork." A popular maga-

²⁴ Leonard Covello, "The Social Background of the Italo-American School Child" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, New York University), vol. I, p. 448.

²⁵ U.S. Industrial Commission, *Reports on Immigration*, XV (1901), 475.

zine article about the foreign born children at P.S. 1 on Henry Street repeated this idea: "... the Italians are unquestionably the most artistic in the manual training shops..."²⁶

A retired principal who began his long career in 1904 at P.S. 189 near Catherine Slip with a fifth grade class which was almost all Italian recalled that his first pupils were of low caliber, from deprived backgrounds and difficult to discipline. They could best be reached through athletics and outings, not classroom work.²⁷

Two studies done by social scientists during this period shed some light on the ability of the Italian children. Leonard Ayres' study of school retardation in New York City, prepared for the Russell Sage Institute in 1909, found that the largest number of overage children were of Italian origin. In 1920, Katherine Murdoch, a teacher at the New York School of Social Work, gave the Pressy Intelligence test to 1700 5th grade boys in two schools and found that those of Italian descent placed lowest. Both studies indicated that Jewish pupils were doing much better in the schools of the day. Miss Murdoch's investigation concluded that Jewish children were the equal of the native-born and Ayres reported that Russian Jewish children were only a little more overage than German and native born youngsters and much less retarded than the English, Irish or Italian students he tested.²⁸

Miss Murdoch's study was followed by a number of others during the 1920's, the hey-day of testing. All of these investigations reported good scores for the Jewish children and poor ones for the Italians. These results should have been suspect because they resulted from intelligence tests in which knowledge of English and verbal ability in general were definite assets, and as the authors themselves stated, Jewish children did well in these tests because they were better at language studies and heard more English at home. In spite of this limiting factor, however, the tests were accepted by many as scientific proof of Jewish intellectual superiority and this idea was reinforced by empirical evidence found in more popular publications.²⁹

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xlv; A. R. Dugmore, "New Citizens for the Republic", *World's Work*, V (January, 1903), 3325.

²⁷ Conversation with Dr. Jacob Ross, October 17, 1966.

²⁸ Katherine Murdoch, "A Study of Race Differences in New York City", *School and Society*, XI (January, 1920), 147-150; Leonard P. Ayres, *Laggards in our Schools* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1909), p. 107.

²⁹ Rudolph Pintner, "Comparison of American and Foreign Children on Intelligence Tests", *Journal of Educational Psychology*, XIV, 292-295; D. Seago and T. Kolodin, "A Comparative Study of the Mental Capacity of 6th Grade Jewish and Italian Children", *School and Society*, XXII, (October 21, 1925), 564-568; Margaret Mead, "Group Intelli-

Kate Claghorn said "In the lower school, Jewish children are the delight of their teachers for their cleverness . . . obedience and general good conduct . . ." ³⁰ A magazine article describing the student body at P.S. 1 on Henry Street found that the "Russian and Polish Jews had a school standing far out of proportion to their numbers." Teachers on the Lower East Side said that the Jewish children were bright, attentive, studious, imaginative and patriotic. ³¹

Statements like these, plus evidence that for most of this century, Jews in higher education have exceeded their proportion in the population, have created an image of the bookish Jewish child who did very well in school and used his academic ability to enter well-paid professions, thus translating his school achievements into economic success. An examination of the occupations of Russian Jewish men who graduated from City College in 1903, 1913 and 1923 indicates that the overwhelming majority became lawyers, teachers and doctors. This would seem to agree with other findings which demonstrate that Jews have entered the professions in numbers far greater than would be expected from their standing in United States population statistics. ³²

Many different explanations for Jewish school success have been offered. Adherents of the "scholarship theory" see a link between the traditional Talmudic study of the Jews and the American classroom. Others, especially modern sociologists, see no connection between the *Talmid hokhem* of the *shtetl* and the able American public school student. As this writer has suggested in other papers, a combination of factors, both attitudinal and experiential, best explain Jewish school success. Values born in the Old World were affected by conditions in the New and compounded by the policies of the schools. Traditional reverence for the learned man probably led many Jewish immigrants to view education favorably and the fact that most of the newcomers brought skills and habits (to sit still, to use a book, to memorize, to recite) learned in the *hederim* of Eastern Europe undoubtedly helped their school adjustment in New York where such traits were greatly valued. The rigid, classical curriculum and rote methodology used by the city schools at the time suited the interests and training of many of the Jewish

gence Tests and Linguistic Disabilities Among Italian Children", *School and Society*, XXV (April 16, 1927), 465-476.

³⁰ U.S. Industrial Commission, *Report on Immigration*, *op. cit.*

³¹ Dugmore, *op. cit.*, p. 3325.

³² Mariam K. Slater, "My Son the Doctor", *American Sociological Review*, XXXIV (June, 1969), 366; *Alumni Register of City College*.

boys; only the fact that the instructor was likely to be a woman of Irish background, not a bearded *rebbe*, was startlingly new.

While many of the teachers were overtly hostile to the Jewish youngsters and criticized them for their competitiveness, dirtiness and foreign intonation, at the same time their ambition and diligence were much praised and highly valued. However reluctantly, many teachers admitted that the Hebrew youngsters were excellent students. As any one who has ever taught knows, it is easier to like a good student than a dull one and the New York City teachers of 70 years ago were no exception to this rule. In such an atmosphere, most Jewish students strove to live up to the high expectations of their teachers. This positive attitude toward schooling was reinforced by the fact that most Jewish parents strongly valued education as a vocational tool, an attitude strengthened by the gradual disappearance of many low level jobs previously open to adolescents with minimal education. Technological changes such as the pneumatic tube eliminated the job of cash girl in a department store and the growing use of the telephone eliminated the need for many messenger boys. Increasingly there were practical reasons to do well in school and complete the required years.³³

Of great importance was the communal decision to use the public schools for basic education and teach religion and tradition in afternoon Hebrew or Yiddish classes. Although there were always dissenters from this policy, the vast majority of Jewish children in this period were encouraged to concentrate on a secular education. The decision to use the American public school, although it was probably more tacit than active, also represented a sign of faith in America which was somewhat surprising in view of the fact that the schools made no attempt to hide their desire to wipe out every vestige of Old World culture and substitute the values of the New. Every possible device was used to derogate foreign traditions and glorify American ones. These efforts were tolerated, even welcomed, by much of the Jewish community, and was quite a change from the attitude in Russia, when the "liberal" Czar Alexander III encouraged Jews to send their children to government schools and Jewish parents had been less than enthusiastic. The

³³ Selma C. Berrol, "Immigrants at School: New York City, 1898-1914" (Unpublished Ph.d. dissertation, City University of New York); Berrol, "Turning Little Aliens into Little Citizens", *Proceedings of the Italian-American Historical Society*, 1974; Selwyn K. Troen, "The Impact of Technological Innovation on the Schooling of Adolescents, 1880-1920", Paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, Chicago, December 30, 1974.

latter feared, with reason, that their youngsters would be proselytized and perhaps converted to Christianity and they preferred to forego a secular education entirely rather than risk a weakening of their religious tradition. The attitude in New York City was quite different, and, as a result, most Jewish children quickly learned that the important school was the public one and the *heder* took second place. Such a positive attitude had much to do with school success.

The excellent school performance of Jewish students should not, however, obscure the fact that most New York City Jews moved into the middle class by other routes. This conclusion can be of considerable importance to our current economic and social policy. American society has taken the position that much of the economic inequality we discovered in the 1960's could be remedied by better schooling. A very large part of the war on poverty, for example, has dealt with educational improvements. Quality education, it is said, would enable more children to make their way up the economic ladder.

Consciously or otherwise, and especially in New York City, the upward mobility of the Eastern European Jews has been a model for this policy. The upheavals of the late sixties which produced community control in the public schools and open admission in the City University resulted from the fact that minority group leaders and many concerned citizens believed there had been a causal relationship between schooling and income. As a consequence, they sought educational changes which would give the poor access to free higher education and make it possible for them to enter the middle class as quickly as possible.

This plan was based on a false model. As this paper has demonstrated, most New York City Jews did not make the leap from poverty to the middle class by going to college. Rather, widespread utilization of secondary and higher education *followed* improvements in economic status and was as much a result as a cause of upward mobility. Although the city and its economic opportunities are very different today and secondary school is now much more essential than an 8th grade education was in 1910, it may well be that misunderstanding the Jewish experience in New York has led Blacks and Puerto Ricans to place an undue emphasis on schooling as the best road to prosperity. What is really important is that a variety of opportunities be available so that each person is able to make the most suitable career choice possible. Education, after all, is only one of the roads to the good life.

Jewish Wage Earners in Pittsburgh, 1890-1930

By IDA COHEN SELAVAN

Pittsburgh, a city famed for iron and steel production after the 1880's with coal mining a major industry in the surrounding counties, did not play an important role in the history of the Jewish labor movement. An attempt to examine the reasons for this leads to a number of hypotheses with some documentation, but most explanations for the "missing Jew" in Pittsburgh's industries derive from oral history.¹

The birth of the Jewish labor movement in the United States occurred in New York, with its constantly replenished masses of immigrants. From its earliest beginnings with Hebrew choristers and printers, the Jewish labor movement became almost synonymous with the garment industry's unions. Pittsburgh was notoriously backward in this regard. One theory has it that the smog filled air made any kind of garment manufacture, except for overalls for local use, impractical.²

Must a Jew, then, only be a tailor? Why could he not be a miner or a steel worker? Some informants note the rabid anti-Semitism which existed at the mills and the mines, both among the workers imported from Eastern Europe and among the employers. An interesting contrast can be made with the town of McKeesport, 13 miles southeast of Pittsburgh, where considerable numbers of Hungarian Jews were employed by the National Tube Company along with their non-Jewish compatriots.

Practically all the Hungarian Jews began their life here by working at National Tube . . . All of life was dominated by the mill.³

¹ During 1968-1969, the Pittsburgh Section, National Council of Jewish Women, conducted an Oral History Project (OHP) directed by Ailon Shiloh. Ida Cohen Selavan served as Research Assistant. About 250 Jews who had come to Pittsburgh as immigrants between 1890-1924 were interviewed and their stories tape recorded.

² Elizabeth Beardsley Butler, *Women and the Trades, The Pittsburgh Survey* (New York: Survey Association Inc., 1909), p. 101.

³ Committee on Second Generation Students, "Student Nativty Study" vol. III, 1933, p. 36 (unpublished manuscript in Archives of an Industrial Society, Hillman Library, University of Pittsburgh); Sarah Landesman, "The Early History of the McKeesport Jewish Community," 1954, p. 10 (unpublished ms. in same Archives); James Forbes, "The Reverse Side," in *Wage Earning Pittsburgh* (New York: Survey Association,

One explanation offered for this lack of discrimination is that these Jews spoke Hungarian and were viewed by the employers as "honkies."

Working as a mill hand was neither easier nor more remunerative than the other occupations to which Jews gravitated. "Eight to twelve dollars for a week of 60 hours has since 1907-08 been the gamut of wages for the unskilled where competition is free and English unessential." To enter into a more skilled and better paying job in industry required going through an apprenticeship program run by the company, or to have come already fully qualified in one's craft, and it was well known among the immigrants that most of the local companies did not accept Jews as apprentices.

As far as I know, I was the only Jewish tool and die maker at Westinghouse. They did not take Jews into apprenticeship. I came to them after working as head mechanic at International Motor Company in New Jersey. Besides, most of them didn't know I was Jewish.⁴

Take Heinz, they didn't want Jews. Some of us boycotted the products of companies who did not hire Jews. We did it by ourselves.⁵

Another factor was the problem of religious observance. A miner or mill worker could not stay home on the Sabbath or take time off to put on *tallis* and *tefillin* and *daven*. A Jew who worked for another Jew who was observant was often able to enjoy these "fringe benefits." For some this was more important than higher wages or better working conditions.

The development of a Jewish proletariat in Pittsburgh seems to have begun only after the influx of large numbers of Jews from Eastern Europe. Before 1870, members of the Jewish community supported themselves mostly by selling, either as merchants in their own shops, or as peddlers traveling their routes. There were a few pawn brokers and two manufacturers. A few Jews also worked with their hands: two tailors (probably in their own shops), one laborer, one coppersmith, and a few cigar makers. According to Jacob S. Feldman, there were about a thousand Jews in Pittsburgh in 1870. The earliest settlers had come from Bavaria, Baden and Wurtemberg in the 1840's and 1850's. The later arrivals, after 1860, came from Holland, Prussia and Lithuania. Within a decade

Inc., 1914), p. 368: "The Jewish parasite of Eastern Europe reasserts his old work relation of panderer, usurer, and liquor seller."

⁴ Interview with Harry Morrison who came from Vitebsk in 1914, at age 29, May, 1969; John R. Commons and William M. Leiserson, "Wage Earners of Pittsburgh," in *Wage Earning Pittsburgh*, p. 120.

⁵ Male who came in 1904 at fifteen from Jassy, Roumania, OHP.

after the Civil War the number of Jews had more than doubled and by 1890 there were 5000 Jews in the twin cities of Allegheny and Pittsburgh.⁶

During the forty year period under study, 1890-1930, there were a variety of jobs held by Jewish wage earners. None, however, approached the number engaged in stogy making. In 1914, this was the fifth largest industry in Pittsburgh in number of employees, and Jews accounted for about 80% of this number.⁷

The needle trades were second in size as employers of Jewish wage earners with an estimated thousand so engaged. There was also a uniquely Jewish trade whose union—the Hebrew Bakers' Union Local 44—had a history of continuous activity from its inception in 1906 until its amalgamation into local 12 in 1975.

These three industries, each different in conditions, wages, and work force, deserve closer study.

I. Stogies

The 1890's, with the increased immigration from Eastern Europe, mark the beginnings of Pittsburgh's own sweat shops—the manufacture of stogies. One of the earliest stogy makers was Samuel Sheffler, from Roumania, who settled in Pittsburgh in 1884. His factory, the Standard Tobacco Company, where Jews could observe the *mitsvot*, became an important absorption center for his relatives and *landsleit*. The relatively large percentage of Roumanian Jews in Pittsburgh may be attributed, perhaps, to Samuel Sheffler and his extended family.

Sheffler defended his immigrant *landsleit* at the second National Conference of Jewish Charities in the United States, held in Detroit, May 26-28, 1902.

I wish to state that we have up to the present time over three hundred to take care of, and you will probably be astonished that the total sum that we have expended on them was a little over a thousand dollars. This was because many of them were taken care of by their own society, or rather the members of the Society, and not in the way of charity. They are loaned a few dollars, and the members of that society are procuring work for them, and as soon as they begin earning money, they pay it back, little by little.

Through the aid of B'nai B'rith, through their officers, I have accomplished the reunion of over fifty families, or at least of some of what they call the collateral relatives.⁸

⁶ Jacob S. Feldman, *The Early Migration and Settlement of Jews in Pittsburgh, 1754-1894* (Pittsburgh: United Jewish Federation, 1959).

⁷ Commons and Leiserson, *loc. cit.*

⁸ *Proceedings of the Second Conference of Jewish Charities in the United States, Detroit, Michigan, May 26th to 28th, 1902* (Cincinnati: 1902), p. 188.

By "B'nai B'rith," Sheffler meant the local B'nai B'rith lodges and other organizations who were working with the Industrial Removal Office, which by 1903 had established an office in Pittsburgh. Berish Chaimovitz, a relative by marriage of Samuel Sheffler and an officer of the Lebanon Lodge of B'nai B'rith (composed mainly of Roumanian Jews) was the local agent.⁹

By the turn of the century, Jews from other countries owned a number of fairly large stogy factories and many small family businesses.

The father was a buncher, the mother was a roller, the kids and the grandparents were strippers and packers, and all combined they could sometimes not make a living.¹⁰

Cigar making had been a traditional craft among Dutch Jews. After the Civil War the manufacture of cigars was centered in New York City where Jews of diverse antecedents were employed. Cigar makers had been unionized as early as June 22, 1864.

Stogies, or tobies, as they were sometimes called, were cheap cigars, not recognized as such by cigar makers. The Cigar Makers' International Union claimed jurisdiction over stogy makers. "We now have stogie makers as members and give them all the rights and protection." However, since stogies did not require the degree of skill that cigar making did, and since they sold for considerably less than cigars, the wage scales at stogy factories were very low and hours very long.¹¹

Stogy making could be divided into a number of processes which could be done by relatively unskilled labor, making it an ideal industry for immigrants. Women and children and elderly men were able to do the work, since no great physical strength was required. By 1907, stogy making vied with peddling as the typical Jewish immigrant occupation in Pittsburgh.¹²

What could one do in Pittsburgh? Making stogies. So I learned the stogy trade.

⁹ Samuel Joseph, *History of the Baron de Hirsch Fund: The Americanization of the Jewish Immigrant* (Philadelphia: 1935), pp. 185-188; interview with Molly and Morris Chaimovitz, August, 1969; Industrial Removal Office Papers, American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Mass.

¹⁰ Harry Slawkin, former stogy worker, and one of the union organizers, interviewed May, 1975.

¹¹ "The original stogy, or toby, was a long, loosely rolled cigar, made only of crumpled filler leaf and smooth, fine wrappers. The binder was left out to lessen cost both in time and material, making it possible to sell the best stogy for from half to a third the price of the cheapest cigar." Butler, *op. cit.* p. 75; *Cigar Makers' Official Journal*, July 15, 1907, p. 9.

¹² Anna Reed, "The Jewish Immigrants of Two Pittsburgh Blocks," in *Wage Earning Pittsburgh*, p. 421.

I worked in a big toby factory rolling tobies. It was very easy—they showed you how to do it and then you could do it. About 200 people worked there. The hours were long and the pay was not much but I did not have to work *shabes* and holidays.

At home nobody had smoked—here I had to work in a toby factory for three years.

When I was only twelve years old I worked five hours every night for thirty-five cents a night as a stripper in a stogy factory.¹³

To circumvent child labor laws, children were often hidden in the basement or in storage rooms when the inspectors came. There were undoubtedly incidents of bribery and collusion between employers of child labor and the inspectors. In 1907, binder strippers made thirty to forty cents a day, filler strippers averaged sixty to ninety cents a day, and wrapper strippers eighty cents to one dollar a day. Packers earned four to six dollars for a fifty-six to sixty hour week. Mold stogy rollers, usually men, could make ten dollars a week with night work.¹⁴

Over the years, a number of unsuccessful attempts were made to unionize the immigrant stogy workers. The influx of socially aware immigrants after the failure of the Russian Revolution of 1905 provided the impetus for its realization.

In 1906, the Industrial Workers of the World was approached for help but was unable to gain enough support. But by 1912, the IWW, working with a local committee, organized a union which enrolled 1200 members, representing a very large percentage of the estimated 2000 Jews then employed in the trade.¹⁵

When in June, 1913, a strike was called against A. Rubin and Company, the Penn Cigar Company, Standard Cigar Company, Enelow Cigar Company, and others announced a general lockout. The demands of the strikers included regular weekly payment of wages, a raise from \$2.25 to \$3.00 per 1000 stogies for mold stogy makers, and some improvement in working conditions. The lockout lasted for eighteen weeks, but was largely ignored by the Pittsburgh press.

I went to the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* on Fifth Avenue and asked for publicity for our strike but the editor refused. He said we were radicals.¹⁶

The weekly *Justice* played up the class differences within the Jewish community affected by the lockout. A front page cartoon

¹³ Respondents in OHP.

¹⁴ Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

¹⁵ Charles L. Cooper, "Stogy Industry in Pittsburgh," *Survey*, November 29, 1913.

¹⁶ Harry Slawkin, interview.

showed Mr. Goldsmit of Goldsmit's Dry Slitz Stogies sitting in the synagogue on Yom Kippur while poor Jews stood outside. A little girl asked her mother: "Mama! Is he asking forgiveness for starving us and locking us out?" The Goldsmits were also accused of fomenting anti-Semitism among the "child scabs" in their McKees Rocks factory.¹⁷

On October 25, 1913, the strike was settled with all the factories except Goldsmit's Dry Slitz Stogies. Although the workers achieved their goal (the average raise was from \$1.50-\$3.00 a week), the lockout resulted in some factories closing down. The growing popularity of cigarette smoking also began to affect the demand for cigars and stogies. Most Jewish immigrants had never viewed stogy-making as a trade with a future. By 1920, about one hundred skilled men who earned fairly good wages were the only Jews involved in the industry, while most of the unskilled work was done by black and Polish women.¹⁸

By 1930, almost no Jews remained in the industry. The Tobacco Workers' Protective Association, which had succeeded the IWW Stogy Workers' Union, was dissolved in 1930 and the few remaining members joined the AFL Cigar Makers' International Union. Similarly, child labor which had been associated with the stogy industry at the turn of the century had disappeared completely among Jews. Indeed, the extraordinarily high percentage of Jewish children who were in high school and college became a phenomenon mentioned by viewers of the Pittsburgh scene.¹⁹

II. The Needle Trades

There is little data providing us with information on the number of Jews employed in the needle trades in Pittsburgh from 1890 to 1930. In 1870, there were six Jews listed as tailors but one may assume that some of the twenty-three "clothiers" or "clothing merchants" were also involved in various phases of tailoring. By the turn of the century, a number of factories had been established to provide work clothes for the local labor force — overalls, pants, vests, and shirts. The United Garment Workers had succeeded in unionizing one factory in 1900 but their drive to popularize the use of the UGW label was generally unsuccessful.

¹⁷ *Survey* October 11, 18, 1913.

¹⁸ Eva Smill, "The Stogie Industry on the Hill in Pittsburgh, Pa." (unpublished master's thesis, Carnegie Institute of Technology); Ida Cohen Selavan, "The Jewish Labor Movement in Pittsburgh," *YIVO Annual*, XVI (in press).

¹⁹ Kurt Pine, "The Jews of the Hill District" (unpublished master's thesis, University of Pittsburgh); Ida Cohen Selavan, "Education of Jewish Immigrants in Pittsburgh, 1862-1932," *YIVO Annual*, XV (1974).

In 1907, Elizabeth Butler listed 20 garment factories in Pittsburgh, employing 1006 people, 868 women and 138 men, but she provides no breakdown of the number of Jews employed in these trades. Her article contains some negative stereotypes of Jews. She notes, for example, that Jewish girls were "trouble makers," and that they had a "nervous energy" which prevented them from putting forth sustained physical effort. She was probably quoting employers who considered Jewish needle workers agitators for unionization.²⁰

In 1908 about sixty Jewish tailors organized themselves as local 86 of the United Garment Workers. Most of these were in custom tailoring, which in other cities was organized by the Journeymen Tailors' Union.

In the custom branch of the industry, expert tailors measured customers for garments in small shops scattered far and wide over miles of city streets. In some cases these same tailors made the garments themselves . . . in others they had journeymen to assemble garments either in the tailors' shops or in their own homes; a third method of work, increasingly important after 1900, was to send the measurements to a factory where teams of workers made the garments . . . Factory workers in the custom trade became involved in jurisdictional disputes between the Journeymen Tailors and . . . the UGW . . . ²¹

In August, 1913, the Journeymen Tailors' Union attempted to form the Tailors' Industrial Union to organize workers in men's ready-to-wear clothes, hitherto within the jurisdiction of the UGW. This was perhaps the threat that inspired the appearance of organizers from New York headquarters in Pittsburgh. They agitated for a revival and expansion of the union, a new dues structure, and the awakening of social consciousness.

Needleworkers of Pittsburgh! How long will you sleep? Don't you work long hours for small wages? Don't you work in filthy shops, where there is no air, so that you may at any time contract consumption? Don't your bosses treat you like slaves?

If you want to live like human beings there is only one solution for you . . . and that is the union.²²

The Pittsburgh District Council of the UGW embarked upon a

²⁰ Feldman, *op. cit.*; Butler, *op. cit.*, pp. 103, 134; Commons and Leiserson, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

²¹ Edwin Fenton, "Italians in the Labor Movement," *Pennsylvania History*, XXVI (April, 1959), 141-142.

²² *Di Naye Tsayt, Vokhenblat in di interesen fun shnayder arbeter*, July 31, 1914, September 5, 1913, (Microfilm at YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York).

drive to organize the entire garment industry in Pittsburgh. Organizers A. Berkson and Ben Schweitzer made regular trips from New York for this purpose to union headquarters at 52 Arthur Street, Hill District.

By February, 1914, there were 250 members in the union (out of an estimated 3000 needle workers in the city) and some successful settlements with employers. Azriel Pressman, Secretary of Local 86, wrote, "*In unzer local hersht a nayer gayst* (there is a new spirit in our local)." Henry Goldberg, the "walking delegate", was contacted by many employers as a kind of employment agent.²³

I came to Pittsburgh in December of 1913 and went to work as a pants presser at \$4 a week for a 70 hour week. The most I made was just before Passover, 1914, when I got into piece work and earned \$11 for 80 hours that week. In May of 1914 I was recruited by Henry Goldberg. By then there were only two shops that had not been organized. I went to one of them on Third and Smithfield and talked the girls into going out on strike. The boss hit me and gave me a black eye. Afterwards, when we settled the strike, he paid a fine to the union.²⁴

The new agreement, signed in April, 1914 between Local 86 and Bennett, Hollander, and Lewis; M. Oppenheim and Company; American Trouser Company; and the Patent Garment Manufacturing Company, decreased weekly hours from 52 to 50 and raised wages. Organizers Sweitzer and Berkson were honored at a banquet and mass meeting that weekend, with a hall filled to capacity to listen to a musical performance, a declamation by Eva Savransky and an address by Ben Schweitzer on the need to organize both economically and politically against capitalism. At this time it was also decided to raise dues to fifteen cents a week.

This period seems to have been the high point of UGW activity in Pittsburgh. The agreement affected only the larger shops. Employees in the small factories were still working a sixty hour week, and many union members felt that Berkson represented only those workers who were in the large factories.

Dissatisfaction grew, during 1914, but it was not reflected in the glowing accounts of UGW success sent in to *Di Naye Tsayt* regularly by Azriel Pressman. In September, 1914, Local 86 was host to Brother Moroto from New York who came to organize Italian needle workers. Local 86 agreed to organize a local of Italians through the Italian Tailors' Beneficial Society. While Jews were

²³ *Ibid.* Feb. 27, March 13, 1914.

²⁴ Abe Forman interview, May, 1975.

concentrated in the Hill District, Italians were scattered all over the city and suburbs in small shops.²⁵

In 1917, Louis Hollander came to Pittsburgh as an organizer for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, and found a fertile field for his activity. The members of Local 86 transferred to the ACWA. The war years brought increasing prosperity. Louis Hollander came to Pittsburgh again in 1921 to help the union obtain a 35% across-the-board increase in wages. At that time piece workers were earning \$35 to \$40 per week and a good presser could earn up to \$100 a week. In 1924 the General Executive Board of the ACWA proudly stated, "The Amalgamated has made much progress in Pittsburgh."²⁶

By 1930, however, the number of Jews in the needle trades was decreasing. Many tailors opened their own shops, went into other professions, or moved away from Pittsburgh. Azriel Pressman, who was the first paid organizer of the UGW in Pittsburgh, moved to Youngstown, Ohio. As a rule, the children of Jewish needle workers did not follow in their parents' footsteps. As early as 1901 John R. Commons had stated, "It is quite unusual for Jewish tailors to teach their children their own trade."²⁷

As the Jews left, their place was taken by other ethnic groups, primarily immigrants from Italy.

III. Bakers

Baking was a skill easily transported to the New World. In the United States, unionization of bakery and confectionery workers dates back to 1886. In Pittsburgh, efforts to unionize the bakers were made by itinerant organizers from the beginning of the century.²⁸ The Jewish bakers organized about 1906 and won their first victories in 1907. There were about a thousand bakers in Pittsburgh in that year but only 200 of them were unionized by the Bakery and Confectionery Workers International Union. Of this group, approximately 70 were in the Hebrew Bakers' Union (later Local 44) about which John R. Commons and William M. Leiserson wrote in *The Pittsburgh Survey*:

²⁵ *Di Naye Tsayt*, April 10, May 8, Sept. 11, 1914.

²⁶ *Report of the General Executive Board of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America to the Sixth Biennial Convention, Philadelphia-New York, May 12-17, 1924*, p. 115.

²⁷ Azriel Pressman, *Der Durkhgegangener Veg* (New York: 1950); John R. Commons, *Report of the U.S. Industrial Commission* (Washington, D.C.: 1901), vol. XV, p. 327.

²⁸ Herman Gordon interview.

One of the locals was composed entirely of Yiddish-speaking bakers, and these had the only union bakeshops in the District. This Jewish local union made agreements with two boss bakers by which the latter accepted the union scale of wages and hours, and in return were empowered to place the union label on all their products . . . In the two union shops in 1908, the men worked regularly a ten hour day, one shift from 5 p.m. to 3 a.m. and the other from 2 a.m. to 12 p.m. These were the only shops where the hours were fixed The agreements in the two label shops in 1907 provided for the minimum scale [first hand at oven \$20; second hand, foreman of bench work, \$16; second hand, bench worker, \$15, third hand, helper, \$12] although the actual wages were found to be higher . . .

Following the financial depression, the bakers' unions more than regained their ground. The general rates in the trade have advanced to the standard set by the label shops in 1907-1908, while the Jewish unions have brought the scale in the small shops up [\$27; \$23; \$20; \$18]

In 1914, the bakery salesmen of the Hill District organized, getting a six-day week and an all-round increase of \$1.00 a week; and in 1914, also, the Jewish cake bakers got sick days, nine hours, and a \$1.00 a week raise.²⁹

The Hebrew Bakers' Union was not all "Hebrew."

There were a number of Polish fellows in the union — they preferred our local because we had a feeling of brotherhood. If there was unemployment we would share out the jobs, even if it was only an hour as a relief worker. We always saw to it that unemployed union workers got some money.³⁰

One of the Polish bakers, Adolf Kebernik, served as Local 44's secretary from 1913. On April 17, 1917, a registered letter to Caplan's Bakery announced the submission of a new agreement which was to go into effect on May 1. Copies were sent to all the Jewish bakeries in Pittsburgh located in the Hill District. The major effort at this time was to abolish night work and to establish the eight-hour day.³¹

In 1917 the three locals, the Jewish, Polish, and American (it used to be German) would meet at the Joint Board to discuss union problems. We met at the Labor Lyceum as soon as it opened in 1916. Dues were two dollars a month, of which seventy-five cents went to the International. In 1918, a baker working a forty hour week could make \$50. Before World War II the Jewish bakers did not work on Saturday.

²⁹ Commons and Leiserson, *op. cit.* pp. 135-136.

³⁰ Charles Sugar interview, May, 1975.

³¹ Ledgers containing minutes and copies of letters of Local 44 in possession of Saul Birnkrant, former secretary of Local 44.

The problem of night work continued to be a major issue. On February 17, 1919, in a letter to all the Jewish bakeries, Kebernik wrote:

The Joint Executive Board of Allegheny County of our International Union decided that night work in bakeshops must be abolished. Our local union unanimously confirmed the decision of the J.E.B. and instructed me to notify you to prepare your shop from the first of May 1919 for day work only.

Since the negotiations were expected to be difficult the International was requested to send organizer J. Goldstein. "He was a top-notch union organizer."³²

As the Jewish population increased to an all-time high of 60,000 in 1924, the need for bread, bagels, rolls, *challes*, and cake were met by Jewish bakeries opened by former union members. If two partners opened a business, one of them was required to be a union member.

In the thirties, a bread baker could earn \$67 a week, \$72 with overtime. Local 44 was successful in forcing the largest Jewish bakery in the area to sign a contract to employ only members of Local 44, even after the bakery had moved to another neighborhood. The conditions achieved were among the best in the industry.³³

Workmen's Circle Branch 45 was the most important and longest lasting Jewish labor-oriented organization in Pittsburgh. From 1916 to 1930 it had as many as 1,600 members, its own building, and was involved in many Jewish and general movements. Besides the traditional fraternal order activities of mutual aid, free loan, insurance, funeral benefits, etc., it operated Yiddish schools and brought theatrical performances and lecturers to Pittsburgh.

The ideological struggles within Branch 45 reflected the struggles on the national level of the Workmen's Circle between the Old Guard and the Young Guard.

The Old Guard see the Workmen's Circle only as an insurance order with a Socialist atmosphere. They are the keepers of the old freethinker, *apikorsish* spirit . . . The Young Guard wants the Workmen's Circle to be the main bearer of free Jewish progressive and radical thought, of scientific research, cultural work, Yiddish Socialist Sunday Schools.³⁴

From 1914, and on, the Young Guard was dominant in Pittsburgh

³² Charles Sugar interview.

³³ *Pittsburgh Jewish Indicator*, May 30, 1924; Herman Gordon interview.

³⁴ J.S. Hertz, *Fufzig Yor Arbeter Ring in Yidishen Lebn* (N.Y.: 1950), p. 132.

as well as in the other cities outside New York. A Yiddish *shule* was opened in response to requests by parents.

The tendencies of the Workmen's Circle in the provinces is much different from what it is in New York. There the Workmen's Circle is everything. It is the Socialist Movement, it is the bearer of free thought and only cultural center. It is therefore quite understandable that the member in the provinces looks at the Workmen's Circle as at an organization in which the ideal is the main thing. In New York and in the few other big cities the conditions are quite different. There is a Socialist Party, a labor movement, etc. and the Workmen's Circle is seen only as that part of the labor movement which should supply insurance and no more.³⁵

From 1907 until 1916 the energies of the members of the Workmen's Circle were focused on one goal — the building of a Labor Lyceum. Concerts were held to collect money and shares were sold at \$5 a share. The unions and the Workmen's Circle bought many of the shares.

When the Zaslov Cigar factory on 37-39 Miller Street was closed because of a fire, the property was purchased by a joint committee of the Workmen's Circle and the Socialist Party. A paid manager was chosen from among the membership to oversee the maintenance of the building and to collect rents from outside groups that used the facilities. The Labor Lyceum was the first white organization in the city to rent its hall to black groups for meetings and dances.

The Workmen's Circle supported the New York Cloakmaker's strike of 1910, the defense of Bill Haywood, and served as distributing agent for funds raised by Jewish labor organizations all over the country on behalf of the steelworker's strike of 1919. The support of the miners' strike of 1923 was considered by some as "the most glorious moment" in the history of the organization.

Abe Straus, who worked for Caplan's Bakery, oversaw the collection of bread and *challes* for the miners. Max Jenkins, Joe Mankin, and others, loaded the bread on trucks and drove out to the mining villages in Washington County. First they were stopped by State Troopers who thought they were bringing arms to the miners, then they were stopped by the miners themselves who thought they were scabs. Cars and trucks with milk and bread were sent out daily for a year to the neighboring mining towns.

Jews were also involved in organizing the miners. Some came

³⁵ *Ibid*

from New York and others were local, but they often assumed non-Jewish names.³⁶

The split between the Old Guard and the Left Wing Section of the Socialist Party and the formation of the Communist Party of America affected the atmosphere of the Labor Lyceum. After 1919 there were frequent quarrels and even occasional fist fights. In 1927 the police were called in to quell a disturbance. A group of leftwingers broke away and became the nucleus for the International Workers' Order, Jewish Section, founded in 1930. Many of the leftwingers were also involved in the founding of the ICOR in 1923, the organization for the support of Jewish colonization in the USSR, as well as the Jewish Section of the Workers' Party. In 1930, the decision was made to sell the Labor Lyceum building, and this marked the end of an era in the Jewish community of Pittsburgh.

The Jewish labor movement in Pittsburgh was a transitory phenomenon which lasted approximately a quarter of a century, beginning with the founding of Workmen's Circle Branch 45 in 1904 and ending with the sale of the Labor Lyceum in 1930.

This relatively short life span, as compared to the Jewish labor movements in larger cities, is due to the relative weakness of the three mainstays of an organized Jewish working class—a strong garment workers' union, a Yiddish press, and a Workmen's Circle. Garment workers, "the trunk of the tree of proletarianization," represented only a small percentage of Pittsburgh's Jewish wage earners. The Yiddish press in Pittsburgh was Orthodox and Zionist in approach, and the Workmen's Circle quickly became bourgeois in composition as many of its members entered private entrepreneurship. By 1938 only 9.9% of the gainfully employed of the Jewish community were listed as skilled workers; 22.3% were proprietors and managers and 10.8% were professionals.³⁷

Along with economic mobility came residential mobility. Whereas the Hill District had been the ghetto from the turn of the century into the twenties, by 1928 the movement eastward, into Squirrel Hill and East Liberty, had become a recognized phenomenon. In 1938 41% of the Jewish population lived in Squirrel Hill, 18% lived in East Liberty, and only 20% remained in the Hill District.

Both economic and residential mobility were preceded by

³⁶ Kurt Pine, *op. cit.*, p. 57; Gabor Kisch former coal miner, interviewed, July, 1975.

³⁷ Maurice Taylor, "The Jewish Community of Pittsburgh, A Sample Study," 1938 (unpublished ms.).

educational mobility. Jewish children attended high school in higher proportions than any other immigrant group as early as 1908, and they formed the largest ethnic group at the University of Pittsburgh in the twenties. In 1938, 11.9% of Jewish college-age boys and 6.4% of college-age girls were in college, compared to less than one-half of one percent of that age group for the country as a whole. Eighty-three percent of the Jews under thirty had completed high school. Twenty-four percent of the entire Jewish population was in some kind of school, including night school.³⁸

Today, Pittsburgh's Jews have become substantially middle-class. The median family income in the Wightman School area of Squirrel Hill was the highest in the city in 1972 and the median year of education for people twenty-five and older was also the highest in the city (16.1). A 1973 survey of the city's Jewish population indicated 70% with college training and 20% with advanced degrees. Sixty to seventy percent of the Jewish labor force was engaged in business or the professions.³⁹

Pittsburgh's Jews may have made the transition from working class to middle class somewhat faster than Jews in larger urban centers, but the pattern they followed is characteristic of American Jews in general.

³⁸ Arnold Z. Pittler, "The Hill District of Pittsburgh," (unpublished master's thesis, University of Pittsburgh); Taylor, *op. cit.*

³⁹ Douglas Smock, "Incomes in City Areas Seen to Correlate with Education of Residents," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, July 28, 1972; *Jewish Chronicle of Pittsburgh*, February 15, 1973; "The Jewish Community of Pittsburgh: A Population Study" (unpublished study, United Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh).

PROGRAM
1976 ANNUAL MEETING
AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
WALTHAM, MASSACHUSETTS
APRIL 30 - MAY 2

Friday, April 30

Executive Council Meeting, American Jewish Historical Society
Special Events
Exhibitions

Saturday, May 1

Afternoon: Sabbath Study Session, Brandeis University

Dinner Program:

Dr. Maurice Jacobs, Presiding

Presentation of Lee Max Friedman Award Medal

Address: "The Problems Facing Colonial Jewry,"

Dr. Malcolm H. Stern, Chairman, Executive Council, American
Jewish Historical Society

Exhibition: "Synagogue Architecture in America"

Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University

Sunday, May 2

Annual Business Meeting, Marriott Motor Hotel

Luncheon: Dr. Maurice Jacobs, Presiding

Program: Honoring Prof. Jacob R. Marcus

Presentation: Dr. Bertram W. Korn

Academic Sessions

I: 2:00 P.M.

Prof. Marvin Fox, Brandeis University, Chairman

"Jewish Intellectual History in the United States," Prof. Isadore
Twersky, Harvard University

II: 3:15 P.M.

Prof. Louis Ruchames, University of Massachusetts, Boston,
Chairman

"Evaluation of the Jewish Family System, What It Means Today,"

Prof. Laurence H. Fuchs, Brandeis University

"The Jewish Family and Jewish Politics in America," Prof.
Stanley Rothman, Smith College

COMMENTATORS:

Prof. Zena Smith Blau, Richmond College of the City University
of New York

Mary F. Handlin, Center for the Study of the History of Liberty
in America, Harvard University

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THE CRUCIAL PROBLEM OF OUR TIME

by John Slawson

Remarks at a Special Meeting
Convened During the General Assembly of the
Council of Jewish Federation and Welfare Funds
November 17, 1962
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen:
First I want to express my deep gratitude to Mr. Sol Satinsky and Mr. William Rosenwald for hosting this fine meeting. It is a great joy for me to see here so many of my former colleagues, with whom I have spent many years in quite a number of cities. Long, long ago I also was connected in administrative capacities with Federation.

Today I would like to tell you something about certain broad areas of major concern to the American Jewish Committee. It is sometimes a little difficult to figure out exactly what kind of an organization we are. Sometimes I am asked, "Is the AJC a philanthropy?" No, it isn't. "Is it like a university?" No. "Is it a religious organization?" No. Then what is it?

The American Jewish Committee as it now functions represents a relatively new development in our lifetime and in the life of American society. It is a human-relations agency primarily dedicated to obtaining equality of opportunity, security and dignity for Jews -- but within the framework of equality of opportunity and dignity for all. The latter is a very important qualification. We believe our efforts must proceed within that framework.

Many of you here, especially those of more advanced age, know something of the AJC and its history. Today it is really three organizations in one. It has a triple function: One is to build wholesome intergroup relations throughout the American community, both nationally and locally. Another is to maintain a widespread overseas service; for, as most of you know, since its founding in 1906, the AJC has been concerned with the security and status of Jews in all parts of the world.

Our overseas service, however, is somewhat different from the type of undertaking to which most of us are accustomed. American Jewry has been generous, and rightly so, in alleviating distress. To prevent distress from occurring is, essentially, what the American Jewish Committee tries to do -- to prevent catastrophes that result in the need for rescue and relief. We don't always succeed; but as Justice Holmes once said, "If you do everything you can, you do everything you should." And we try to do everything we can.

Our third function grows out of a philosophical orientation which the American Jewish Committee brings to its work for Jewry both here and abroad. This philosophy holds that an element essential to Jewish self-regard and wholesome integration into the country of birth or residence is Jewish self-understanding. This philosophy is expressed in a program that deals with the civic relations of Jews.

Concretely, what does this program of ours involve? It has included self-studies of attitudes and civic relationships of Jews in such

cities as White Plains, Memphis, Miami, Kansas City, Baltimore. It involves objective research by trained social scientists, such as our Riverton Study undertaken a few years ago in a small community on the East coast, and the Lakeville Study going forward in a suburb in the Midwest -- to help us understand what actually is going on in American Jewish communities today: to what extent are Jews accepted, integrated in their communities? to what extent do they want to be? How do their Christian neighbors feel about them? How do they feel about their neighbors -- Christians and Jews?

These studies and researches feed an adult education program, to examine the implications of the findings for Jews and for the future of Jewish group life in America. We conduct such a program among our own constituency; and, interestingly enough, we find a great demand for it by other groups in the Jewish community, such as community centers, temples and synagogues, women's and youth groups. Clearly, this kind of service and material is sorely needed to cope with the problems of both assimilation and self-segregation, and nowhere is it adequately available.

Abroad, this philosophy has led us into an activity which is known as Community Service, aimed at Jewish religio-cultural survival in other lands. There is, of course, the problem of Russia, where we are witnessing cultural genocide before our eyes; and we have been trying to do a great many things about this critical situation with the Russians themselves, with the American public, and with officials of

the United States Government. But in Western Europe, the conditions -- and the problems -- are very different. There, since 1958, the American Jewish Committee has been collaborating with the Alliance Israélite Universelle of France and the Anglo-Jewish Association of Great Britain, conducting a Jewish cultural program for adults and young people in the many small and widely scattered communities.

This service started as the result of a meeting we called back in 1955, which we named the Conference of Hope. There we brought together representatives from various communities in Europe and North Africa to learn from them, at first hand, what were their needs. They said, "In 1946 when we met with you our needs had to do with physical survival. Today our needs have to do with our spiritual and cultural survival."

Thus, through tape recordings, through the printed word, through lecture series, through population studies, through bibliographical compilations of Jewish literature, through transliteration of religious texts to facilitate religious worship, an effective program is being conducted to inculcate, preserve, and enhance Jewish values. That program is advanced by magazines which AJC publishes in Paris, such as The Community, issued in English and French as a guide for rabbis and community and youth leaders, and Evidences, published in French for opinion molders.

At the moment, this activity is particularly important because of the vast influx of Algerian Jews into France. Great work is being

done there by many organizations, especially the Joint Distribution Committee and the French welfare organizations, as well as the Alliance Israélite Universelle in the field of children's education. But a most important job remains to be done, to help Algerian adults and youth adjust to French culture and, at the same time, retain their religio-cultural identity; also to help deal with the general community tensions that are bound to arise as a result of this influx.

Vital as it is, our Community Service program abroad is a modest program, costing very little. About 45 per cent of its cost is met by our two partners, the Alliance in France and the Anglo-Jewish Association of Great Britain, and by funds from the Conference of Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.

Now, moving beyond the three major areas of AJC's operation, I would like to take up three subjects which have a great bearing upon the future of Jewish life here and the world over. One has to do with religion; the other, with totalitarianism; the third, with Jewish exodus.

First, religion. There has been a religious basis for anti-Semitism for more than two thousand years. It is my belief and that of my colleagues in the American Jewish Committee, that we are now approaching a period when, for the first time in history, there is emerging the possibility of a fundamental understanding between Christianity and Judaism.

There are various reasons for this. Today, with the resurgence of Moslemism and

the ancient religions in Africa and Asia, Christianity has begun to realize that it is indeed a minority. Communism has also threatened Christianity. And, there is great shame and guilt over what happened in Hitler Germany within the framework of Christian civilization.

For all these reasons, a re-examination of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity is going on here and abroad, and there has been a great increase in the study of the Old Testament by Christians. The Pope himself has emphasized the Judaic basis of Christianity.

Today in Rome a historic activity has been taking place, the Ecumenical Council -- the first to be convened since 1870, and the second ever to be held in the Vatican. One of its important purposes, as you know, is to achieve Christian unity among Catholics and among other Christian groups as well. But in addition, the Council will turn its attention to relationships with non-Christian bodies.

Three years ago, preparations for the Ecumenical Council were started; and three years ago the American Jewish Committee also started to be concerned with this important undertaking. We wondered whether it might not be possible to do something about the concept of the collective guilt of Jews for the death of Jesus which has permeated the literature of the Christian world for two thousand years and has been one of the fundamental factors in anti-Semitism.

We proceeded to make available -- on a confidential basis -- three memoranda to Cardinal Bea, who is one of the important leaders of the Ecumenical Council. These were studies, carefully and extensively documented, relating to erroneous references to Jews and Judaism in Catholic literature and the damaging imagery of the Jew as the killer of Jesus conveyed in Catholic religious education and Catholic liturgy.

Cardinal Bea is a man of great moral stature. He was the confessor to Pope Pius XII, and he is a great student of the Old Testament. Our people in Rome and in Paris have been working very closely with him for the past three years without any publicity whatsoever, for this is a very delicate matter. Unfortunately, certain activities of some organizations did reach the press, and this did great injury to our cause. It should be obvious that whatever changes can be effected in this area must come from the Catholics themselves.

We are hopeful that when the Council reconvenes, Cardinal Bea will introduce two documents bearing on this question of collective Jewish guilt. If that should occur, my friends, not alone we, but generations yet unborn will profit by it.

In back of a good deal of the progress we have been making in Rome is our affiliation with a university there known as the International University of Social Studies "Pro Deo," or University for God. There, with our encouragement and financial support, a Chair in Intergroup Relations has been established. To

develop an actual program of studies in inter-group relations for Pro Deo students, we secured Professor Otto Klineberg, former Professor of Social Psychology at Columbia University, who is now dividing his time between the Sorbonne in Paris and Pro Deo in Rome. The faculty at Pro Deo represents the liberal wing of the Catholic Church, and their contacts have helped us greatly in our work with the Vatican.

About twenty-five years ago the American Jewish Committee began to work with Christian leadership in another way. We sat down with Protestant educators and said, "You are teaching anti-Semitism through your religious texts." For, as a matter of fact, Protestant children were being taught in their Sunday School classes that the Jew deserves to suffer, that he is a living example of the "non-believer," and that he is spiritually inferior to the Christian.

Since then, studies of Protestant texts and lesson materials have been under way, culminating in one comprehensive seven-year study at the Yale Divinity School, which has just been published by Yale University Press under the title Faith and Prejudice, by the Reverend Bernhard E. Olson. This work contains numerous illustrations of references damaging not only to Jews, but to other groups as well; and it suggests how these can be remedied. A great deal has been accomplished already, for while the studies were going on, findings were being conveyed to religious educators, publishers, and writers. Some of you may recall the article by Dean Pike in Look

magazine about a year ago, in which he described these studies and observed that "the roots of bias reach back to the pulpit and the Sunday school classroom." New approaches to religious education are under discussion at Yale Divinity School and at the Union Theological Seminary, where Dr. Olson is now teaching. As his book moves into circulation, much more will have to be done to implement it on the local level, and financial resources will be needed to help reach the pulpits and local councils of churches in communities all across the country.

Now to the question of totalitarianism, the second important issue I want to bring before you because of its impact upon the destiny of the Jew. There is no greater enemy to Jewish survival and Jewish dignity. You remember the swastika epidemic which started in Germany three years ago. Just before that outbreak, some of us visited Germany and saw many signs of a revival of nazism. But we also found another noteworthy manifestation. German educators wanted to learn how to educate German children for responsible citizenship. We found one in particular, Dr. Friedrich Minssen, an influential person in German educational circles, with whom we discussed the problem in detail. Upon returning home, we went to the Institute of International Education -- which administers the Fulbright and other exchange programs -- and we said, "Would you like to sponsor a group of educators from Germany to come and learn our methods of educating for democracy?" The answer was yes, but the Institute had no funds for such a project.

We then went to the Ford Foundation and to the New World Foundation, and from both we obtained sufficient funds to bring over the first group of six, about two years ago. They spent two and one-half months here and were so encouraged and stimulated by their visit that they urged us to help other German educators to come. Since then, three additional groups have been to this country. In Germany, incidentally, we are associated with a Teachers Institute where those educators who have had this American experience are afforded the opportunity to consult with one another and be helped in applying this experience in their schools. The fourth group is here now -- this one, please note, financed by the German Government itself, which is now convinced of the importance of this undertaking for the future of German education.

An interesting sidelight is the kind of things that impress them. In one classroom they noticed that a child dropped a pencil, and the teacher picked it up and handed it to the child. This would be unheard-of in Germany. And this, one of the German educators told me, probably symbolized the difference between German and American teachers.

If this program to revamp German education, which we started, is permitted to continue and expand as it should, I venture to predict that in about ten years we will see a different educational leadership with very different approaches to the educational process in Germany. The group we are working with has already formed an association for this very purpose.

But here in the United States we also have a great problem with respect to education -- particularly educating about totalitarianism. We talk about communism, and we talk about fascism, and we often carelessly label people "Communist" or "Fascist," but the children in this country are growing up without knowing the real meaning of communism, or fascism, or totalitarianism of any kind -- in fact, without really knowing the meaning of democracy.

A year or so ago we went to the National Council for the Social Studies, an organization to which twelve thousand social studies teachers belong, and we said: "Would you be willing to sponsor a special course on the meaning of totalitarianism, designed specifically for use by high-school teachers?" The officers of the National Council said they would welcome such a program; whereupon we set it in motion. As a result, under the direction of President John Fisher of Teachers College, Columbia University, the preparation of a syllabus on the dimensions and meaning of totalitarianism, especially designed for social-studies teachers, was undertaken by Professor William Ebenstein, a leading scholar in the political sciences, formerly of Princeton University and presently at the University of California. This comprehensive manual has just been published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., the well-known textbook publishers. It is now being distributed by the National Council for the Social Studies to thousands of high-school teachers throughout America.

For some time, and even today, we have been very much concerned about the "radical

right." Since these extremists threaten all Americans, we went to the FBI, to the National Council of Churches and to a number of other civic and religious groups; and together with them, last January, we convened a conference at Greenwich, Connecticut, attended by individuals representing groups from all over the country. At this two-day meeting, they appraised the danger and considered proper counter-measures they might take in their own communities to fight the evil represented by the radical right. That conference was appropriately named Conference on Preserving the Democratic Process. A number of similar conferences have since been held in other cities.

In each of these enterprises, be it directed toward Rome, or German education, or American teaching, or the radical right, the American Jewish Committee appears either as just one organization among many, or in the background; because we have a basic philosophy that group hostility, bigotry, discrimination and even anti-Semitism are problems for all Americans, for all religious groups. They are problems for society as a whole and they must be dealt with that way.

Now, on the matter of Jewish exodus. Sometimes, after all these years in Jewish communal work, I ask myself the simple question: "When will the Jew stop running? When will the Jew stop running from country to country, from pillar to post, even if it be to Israel?"

Take Argentina where swastikas have been branded on the bodies of Jewish youths.

You've read about that -- and about the bombings of synagogues and other houses of Jewish communion while the police turn their eyes and ears elsewhere. Tacuara, a blatant anti-Semitic, Fascist organization, is flourishing. Just what will happen to the 450,000 Jews in Argentina? Will the same thing happen to them as is happening in Algeria, in Morocco?

The American Jewish Committee, as I indicated earlier, is concerned with seeing that Jews live wherever they wish to live on the basis of equality; and if they wish to leave, that they be permitted to do so, freely and voluntarily with all their belongings.

With respect to the situation of Jews in Argentina, the State Department and the Pentagon have been contacted, the latter because of its relationship with the military in Argentina. We have also alerted the American press to go down there and see for themselves what is going on, guiding them, of course, to important sources of information. We have held several conferences here with persons like General Aramburu, who deposed Peron, and with others of comparable stature.

But, in keeping with our accent on prevention, we did something much more significant a long time ago. About fifteen years ago we brought to this country, and to the office of the AJC, an Argentinian by the name of Maximo Yagupsky. He stayed with us for two years, learning American methods of community relations. He then went back and promptly organized in Argentina an organization known as the "Instituto." It has a long Spanish name which

I won't try to give you because of my terrible Spanish.

Though the Instituto is completely independent of the AJC, it is composed of people whose philosophy is akin to ours -- but applied to Argentina. It has opened up channels of communication and action between themselves and the rest of the Argentinian population. It publishes Comentario, Spanish version of our American Commentary. Before the Instituto was formed, Jews in Argentina lived as a virtually segregated and isolated community. Mr. Simon Mirelman, the leader of Argentinian Jewry, who has been the head of this Instituto for many years, is now here in the United States.

Having opened up these channels, Argentine Jewish leaders now have contacts with some of the most important people in their country. Close collaboration has been achieved with prominent Argentinian personalities who are helping fight anti-Semitism. It is no longer necessary for Argentinian Jews to battle as an isolated, beleaguered minority.

The same thing has happened in Brazil. There is now a Jewish Instituto in Rio de Janeiro with the same philosophy of reaching outside, as well as within, the Jewish community; also in Sao Paulo. And all this, my friends, has been done with the very limited financial resources at our disposal.

When I talk about limited resources, I am reminded of the small boy who was asked to write a paper on poverty. He was eleven years

old. He wrote: Everybody in my home is poor. I am poor. My father is poor. My mother is poor. My brother is poor. My sister is poor. The maid is poor, the cook is poor, the chauffeur is poor, and the butler is poor.

But, by any standards, when our limited resources are measured against needs, we are poor indeed.

Now, let us look at Morocco. For many years the American Jewish Committee hoped that France would stay in North Africa. In 1954 and in 1957, when some of us visited there, we still had some hopes, but later it became quite obvious that France would have to go. Jews could not live in peace under Moslem rule, for reasons that were no less obvious, especially since the creation of the State of Israel. And you know what has been happening of late.

Let me tell you two incidents that occurred about a year and a half ago when the doors were closed in Morocco and Jews could not get out, despite all the pressures that were exerted by Jewish organizations. This is, to me, a very interesting illustration of the uniqueness of AJC's relationships. We discussed the problem with Dr. Harold E. Fey, editor of Christian Century, and Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, head of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S. We asked if they would be willing to go to Morocco, since they had many friends there, to determine what was really the plight of the Jews in that country and discuss the impact of the plight on world public opinion with Moroccan officials.

Our friends went, and they held several discussions with some very important persons. But we didn't stop there. We also asked Ben Aboud, then Morocco's Ambassador to the United States and Representative to the United Nations, to come to our Institute of Human Relations and speak before our group about Morocco and the Jews.

Dr. Ben Aboud came to our Institute. And there were some very telling questions debated and discussed -- including our conviction that were Morocco to open its doors, and were the Jews there no longer to feel themselves imprisoned, their urge to leave would be greatly diminished. I can't vouch for cause and effect, but the doors of Morocco opened -- undoubtedly for many reasons, and let us hope they will stay open. Maybe some of you had something to do with this. As I grow older, I become more modest about claiming cause-and-effect relationships, but I did want to give you a few concrete illustrations of what we do and how we do it.

In Algeria we even met with the FLN. In Tunisia we have had many discussions with President Bourguiba. In Paris, we have the most complete dossier available on present-day neo-Nazi groups in Europe. Libya provides another illustration of our work to prevent catastrophe. We have been in close touch with developments in Libya from the time it became a nation. For a while, Jews there suffered greatly from oppression, but a great deal of work has been done, and as a result, there has been noticeable relaxation.

May I say this to you now. Strange as it may sound, major achievements of the AJC must be recorded in terms of events that did not happen -- catastrophes prevented, disasters that failed to occur. In North Africa, for example, I believe our efforts figured most importantly in preventing physical harm and other forms of persecution that Jews might have experienced.

But we can also identify specific positive occurrences in the lives of Jews the world over. In Spain, for example, there recently occurred the first public Sabbath Service held in a synagogue since the Spanish Inquisition. This was a direct result of representations made by AJC and friends of the AJC, including our Catholic friends from Latin America whom we brought to Spain to discuss this problem.

To reiterate: Anti-Semitism must not be fled; it must be fought. Our Jewish co-religionists must be permitted to live in equality wherever they are, and to leave without penalty with all their belongings if they wish to do so.

In this connection, Israel comes to mind. I need not tell this group about the work of the American Jewish Committee in behalf of Palestine and Israel from the very beginnings of the Jewish Agency. I simply want to remind you that the American Jewish Committee has helped Israel greatly to strengthen its international position, to obtain economic aid from our Government through grants-in-aid and export-import loans, and from funds from the German Material Claims venture. Moreover,

it is my belief that the understanding arrived at between Ben Gurion and Jacob Blaustein with respect to the relationship of Israel to American Jews and Jews throughout the world, has been helpful both to Israel and to Jews in other lands.

We opened an Israel office of the American Jewish Committee about a year ago. When Abba Eban spoke before our Executive Board in Boston a few weeks ago, he made an observation which has been made by other Israeli leaders as well: Israel is one of the great events in the world's history and, in addition, she has raised the stature of Jews everywhere -- giving us more than we have given her. But one of the great problems within Israel, causing concern to many, is the possibility of parochialism overtaking the country, of a growing prejudice toward non-Israelis, which has been manifested particularly by Israeli youth. These are but a few indications of the need we have felt for a long time for promoting understanding within Israel of the status of Jews elsewhere, and particularly, of American Jewry.

It was with these needs in mind that our office in Tel Aviv was established; and incidentally, we now have a Hebrew journal published in Israel, known as Ammot (Evaluations), which brings to the Israelis much they would never know otherwise, and also helps bring something of Israel to us. This relationship is very important.

I cannot go much further without saying something about our lay leadership. Those of you who have known me over the years, know that

I am not given to generous praise. But the service of our lay leaders, locally, nationally and internationally, has been magnificent. Whether in Dallas, where they have helped open up channels between Negroes and whites; or in Atlanta, where they have led efforts to open up eating places in department stores to Negroes; or in Birmingham, where they have worked relentlessly and effectively to prevent riots; whether in Washington, Rome, Germany or Israel, where tasks must be fulfilled, our lay leadership is always available. Today three of our people are in Germany at a conference. And several of us are going to Israel very soon.

We encourage our leaders to be active not only nationally and internationally, but in their local communities -- as a matter of fact, in the central concerns of their communities. To this end, we even conduct intensive leadership training programs for our people, even à la group dynamics.

In conclusion, I want to tell you something about the JDA termination. On January 1, 1963, we will come to you in our stark nakedness. By that I mean not alone in our poverty, which we possess in abundance, but simply alone. We will come under no umbrella -- we will come as we are, without any intermediaries. On what we do and how we do it, you will be required to judge us.

The JDA termination did not come about lightly. It was a relationship in force for twenty-one years. AJC's negotiators were William Rosenwald, Jacob Blaustein, Irving Engel, A. M. Sonnabend, Herbert Ehrmann,

Maurice Glinert, Louis Caplan and during his lifetime, Fred Greenman -- hardly the kind of communal leaders to permit a step like this to be taken lightly. Moreover, the step was not unilateral; it was mutually agreed upon.

The basic issue is very clear, even simple. Here is the American Jewish Committee, an organization with diversified activity -- domestic, overseas and intra-Jewish. For years, it has been required to live on an income, almost the same income, as the one unit of the B'nai B'rith organization, the Anti-Defamation League, which is the B'nai B'rith's domestic community-relations arm. The B'nai B'rith, of course, has many other activities (Hillel, Vocational Service, an International Service) just as the American Jewish Committee has many other activities. What we asked, therefore, was that the Joint Defense Appeal be concerned solely and exclusively with fund raising for domestic community-relations work, that there be no supplementary fund raising for this work by the two agencies, as has been the case up to now.

In short, we proposed that JDA finance the domestic community-relations arm of the B'nai B'rith (which is the ADL) and the community-relations work of the American Jewish Committee (which we now call our Institute of Human Relations). Further, we proposed that outside of this domestic community-relations campaign, both agencies, B'nai B'rith and AJC, be free to obtain financial support through welfare funds, through individuals in New York City and Chicago, and so forth. B'nai B'rith has always had this opportunity,

whereas under the JDA arrangement, the American Jewish Committee was prohibited from doing so.

Our proposal was rejected. That, my friends, is the basic issue. All the rest is commentary.

Now we are on our own. We hold no grievances and, I assure you, no animus against our former partner. We have had twenty-one years of pretty good relationships. There have been struggles and differences; we tried during all these years to resolve them, and we went along, attempting patchwork to meet our growing needs -- through supplemental fund raising, through special appeals to foundations, and various other approaches. But it just did not work.

We hope you're going to like us in our new form. We hope you will like what you will see on January 1, 1963, and thereafter. We trust you will approve and support what we do.

*The American Jewish Committee raises the funds
for its diversified human-relations program
at home and abroad through its nationwide*

Appeal for Human Relations

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE
Institute of Human Relations
165 East 56 Street, New York 22, N.Y.