



*The Jewish Labor Movement:
A Living Legacy*

by GUS TYLER

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The Jewish Labor Committee's National Trade Union Council for Human Rights is happy to join with the Nathan Chanin Cultural Foundation of the Workmen's Circle in making available this edition of Gus Tyler's unique pamphlet. This study contributes to our understanding of a rich heritage—a heritage that has not only shaped our past but still has important meaning for us today. We are proud of the role that the Jewish labor movement, and since 1934 the Jewish Labor Committee, has played in strengthening American democracy—proud as Jews, proud as trade unionists, proud as people with a social vision. Whether the struggle has been against anti-Semitism, against urban and rural poverty and the degrading quality of life in our urban centers, for health care for aged citizens, or against discrimination North and South, JLC has been an important force for over 30 years in the continuing struggle for social justice and economic democracy. The social vision of the Jewish labor movement is our most important heritage—and maintaining the concrete relevance of that vision is the role of the NTUC.

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The Jewish Labor Movement: A Living Legacy

THE subject of this pamphlet is a thing that *was*. It is a matter of history that has present uses. "To forget the past," said somebody, "is to repeat the errors of the past." We are children of the past and it is a wise child who knows his father. Our subject, then, is not history as the past, but history as it insinuates itself into our social genes.

It is a concept, an idea, a collection of attitudes, that found *strong* expression in the United States some years ago and has continued in modified form at the present time to exercise a vital influence on American life.

The Jewish labor movement never was a separatist movement in the sense that, in some European countries, there was a Catholic trade union movement, a Socialist trade union movement, a Communist trade union movement. There never was in the United States a movement of Jews who gathered together and said, "We are distinct, with a separate ideology, and therefore we must have a separate set of organizations."

The Jewish labor movement forgathered in 1890 to found a national federation that was to be known as the Hebrew Labor Federation. They spoke assimilationism in unadulterated terms. They said:

"We have no Jewish question in America. The only Jewish question recognized by us is the question of how to keep Jewish questions out of this country. And because only we Yiddish-speaking citizens are able to work among Jewish immigrants and because we speak their language and are acquainted with their lives, for that reason *solely* are we creating this particular Jewish body. The Yiddish language is our tool. To erase all borderlines between Jew and non-Jew in the world of labor is one of our aims."

That was the stated aim of this federation. It was not an attempt to say, "We have a separate ideology requiring separate organizations." The Jewish labor movement thought of itself as a thing in time, as a translating mechanism. It did not want to stand apart from the labor movement; it wanted to get into the labor movement. Where unions did not have outstretched arms to Jewish workers, the latter organized separately and then beat on the doors of, or pleaded with, the existing unions for admission.

But, while it did not set out consciously on any separatist course, the Jewish labor movement found itself over the years possessed of a reasonably distinctive ideology, and it concentrated in certain trades and in certain trade unions.

The genesis of the movement can be traced to a moment in time that coincided with the two great waves of immigration of East European Jews into the United States: the first one after 1882, when the liberalism of Alexander the II was suddenly reversed and expressed itself in a series of violently outrageous acts against the Jews of East Europe; and the second great wave of immigration that came after 1904 and 1905 following the pogrom in Kishinev and the unsuccessful revolution of 1905 in Russia.

THE Jews who came to this country from 1882 to 1900 did not find a trade union movement among Jewish workers, but they built one before 1905. After 1905, the movement took on new dimensions because of the influx of the Bundists who were associated with the great revolutionary currents against Czarism. The Bundists were Jewish revolutionaries: professionals, skilled workers, filled with the ideology of Marx, great technicians in organization, excellent speakers. They brought to the Jewish labor movement a collection of talents that gave it a new tone and direction.

The Jewish labor movement was born in the ghetto. It was a ghetto both by external pressures and internal ties. Out of the geographic ghetto rose the industrial ghetto that reflected the life of the community of newcomers. There were several trades into which the Jewish population moved. And when I say population, I don't mean only the Jewish "proletarian." For into these trades poured the intellectual, the poet, the philosopher and the agitator, as well as the worker.

Overwhelmingly, the movement was into the needle trades—women's clothing, men's clothing, millinery, fur, shoes, boots. The second largest trade was tobacco, and then, food. It was very difficult, though not impossible, for the Jewish immigrant to move into the building trades. It is fascinating to see the way history repeats itself in this respect. At the present time, in the manufacturing trades such as the needle trades, new population groups still can move in and up. In the building trades, new population groups still find it difficult to move either in or up. Before one makes any moral judgment, it must be borne in mind that after Jews moved into the building trades, they too closed the doors on newcomers in much the same way as the Irish and Germans had closed the doors on them. And the conclusion is less a moral judgment about the

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nature of leadership in these trades than it is about the nature of the trades. The craftsmen in the building trades and the railroads are part of a thing known as labor's aristocracy. Aristocracy tends to be exclusive about its privileges. Manufacturing unions are different. The fact that the Jews moved into manufacturing unions, to a large extent, helped condition their attitude in the years to come.

Today, as we look back on the Jewish labor movement, we like to think of the Jews as being a people who naturally moved toward trade unionism and toward radical ideas like socialism. There is little in history to support that belief.

The first Jews who came in 1880-1890 out of Eastern Europe were small-town people. They were not involved in the great revolutionary currents that were beginning to stir Eastern Europe at that time. They came to this country without any of that background. They had heard about revolutionary stirrings against the Czar, of course, because occasionally there was a peasant uprising in their town. But the peasant outbreak consisted of a specialized kind of revolutionary protest: it consisted of a pogrom against the Jews. And while these rather narrow-minded little revolutionaries were gobbling up their Jewish neighbors, the Czar was able to sit back and say "When my people are hungry, I can always feed them Jews." As Babel said of such movements which existed throughout Europe, "Anti-Semitism is the Socialism of the fool."

So to the extent that some of these small-town people had heard about Socialism, they equated it with a pogrom. From some of the larger and more urban centers there came young Jews who were revolutionaries. They looked down upon Tevye. Tevye, with his milk wagon, was a capitalist. He owned a piece of property; he was in business for himself; he didn't belong in any revolutionary movement. He didn't even speak Russian; he spoke Yiddish. The young Russian revolutionary had no taste for his small-town fellow Jew who appeared to be useless for a labor or revolutionary movement.

And when these same small-town Jews came to America in the 1880s and 1890s, there was no movement here to greet them with open arms. They went through the same experiences as the Negroes who moved from the South to the North: scab-herders organized them and used them as strike breakers. As in the case of the Negro scab, there were exploiters who corralled Jewish workers to work for less and to undermine existing conditions. The craft unionists didn't want Jews; the trade unionists in manufacturing looked upon them as a drag on the labor market. So who was going to educate

these Jewish “greenhorns” in trade unionism?

The answer was found in the Jewish community, with its ancient tradition of the teacher wandering everlastingly with his pupils. Although the Jews of the 1880s and 1890s did not move toward trade unionism or progressive causes out of the gut, they had good teachers. Who were they? Well, the natural teachers weren't here. There were Spanish and Portuguese Jews in the metropolitan centers—they were no teachers. There were the German Jews and the Hungarian Jews who had come decades earlier. They were sympathetic but not enthusiastic. They were a little bit embarrassed by their new neighbors from Eastern Europe and they wished that they would please go settle in Oregon, Louisiana or North Dakota, and were quite ready to help finance colonies in those areas. The native American worker and trade unionist did little to educate these newcomers.

THE revolutionists of the old country did feel that these people ought to have unions, so they gathered together these Yiddish speaking masses and addressed them in Russian and German. In the 1890's, one man, Abe Cahan, came up with a novel thought: to speak to Yiddish-speaking workers in Yiddish. His fellow intellectual revolutionaries indulged the nonsense: they thought it would be a great joke on Abe Cahan to let him speak in Yiddish to these people. What kind of revolutionary language is Yiddish?

Out of Cahan's initial effort arose a number of great institutions and publications in the Jewish language, the most prominent of which was, and remains, the *Jewish Daily Forward*. And there rose other movements, the Workmen's Circle among them, which based their organization on Jewish workers speaking Yiddish.

The great academy for the Jewish worker, however, was the shop. Among its faculty was Morris Hillquit, a pants maker and one of America's finest minds. Into the shop came the intellectual to create a new mix of personalities: the mix of proletariat and professor that was the mark of both the work world and the community.

What happens to an intellectual when he has to sit at a sewing machine? Does he stop thinking? He thinks.

And what happens to the man who compulsively must orate and speak to the people around him? Does he stop speaking because he's in the shop? He speaks.

And so the shops in which the Jewish workers lived became academies operating at a rather high cultural level. The shop became a cultural cluster, like Lincoln Center. And the union, the

conscious expression of the shop, organized itself to encourage that culture.

The great literature in the Jewish community of this period, written in Yiddish, found its roots in the trials and tribulations of the ghetto. The audience was the literate worker. The theme was his burdens and, sometimes, his dreams. The popular literary form was the poem. And where the lyric caught on, there was generally the music to be hummed or sung against the obligato of the whirring machines.

The great names of this early literature were Morris Winchevsky, Yossef Bovshover, David Edelstadt, and Morris Rosenfeld. They wrote belle-lettres for the masses. They created an amalgam between the folk tales passed from mouth to mouth and inspired by the life of the plebs, and the written word addressed to the literati and inspired by the ways of the patricians. These laureates of the people "invented" folk ballads, very much as young intellectuals in the 1960's have "invented" folk songs for their social protest. The remarkable irony of this Yiddish literature was the fact that many of its better authors wrote in a language that was neither their first tongue nor their first love. They were European intellectuals, raised in the official language of their native land, who developed their facility with Yiddish while in America. In a sense, these writers were repeating at the literary level what was happening at the shop level: merging levels of culture and thereby creating a new culture.

I think it was Dr. Rudovsky [director of Hebrew studies at New York University] who said that Jews have a prophetic tradition. Yes, there is a prophetic tradition: an optimistic view of the ultimate future.

There was a messianic feeling that existed in the Jewish labor movement. And part of the messianic feeling was the natural response of a people who had for several thousand years been wandering unsuccessfully across the face of the earth in search of the promised land. The messianic notion says that there must be a reason for suffering. You don't go on suffering for five thousand years without purpose. If we suffer today, it must be because out of our cumulative suffering we will produce liberators who will liberate us and all of mankind. So the millennial notion was deep in the Jewish labor movement, a movement that rarely was satisfied to know that today or tomorrow we earn two cents more. It required a greater ultimate meaning for its suffering and striving.

So, here was a movement that, out of its own experiences and out of ancient tradition, felt the instinctive need to see beyond the nose to the distant horizons of tomorrow. To think creatively at a

sewing machine is easier, of course, when you work next to a philosopher: he can put your ideas into words. In the forum of the workplace, the intellectuals turned proletarian: the man of the cerebrum who learns the smell and sweat of the shop. And the proletarians turned intellectual. Out of this interchange of experience and thought, knowledge of the immediate and study of the ultimate, came a movement with a special quality that tried to think about what happens now, with a view to what must and should ultimately be man's fate.

The Jewish labor movement had a second overriding characteristic: a sense of community, almost a family feeling about the shop, the culture, the union. How could it be otherwise? When you take a people and toss it into the Diaspora and say "Go survive," how does it survive? How do you survive without a piece of real estate you can call your own, without boundaries you can call your own? How does one survive amidst nothing? How does one put down roots in the air or in the concrete sidewalks of New York? You survive by developing a sense of community and mutual interdependence around a central focus. And the central focus was there. It was the spoken word.

These are the *People of The Book*, with a respect for the Word and the man of the Word: a people with a capacity to understand and play with the abstract, to build a community out of the air of ideas.

IN Hebrew, there is the word "tzadakah." The word means "charity," but not as we know it. "Tzadakah" means "righteousness." In the Jewish tradition, giving is not an act of condescension on the part of those who have wealth towards those who grovel before them. Giving is an act of righteousness, a fulfillment of duty. And for many hundreds of years in the Jewish communities of the Diaspora, the act of giving was practically a "governmental" decree. And what has come to be known as a "schnorrer" was a man who levied taxes. You *had* to give. You gave anonymously into one end of the horn so that the funds might be drawn for the needy from the other end.

And if you didn't have money to give, you gave your time, or your wisdom, or your sympathy—and if you couldn't give anything else, you gave words.

The union movement that grew up in the Jewish community was one with a strong sense of community—the Jewish community and the larger community. This developed into a movement that identified with the community by giving and giving and giving, even when it was so poor that all it had to share was its tears.

There was a third characteristic to this movement: the effective voice of a minority. Like other immigrant groups, the Jews were strangers in the land but, unlike some others, they were experts as strangers.

The Jewish labor movement boasted of its immigrant origins. It was proud of its heterogeneity. It turned out a trade union press intended to make the newcomer feel at home. The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, for instance, has printed publications in Italian, in Spanish, in Yiddish, in French, in Chinese—at one point on the West Coast, in Japanese—in one local in Pennsylvania, in Pennsylvania Dutch. We also put out a publication in English.

Here then was a movement that was one of the rebel voices—messianic, mutual-minded, minority-minded. All this added up to a concept of unionism known today as “social unionism.” It was a feeling for the oppressed and an identification with the community and a messianic faith in man's future.

The exodus from the ghetto is a fascinating story full of internal contradictions. Why did this movement, at a rather early time, begin to play an important role in the larger labor movement and in the larger political community, as it did? What was the bridge from ghetto to nation? In part, the bridge was built by earlier Jews who, although they weren't happy with these unwashed East Europeans, nevertheless assumed that community is community and that brethren are brethren—even though you may not like them. There was a second group in the metropolitan centers, especially in New York, that was extremely helpful in creating a Jewish labor movement, in introducing it to the rest of the labor movement, and in educating the newcomers in the ways of America. The great educators of the Jewish labor movement, outside of the Jewish community itself, were the German Socialists of New York. They encouraged Jews to organize, gave them funds for organization, made way for them in the central labor union, negotiated affiliation of the Jewish locals to the general labor movement. In 1888, for instance, when the Jews of New York organized the United Hebrew Trades, the meeting was called by the United German Trades in the German Labor Lyceum.

The Germans, too, were a bridge to “America” for the East European Jewish unionists. The Germans moved the Jews to affiliate with the Socialist Party and the Socialist Labor Party in the 1880s and 1890s—a move that in those days marked a breaking out of the ghetto. The Socialist Party at the turn of the century played a rather distinctive role: for the Jewish trade unionists, the

“party” was an introduction to America. The Socialist Party of the United States in 1907 was composed 85% of native-born Americans. It was in the Socialist Party that the Jewish immigrant met the native American on a friendly and mutually educational basis. The Socialist movement of the 1900s, moreover, was the vanguard of a broader movement in the great age of reform in the United States from 1900 to 1912. This period marked the beginning of our industrial and urban era. The Republican Party expressed the mood of reform through its Theodore Roosevelt. The Democratic Party produced Wilson. Those times produced great social critics like Lincoln Steffens and Thorsten Veblen. Those years saw the rise of the Wobblies, the ultra-militant unionists. It was a period of turmoil, movement, and faith in progress. Those who were affiliated with the Socialist movement had reason to feel that tomorrow belonged to them. The commitment of the Jewish unions to socialist goals was—in those days—not a withdrawal into a sect but an identification with an expanding movement full of meaning and impact.

There was considerable interplay between the Jewish unions and the general labor movement. The Socialist trade unionists had a pretty clear concept of what they wanted and where they were going. Together with other “socialist” unions, they had five major concepts: 1) they believed in a cooperative commonwealth and not in simple reform of capitalism; 2) they believed in the organization of a Third Party with a labor base and a divorce from Democrats and Republicans; 3) they believed in the promulgation of social legislation and not simply a dependence upon trade unions that were able to negotiate collective agreements; 4) they believed in a great class organization of working people and not simply craft unions; and 5) they believed, finally, in internationalism and inter-racism and inter-religious life, as opposed to isolationism and racial and religious prejudice.

OVER the years how successful have these ideas been?

1) We don't have Socialism in the United States. But, as a result of the movement of these ideas, we have in the United States today a welfare state that is vastly different from the *laissez-faire* society of Herbert Hoover.

2) Labor in the United States does not have a Third Party of its own, but an American labor movement that for many years was apolitical—against national social legislation—is organized today into a vast political force. In a sense, it has become a third force in American political life, albeit not a party.

3) The Socialist program for social legislation—unemployment

insurance, workmen's compensation, pensions, government activity in the field of health and medicine—is today an accepted fact although still, in a sense, at its beginning.

4) The effort of the Socialist trade unionist to create a national movement with a degree of coherence and centralization has not come to pass in terms of the old Wobbly notion of “one big union.” But we have in the United States a national trade union movement that has greater coherence and unity of purpose than at any time in the American past.

5) Finally, we have in the United States an American trade union movement that has broken sharply with a primitive isolationism that dogged the movement for many decades, and is addressing itself seriously to solving the problem of civil rights in our country.

Now, it would be nice to say that the Jewish labor movement is responsible for all this progress in the labor movement. But that would be as inaccurate as it would be self-serving.

The Jewish trade unions were not the only Socialist trade unions in America. There were others, not predominantly Jewish: The Machinists, Printers, Shoe Unions, the Western Federation of Miners, the American Railway Union.

But the idea of social unionism with which the Jewish labor movement was identified helped to shape labor's basic personality as we know it today.

The change in national mood and mind in the last half decade also influenced labor. America went from a Square Deal under Theodore Roosevelt to a New Freedom under Wilson, and to the New Deal under Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The labor movement moved with—and helped move—the nation.

Although the Jewish labor movement taught a great deal to the general labor movement, the Jewish unionists—good teachers—also had the capacity to learn. The American Jewish labor movement learned a great deal from the general movement, especially from a fellow Jew, who was never part of the Jewish labor movement. His name was Samuel Gompers, and he was viewed as the epitome of the non-Jewish labor movement, as the essence of “pure and simple” trade unionism in the United States.

Gompers, too, had concepts. He felt that the Jewish revolutionary trade unionists in the United States loved to strike, but that at some point the strike had to come to an end in the form of a contract. It took time for the Jewish labor movement to learn that lesson. And when they learned it, they did so with a vengeance. In men's clothing, they signed the Hart, Schaffner and Marx contract

for industrial peace, replacing Karl Marx with Hart, Schaffner and Marx. And in the women's clothing industry, the class struggle gave way to the "Protocol of Peace."

Then Gompers said that one can't build a union without money and that the Jewish unionists too often tried to build organizations on revolutionary hot air. After a number of successful strikes and unsuccessful organizational efforts, the Jewish unions began to build holdings: treasuries, banks, buildings, summer resorts. When the Rockefellers wanted to put up a new housing development in Puerto Rico not long ago, they came to David Dubinsky to borrow funds from him.

Gompers said, "It's all right for you to build class-conscious unions with an interest in the non-skilled, but you've got to take care of those skilled craftsmen. They're very proud and they're very important. You can't build without them." The Jewish unions made a Solomon's decision: craft unions operating like industrial unions, a form of unionism known as amalgamated unionism. The crafts have their craft unions, but they swear family fealty to their less-skilled craftsmen. The crafts exist separately but act jointly with the other crafts—craft unionism plus industrial unity.

Gompers insisted that workers should not turn to the government for unemployment insurance and old-age pensions and the rest. He said "You have to do this through the contract." Well, the Jewish unions were pioneers in the area of "fringe benefits"—health and welfare funds, pension funds, death funds, optical care. They went far beyond Gompers's fondest expectation in self-help through contract.

The great debate between Gompers and the Socialists was political. The socialists stood for a Third Party. Gompers stood for a non-partisan policy—"Reward your friends and punish your enemies." The debate ended in a draw. There is no great third party in America. The Jewish unions have instead accepted the concept of trying to build, at least for the moment, a labor political force as a pressure group. But Gompers lost the great fight on the central issue of social legislation, because today—to the extent that labor has an independent political force in the United States—it is wed to the notion of social legislation and more social legislation.

Here then was an interchange of concepts and cultures, an adaptation of social unionism to existing unionism, and vice versa.

Even as this evolution was taking place, the Jewish unions were changing. They were no longer speaking Yiddish.

The industrial base of these unions was changing. Shops moved out of the metropolitan centers. The ethnic composition changed.

New elements came in. And, in a sense, one can no longer speak of Jewish unions. They aren't. They're not Jewish unions in the sense that they speak Yiddish or that their members are Jewish. But the tradition of Jewish unionism became a living legacy. The part that remained vital was the concept and the attempt to apply that concept realistically to a new body of members out of a new cultural background in a new environment in the United States, in a changing labor movement and in a changing political climate.

LET us now look at the 1930s. Unions are on the march, recovering from the open-shop campaign of the 1920s, recovering from the shattering experience of the Depression, recovering from division and Communist disruption. It is the day of FDR. The economy is being restored. The hour has come for the unions to march!

Which unions began to march? The craft unions! The unions that already existed began to march while the great mass of the unorganized were still unorganized.

The unions that dominated the American labor movement were three: the railway unions, the miners' unions, the building and construction trades unions. For the most part, these were the American labor movement.

The weakest sector of the American labor movement existed in the field of manufacture. But here, too, the Jewish unions were in a measure, distinctive. The leadership in the Jewish community had almost performed a *tour de force*: it had managed to organize workers in manufacturing trades and, if you please, in semi-skilled and almost unskilled manufacturing trades. It was a most unusual organizational achievement.

But in 1934, workers in auto, steel, rubber, chemicals, shipping, timber, were unorganized. So a committee got together, headed by John L. Lewis—a prominent but small committee of people who were trained a) in the millennial concept—"there's a thing bigger than us and we're with it"; b) in the notion of mutuality—"we are part of a great community and when others fight, we fight with them." And so in the CIO—a little committee of a half-dozen leaders—there was a Hillman, a Dubinsky, and a Zaretsky. They gave whatever prestige, funds, talent and leadership they had.

But behind them stood two generations—those who had come out of the 1900s and were now in positions of leadership and those who came out of the Great Depression. These latter were the youth who were born in this country of immigrant families and raised in "the movement." These were young people who learned about

the revolution with their mother's milk and who also learned from their experience: the Depression of 1929.

These were the young radicals. They had a great deal to give. They could do everything: make a speech, carry the platform, hang the American flag when necessary, build a platform when called upon to do so, distribute the literature, make home visits, organize, run a meeting, aspire, go without food. It was a dedicated generation.

Here was a new movement, the CIO. The time was ripe: the people were ready to move; there was a need for young zealots with the missionary spirit of the millennial, with total dedication to the future. Into this movement of the late '30s and early '40s, there poured a new generation of shakers and doers. Many were Jewish. Many were raised in the cradle of social unionism.

Where did they come from? Were they *just* workers? The new mix was the old mix repeating itself again. The radicals of the '30s and '40s came off the campus of the University of Michigan and off the campus of CCNY. Once more you had intellectuals pouring themselves into the labor movement. And the old mix began to repeat itself. So three brothers, non-Jewish, called Reuther, all of them intellectuals out of the same tradition, decided to become auto workers. Because they wanted to build autos? No. They went into an auto shop to make a speech; they never stopped making those speeches.

This was, in a sense, a revival of a movement, a re-expression of the old concept, a re-expression that seems to be unending.

WITHIN the last ten years the American economy has shifted away from the factory to the white collar worker. A few years ago we discovered that we have more white collar workers in America than blue collar workers.

Jews, of course, are not averse to white collar trades. As a matter of fact, the percentage drift is rather large, although many still remain in manufacturing. Within the last half-dozen years, unions in the white collar trades have been leaping forward so rapidly that the single area of greatest growth in American trade unionism today is among teachers, retail employees, and government employees. In these professions and trades, there's a reasonable percentage of articulate young people who were also raised in the tradition of social unionism. As the white collar worker and professional now move toward organization, the American labor movement's composition is changing, and so is its personality. And once more, those steeped in the concepts of the Jewish labor movement are in a position to exercise leadership and to transmit a meaningful tradition.

To the extent that the near-past can tell us about the near-future, we are now living in a period of intellectual reawakening with the intellectual once more resuming his role in government as a progressive, creative force.

It is also a moment of rebirth and reawakening in the American trade union movement.

It is a moment of massive reawakening among an oppressed group in our population—the American Negro.

But may I suggest that the election of John F. Kennedy, the first Catholic President of the United States, whose inauguration was expected by many to mean the coming of a new kind of intolerant Catholicism in the United States, represented a world movement of progress in Catholicism, a movement still unresolved, but a movement nevertheless.

These four movements among intellectuals, unionists, Negroes and Catholics are all incomplete.

But if these four movements could be successfully united into a meaningful liberal coalition, then a political force can be created that could play a creative role for the next half-century in the United States.

I would suggest that those who were raised in the tradition of the Jewish labor movement would have much to contribute to such a liberal coalition.

I am aware that there is probably something contradictory about looking to tradition as a guide to the future. May I then quote a distinguished authority on the role of tradition, a man who holds an important position in the United States. He came out of a Jewish laboring family with a progressive background, and for a while was advisor and lawyer to several major unions in the United States. The labor movement lost him to the Supreme Court. He is now the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. His name is Arthur Goldberg. He said:

“I believe in tradition. And to me, the supreme test of an American citizen is this: that he is one who does not conceal, but affirms his origin, who is proud of whatever it may be, and who realizes that in the plurality of American life is our strength and the source of the freedom that we proudly profess throughout the world.”

The Jewish labor movement provides an example of the capacity of a people to enrich democracy through its contribution to such a “plurality of American life.”

THE Nathan Chanin Cultural Foundation and the Workmen's Circle, which established the Foundation in 1963, were very happy to sponsor, in association with the N.Y.U. School of Education, the lecture on which this booklet is based.

The lecture was the first of a series we have been sponsoring in cooperation with leading universities in the United States and Canada. It is part of a varied program by which the Chanin Foundation seeks to stimulate a greater interest in Jewish cultural creativity and in the social ethic that has evolved out of Jewish experience, unique in so many respects.

The Nathan Chanin Cultural Foundation, in our judgment, has been most appropriately named. The late Nathan Chanin, who served as general secretary of the Workmen's Circle, devoted his entire adult life to stimulating an interest in Jewish education, Yiddish literature, Jewish history and, most of all, to the Jewish social ethic and its humanistic values and goals. There was a period, and its effect is very much still with us, when all of this was embodied in what was known as the Jewish labor movement.

It is a movement well worth knowing about. It produced great ideas and remarkable men. In more than one way, it has had a lasting influence on American life.

We believe that we were most fortunate in getting Mr. Gus Tyler to tell us about it. The title he chose was "The Living Legacy of the Jewish Labor Movement." I hope that he will forgive me for noting that, in an important sense, he exemplifies that legacy. For he has managed to combine writing, lecturing and active participation in politics, in the cause of liberalism, with his career with the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, which he now serves as Assistant President.

ISRAEL BRESLOW

Chairman, Nathan Chanin Cultural Foundation

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NATHAN CHANIN CULTURAL FOUNDATION, INC.

175 EAST BROADWAY

New York, N. Y. 10002