

The Jews and Peace

*Anti-Semitism is fomented around real issues;
let's not fight it with abstractions alone*

EVERY once in a while someone tells us that we should fight anti-Semitism, yes, but in a non-controversial sort of way, not taking up current issues like war and civil liberties, where we are liable to step on someone's toes. We should continue publicizing lofty utterances about the equality of all men in the eyes of God and on the scales of reason; we should recount again the distinguished record of the Jews in science, religion, philosophy, philanthropy, and statesmanship; but we should never, never tread dangerous ground like the Dies Committee, the peace issue, the anti-lynching bill, or Mr. J. Edgar Hoover's private card index of liberals and radicals.

Obviously we disagree. And we disagree because we don't think you can *combat* anti-Semitism adequately by means of abstract truths alone while the Coughlinites and their allies are *making* anti-Semitism through skillful misrepresentation of the live, vital issues of the day. We don't believe in letting Father Coughlin or Joe McWilliams get away with the claim that they alone are concerned over matters close to people's hearts and lives today—a concern they are turning to demagogic, Jew-baiting ends—while we retire in quiet dignity to our generalities about brotherhood and tolerance.

When Joe McWilliams shouts to hundreds of Americans each week that this is a Jewish war, and that if you want to keep out of it you must follow him, is our rejoinder to be that Spinoza and Maimonides, both Jews, are numbered among the world's greatest philosophers? Or when we see witch-hunting being whipped up into a storm that bodes no good to any minority, are we to write an essay on the eternal verities? Timid friends imply that we should. We think not.

Every Wednesday night Joe McWilliams dedicates his considerable talents of vocal chord and body muscle to the proposition that every Jew in the United States is moving heaven and earth to get this country into a war to "save the Jewish-British Empire." On April 24, he said:

"I know that if the Jews finally drag us into this war, I will be put away. But I am not afraid to go to prison. I am young, and I am strong. I can wait. I can wait, while two million of our fine American

boys are killed on Europe's battlefields, while the national debt goes up another fifty billion dollars. Then, when the country is in ruins, when the survivors of the war straggle back to these shores, I will come out of prison. And I won't need to say a word against the Jews. The American people will do the talking. There won't be enough telegraph posts on which to hang the warmongers. So if you want to do a good deed, go out and plant a telegraph post."

A frenzied crowd cheers this lying gospel of hate. It is not primarily a crowd of irresponsible young hoodlums, as many think. It is primarily a crowd of men and women in their thirties and forties and fifties—a bit on the shabby side, workers and shopkeepers perhaps, people who have felt hard knocks and want to know whom to blame. McWilliams gives them an answer. It is a false answer, but many of them do not know that and believe him.

Are we going to give these people the impression—and millions of others whom Joe McWilliams hasn't reached yet, but hopes to—that if they want Spinoza they can come to us, but if they want peace, they must follow McWilliams?

Or are we tolerance folk going to say: If you want peace, don't go to Joe McWilliams. His peace is a phony peace. He says he is for peace, but he is betting on war, because war will serve his ends. We, like you, are for peace, because peace will serve the ends of life and happiness and a decent country in which to live. Take your place alongside us who uphold the rights of minorities. We have even more reason than you to be for peace, for we know that the aftermath of war will be the feeding ground of anti-Semitism and all manner of intolerance. We know that Nazism is no Germanic flower springing from a single blood and soil, as Hitler would have it, but a hardy shrub with many names that can send forth evil blossoms wherever the greed of the powerful is able to cultivate the desperation of the many.

On the issue of peace we know that we speak with the great masses of Americans, Jews and non-Jews. McWilliams lies when he says that the people of any race or creed want war. Let's throw the lie back into those smirking lips of his!