

Look to the rock from which you were hewn
הביטו אל-צור הצבבתם



chicago jewish historical society

FORMERLY SOCIETY NEWS
volume XIV, no. 4. Summer, 1991

CHICAGO JEWISH *History*

Debate on Zionism Recalls Division Among Chicago Jews in the Twenties

*Clarence Darrow and Stephen Wise Spar Over
Palestine at Sinai Lecture Forum*

by Walter Roth

A cultural highlight of Chicago during the thirty years following World War I was the annual series of lectures, debates, and discussions scheduled by Chicago Sinai Congregation, then located at Forty-Sixth Street and South Parkway. In those days, before television brought the famous into everybody's living rooms, the annual Sinai Temple Forum, as the series was called, made it possible for Chicagoans to see and hear in person prominent personalities in the arts, the sciences, government, and other public affairs for a modest fee.

Under the leadership of S. D. Schwartz, the longtime executive director of Sinai, stimulating yet significant topics of broad general interest were featured and diverse audiences were attracted by the prominent speakers scheduled. Chicago newspapers frequently reported what had transpired at forum sessions and other synagogues and churches developed similar forums although few if any ever attained the following, the quality speakers, or the attention of the Sinai Forum.

Debate on Zionism Famous

Of the many topics discussed, perhaps none was more stimulating than the debate held on October 24, 1927. "Is Zionism a Progressive Policy for Palestine and America?" was the subject. Taking the affirmative was Dr. Stephen S. Wise of New York City, with Clarence Darrow of Chicago representing the negative. Mr. Schwartz served as moderator.

Both Wise and Darrow were renowned lecturers and debaters, well known to their audience. Dr. Wise was a leading rabbi in the Reform movement and an articulate spokesman for the Zionist organizations of America. Darrow was perhaps the most famous trial attorney in the United States at that time, having recently won renewed fame in the Leopold-Loeb murder case (in which the principals were from Sinai families) and the Scopes trial concerning

continued on page 4

Jews in Symphony Is Topic for October Meeting

*Seymour Raven To Talk in
Roosevelt U's Ganz Hall*

"From Fannie to Danny" is the title of what promises to be a stimulating and informative talk by Seymour Raven at the Fall meeting of the Society on Sunday, October 20, at Ganz Hall of Roosevelt University. Mr. Raven's subject will be the role of Jews in classical music in Chicago through the years, focusing particularly on the Chicago Symphony.

He is especially well qualified to speak on his topic because he was himself a music critic for the Chicago Sun and the Chicago Tribune and also served as general manager and chief administrator of the

continued on page 2

Among the many outstanding programs presented at the Sinai Temple Lecture Forum during its long history, perhaps the best-remembered was a debate on Zionism between one of its outstanding advocates and a famous non-Jewish attorney who opposed it. That 1927 occasion, which attracted nationwide attention and was repeated later the same week for the benefit of a west side audience at Washington Boulevard (now Oak Park) Temple, is here recreated by CJHS President Walter Roth. Mr. Roth bases his article on a transcript of the original debate preserved in the American Jewish Archives at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati.

President's Message

Jewish History In Other Places

Canadian Jews Preserve Record of Their Past

Sephardic Jews from the Mediterranean island of Rhodes migrated to Seattle at the beginning of the twentieth century, while Ashkenazi Jews from small towns in Germany had already made their way to Victoria and Vancouver in British Columbia, Canada. This was the beginning of some of the local Jewish history that my wife, Chaya, and I learned on a recent trip to the Pacific Northwest in August of this year.

We flew to Seattle, drove to Vancouver, took ferries to Salt Spring Island, Vancouver Island and the magnificent Olympia Peninsula and then by ferry and car returned to Seattle. The western shores of the Pacific Northwest remain a majestic and pristine outpost of the North American continent and a great source for the rejuvenation of body and soul, particularly if you can be there at a time when the sun is shining and the sky is clear. Such was our good fortune on our trip.

We had the privilege of taking "history" tours with members of local Jewish historical societies in Vancouver and Seattle. Our guides for our walking tour of Jewish Vancouver were Andrea Finkelshtein, who has recently become a full-time staff member of the Vancouver Society, and Janis Diner Brinley, who is the director of the Jewish Festival and Arts Society of Vancouver.

We learned from them that Jews first settled in British Columbia during the Gold Rush of 1858 and the first synagogue, Temple Emanuel, was built in Victoria on Vancouver Island rather than in Vancouver itself. Incidentally, we later visited Temple Emanuel in Victoria, which is still in use and is now a national landmark. Our walking tour of Vancouver took us through an area where Jews first settled, which is near what is today Chinatown and the rebuilt Gastown. We saw the Sons of Israel Synagogue built in 1907 and the refurbished warehouse of the Oppenheimer brothers, who immigrated to America in 1848 and then moved to Vancouver where one of them, David Oppenheimer, served as mayor of Vancouver for four years.

Many of the old Jewish homes and stores are still extant, such as the original Army and Navy Department Store, the San Francisco Pawnbrokers and Knowlton's Drug Store. Also still standing is



President
Walter Roth

Zionist Hall, a historical reminder of Zionist activity in Vancouver dating back to the turn of the century.

Of special interest to a Midwest tourist to Vancouver was the building known as Ferrera Court at 504 East Hastings Street. On this building there is a plaque stating that this was the home of David Marks and his family, which included his daughter, Sadie. It was here that in 1922 Zeppo Marx was invited to a Passover Seder. Zeppo brought along his friend, Bennie Kubelsky, born in Waukegan, Illinois. Bennie soon became attracted to Sadie, who was only thirteen years old at the time. Five years later, Bennie married Sadie, she later became known as Mary Livingston. Bennie, of course, became famous under his new name of Jack Benny. Apparently, Bennie and Sadie often returned to Vancouver to give benefit performances.

We wound up our tour at the office of the Vancouver Jewish Historical Society, which is located at the Jewish Community Center. It was here that I purchased a book recently published by the society which contains a splendid collection of photographs by Leonard Frank of life on Vancouver Island with magnificent pictures of the early logging camps, wildlife, mountains and rivers of the Vancouver area. The book also contains a well-written narrative of the history of the area by a local Jewish historian, Cyril Leonoff.

Our Seattle tour was both by automobile and by foot. Our hosts were Esther and Richard Quint and the president of the Seattle Historical Society, Henry Friedman. The first Jews came to Seattle in the early 1860's with the Alaska Gold Rush and the first Orthodox synagogue, Bikur Cholim, was founded in the 1880's, with the second oldest synagogue being the Reform synagogue, Temple De Hirsch.

Sephardic Jews came in the early part of the twentieth century. They were mostly laborers, artisans and fish and produce vendors. They founded the Sephardic Bikur Cholim and Congregation Ezra Bessoroth. Seattle today has seven syna-

gogues with two of them located in suburban communities across Lake Washington.

We also visited the Jewish Community Center. Seattle has a fine Home for the Jewish Aged, whose president, Mr. Quint, was our host. This home was endowed with a \$1,000,000 gift in 1907 by Caroline Kline Galland and is now a model for the community.

A fascinating part of any visit to Seattle, of course, is an expedition to Pike's Market with its numerous stalls of fresh fruit and fish of all varieties. Interestingly enough, many of the fish vendors at the Market are descendants of Jews who originally came to Seattle from the Mediterranean area.

I urge those of you planning trips to the Northwest (or elsewhere) to take some time to see some of the historical Jewish "roots" of the communities you visit. It will add immeasurably to your pleasure and experience. In the meantime, I wish you health and happiness for the New Year.

Walter Roth
President

October 20 Meeting

continued from page 1

Chicago Symphony Orchestra. He recently retired as an advisor to the chancellor of the University of Illinois—Chicago.

The program will begin at 2:00 PM and be preceded by refreshments and a social hour at 1:00. The speaker will be introduced by Vice-President and Program Chairman Burt Robin. Society President Walter Roth will preside.

Ganz Hall is located on the seventh floor of the main Roosevelt University building at 430 South Michigan Avenue. The meeting is open to all without charge. □

An Opportunity To Be Active

An opportunity for an interested person to become active in the Society has arisen through the recent resignation of Shirley Sorkin as chairman of the Hospitality Committee after more than a decade of service. The Hospitality chairman is in charge of the social hours which precede the five yearly meetings and as such has an unusual opportunity to get to know a wide spectrum of our membership. He or she arranges for the refreshments and their serving, having control of committee membership and making decisions independently as to what is to be served and where it is to be purchased.

Any member interested in this position or more information concerning it may contact President Walter Roth through the Society office (312) 663-5634. □

Members Brunch Closes Busy Year For Society

The Society's members-only brunch meeting held June 2 at Temple Sholom was a many-sided affair. In addition to the brunch itself, the annual event featured entertainment, the election of board members and the presentation of cash awards to two Minsky Fund authors.

Checks for one thousand dollars each were presented to writers of the two winning entries in the Doris Minsky Memorial Monograph Competition, Carolyn Eastwood and Beatrice Michaels Shapiro. Dr. Eastwood's work on Chicago Jewish street peddlers and Mrs. Shapiro's memories of Lawndale are in the final states of publication as a double monograph in the Minsky series and will be distributed free to members in good standing. Both women gave short acceptance speeches.

Four new members were elected to the CJHS board of directors and eight were re-elected at the brief annual meeting which followed the brunch. Newly elected members are Carole Gardner, Judge Sheldon Gardner, Mark Mandle and Oscar Walchirk. Re-elected members include Charles B. Bernstein, Herman Draznin, Joseph Minsky, David L. Passman, Walter Roth, Milton D. Shulman, Elaine F. Suloway and Dr. Irwin J. Suloway. Elections are for a three-year term ending in 1994. New and re-elected board members will join continuing members and past presidents to constitute the Society board of directors for 1991-92.

The final event of the afternoon was a rollicking performance of klezmer music by Hasha Musha and her klezmer musicians. Attendance at the annual brunches is restricted to Society members and their immediate families. □

Meites Book Price Raised to \$64.95 For Non-Members

Sales of the Society reprint of the Meites *History of the Jews of Chicago* have reached the point where stock will soon be in short supply. In order to insure longer availability of the volume for CJHS members, the price for nonmembers has been increased to \$64.95 from its original \$48.95 publication price. The price for members remains unchanged at this time at \$45.00 plus tax and shipping.

"Approximately seventy percent of the printing order has been exhausted," said Society President Walter Roth, "and



Dr. Irving Cutler presents Minsky Awards to Beatrice Michaels Shapiro (above)...

we wanted to make sure copies remain for those members who have not yet bought a copy or who wish to purchase copies for family or holiday gifts."

Members' orders may be sent to Wellington Publishing, Inc., 950 North Shore Drive, Lake Bluff, IL 60044 at \$45.00 plus tax and \$3.50 for shipping. Checks or credit cards (include number and expiration date) are acceptable. Be sure to mention that you are a CJHS member in good standing.

Good reviews and word-of-mouth praise have helped spur the sales of the comprehensive history first published in 1924 and out of print and unavailable for over a half-century. The lavishly illustrated hard-cover volume of over 900 pages contains several hundred individual biographies of Chicago Jews. □

Successful Tour Season Featured A Day in Indiana

*Two Other Trips
Given During Summer*

The Society completed its fifteenth successful season of summer tours in September with a tour of South Suburban Jewish sites led by Irvin Roth. The tour visited several synagogues in Homewood, Flossmoor and Olympia Fields and was addressed by leaders of those congregations. They also heard from Dr. Roth about patterns of Jewish settlement in the area.

This third tour of the season was preceded by others in June and August, all ably arranged as usual by longtime Tours Chairman Leah Axelrod. The June tour was a repeat of Dr. Irving Cutler's perennial favorite, a visit to old Chicago Jewish neighborhoods with emphasis on the West and Northwest sides. Nostalgia dominated the thoughts of most tour members.



...and to Dr. Carolyn Eastwood (above)

Photos by Norman Schwartz

The August tour was an all-day tour of Northwest Indiana, which included a look at several small Jewish communities in the Calumet area, Gary, Hammond and Michigan City. Herbert Kraus, who grew up in the area, and Mrs. Axelrod led this trip, which included visits to several synagogues and an attractive restaurant lunch. Many of these communities are struggling for survival today.

As usual, all tours were on air-conditioned buses and special rates were given to Society members although they were open to the general public as well. Mrs. Axelrod always welcomes suggestions for future tours and may be reached at (708) 432-7003. —I.J.S. □

Large Numbers Join Society

A large number of new members have joined the Society during the past three months, in part perhaps as a result of attention drawn to the Society's work by the republication of Meites' *History of the Jews of Chicago*.

A hearty welcome to the following, who have joined the Society's multifaceted efforts to preserve and disseminate the record of Chicago's Jewish past.

Elizabeth Baum
Cecile A. Cliffer
Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Elman
Mr. and Mrs. Larry Fox
Nora H. Gordon
Robert Gordon
Sidney J. Hess
Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Hillman
Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Hoffman
Dr. Robert Holzman
Alex Kapner
Mr. and Mrs. Laurence Kaufman
Mr. and Mrs. Jack Kohen
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Perri
Maeta Rosengard
Moshe Shaltiel
Jeanne K. Shapiro
Dr. and Mrs. Jack Sloan
Deana R. Smith
Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Specter
Manfred Steinfeld
Dr. David Zubatsky

Mark Mandle
Membership Chairman

1927 Debate Over Zionism

continued from page 1

the teaching of evolution. He was nearly seventy years old, yet still a powerful personality. Wise was then fifty-three years of age and a towering figure in his own right.

Local Jews Divided on Zionism

They were debating a controversial subject then very much on the conscience of many Americans. American Zionism had had its birth in Chicago in the 1880's and had always had strong supporters there, though perhaps not many among Sinai's membership. In 1924 America had closed its door to open immigration from Eastern Europe and pressure for another haven for Eastern European Jews was great. While the Balfour Declaration had been proclaimed by Great Britain a decade earlier, a great many American Jews were lukewarm to the idea of the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Also, many non-Jewish Americans were opposed to Zionism. Among them were many social and political liberals, such as Clarence Darrow. Stephen Wise, being on the affirmative, prefaced his opening argument with the obligatory witticism. He recalled that the atheist Robert Ingersoll, after a bitter debate with Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise (no relation) had said: "Ladies and gentlemen, have you ever noticed things like this in your experience: the shortest, littlest man I ever knew was named Long. The thinnest man I ever knew was named Stout. And that rabbi from Cincinnati is named Wise."

Stresses Early Roots of Zionism

"The theme of this debate is 'Is Zionism a Progressive Policy for Israel and America?', stated Stephen Wise, who then continued:

Ladies and gentlemen, within and without Sinai, Zionism is not a policy. It is a principle. It is a conviction. It is an ideal. It is one of the inevitable movements that grow out of the history of a people.

I dwell for a moment upon the term "policy" because, Brother Darrow, you will be interested, as a non-Jew, to learn that there are some Jews, alas, who are so ill-informed about Zionism that they think that a handful of Zionists, led by Herzl and Sokolow and Weizmann and Wolfson and Brandeis and Mack, just define Zionism as a policy when, in truth, perhaps you haven't heard, sir, Zionism began on that day in July, or in the month of Ab, we Jews say, in the year 70. In other words, 1857 years ago, when Jews were exiled from Zion; and there has never been an hour since the year 70 that Jews have not deeply believed, ardently hoped, and passionately prayed for the restoration of the Jewish people to Zion, or Palestine.

Is Zionism good for America? Wise argued that "it is not a question of whether America is good enough

for the Jews; Jews cannot come into America any longer; the various handful are granted the freedom of admittance; the rest must remain outside of the doors of America and wait for years, decades, even for a generation, before they are granted admittance." Is Zionism a progressive force? "Yes, of course," opined Wise:

Zionism is a movement that aims to restore to the ancient land of the Jews, those Jews who are homeless and those Jews—not me—who will live a holy Jewish life from every point of view in the land of their Fathers....The cause of Zionism is to be found in the discovery of the Jews of the seventies, eighties and nineties in the last century, that a people which has no home of its own is welcome nowhere; that in order that a people may enter into the full advantage of life, together with all the people it must have a home, it must have a center, it must have a country of its own; it must live and think and feel in the terms of freedom and self-determination, the things for which you and I bled and fought during the years of war.

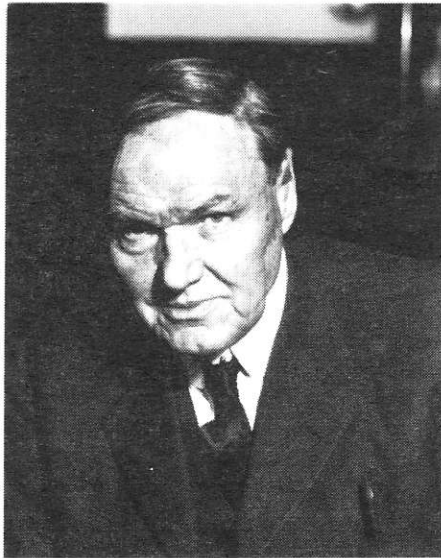
A Sense of Peoplehood

Wise pressed his argument that Jewish nationalism was a progressive force. Like Herzl before him, Wise believed that Zionism had restored a sense of security for Jews, so that a Jew could walk upright in his own land and in the world at large. "That is what Zionism has done for the Jews. Again, Zionism had not only given the Jews security and peace in the face of oppression, it has done something infinitely more. It has ended the confession of the Jews—the confession of the Jews that we are nothing more than a religion." Standing at the very pulpit recently held by Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch, who had opposed Wise's call for Zionism, Wise now thundered:

Once more...we seek Jewish life to be reinvigorated, re-inspired by keeping constant contact with the land, which, after all, is the land of the prophet and the psalmist, the land of the decalogue, the land of the teachings by which the Western World lives twenty, thirty hundred years after these teachings were promulgated. Once again we wish the Jew to enter into a heritage in which he shall be creative, spiritual and constructive.

To great applause, Wise took his seat after his thirty-minute opening. Darrow then took his turn, whimsical as ever in his start. "Well," he said, "I see that all the Jews are not in Palestine anyway."

Darrow quickly moved to the central question: Is Zionism good for the Jews? "I think not," he said. "I think it is about the most abused enterprise that I know anything about." He deplored the new immigration laws that excluded Jews, or anybody else, from America. After all, most Americans were foreigners. Darrow said that his people



Clarence Darrow

came here from Europe sometime in the seventeenth century. They got here on an earlier boat. He would devote all the energy and money used by Jews to promote Zionism "to try to civilize Americans" so that foreigners could continue to come to America.

Not a Practical Proposition

Darrow then attacked Wise's definition of Zionism. To him it had only a practical meaning: "It means taking the Jews from the four corners of the earth and landing them in Palestine where they can be happy ever after. It means gathering up the Jews and taking them back to Palestine, partly an industrial and partly a religious question. Darrow ridiculed Wise's idealistic vision of Zionism. The Jews had conquered land, held it for less than five hundred years and then lost it in a war. "Of course, we lawyers know that the statute of limitations would run against any title like that. (Laughter) Utterly absurd to talk about it being the homeland of the Jews. When they went up from Egypt with manna in their hands it was acquired by someone else. They got it, as everybody gets everything else in the world, I am sorry to say, by fighting, and then lost it by fighting, and all of them moved away who could afford to. And nobody would be there now if they could walk home." (Laughter)

Doubts Economic Feasibility

Darrow then referred to a recent trip he had taken to Palestine. "I have been there. I didn't stay long." It was a small country containing some ten thousand square miles, about one-sixteenth as big as Illinois. "It can't be farmed because there is no soil there. Oh no, you won't till the soil. The Jews are not given to cultivating the soil, even if it is good land, but they are too smart to want to dig it there. Now, I love idealism. I am something of a dreamer myself, but there are some things that are not worth dreaming about, and this is one of them."

Darrow continued with his ridicule. "Were you there? Well, now, I have been there. I walked up to the top of Mt. Olive, I don't know how far it is anyway, maybe four miles, but it seemed further, up a narrow, dirty street,

down a filthy, impossible land, which everybody tramped down; the poor, the ragged, the illiterate. The chief transportation is the ass. You could see Balaam riding down and the same old ass that stuck." (Laughter)

Darrow was now at his sarcastic best. He described his trip to Jerusalem, high up in the sky. "Well, as I got into the Jaffa Gate I heard somebody speak a strangely familiar language, not English, but American. I think he was a ballyhoo for Riverview Park, and I heard him say, 'Right this way to the Wailing Wall; wailing now.' And what did he find at the Wailing Wall? A lot of old, dirty, decrepit men and women standing holding a tin cup in their hand saying 'Baksheesh' or something like that, picking up pennies, and little children with sore eyes, the worst, most base looking people I ever encountered, and I have seen beggars everywhere, even outside of Chicago....I am willing to concede right off that the Jews have not been fairly treated. What of it? Nobody else has." (Laughter)

Who Will Go?, Darrow Asks

Having thus "destroyed" the economic basis for Zionism in Palestine, Darrow turned his attention to one of his well-known irritants—religion. "You cannot attack this: The foundation of this movement is a religious movement, to bring back Zion. Of course, there is another Zion up north of Evanston."

How is it that in this Zion, Darrow stressed, that only ten to fifteen percent are Jews? There are ten percent Christians and all the rest are Arabs. All were living in this desolate Holy Land. "Who is going anyway?" asked Darrow. Then he answered his own question:

"Why, one of the leaders is Louis Marshall, partner of Sam Untermyer. Is the firm of Untermyer and Marshall going to open a law office in Jerusalem? Not they. There is my friend Greenebaum; is he going there with his bank? hope not....Is Rosenwald going to have his store there? Why, even my friend (Stephen Wise) would not want to establish a church there; there would be nobody to listen to him." (Laughter) Many of the above-mentioned individuals were prominent Chicago business leaders and Sinai Temple members.



Stephen Wise

Doubts Agricultural Potential

“And to revitalize the land?” asked Darrow. “How much would it cost? Why all the Jews in the world haven’t got enough money to do it—and for what? Do you suppose there is any one of them would ever think of it as a business proposition, connected with anything else but a religious movement?”

With three minutes remaining of the time allotted for the opening argument, Darrow got to another of his main points. “What about the Jews?” he asked. He did not believe in races. There are differences among people caused by climate and geography, but otherwise people are all alike. “Jews ‘are a commercial people.’ They may have been farmers once, but they got over it. They are traders. They have no mission.” he said, “except to live like all other people.”

As Darrow sat down, Wise began his response. First he asked Darrow when had he been in Palestine. “About three or four years ago, retorted Darrow, “in October.” Wise then answered Darrow’s contemptuous description of the land in Palestine. He had been there in 1913 and in 1922, and the transformation that had taken place was a miracle.

“Did you go to the Emek?” asked Wise of Darrow. “No, I did not,” came the answer. “Well, I wish you had,” answered Wise. “In 1913, it was just desolation itself. In 1922, the Valley of the Emek, as we lovingly style it, had been transformed into one of the most fruitful valleys on earth.”

Cites History of Mistreatment

Wise then attacked Darrow for a remark “not worthy of him”; “Jews have not been fairly treated. What of it?” “Is it fair, Brother Darrow,” questioned Wise, “to speak of the hell of Russia, to speak of the foul and fiendish treatment of my people for nineteen hundred Christian years as if they had not been fairly treated?” Wise then took Darrow to task in each of his other characteristics about Jews and concluded with his own jibe at Darrow.

“You speak about working against nature. It is not done and it ought to be done, Brother Darrow. Brother Darrow, were you in Dayton, Tennessee? [site of the Scopes trial] (Laughter) Why you sound as if you had become a disciple at the feet of the late William Jennings Bryan.” [The opponent at that trial who opposed change] (Laughter).

Darrow in his Response became very serious, perhaps seeking to avoid fraying further the nerves of his protagonist. He now stressed: “I have many friends who are Zionists. I think a great deal of them. I love the idealist. I cannot help being a dreamer myself. Neither can I help waking up. It would be all right to dream if you were not obliged to wake up...But,” Darrow concluded, “for a proposition that is absolutely impossible, a proposition which goes against space and time and the laws of nature, I tell you, you cannot do it, and many of you will be bound to regret that you ever undertook such a foolish thing.” (Applause)

Predicts Success for Zionism

Wise then rose for his Closing Argument. He believed, he said, “that one half of the fifteen million Jews then living in the world would go to Palestine if they could.” Right now, he, Wise, supported the British in limiting immigrants to Palestine because economic facilities “had to be prepared.”

Wise then turned to Darrow and inquired as to what time of the year he was in Palestine. “October,” replied Darrow; “it was cold.” Well, replied Wise, last winter a friend of his from Berlin visited Chicago and was dead in three days. “Yet I don’t say that Chicago is unfit to live in.” Opined Wise, “I don’t know what this man saw in Palestine, but I tell you what I saw: Such sunshine as I have never looked upon; the gleaming of such stars as I have never beheld; the iridescence as well as the richness and beauty of the soil is incomparable.”

Instead of mocking the Jews, Wise urged Darrow to join the Jews in their new endeavors. He addressed the audience: “I tell you, I shall not live to see it, but you and your children and your children’s children will bless and bless over again the day that saw Jews, forgetful of their personal, physical, material advantage, take up the march again and go to Palestine, to rebuild a great life, and once again to become moral leaders and spiritual benefactors of the human race.”

Wise concluded his portion of the debate by graciously noting that he took five minutes more than he should have, and he offered Darrow the same amount of extra time.

Darrow was gracious in his Closing Argument. He knew that the Jews had not had a fair deal in history. He also knew that Jews do more for “their class than any other class that I know of, but all I am insisting on,” concluded Darrow, “is that their charity and their helpfulness would do a great deal more good and accomplish more permanent benefit to their people and to the world [if used in ways other] than the way that my friend thinks it ought to be diverted....”

Neither Wise nor Darrow lived to see the flowering of the State of Israel. Darrow retired from legal practice soon after the debate and became an early outspoken foe of Hitler’s Germany and often spoke out on behalf of the persecuted Jews of Germany. He died in 1938.

Stephen Wise became the great rallying force of American Jewry against Hitler in the 1930’s and the prime American Jewish leader of the lost struggle to rescue European Jewry from Hitler’s onslaughts. He remained active in Zionist activities during the remainder of his lifetime. He died in 1949, shortly after Israel became a state.

Times have changed, but elements of the Darrow-Wise debate held in Chicago in 1927 remain pertinent today. Darrow’s worries about the soil of Palestine were ill-founded, but other of his problems with Zionism are still very much with us today. And Stephen Wise’s idealistic description of Zionism remains as alive and vital today as it was sixty-five years ago in his Chicago debate with Clarence Darrow. □

Book Studies Workers' Lives In Old Jewish Neighborhoods

*How Inter-war Changes Affected Local
Living and Thinking Patterns*

by Sidney Sorkin

Elizabeth Cohen in her *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1990) has made Chicago's communities viable and neighborhoods visible. For us, and for the immigrants with their individual senses of community and their perceptions, the neighborhoods are realized in these pages. The Jewish communities among them have adjoining borders and their residents were to meet in parks, the marketplace, and schools as well as on the job.

In the two decades between World Wars One and Two, Chicago, the nation, and the world were in transition. The focus of that transition is Chicago's ethnic communities and many neighborhoods. What happened to the ethnic communities of the 1920s and 1930s? What influences from without and within wrought subtle but great changes in the lives of the majority of these men and women and their children? The major communities discussed are Blacks, Bohemians, Croatians, Germans, Irish, Italians, Jews, Lithuanians, Mexicans, Poles, Serbians, and Slovaks with a passing mention of Hungarians and Yugoslavs.

Ethnic Groups Politicized

In her book Professor Cohen concentrates upon the struggle for economic survival and the political awakening of these ethnic communities. They were completely dependent upon the factories, near or far, and any other places of employment available. As their economic situation changed, so did their political awareness and allegiance. During the relatively flush years of the 1920s and the anguished years of the 1930s, there was a definite change of attitude among the workers and within the community. Demands and expectations were similarly altered. A desperate economic situation brought about new union militancy and new political awareness.

Cohen explains the union failure:

Workers' most recent and successful efforts had followed World War I. In Chicago's steel mills, packing plants and agricultural equipment factories, manufacturing workers came close to building a viable industrial union, but they did not last.

Chicago might be considered the "most union" of large American cities; even so, the success of the unions here was limited, especially among the major producers.

The dilemma was:

Fragmentation of workers along geographic, skill, ethnic and racial lines—along with repression by employers and government and weak national union structures within the craft ori-

ented American Federation of Labor (AFL)—led to the defeat of the workers' once promising challenge.

Traces Changes in Attitudes

What makes this book unique is that the changes, among them the difficult-to-discern changes in attitude and behavior, are elucidated step by step. Included is every face of their lives, from shopping at the "mom and pop" store, speaking to their neighbors and local merchants in their own language, to the switch to the chain store and mass media, which would change all that. The local movie theater was to evolve from a noisy large bare-benched room where the audience talked to and yelled at the silent screen. It became a picture palace in which a silent audience sat listening to a talking screen.

These enclaves, composed of people who spoke the same language, had the same religious affiliations, accommodated many differences in political beliefs, and despite a common culture and a common area of birth, became bases of political power. The Irish had established their dominance throughout the American Catholic Church and in Chicago's political structure among others. Now the Blacks, Bohemians, Italians, Jews, and Poles were claiming their shares.

Effects of the Depression

The Depression was cataclysmic because of its immediate effect and its long duration. Local ethnic fraternal groups could not provide the needed help, nor could those manufacturers who offered a version of "welfare capitalism" in an effort to survive. In the end their relationship with their workers had also changed. The Jewish community, which in the 1920s had prided itself on its self-sufficiency, on taking care of its own, was not able to do so in the 1930s. Neither the city, county, nor state had the resources; they all turned to the federal government.

The Great Depression wounded the community as neighborhood stores closed, local banks failed, and many mortgages were foreclosed. Consider the over-all effect when more than two hundred banks failed.

Chicago has been the recipient of more intensive sociological scrutiny than perhaps any other city in the country. This scrutiny has provided a wealth of information about the city and its immigrant population. These vast resources are on deposit in the archives, libraries, museums, and universities of this and other cities, the subjects ranging from banks to unions. These resources have been carefully crafted by Ms. Cohen into a superb book. The Chicago Jewish Historical Society is proud to have assisted her research. □

A number of Society members not long ago assisted a bright young professor with her research on old Jewish neighborhoods in Chicago. Their efforts were more than repaid by the recent publication of her resulting book, a perceptive look at several ethnic areas of the city during the Twenties and the Thirties. Society Board member Sidney Sorkin reviews this significant study.
