



THE FORD HALL FORUM
75 YEARS OF PUBLIC DISCOURSE

(FEBRUARY 23, 1908)

At the beginning of this century open forums were a popular form of public education and entertainment, as well as a "bully pulpit" for speakers in search of an audience. Considering the profound changes which have taken place in the last 75 years in public discourse, first through radio and then through television, it is remarkable that the Ford Hall Forum has maintained the vitality it has. The reason is not all that mysterious. Forum audiences get to talk back. Our speakers have been live, present, and compelled to be responsive. Necessarily they reveal more about themselves and their ideas, with less caricature, than in carefully edited electronic form. In another 25 years, when the Forum turns 100, we expect that it will, in its primitive but irreplaceable fashion, still be informing, illuminating, entertaining and irritating.

Rudolph Kass
President
December 1982

"There is an old saying that more than a calf needs its mother's milk, the cow loves to feed it. Looking back over nearly 40 years of service on the Board, I readily admit that more than the Forum has required my devotion, I have delighted in giving it. It has been exhilarating to work with others who share my enthusiasm for the Forum.

"Seeing the Forum strike deeper and stronger roots in the community is a source of continuing satisfaction. To foster an interest in broad public issues among those whose world view is circumscribed by the personal demands of daily living is one of the principal responsibilities of the Forum. I feel especially gratified that efforts were initiated during my term as President to involve the greater Boston school children in Forum activities, to introduce them at a formative stage of their lives to the value of exploring all sides of political, social, and economic questions. As the Forum completes its seventy-fifth year, we have much to celebrate — and more to accomplish in that period that lies ahead."

Frances Smith
Chairman of the Board
November 1982

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Deac Rossell, Vice-President
Project director for the Ford
Hall Forum

Chapter 1

Tracing the Forum's Footprints

"The Ford Hall Forum is a constructive element in our American life that makes for more mutual understanding among all classes; for greater tolerance and good will; for unity in essentials, with liberty for each and all in matters of personal religion and political conviction." (Lewiston, Maine *Maine Journal*, February 23, 1923).

"The Ford Hall Forum guarantees the fullest and freest open public discussion of all vital questions affecting human welfare — and furnishes a common meeting ground for all the people in the interest of truth and mutual understanding, for the cultivation of community spirit. Experts in social work have more than once described the Ford Hall method as the soundest and most successful process of Americanization they have witnessed." (*Boston Herald*, February 28, 1923).

Such praise for an organization which was, at that time, only 15 years old! But these statements of faith and purpose are a fitting way to start an exploration of the oldest — and most well known — public speaking forum in the United States.

In 1898, Daniel Sharp Ford, owner of *The Youth's Companion* journal and a Christian philanthropist concerned with the welfare and conditions of the working people, left \$300,000 for a building to be erected as the home of the Boston Baptist Social Union. Following the bequest, eight years later the Ford Building was erected on Beacon Hill. Ford recognized in his will "the need for Christian businessmen to come into closer personal relations with the workingman, and this time seems to be imperative because of his [the workingman's] religious indifference, his feverish unrest, and his belief that businessmen and capital are his enemies. The attitude of his mind and his tendencies forebode serious perils, and Christianity is the only influence that can change or modify them."

George W. Coleman was president of the Boston Baptist Social Union at the time. He made it a point to stop in on a meeting at Cooper Union in New York City to hear Prof. Charles Prospero Fagnani of the Union Theological Seminary speak on "God and Democracy." A passing comment that it would be wonderful if the church could get people as the Cooper Union did on Sunday evenings caught Coleman's imagination. The rest is literally the realization of his ideal that the greatest leveling force in American life was mutual tolerance and understanding. It was then that Coleman coined the rallying cry "Let there be light," which continues to this day as the Forum's chosen motto.

With its original Baptist Social Union affiliation, the Forum was lauded by the *Christian Register* in March 1923 as "one of the most important expressions of human hope and courage which we can put up

against the Bolshevik movement, which means the destruction of civilization." Coleman stressed time and again, however, that the Forum meetings were carried on with the sole purpose of community service, with no particular leanings toward any one group over another.

Forum speakers like John Haynes Holmes and Margaret Slattery were quick to praise what they termed the greatest audience in America. During the twenties, 61% were regular attendees; of those, 58% were men, 25% were under 30, 44% between 30 and 50, with 30% over 50 years of age. Only a third were foreign-born, yet 61% claimed foreign parentage. And 58% were Protestants, 22% Jews, 6% Catholics, with only 2% agnostics or atheists at that time.

In bold, black, 36-point headlines, the *Boston Herald* declared Ford Hall Forum on its 15th birthday the "big safety valve of public opinion," noting the "frank interchange of questions and answers between listeners and speakers not limited by creed or class distinctions"; the "amazing range of subjects covered in these verbal duels"; and that "thousands of radio fans listen in on its Sunday meetings."

Unity, a religious leaflet, proclaimed that the Ford Hall Forum and its founder had won the highest form of admiration — imitation. In fact, Ford Hall Forum inspired and assisted in the launching of more than 500 other public-speaking forums across the country to spread its form of active, participatory education for everyone.

Conceived in the spirit of reasoning together, Ford Hall Forum's platform of principles was there for all to see and hear:

- The complete development of democracy in America.
- A common meeting ground for all people in the interest of truth and mutual understanding — and for the cultivation of community spirit.
- The fullest and finest open public discussion of all vital questions affecting human welfare.
- Free participation from the forum floor, either by questions or discussions.
- Freedom of forum management from the responsibility for utterances from the platform or floor.

Just what comprised these meetings that aroused so much praise and interest? The first one, held on Sunday evening, February 23, 1908, fell exactly two years after Coleman's visit to Cooper Union. With that vision still fresh of an audience of hard-working men and women united by a common eagerness to learn the truth, Coleman had handbills and flyers generously distributed in English, Italian, and Yiddish; the newspapers gave the notice publicity and free space. The flyers proudly announced:

"A meeting of the people for good fellowship, for the enjoyment of good music, and for moral and intellectual stimulus, without prejudice to race, creed, or class. A hearty welcome. Admission free. Invite your friends." The speakers for the kickoff session were Henry Abrahams, Edwin Mead, C.C. Barry, and Robert A. Woods. Despite all of Coleman's hopes, only 150 entered the vast hall, which could seat 1400, for that first meeting.

By the fourth meeting, however, word had spread. Four clergymen spoke in a symposium entitled "Socialism as I See It," heard by a full house, with 500 turned away for lack of space.

The meetings began with a concert, followed by a prayer period (which the Baptist stronghold insisted on including, over Coleman's objections to introducing devotional exercises in a forum of free opinion and persuasion), the lecture for one hour, then an hour for no-holds-barred questioning from the audience. The primary goal of the Forum being to further the complete development of American democracy, it has always been expected that the "students" engage the speakers in clarifying points made for half of the main program. The "term," which has become truncated over the years for financial reasons, began the third Sunday of October and continued for the next 26 consecutive Sunday evenings — up through the 1930s for that length.

Lecturers have included a cross-section of leaders representing all facets of society — ministers, priests, or rabbis; university professors; physicians; businesspeople; lawyers, judges; priests, social workers; publicists; representatives of labor; journalists; authors; editors; educators; and politicians. For both lecturers and students, then, Ford Hall Forum represents the bringing together in a common quest for knowledge people seemingly poles apart, but united by the spirit of friendliness and goodwill.

On this latter point, it is important to note that Ford Hall Forum was not merely a state for cross-fertilization of ideas on Sunday evenings. During its early life, it was a complete culture that spawned theater groups; the Ford Hall Folks, a smaller number of regulars who got together to know each other better; and the Ford Hall Town Meeting, which broke into committees to consider liquor laws, budgets, and appropriations, municipal affairs, education, housing — in short, all problems facing a community. The Town Meeting also discussed the problems associated with the "big" forum, concluding that the meetings and lectures should be set down in print to record permanently the good feeling of fellowship at Ford Hall. Thus began the little journal *Ford Hall Folks*, out of which grew the *Open Forum*, the organ for the Open Forum National Council.

George Coleman presided as chairman of the Ford Hall Folks and liked to say of its meetings: "At the Ford Hall Folks meeting, you are introduced to Christians, Jews, Agnostics, atheists, shy folks, loud folks, thinkers, immigrants, bluebloods — all have succeeded in molding themselves together into a bit of democracy."

The onset of World War I led to the scattering of the folks to all parts of the United States and abroad; the Folks and the Town Meeting never completely revived. But the printed legacies live on in the delightful aphorisms, prayers, and thoughtful columns in *Ford Hall Folks*, which testifies to the story of Ford Hall as a study in personalities — of men and women united through the goodwill that is but a reflection of their own selves.

An example of one of the thoughtful prayers from the January 12, 1913 edition of *Ford Hall Folks* reads as follows: "We give thanks for the capacity and the desire to learn with which Thou has endowed us. We rejoice in the blessings that the Public School has brought into our lives. We pray for an open mind and an attentive spirit that we may learn each day the lessons of life that Thou wouldst teach us. Help us to cherish our public school system, to guard it against every danger that threatens, and to welcome every change that will make it a more efficient servant of all the people."

"It is with glad hearts that we recognize that this great function of giving a fundamental education to all the people rests upon the divine principle of requiring from every citizen according to his ability and giving to every child according to its need. With such a glorious foundation on which to build, help us to go on in the same spirit, not resting content until every child graduating from our public schools has received the best equipment for a life and for a living that is was possible for that child to receive. Amen."

Thus did the *Ford Hall Folks*, the magazine of neighborliness that sold for 5 cents, deliver its message. Published weekly by the Ford Hall Associates, its aim was to create, assemble, and distribute ideas that would help men and institutions grow more helpful in serving society and promote peace on earth, goodwill toward men. Aphorisms such as the following sprinkled the leaflets:

"Even the most sympathetic wise man wastes a little time mourning over the bodies of Dead Difficulties."

"To bathe the soul in beauty is quite as essential as to bathe the body in water."

"To get the frown from your face, you've got to get it out of your mind."

And there were injunctions such as "How many of our citizens will march in the woman suffrage parade on May 2?" (1914)

The inspiration from the pages of *Ford Hall Folks* could fill an entire book. But a few more selections should suffice herein to transmit its transcendental, moving messages:

"Herein" by W. E. B. DuBois

*"Herein lies the tragedy of the age;
Not that men are poor;
All men know something of poverty.
Not that men are wicked;
Who is good?
Not that men are ignorant;
What is truth?
Nay, but that men know so little of each other."*

Those words ring true — and most probably will continue to ring true — over the ages.

And who can ignore the weekly section of moral and character issues entitled "As Brother Hood Sees It"? As one astute reader remarked,

"Like an O. Henry story, some of Brother Hood's articles have endings that make one's mind wiggle and twist, loosening many of the old notions one has placed so carefully away. He sometimes makes me think so hard that it hurts. But who is afraid of growing pains?"

As President Mary E. Woolley of Mt. Holyoke College put it in 1928, "The Forum idea in America stands for enlightened thinking and seconding the gifts of unity in diversity. There was also a new spirit, new life, new thought abroad in the land — and a new type of American was pushing forward to even higher ideals than those of other days."

Yet in that same year — 1928 — rumor spread quickly that the Ford Hall Forum was to be closed down. Less than a month after celebrating its twentieth anniversary (and, coincidentally, when George Coleman was on an around-the-world trip), the Ford Hall Forum was gently but firmly ousted from the auspices of the Boston Baptist Social Union. That group charged that the meetings were anti-Christian and un-American; in response, on his return Coleman published a small volume of the prayers used at the Forum to answer the charges that it had no program for Christian activities.

The leader of the attack, Rev. Herbert S. Johnson, a Baptist minister, called the Forum radical, socialistic, and communistic — making no distinction between the various speaker's views and the Forum itself. Even worse, Rev. Johnson claimed there was a growing tendency in America to associate radicalism with the Baptists because of the Ford Hall Forum. The Massachusetts Public Interest League and the right-wing Industrial Defense Association, whose purported object was to perpetuate and inculcate actively American ideals as expressed in the U.S. Constitution, rallied along with Rev. Johnson in seeking to close the Forum.

Fire was in the air. And Johnson, backed by the Association, said he would petition for a court injunction to close down the "disloyal" open forum. Replying in its best form, the Forum invited the Association's own executive secretary to present its views openly from the rostrum; no response came.

1928 was also the year that the Daughters of the American Revolution blacklisted the Forum for its so-called outspoken radicalism. Tempers ran high; in that same year, two women from the Massachusetts Public Interest League attacked the Boston Public Library (the current repository of the Forum's archives) for renting its lecture hall to a meeting at which Negro leader and publicist W.E.B. DuBois, an active Forum participant, spoke.

Support for the Forum came from places as high as the presidency itself. President Calvin Coolidge had praised the Ford Hall Forum throughout the difficult blacklist period as a "vital influence in Boston and a good example for other communities."

Nevertheless, the outcome was founder Coleman's decision that the Forum go it alone and incorporate; without the \$5,000 annual maintenance fund of the Baptist Union to fall back on, the Forum became

self-supporting as an independent organization. Membership cards were issued for the first time to the tune of \$2 each. George Coleman became the first president; other charter members included Roscoe Pound, Edward A. Filene, Roger W. Babson, Margaret Slattery, and David K. Niles. The stated purpose of the new corporation was:

"To provide education such as will develop intelligent, capable, and responsible citizens, minister to the welfare of all, and promote understanding of civic, moral, religious, and spiritual responsibilities. This can be done in part by maintaining a common meeting ground for all the people where there will be full, free, and open public discussion of all vital questions affecting human welfare."

In honor of its twentieth anniversary, notables like Judge George W. Anderson of the Federal Court had these words to add:

"The world has not obviously been made safe for democracy — or for anything else. But we may confidently adhere to the moderate judgment that democracy is the least unsafe and unstable scheme of government yet devised. And democracy is government by free discussion and experiment and criticism . . . No part of the Constitution is more vital than the very first, which provides for freedom of speech and assemblage, if we are to preserve the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity. When discussion and criticism are carelessly or weakly abandoned, unfitness for democracy is indicated; failure to insist on important rights menaces liberty."

Judge Anderson continued with a theme common to our automated age: "To found and to guide that forum for 20 years entitled George Coleman to respect and honor from all who realize that ordered liberty is as yet no output of this machine age, that man's inhumanity to man is, in varied form, a painfully persistent factor in our social and economic system." This, during the height of the Roaring Twenties.

Yet during that period the hate campaign against the Forum had smeared it as a terrible place, where no one but Reds and aliens went. Fortunately, those who saw the open forum movement as America's safety valve prevailed — and this vital outlet for the forces of social discontent and restlessness continued.

In Spring 1929 the anti-obscenity Shattuck Bill was up for reconsideration — at the time when an appeal on the ban of Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* was before the courts. Seven hundred people jammed into Ford Hall for a rally for freedom of expression. Several national figures spoke, including Clarence Darrow of Scopes Trial fame; historian Arthur Schlesinger presided. The mood was festive, and radicals wore buttons declaring themselves "Red but not dictated." Students showed up as Fanny Hill, Elmer Gantry, and other characters in various banned books; Margaret Sanger, forbidden to speak in Boston because of her advocacy of birth control, was present on the platform with tape over her mouth as Schlesinger read her comments.

The Forum entered its Golden Age during the Depression years of the

1930s. At that time, a monthly Ford Hall Youth Forum was organized to run concurrently with its adult counterpart. A Ford Hall drama workshop and even a Forum orchestra flourished. The Ford Hall Forum Dramatic Society Workshop stated as its purpose: "to study and produce significant plays, promote and stimulate interest in dramatic art in all its phases; to encourage plays, amateur and professional, stimulate and foster a more intelligent interest in drama through direct contact with workers in the field of drama."

Many of the plays dealt with pressing social issues of the day. One, a Negro folk drama entitled "Earth," was presented by a cast of Boston's best-known Negro players, with the theme dealing with Christianity and Voodooism. Another, entitled "Strike," depicted mass movements during the labor troubles in the cotton mills at Gastonia in North Carolina. It aroused such attention that City Censor Stanton White proclaimed it "red and naughty" in December 1932 and tried to censor it. Mayor Curley (White's Uncle Jim) intervened, however, saying the city had no authority to rule over a private play and that White had exceeded his authority in ordering the censor.

And who can ever forget the famous 27th anniversary dinner, at \$2.50 a plate, in 1935. Such dinners were described by some as Ford Hall Forum's "annual impertinence." The 1935 edition was titled "The Coroner's Inquest" and subtitled "Who Killed Democracy?" The cast of characters in this montage of American society included a DAR (Mrs. D.A. Rattlebrain) a Fascist, a Communist, a 100% American, a fugitive from Justice, a Labor Agitator, a Socialist, a Bewildered Liberal. All were quizzed as to the part they played in killing Democracy.

The jury was entirely composed of professors, with Prof. Felix Frankfurter, one of the President's Brain Trust, leading the haranguing of the witnesses. Senator George W. Norris of Nebraska and Dr. James Bryant Conant, president of Harvard University, presided. William Pickens, a Negro representing the NAACP, was the 100% American. He said that he hadn't killed Democracy, impersonated by a frail, elderly man who was regarded as eccentric if not unbalanced. But the 100% American did say he'd seen the DAR throw a bouquet with a brick in it at the bandstand. Democracy held a permit to speak but was toned by DAR and others when he began on the "Twin Menace of Communism and Fascism." And all the aforementioned witnesses were charged with being present at the May Day demonstrations on the Boston Common, at which time the brick was thrown that allegedly caused the demise of Democracy.

Throughout, the most bewildered of all was the liberal. He didn't know why he'd been on the Common and said he was a bit foggy because he'd been on a diet. When asked what kind of a diet, he replied, "Baloney." He claimed to be Democracy's best friend, but the jury found him guilty of being an accessory to the crime, as he admitted to getting the permit for "Old Democracy" to speak.

DAR, despite testimony against her, was absolved as she held that she was a "womanly woman" and really couldn't hit any object at which she

threw, even though her bouquets sometimes did contain bricks.

The life and spirits of the Forum slid back a little in the 1940s, when problems multiplied again. The state acquired the Ford building for office space, and the Forum moved to the Old John Hancock Hall on St. James Avenue. (In fact, the Ford building is no longer; in 1970 it was razed for replacement by a parking garage.) Yet again in 1945 the Forum had to move once more, when the Hancock building was slated for demolition. It took up residence briefly in the Old South Meeting House, then moved to Jordan Hall on Gainsborough Street.

Before World War II, the crowds were predominantly adult. As Superior Court Judge Reuben Lurie, then President of the Forum, put it, "Before the emergence of radio and the subsequent emergence of television, you had to come out to a lecture if you wanted to hear a speaker, so people came out."

During the 1950s, however, television became a serious competitor for the Sunday night audience, particularly during the bitter cold of Boston's winters. And more recently, the fear of crime in the streets has cut down on the number of attendants, especially adults who come to the meetings alone.

Pragmatically speaking, the Forum's financial deficit has exacted its toll. With its charter to provide education to all free of charge, the Forum continues to this day to charge no admission to its programs. Free-will donations are accepted at the door, and dues for members help defray expenses, which currently vary from \$100 to \$5000 per evening.

One of the biggest problems over the last 15 or so years relates to the fees that many speakers charge; those figures have skyrocketed into thousands of dollars for one appearance. Some speakers, like Kingman Brewster, charge no fee; John Kenneth Galbraith returns his fee as a contribution. The Forum has had to make a choice to either reduce the number of programs or downgrade their quality by inviting speakers of lesser reknown or reputation — at a lower cost. The Forum's directors chose the former alternative. Thus, in 1968 the Forum season, which once stretched over 26 Sunday nights from September through May and had already been cut back to 20, was shortened even more to 12 meetings and is now 10 per year.

Unlike more traditional university settings, the Forum has encountered little resistance from the abundant college-age population. Its meetings, now held in Northeastern University's Alumni Auditorium, are broadcast live over WGBH-FM.

The Forum was the only place where Ayn Rand would speak, and she hailed it as a great, unique institution. Individuals came from Florida, Oregon, or Canada just to hear her and would pay a full year's membership for this one evening, traditionally in the springtime. And for many years Robert Frost gave an annual reading of his poems.

Mrs. Frances Smith, director of the Forum, expresses the common feeling well. "I really see this as an extension of education for people who

did not go to college. They ought to have a chance to see and question important people too."

She adds that it is difficult to put together a season of varied subject matter and balanced political outlooks. There seems to be no problem getting liberals to come speak, but it's another story with conservatives: Smith says they're either not interested or their fees are too high.

Yet for all its problems, the Forum remains a vital force for its members and leaves an impression of lively views and debates with all who attend its sessions. As one elder enthusiast put it, "Newspapers seem to be getting more interesting now because they are expressing strong points of view through their columns, but I still find the debates exciting." And another claims he'd take his dates to Ford Hall Forum "if they weren't the kind who liked to see movies."

And testimony from the press reinforces the enthusiasm. The *East-West Journal* in 1972 candidly stated in its pages: "There are few gatherings in the City of Boston that are as worth your time as is the Ford Hall Forum. It really is quite an environment. There are few institutions around today that are so nakedly an in-the-flesh recreation of the Constitution and the American way.

"But what I really got into was a short, almost crusty old fellow who was the moderator [remember those?] for the evening. Except that this guy not only held the whole thing together, he transformed it into something beyond a lecture that wouldn't have existed if he had not been there. [This is a reference, of course, to Judge Reuben Lurie.] Lurie, the program, the atmosphere cut through the tired haze of my Sunday nights. I think I am being most accurate by saying it was an enjoyable evening."

Ramsey Clark added, "The Ford Hall Forum has an anachronistic formality to it, but it is still a lot of fun. Serious, thought-provoking, stimulating, and enjoyable fun." And Tom Wicker, then columnist for the *New York Times*: "This is a great place to be — here with all the other eastern liberal elitists."

Touted as "the best buy available anywhere" by the *Boston Herald Traveler*, that paper went on to say, "In this day of soaring prices for books, concerts, and lectures, a minor but nice point about Ford Hall Forum is that it is free."

Both Frances Smith and Rube Lurie see the Forum countering the influence of television as being the difference between theater and the movies. Mrs. Smith adds: "There's something about seeing someone live and watching the facial expressions that really adds to the performance in live theater. The same thing is true in a lecture." But, she adds, what television has done is make people want instant recognition. She comments, "I could just go across the river to get the world's leading experts on genetics, for example, but we would not have a large audience because people would not know who they are, so sometimes I'm forced to go after someone who may not be quite as expert in a field but who is very well known."

So the Forum lives on — in idea and in practice, preserving the right of free speech and guaranteeing the dignity of both the speaker and the questioner.

Ayn Rand put it succinctly and thoughtfully: "Ford Hall is truly a forum in the kind of sense which today, to my knowledge, does not exist anywhere else. In ten years of speaking here, I do not know what the political opinions or convictions of Judge Lurie or Mrs. Smith are. I have never asked them and it wasn't necessary. The greatest tribute you can pay is that it has no ideology because that is what a forum has to be. The ability to respect ideas as such, the ability to respect an individual speaker's mind, and to leave him free to speak doesn't come out of nowhere. There are certain conditions which that ability requires — namely, respect for the mind and respect for the right of the individual. The mere fact that I am here today is perhaps one of the best gifts I can offer them because I certainly am one of the smallest minorities in existence today — namely, an individual."

Whether individuals are truly in short supply cannot, however, be assumed from the rostrum of speakers for the Forum. In the following chapters, we will look at each decade as its own contribution to the making of American history and society through the minds represented here.

Chapter 2

1908 — 1920

The early concerns of the Ford Hall Forum centered around education, philosophies of life, feminism, politics, religion, the "high cost of living," and war. A sampling of programs and speeches says more than any talking around the subjects can, so let's hear what the social activists of the early part of the century had to offer as guiding words.

"How Much of the New Order is in the Present?"

Professor Charles Zueblin, December 22, 1912

"There are two classes of people who are not doing enough for this contemporary life of ours. One is the class who are satisfied with the present state of affairs, and the other is the class who jump to their remote ideal without thought of the present. I believe the latter is better than the 'Stand Patters.' The germ is all in the present, and while it is necessary to have some hypothesis, we must be careful not to allow the wish to become father to the thought."

"Are Our Public Schools Democratic?"

Mrs. Anna Garlin Spencer, January 5, 1913

"We have had pressing upon us from the kindergarten through the elementary school a wholly new scope and breadth of education and have had pressing down to the high school another great congerie of studies that seem to be absolutely necessary for the student to know something about; and in the elementary school the two things have come together like a lumberman's jam. Something has got to give way; we cannot have a shorter school day, more vacations, and more holidays, and longer summer vacations; we cannot keep on cutting off at every end our time of study and then pour in an infinitely increased content of education.

"The teachers are getting nervous prostration by wholesale trying to do the impossible — putting a gallon into a pint; and the children are following, too, in their wild rush for knowledge. You cannot simply set children to repeat and memorize, to do the mere things that mean the saying over and over and over of something enough to make it so that it cannot be forgotten, but we have got to have something that attracts the attention and holds the power of acquisition immediately, and so we have come into an era of demonstration. We have pushed the laboratory from the post-graduate course in the university down into the elementary school and we are pushing it more and more, and now somebody (I believe it is Mr. Edison) says that we are going to get our education quick, on the run, by the moving picture that is going to pour into us, as we stop for a minute between sandwiches, all that we need to know."

Q: Does the speaker of the evening think that the right meaning of democracy ought to be taught in the schools?

A: Yes, I do. What's more, my son, I think it should be lived in the schools.

"Socialism as I See It"

Miss Vida D. Scudder, January 12, 1913

"Struggle is the essence of life everywhere. The assertion of the right to live is a holy and a sacred thing. Life is in itself a dim desire on the part of man to be more filled with Deity — to reach a fuller measure of likeness to the Infinite, and wherever one finds a demand for life it is intrinsically holy.

"It seems to me that the man who is striving to get economic freedom for his fellows is more to be applauded than he who is simply fighting for himself and his immediate family. What I see in the Labor War movement generally is an incentive to wage earners for the growth of the feeling of love and solicitude for one another.

"The question for shorter hours is a desire for more time, and time is a spiritual thing; the one thing that is distributed on a perfectly socialistic basis."

Q: What is the Socialist definition of the privileged class to a man who believes in following the Golden Rule?

A: I think that the privileged class of people are those who are living on money that they have not directly earned.

"The Growing Pains of Democracy"

Edward A. Filene, February 9, 1913

"I think that we shall agree, all of us, that we are face to face with most momentous political, industrial, and social changes. I think we shall also agree that inasmuch as these changes predicate the need of greater justice, we should feel ourselves under obligation to see that they are brought about with fairness to all interests concerned with due regard for the conservation of all in the present order that is worth conserving. I think we may also agree that the most immediate changes needed are those dealing with big business and those making for greater justice between employees and employers. I do not think that such just relations come about from the mere statement of abstract principles, but most come rather from the working out in our everyday life and in competitive business of these principles. If that is true and the great questions that underlie the coming changes are business questions, then we shall require the best leadership and the best business leadership that we can get.

"The best rule for business is the golden rule. Men who love their neighbors and therefore can handle and lead men are the coming leaders of business. The only road to success and happiness for any of us is to conform to the great current of democracy of which we are a part and to do with a will our share of work for the common good."

Q: Does the rum business serve the common good, and shall it go on serving it?

A: There is a difference of opinion about that. The last vote of this commonwealth said that it did and that the people want it continued.

Q: What do you think of the single tax?

A: I think well of it. I think it is good. I do not believe in the final radical program of it. But I think the tax will come more and more on the land and less on production.

"How to Socialize a Competitive World"

Paul Moore Strayer, 1913

"This is an incurably competitive world. It is competition that gives zest to life and adds something of play to work. How are we going to socialize this competitive world? The desire to excel above one's fellows still remains with us. A man's greatness still rests on his achievement.

"The way to socialize this incurably competitive world is to set men to competing for something better than lordship and gold. You can't get rid of the game; and you don't want to. But you can change the rules of the game, and if you do that, then the game itself is changed. It is just as exciting to invent some new social machinery to enable people to get along better as it is to invent some new kind of locomotive or aeroplane — to invent something to put back money into the community as something to extract from it everything one can. That game is social — it is Christian.

"It isn't true that 'the world owes you a living.' You owe the world a life. How have you spent and how are you going to spend it?"

"A Fundamental Difficulty in the Way of Improving Boston Schools"

Susan W. Fitzgerald, 1913

"It seems to me that the fundamental difficulty with our schools is the same thing that is the fundamental difficulty with so much of our common life — the fact that democracy is more common in speech than in practice, and that the lesson we have got to learn is not to say that democracy is an overworked word, but to learn that it is an underworked thing.

"It would be better for our schools and for us all if socially the schools were more democratic in Boston today. Of course the schools cannot be the same in all districts, but if we could feel that in each school section the schools really gathered together the whole of young life and taught them to work together and think together and pull together, we should be well satisfied. I don't know whether we can look to the happy time when that will be true in all parts of Boston. There is nothing more damaging to our public schools than the growth of the private schools, which always stand for separation."

"The Economic Aspect of Woman Suffrage"

John Cowper Powys, April 4, 1914

"Women, by being near the flow of life, by being the true creators, through the magic of the life force, of the world that is to be, understand certain things better than men do. And they understand, though they are too wise to put it into words, that in no sphere are there any absolutely fixed or external principles. There are relative truths only.

"How does this bear on the economic aspect of woman suffrage? Women will never be really free or have justice until Socialism is established. What makes woman a slave today is the economic condition which prevails. A certain number of people are afraid that if you made every woman the equal unit of society with every man, and made that unit the person and not the head of the family, every kind of catastrophe, moral and otherwise, would come about — free love the least of them.

"As a matter of fact it may turn out that the vote is not the most important aspect of the woman question. It may be more important to be a feminist than a suffragist, and it may even be that no one can be a suffragist in the logical sense without being a feminist too."

"God and His World"

Mary Antin, November 1, 1914

"Evolution in no way contradicted the story of Genesis. The theory of the scientists simply explained to us in what manner God did His work. It became interesting to go back and explore the Bible; and I learned that at first there was nothing, and then there was something — the plants, the fishes, the reptiles, the mammals, and by and by, man. Why, it was the story of evolution — the poetical form — the old story after all."

Q: Why doesn't God perform some miracle in order to demonstrate His existence to the inhabitants of the earth?

A: I see a miracle spread under my eyes tonight — all these men and women, living apart, brought together by the same thought. What are you all doing here tonight?

Q: Do you believe in a God with a future and a heaven and hell?

A: Whether or not God has future, He has a pretty long past behind Him, and I pin my faith to the law of orthogenesis. As for heaven and hell, I think they are right here with us."

"What Work Should Give Us Besides Bread"

Earl Barnes, November 8, 1914

"We all know what it is to work. Many of us know only too well what it means to be worked. To be able to work in our own way, conquering, achieving, creating, and to enjoy the full fruits of our labor is a glorious privilege. To be obliged to work as another may arbitrarily dictate, with no choice of time, place or occupation, and to receive less than our labor entitles us to, is essentially slavery. Our hearts cry out in protest against an industrial order and commercial standards that take no account of the

individual's welfare or of the merit of his service to society. We challenge the soundness of an economic system that so generously interferes with the individual's right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and which also so often denies that the laborer is worthy of his hire."

"Minimum Wage Laws and Their Operation in America"

Rev. John A. Ryan, D.D., February 14, 1915

"The percentage of women in this country making their own living as independent economic units is increasing constantly and rather rapidly. The most important fact, however, is that there is a large proportion, more than a majority, of wage-earning women who are getting less than what authorities have come to regard as decent living wages. About three-fifths of the women of the United States engaged in working for wages were receiving less than \$8 a week, less than decent living wages. Now, I do not intend to go into any discussion or description of the evil effects of low wages on health, mind, and morals. I shall simply assume that these evil effects are considerable, that they are serious, that it is of very great importance that some comprehensive remedy or device be found to prevent these evils. So there is a need for a comprehensive remedy for this state of low wages among women."

"Is War Cureless?"

Dr. Stephen S. Wise, October 31, 1915

"I sometimes think that this attitude of mind is the most hurtful consequence of the war — this dependency that has struck dumb the moral and spiritual natures of men and that has made them insensible to the terrible wrongs committed in its name. We have become so hardened that we are scarcely stirred with the slightest emotion when we read of the slaughter of a thousand or two thousand men in some skirmish; we must read of hecatombs being slain to awaken our interest. We are not going to put an end to war merely by willing that there shall be no war. We have got to have a little more backbone and a little less wishbone."

Q: Isn't it true that all the teachings of Christianity and of the Jewish religion for the past thousand years have not been able to prevent war and that economic causes are really behind the war?

A: If there were true Christians in the world, and if my people were as true Jews as I want them to be, there would have been no war."

"What Are We Here For?"

Dr. Alfred W. Martin, February 27, 1916

"The majority of men and women go down to their graves believing that if they had only one more chance to reach out for it, happiness would be theirs.

"But that is a vain delusion, for the reason that happiness is not a substance, not an entity, not a thing that can be pursued and caught and grasped and held. It is one of those exquisite surprises that come to us when we have abandoned all thought of ever seizing them. To get it, you must forget it."

"What of the Backward Child?"

Professor Arthur Holmes, March 26, 1916

"The trouble with many people is that they insist on an individual standard. By that standard all of us are backward because we have not attained to what we conceive to be our full possibilities, and the only normal human being is an idiot who has been educated to the ultimate limit of his power to learn.

"We cannot say that backwardness is bad until we find out what that backwardness means. It is not always a sinister thing to say that a child is backward. One of our most famous educators, a man with a Ph.D. to his name, did not enter the first grade until he was 14 years of age. Backward? Not a bit of it! He was the son of an American missionary in a foreign field and did not come to this country until he was of that age; and he entered the first grade for that reason.

"Remember, all of us were born into the world deaf, dumb, blind, and helpless. Some of us recover and some of us don't — that's all."

Q: How is one to pick a safe matrimonial partner?

A: Love alone is no excuse for marriage. There should be a long courtship, an understanding with and acquaintance among the family and the use of a little common sense. Further, I think the State should insist on a physical examination.

"What Feminism Is — and Isn't"

Mrs. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, April 2, 1916

"There is nothing about feminism or in the minds of those who believe in feminism most strongly that will in any way injure monogamous marriage, the private home in the separate house, the motherhood and mother love and mother care of children, to such a degree as is good for them.

"Moreover, woman is not going to leave off being a woman. No matter how feministic she may become, she is never going to stop being feminine. Feminism, in short, is not going to hurt any of the fundamental things of life.

"As you probably know, there has been going on among the women for the last century, notably for the last half century, a movement towards something they have never had before. It is very plain nowadays, and those who cannot help but see it and fear it are indeed mortally afraid. The woman's movement has been misquoted and misjudged and ridiculed and slandered and garbled until many excellent people without knowing anything about it are fully convinced that it is attempting to undermine the very foundations of society. They hold that the feminist is an unnatural woman. They have one particularly nice term for it — a denatured woman.

"Feminism is really nothing but humanism; it is merely the right of women to be persons, instead of females, and to have interests, affairs, and businesses of their own. Women are developing their human traits

and characteristics rapidly. When the historians of a new day write the history of this period, the greatest thing in it is going to be the humanizing of women.

"It is a handicap to any man to marry a woman who is behind him. She ought to be beside him, and perhaps even a little bit ahead. It will be better for the race when the woman catches up."

Q: Would you advise working after a woman is married?

A: Ultimately the woman will be financially independent all her life, married or single. It is necessary if she is to make an independent choice of a husband instead of having to marry any man who will feed her and if after marriage she is going to be a human being instead of an owned chattel.

"Shall Birth Control Be Discussed?"

Norman Hapgood vs. Dr. Eliza Taylor Ransom

Hapgood (pro) "Some of us believe that the abolition of poverty is absolutely impossible until human beings are allowed to exercise choice in one of the things that do most to determine economic conditions in the family — the birth rate.

"Of course there are certain dangers connected with any reform. It would be a very foolish thing to make a campaign of this kind to put mechanical devices into the hands of the people without proper advice. People taking advantage of methods of this kind ought to be in close consultation with a physician. Handled ignorantly, it may result seriously. There is another real difficulty. It seems to be agreed among physicians that if a check is put on the process of nature at the beginning of a woman's sex life it is likely to result in barrenness the rest of her life."

Ransom (con) "I do not believe that any man or woman is capable of saying whether he or she shall have one child or ten. I have the distinction of being a mother. I was married in 1893. I am sorry and ashamed to say that I have only two children and that I have myself to blame for it. I should have ten, and if it were in my power today I would have them.

"Now what are we men and women in the world for? To carry on the race — to reproduce ourselves. If the middle-class people would educate their sons and daughters as well as the poor people do — or they would teach them that it is right to reproduce their kind — we would have just as large families in the middle classes as we do in the poorer classes. And if the poorer classes have families larger than they can support, it should be a taxed duty of the rich people to protect and care for and educate those children and see that they do not die for lack of care."

"The High Cost of Living: Its Cause and Remedy"

George L. Record

"Every thoughtful man who watches present-day conditions knows that as a result of privilege we have a slavery today that is equal to if not worse than the slavery of 1850. We catch a glimpse of it here and there — the curtain goes up for a minute, though they are careful to keep it

decently down most of the time — and we see through the daily papers a glimpse of conditions as they really are. In 1892 the lid flew off at Pittsburgh and we saw the steel industry armed with rifles shooting down its workmen. While the curtain was up we saw men working 12 hours a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year, for a wage that compelled men to support their families in two rooms and take in lodgers to eke out their livelihood. Isn't that slavery?

“And then the curtain went down again and we went on with our piling up of immense fortunes and our granting of privileges, and in the meantime the horrible torture of existence that is carried on constantly in the city slums and that nobody ever hears about continued. Three or four years ago we were all shocked when the curtain rang up at Lawrence and we saw that people were ground down to such living conditions that one cannot describe them or even mention them in a mixed audience.

“Again the curtain went up at Bayonne, New Jersey, and we saw hired thugs shooting down the workingmen. We saw men working 12 hours a day in 120 degrees of heat for \$1.60 per day. All of them were herded like cattle in small subdivided tenements living a life a slavery, under the mastership of Standard Oil.”

Chapter 3

The Roaring Twenties

*"Two halls in Boston town there be
Both consecrate to Liberty.
The older, Faneuil Hall is named;
The other as Ford Hall is Famed.
The one is revered far and near;
The other – well, I rather fear
There are some folks who do not laud,
Who don't approve and won't applaud,
Or give the very slightest hand for
The things Ford Hall appears to stand for.
Time passes; old ideas change
New truths seem always somewhat strange;
And there be minds not well adjusted
To think that new things can be trusted."
(15th Anniversary Banquet pamphlet, February 23, 1923)*

The Ford Hall Forum came into its own in the twenties – and both gained wide acclaim and was smeared and blacklisted. But the forum did survive and continued its unique stance, in one observer's words, as "the finest group of undesirables as every graced a head table" and the "greatest collection of artistic temperments ever assembled under one roof and all for the price of one banquet ticket, \$2.50." And continue its mockeries it did.

The 21st anniversary dinner gained the headline "700 Cheer Mockery of Censorship Here" from the *Boston Globe* (April 6, 1929), where Ford Hall Forum diners saw a girl pass a test before she could buy the rhymes of Mother Goose. The skit for the evening, entitled "The Suppressed Bookshop," featured birth control advocate Margaret Sanger entering with a gag over her mouth, which George Coleman removed after assuring the audience that the lady would not say anything.

A fitting testimonial for the Ford Hall Forum of the twenties comes from Dr. Horace Meyer Kallen, psychologist and philosopher: "Ford Hall Forum is the one remaining symbol in Boston of what Massachusetts used to be and that is now not Massachusetts."

"What Makes Us All So Queer?"

Dr. David Seabury, November 4, 1928

"Thousands of persons are queer simply because of their own mental images. There has been a 30% increase in the last ten years and a 60% increase in neurosis. The mass of humanity tries to mold people as they think they ought to be. But if one attempts to shape the basic character or nature of children, the latter are bound to become queer."

"Is Progress Real?"

Dr. Will J. Durant, November 18, 1928

"Today despair is the fashion, belief in nothing and hope in less, yet the leaders of current thought declare their disbelief in progress. I believe humanity is steadily moving upward. Furthermore, the best means of settling serious international disputes, without war, is by submitting them to a commission or court composed equally of representatives of the two nations in dispute, its verdict to be final."

"The Problems of Straight Thinking"

Professor Harry A. Overstreet, December 16, 1928

"Most of the things that are wrong with the world today are due to lack of straight thinking; the world of the future, in which mankind will be prouder of its mentality than of its material possessions, is to be made by the straightest and greatest kind of thinking.

"At present, much of life is made impossible by resting it on what we want to be true, rather than what has been proved by ascertained facts to be true. Mankind is what it thinks."

"The Menace of Birth Control"

Rev. William A. Bolger, January 27, 1929

"Anyone conversant with social questions in Boston who passed away 10 years ago would be astounded could they return now and find that birth control has 'broken into respectability' and that the New York Federation of Women's Clubs has endorsed that principle. An ancient vice has become for its devotees a great, modern social virtue. We are doomed socially if we are to accept the results implied in the principle of birth control. Among those results will be rejection of that ancient Christian and rational decency regulating sex and family life, still believed in by followers of the historic Christianity and probably by an overwhelming majority of non-Catholics, Christians, and Jews.

"Marriage is the severest test of character and people must be trained for it. Moses and Christ and His church, social welfare, delicate womanhood, and chivalrous manhood all appeal alike for control of the flesh by the spirit."

"How to Get On with Your Daughters"

J. Edgar Park, February 3, 1929

"Smoking by women is purely a health question, not one of morals. Most women do not enjoy smoking because they are naturally dainty in their tastes, but many of them have become smokers merely to prove that they are just as good as any man.

"Women with families should have jobs in business or industry to take them outside their homes a certain number of hours daily, the children to be looked after in nurseries. Mothers would then regard home as something romantic, instead of being bored as they are now by the never-ending round of daily household drudgery.

"Women are taking more than men to higher education, are getting better educated than men, and many of them are going to be eminent, even in scientific lines.

"The world has radically changed since the World War, perhaps owing to the movies, rendering love making a public act, to easy telephone conversation between youth of both sexes, and to alcohol and gasoline.

"Unconventional language by small children, such as a demand at the breakfast table that the 'bloody butterplate be passed' was considered something not to be rebuked because very likely the offender will not use the expression again if no notice is taken of it the first time."

"The Problem of Ordered Society"

Dean Roscoe Pound, Harvard Law School, March 31, 1929

"The problem of ordered society could not be discussed today with as much confidence as a century ago. The investigation by a commission into law enforcement proposed by Pres. Hoover will bring all the elements together where they can be thought of intelligently and coherently.

"It is important that men not only be well governed but that they know how, and why, they are governed, and build on the belief that they are well governed. The patient, logical investigation of facts and the bringing to bear on these facts of coherent, intelligent, objective thinking would give society mastery over its problems."

"Crime and Its Treatment"

Clarence Darrow, April 14, 1929

"Prohibition! I'm against it. I don't believe in it. It's the work of bigots and fanatics whose only concern is to make others live as they live or pretend to live – mostly pretense. It will never be well enforced in this country, that is, to any great extent. It never can be. So long as people have any regard for their own freedom they will not consent to let somebody else tell them what they may eat and drink; anybody who can do that can just as readily tell them what they may believe in or what church they shall go to.

"The 18th amendment can be repealed all right. It will take a little time. As soon as the congressmen think that a majority want it done, they'll do it. They are not interested in having it enforced. They can get a drink if they want it – most of them do. They are interested in votes.

"A crime wave! There is no such thing. There is a wave of making new laws, and the more laws you make the more victims you get. If you count out the people who are in prison on account of violation of the Volstead Act there wouldn't be any more crime than there always has been, in spite of the fact that the population has increased. Men are no better and no worse than they always have been and they are no more afraid of being caught and punished than they always have been.

"The only way to respect life is as a huge joke!"

"The Meaning of Dreams"

Hereward Carrington, February 17, 1929

"Dreams are inseparable from sleep and there is no one who does not dream each night, though many forget the fact and deny on awakening that they have dreamed something and later recall a forgotten dream. Among the common dreams, mainly due to physical causes affecting the person while asleep, are dreaming of being insufficiently clad in public places, due to chilliness from insufficient bedclothes; also flying, being chased by wild beasts, falling from a great height, and excitedly packing a truck while unable to get the effects into it.

"Nightmares are caused by subconscious fears. Only by psychoanalysis can one really get at the underlying causes of dreams, the average dreamer being able to recall on awakening only a bit of the dream. Among 'supernormal' dreams are those willed on a sleeper by another person, by means of telepathy."

"The Enigma of Marriage"

David Seabury, October 27, 1929

"Every censor is a libertine afraid he will go bad and so wanting to make restrictions for himself and to put them on others. The romantic love of Romeo and Juliet, in which a couple think each other perfect, is no real foundation for marriage.

"Only real love, based on some resemblance in tastes and a disposition to give in to the extent of 60% in order to preserve mutual compatibility, is likely to maintain a happy marriage. A 600% increase in the annual number of divorces in the United States in the last 30 years proves that marriage today is a botch, showing that while we have grown up we have not learned to adjust ourselves to the grown-up state.

"Recently in a hall where there were 1800 persons, when I asked how many were blissfully happy in marriage, one young woman, only, arose.

"I believe that possibly in the nation there are 10% blissfully happy in marriage and 50% ranging from contentment to misery. As an indicator of how widely sentiment differs on the subject, a president of a woman's club recently declared that 50% of married people were happy, while a male speaker declared that an estimate of 10% indicate preposterous optimism.

"What state is the most moral to all outward appearances?

Massachusetts.

And what state has the lowest moral standard of the nation? And the answer is Massachusetts. It is the same in Massachusetts as in England. They pull down the blinds."

Chapter 4

The 1930s

"The 1930s brought with them multiple concerns, most of which found their outlet at Ford Hall meetings. War, National Socialism, intolerance, discrimination, life in the Soviet – all of these and more provoked Ford Forum audiences trying to grapple their way through the Depression era. In these hard times Americans were brought together by adversity, in ways long since forgotten. Ford Hall Forum reflected this sense of camaraderie in its seven-day-a-week office, its hospitality fund and emergency loans to members, its own drama workshop, a youth forum, an orchestra, its one-year study class in race culture (led by Professor Rayford Logan of Harvard and Florence Luscomb), its Open Forum Speakers Bureau, and its extension work, including weekly lectures at Norfolk Prison Colony – with the same right of unrestricted questioning available to the inmates.

Ford Hall Forum, in its true spirit of representing all sides of important issues, brought an avowed Nazi supporter and deputy of Hitler – Professor Frederick Shoenemann – to the podium in 1933. This, despite a violent demonstration in which 5,000 anti-Fascists battled the police outside the hall.

One of the liveliest evenings of its then 25 years' existence brought headlines of "Communists Heckle Spargo in Ford Hall" – as former Socialist John Spargo opposed the U.S. government recognizing the Soviet government because the latter was "bound to conspire against the government and institutions of the United States." The audience's uproar, which Spargo termed as ignorant sneers and blissful irresponsibility, ended only after George Coleman explained the "Ford Hall spirit" of tolerance to the "strangers" whom he blamed for the boos.

And the largest audience to date – 3,200 persons – jammed Ford Hall to hear William Patrick Hitler, nephew of the German Fuhrer, speak on what the German people were thinking.

The Ford Hall Players gave their own interpretation of life in Hitler's Germany in "Blood on the Moon" – a production depicting the disruption through persecution of an intellectual and idealistic German Christian family because of a slight strain of Jewish blood.

The following speeches of the Forum's "professors" reflect and allow insight into the very real concerns of those years.

"You Cannot Fall in Love Instantly"

Rev. J. Elliott Ross, January 26, 1930

"You can fall downstairs; you can fall down a well; you can have an instantaneous stroke of paralysis – but you cannot fall instantaneously in love. The school of fiction, the moving pictures, which represent love

as coming to people immediately and with uncontrollable force, has done no end of harm. This idea of love is absolutely false. This world would be a terrible place to live in if love came that way. No one would be safe. You might fall in love with your mother-in-law or your best friend's husband. Love would be like a bolt of lightning. No one could tell where it would strike next. And one experience would not insure immunity. Life would be turned topsy-turvy.

"Shall we go on and demolish the myth of 'falling in love'? Of course, you may feel immediately that another has a beautiful face, or wonderful eyes, or a musical voice. You may have a desire to know that person more intimately, to hear that voice oftener. But this is not love. It is the merest outpost of love. That desire must be yielded to, that person must be studied in various moods, before the great passion of love can be said to be actually present.

"That gives us a key to the whole question of picking a 'peach' in the garden of love. For if we can recognize the beginnings of love, we can resolutely refuse the association which alone can lead to love. If this attraction asserts itself toward what common sense would deem a 'lemon,' it can be kept from growing into love.

"Insofar as love is a passion, yes, it is probably temporary by nature. Once its object has been attained, it begins to pall. You can see that more clearly, perhaps, in other passions. It is difficult to live long at any great emotional height. You can't keep yourself keyed up to a high pitch even of anger. Love is not an exception in this regard. And so you must realize the need of marrying on a firmer basis than mere passion."

"Questioning Our Working Class Prejudices"

Scott Nearing (communist, economist, and sociologist), Harry Laidler (socialist author and executive director of the League for Industrial Democracy), Robert Fechner (national vice president of the International Machinists' Union), February 18, 1930

Nearing: "The first prejudice of the American workingman is that it is possible to take one country like the United States, build a tariff wall about it, and maintain prosperity therein despite the rest of the world. Germany tried this. England tried it - and look at England's unemployment. A world economy is a necessity. The second prejudice is that workingmen seem to believe you can rely on the boss as being big-hearted and generous. In time workingmen will realize that if they place their hands in those of the bosses, they will be led merely to serfdom.

"The third prejudice is that of the worker in favor of law and order, being imbued with the idea that he must abide by the law and order established by capitalists for their own protection and own profit. In upholding law and order, the worker upholds the political end of the capitalist system. The workingman should set up his own system of law and order."

Laidler: "Prejudices are belief that the present capitalist order is eternal; that the present economic order is one of unparalleled efficiency; that

equality of opportunity now exists, and that people won't work unless the profit incentive is retained.

"But the capitalistic order is not eternal. All orders throughout history have changed. Modern economic systems are wasteful, resulting in unemployment, wastes in distribution, and wastes of resources. With such astounding big fortunes, privately held, dominating industry, how can you say there is equal opportunity? Profit is not the only incentive to work. There are pride in creation, the desire for human betterment, and other stronger motivating forces."

Fechner: "My party [trade unionists] is not a panacea for all our economic ills, but a means to guarantee certain rights. An economic system cannot be developed within the life of one generation. It is continually developed out of slowly growing experience. Control of the government is but an echo of the capitalistic power, and we strike at the source of that power – in the workshops, mills, and mines. There the real battle for freedom is being fought. When the right of voluntary association and collective action is won, we make the first step in the democratization of industry."

Annual Negro Night, February 9, 1930

Miss Nannie H. Burroughs (president of the National Training School for Women and Girls, Washington, D.C.)

"Discrimination is a breeder of prejudice, idleness, disease, and race antipathy that has cost billions of dollars and millions of lives. The 'John Crow' civilization has engendered a double standard so deeply imbedded in the blood of both white and colored peoples that 500 years of intensive application of the teachings of Jesus Christ will be required to remove it."

"The Fanatic and the Fool"

Margaret Slattery, March 2, 1930

"Intolerance and an unwillingness to think have reached such heights in this country today that no questions of prohibition, censorship, or morals can be sanely discussed and solved. Greater desire for the truth and less reinforcement of ideas already held are urgently needed in the solution of problems of widespread public interest.

"The majority of people over 25 years of age have closed minds. Concentration is absolutely essential to successful thinking. There must be a will to think. One useful way of thinking is to write two columns. In one column write what you know and in the other what you don't know and want to know.

"Real thought means concentration. Yet books are read daily, news heard, and sermons and music wasted because many minds fail to retain anything in them. Great mobs think of nothing but millions of trifles that do not matter.

"A second kind of thought is 'thinking in a straight line.' All know it when they have to make up our minds on some matter relating to business or the welfare of the family. Creative thought was represented

by Montaigne, Kant, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, who lived withdrawn from the world and read only what they regarded as good for them."

Q: Do what we eat and drink have some effect on our thinking?

A: A quart of old wine has improved many a mind.

"Freedom of Expression"

John Dewey, April 24, 1930

"I can see no possibility of the development of a robust culture in literature or art commensurate with our natural resources, wealth, and physical strength without more freedom of thought than now exists here. Oppression in that direction does much to cultivate or to keep alive racial and religious distrust or hatreds that might otherwise die out.

"It is no disrespect to the founders of this nation to say that while they won freedom for themselves, they did not for their posterity. Every generation must fight for its own freedom, which with each generation will come in a new form.

"I don't know why it is that we do not learn from the past, as we ought to, the dangerous futility of repressive measures in the matter of opinions. They never result in anything but violence and disorder, changing the current of constructive into destructive energy."

"The Art of Thinking"

Abbe Ernest Dimnet, October 19, 1930

"There are various ways of thinking. The first natural way of thinking and not thinking is a rambling way of letting images drift by our eye. When I hear of masterpieces being published weekly, I wait for 12 weeks before deciding to read them. If after 12 weeks the masterpiece is still spoken of, I read it; I read very few, I grant you."

"Does Science Leave Any Room for God?"

Professor Julian Huxley, November 2, 1930

"Darwinism has removed the necessity for a supernatural power in the universe by showing that living things become adapted to their surroundings independent of any conscious foresight in any quarter.

"Since psychology assumed a large place in the intellectual world, God has become a being more and more vague who, even if originally a creator, has become since a spectator to enjoy contemplating the verification of his predictions, involved in the automatic workings of natural law in the universe.

"Religion has steadily progressed throughout its existence in spirituality and morality, and science has contributed much to that progress. Churchgoing has been decreasing for 100 years, owing to the spread of scientific ideas, but a most hopeful thing is that mankind has only 1 million years behind him, while he has hundreds of millions of years before him in which to continue to progress."

"Should Negroes Be Encouraged to Social Equality?"

Dr. W.E. Burghardt DuBois, November 9, 1930

"The advance of humanity requires that there shall be social equality between the Negro and the white race and if there is going to be social equality there will be intermarriages.

"The colored race will gain more by making the carrying out of their obligations toward the white race their first aim rather than adopting a militant course that might prove antagonistic."

"The Decline of the Male"

Dr. Lorine Pruette, January 18, 1931

"Men have made a decided mess of things while running them through the ages. As statistics show that in every 100,000 of the male population of the United States, 610 are criminals, while only 55 women in the same total are criminals, and as men are steadily becoming feminized, it is to be hoped that the change in the men will tend to make the world a better place to live in."

"The Abuse of Capital"

Stuart Chase, April 5, 1931

"Failure to use a surplus of capital correctly in business expansion is one of the causes of the recent depression. Idle capital means idle men and women. Criticism aimed at the wealthy because they spend too much for luxuries misses the point, since the truly wealthy are unable to spend more than a small percentage of their vast incomes.

"The middle classes have tied up too much money by overcautious saving. Capital investment should be controlled so that money can be circulated properly.

"Seven million unemployed constitute a greater menace than Germany in the World War; what America needs most is a 10-year plan that will provide for a minimum wage of \$5000 annually by 1942."

"What This Depression Is Doing to Our Moral Standards"

Earl Bertrand Russell, October 25, 1931

"Big business has more brains than the politicians and appears more likely than they to arrive at the international agreement necessary for the restoration of prosperity.

"Germany is the most dangerous spot in Europe, and there is always the chance Germans will call on Russia to help them. Then you will get another universal scrimmage.

"If I were in power I would disband the army and navy, thereby affecting a much large economy without anybody being worse off. I would risk disarmament in one country without waiting for the others to follow on the grounds that the country would be much safer without an army and navy.

"If you haven't got an army nobody will have any reason for attacking

you. Denmark, without an armed force, is safer from war at present than any other nation. Nobody would bother to fight them because there wouldn't be any point to it. Nowadays when nations fight, the result is almost equally disastrous whether they win or lose. However, the attempt to disarm by agreement is not likely to succeed in any very near future. I would disarm and wait for the rest to follow."

"What We Have Lost Since the War"

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, January 15, 1932

"I believe that the needy in this country during the present depression should be fed and clothed as well as the soldiers in the trenches were in the World War.

"There are people in the world who are lazy. Some of them are among the idle rich, some of them are among the idle poor. There are those who would duck to the other side of the street if they saw a job coming along to shake hands with them. There are those who have real need, are working against overwhelming odds, are trying everywhere to get something to do, and cannot seem to find any opening.

Relief through philanthropic agencies is not entirely satisfactory, but if a government dole were to be put through, it would be much worse than the present system. The dole in England was a tragic failure.

"While the needy should certainly receive the necessities of life, probably private relief and philanthropic agencies are the best means of giving this help. The best way of all is to get rid of the cause."

"My Twelve Years in Soviet Russia"

Dr. Anna L. Strong, October 22, 1933

"Recognition of Soviet Russia by the United States will do more to prevent war between Russia and Japan than the League of Nations could ever do. There may come a time, and it may come soon, when the Bolshevists may be called on to save civilization for the rest of the world. The Russians are pathfinders for the rest of the world.

"Nowhere in the world have women such equal wages and equal standards as have the women of the Soviet. Women work side by side with men in the factories, on the docks, in the subways, in the mines, in the steel mills, and in the hospitals. Men and women are equal in love and custom."

Q: What about the starvation and want that I personally found in the Soviet Union when I visited there recently?

A: I do not believe that you have been in the Soviet during the past two years. There has been no need or want in the Soviet during the past few years.

Q: When I visited the Soviet in 1934 I found persons seeking crusts of bread; I had been unable to purchase for myself an ordinary bar of soap.

A: There was no such hunger; the Soviet is a country of industry and happiness.

"America's Debt to Negro Culture"

James Weldon Johnson, March 25, 1934

"Certainly the Negro, who by the way, landed in America in Jamestown, Virginia two years before your New England Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, has influenced the course and nature of America both actively and passively over a long period of time.

"Passively he has provided the American people, for years on end, and is still providing them with the opportunity to practice injustice, cruelty, and savagery to a defenseless minority. When a Negro accused of a crime, but not tried for it, is burned at the stake under the shadow of two Christian churches and a courthouse in the public square, his few moments of suffering are as nothing compared to the moral degradation of a community.

"Actively, I go so far as to say that there is no artistic creation of the American people, sprung from American soil and acknowledged throughout the world as American rather than as a variation of European art, save only the skyscrapers, which is not Negro.

"The body of American folklore, so well collected and explained by Joel Chandler Harris, is Negro. The American music in its most beautiful and in its most popular versions is Negro. The spirituals, I may say, are of the loveliest and most elevating folk music in the world. No other body of folk music has for its inspiration the naive and tender devotional aspiration toward heaven and the good life that is so characteristic of the Negro religious songs."

"The Washington Scene — What Next?"

Senator Robert M. LaFollette (Wisconsin), December 9, 1934

"To bring prosperity back to this country, old-age pensions, unemployment, and accident insurance, as well as adequate care of the physically and mentally ill must be provided, and the 30,000,000 farmers must be guaranteed reasonable return for their labor.

"The only proper cure for unemployment would be jobs at decent wages.

The unemployed should be set to work rebuilding America. We should see that children are not deprived of educational and economic opportunities.

"The Federal Constitution should be amended to give the people the right to say whether this country shall participate in another war, except in case of invasion from abroad.

"Any government has a right to restore a people's way of life and to enlarge their opportunities, without regard to the costs, and to require the people to pay the bills under a graduated income tax. Wealth will have to be taxed if inflation is to be avoided."

"The Present Political Situation and Prospects of War in Europe"

Emil Ludwig, November 29, 1936

"War in Europe is imminent because of the political philosophies peculiar to the prospective belligerents. I do not find the philosophic

antithesis between fascism and communism, for these have in common the fact and aim of idealizing the state. Both Berlin and Moscow are more or less dictatorships. In both, fear is one of the mediums of governing.

"I do find antithesis, however, in the fact that Berlin, Moscow, and Rome sacrifice the individual to the state, whereas most other governments in Europe subordinate the state to the security of the individual. A second and more practical antithesis is the division of Europe into aggressive and defensive powers. On the defensive you have England, France, Russia, and most of the smaller nations; on the aggressive, Germany, Italy, and, in the Far East, Japan.

"The real tragedy is that pacific inclinations have caused the difficult position of the defensive powers. For ten years England disarmed and trusted to the League of Nations, forgetting that Europe is not an island and making the mistake of thinking that all nations are gentlemen. Today the archbishop of Canterbury can only pray that Hitler will wait two years until England is ready to fight."

"Does the Constitution Function for the People?"

S. Miles Bouton vs. John Spivak, October 25, 1936

Bouton - YES: "The minority so scornful of the Constitution would not only change it in many respects - for one thing it would give the Federal Government very much more power, not realizing that centralizing the power is one of the essentials of dictatorship. The best instrument loses its force in the hands of the bungler. It is the same with the Constitution. It functions only so long as there shall remain virtue in the body of the people. If it does not function, the fault is not the Constitution's. It is our fault. It rests with our indifference. Yes, the Constitution functions - but it is only too often we who do not function."

Spivak - NO: "It is my contention that the Constitution of the United States, from the day of its inception and its adoption, has been and is the greatest bulwark for the property classes that we have. It has been functioning at the expense of the overwhelming majority of the people, which means the people of the United States. The Constitution functions to protect property rights at the expense of human rights. Nowhere in the Constitution of the United States have I been able to find, and I have searched for it, a statement that Negroes in the South should not be allowed to vote; nowhere in the Constitution have I been able to find a statement that says if you are a poor man, you can't vote. And yet millions of American citizens of fighting pioneer stock, descendants of men who fought in the Revolutionary War and the Civil War, are unable to vote because they are too poor to pay a dollar for a poll tax."

"Mother to Son"

Langston Hughes, March 14, 1937

"Well, son, I'll tell you:

Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

It's had tacks in it,

And splinters,

And boards torn up,

*And places with no carpet on the floor –
Bare.
But all the time
I've been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landins',
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So, boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps,
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now –
For I've still goin', honey,
I've still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no
crystal stair."*

"In its challenge to other political creeds, does German National Socialism endanger the security of the world?"

Count Raoul de Roussy de Sales vs. Dr. Helgo W. Culemann
March 21, 1937

Count Raoul de Roussy de Sales – YES: "That National Socialism challenges the world is evidenced by the pronouncements of Hitler, echoed by Goebbels and others. This movement has its outlet in Fascism and exists in most countries of Europe. Consider the progress of Fascism on the map of the world and compare it with the pitiful progress of Communism. The ideas implicit in this fanatic cult of Germany, that there is nothing above one's own race and one's own state, have infected the world, and people say Fascism, alone, saves private property and capitalism.

"The idea is fashionable now. People are beginning to think that freedom of thought is not essential, especially when given to masses. In Germany the cult demands that you give expression to prejudices rather than try to reason them out. One of the greatest spiritual dangers of National Socialism is the fact that it destroys the education of tolerance which it has taken two or three thousand years to cultivate among us under the name of civilization. The idea that each individual is less important than this vague thing called the 'Nation' is perilous."

Dr. Helgo W. Culemann – NO: "National Socialism is an emergency-born philosophy of the state. While it is probably the most maligned political theory of our times, in Germany it has been hailed as a life-saving device. It is maligned by the unfavorable propaganda of those who have been expatriated; because it involves a curtailment of human liberty; because it was born in Germany and not in Ethiopia; and, lastly, because the political leaders of the Allies fear that it may give Germany strength to demand a fairer deal.

"Hitler's policies have brought a decrease in our unemployed from 7½ million to approximately 1½ million. This has been done by putting people to work reclaiming moors and bogs, by establishing rural housing,

by building the German Army. The German Army had to be rebuilt because we were surrounded by neighbors armed to the teeth. This has helped business and restored confidence to the German people.

"I feel that in four years of control of German foreign policy he has shown shrewdness and wisdom and a desire for peace and not war. I leave it to Count de Sales to prove to me and to you that Hitler's internal and foreign policies constitute threats to the peace of the world."

"On Behalf of Democracy"

Alexandre Fesdozovitche Kerensky, March 9, 1938

"Democracy, if it is to survive in the modern world, must transform its structure to suit the needs of the times and must listen to the new classes that are clamoring for power. Today it is the turn of the laboring masses to rise to political consciousness. The old democracies must be strong enough to make bold political and social reforms. Equality must be not only political but social.

"The success of totalitarian ideologies does not lie in their own strength. It lies in the weakness and distortions of our democracies. Democracy must be dynamic.

"All dictatorships use force and violence. Force as a law of life is incompatible with mankind's normal evolution. Mussolini is nothing but a brilliant imitator, the pupil of Lenin. Lenin is father and teacher of all modern disasters. They resemble each other in one essential point – their attitude toward democracy; their hatred of civil and political rights and religious freedom. Violence is the fundamental method of all totalitarian states.

"The principle of isolation is an illusion – and a dangerous delusion. In our modern world, doctrines and ideas ignore all physical frontiers. It is not enough to feel sure and invulnerable in our own democracy. It is necessary to participate in the common struggle of world democracy."

"Is Uncle Sam Insane?"

David Seabury, January 15, 1939

"The populace of this country, living at a fast pace and under tremendous pressure, will be without a sane person in 200 years. People in this country are in a constant state of jitters.

"Increasing divorce, insanity, neurosis, and nervous breakdowns are multiplying year after year. Our present standard of living is so irrational that, annually, almost as many people enter asylums as colleges. Most of us are guilty of 'grasshopper thinking' – not pausing long enough on one subject before we attempt another."

"The Coming Victory of Democracy"

Thomas Mann, March 8, 1939

"Democracy is the political expression of Christianity on earth. Democracy is the greatest conservative power on earth, but it must return, to a certain extent, to a philosophy that embraces a will to resist

evil, to defend all that is good in civilization. Democracy is a proof of the spirituality of Christianity and both will survive together – Christianity and democracy.”

“National Socialism is the most radical, the most unrestricted revolution the world has ever seen. It is the revolution of unprincipled force, or spiritual nihilism, of absolute cynicism. It is the lust for degeneration of men and ideas. Morally, its force is directed toward the extermination of civilization. It is an assault of Christianity.”

“What the German People Are Thinking”

William Patrick Hitler, October 29, 1939

“I am shocked when I hear Roman Catholics in America say we need another Hitler over here. It is because they haven’t been to Germany and don’t realize that Hitler has thrown priests into jail. He is playing with the Catholic Church as a cat with a mouse.

“Germany is exhausted, is on starvation rations today, and cannot survive more than nine months of warfare. Hitler in 1932 could have locked up the whole German army and the people would have cheered him. The German people gave Hitler a blank check – and Hitler filled it out.”

Chapter 5

The 1940s

America's sensibilities turned toward the second World War in the forties, and Ford Hall Forum's speakers echoed this concern. Even Ely Culbertson, the world's greatest bridge player, presented his version of a blueprint for world peace, saying he taught the world to play one system of bridge in 12 languages and that you should be able to do the same job with peace. Other topics of perennial interest beyond the pressing foreign policy issues also received their fair share of attention — including women's rights, coping with neurosis, and the problems of the middle aged.

And Ford Hall Forum again faced a crisis when the State of Massachusetts wanted to buy the Ford Hall building in 1941 as the headquarters for state officials. The *Boston Traveler* joyously put fears to rest with its headline "Ford Hall Forum Lives," going on to say "The Forum is the embodiment, the incarnation, of free speech. It is the Athenian agora, the sidewalk cafes of the Seine's Left Bank, London's Hyde Park brought indoors. It is dedicated to the principle that in the unfettered presentation of intellectual claim and counterclaim, the truth will emerge. The founding fathers believed in the same principle."

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, on the occasion of George W. Coleman's 80th birthday party, honored him as the cornerstone of Ford Hall Forum: "Dr. Coleman is a man who has started people to think. He has lived for his fellow man, and it is evident that he has contributed to this community a strong sense of religious, social, and political responsibility."

"What the Economic and Social Future Holds for Us"

Louis Bromfield, November 23, 1941

"Revolution brings about quicker change at the cost of considerable sacrifice, whereas evolution traditionally leaves undesirable traces of the ages from which it emerges. Democracy in the United States and communism in Russia are moving from opposite poles toward the solution of problems that individuals in both countries heartily want solved. A more ideal form of government will come from the trial and error through which both governments are passing in this period of emergency.

"After the present war is over, the United States will find it essential to participate in a 'new world union,' if for no other reason than that its agricultural products and industries will be needed to reconstruct the social order. After that, the United States will have to continue its new relationship to the rest of the world in order to protect its interests.

"Being well off is the worst thing that can happen to a democracy.

There has been no such thing as honest prosperity in the United States since the Civil War; we merely have had a succession of boom periods.

"Greed and waste are two of the most pressing problems confronting the United States. National optimism regarding the country's resources is carried to the point where those resources are threatened."

"The End of an Epoch"

Stuart Chase, November 30, 1941

"America's danger from the Axis is not military or economic; it's political. Democracy will lose only if we don't beat the Axis in providing the good life for our people. Our thoughts must turn to giving to our country, not taking away; and if we do, our hemisphere will be impregnable.

"Some intelligent economic planning can head off an economic catastrophe after the war. If we can keep prosperous making 'howitzers', we can stay prosperous making homes for our folks. And even people with low IQs are going to be able to figure that out. If one forgets the man-made conventions of money and finance and concentrates on manpower, materials, energy, horsepower, and plant, there is no reason for any post-war trouble at all.

"Waste of the land is 'national suicide.' We need militant conservationists who will be angered at blackened forests, slaughtered game, billboards in open country, and gullied hillsides.

"Floods must be controlled. Pollution, dirt, and slums must be cleared away. We cannot longer tolerate such injuries to our country."

"This Is My Own"

Rockwell Kent, January 25, 1942

"The proper canvases for American artists now are the sides of silos, barns, and billboards — every blank space should proclaim, 'Wake up, America.' If art can't help in the promotion of victory, then let's forget art. But if art can function to stir up morale, then let art be brought into service. So far we have completely neglected the arts.

"Posters are needed to show American people what they are fighting for and to inspire them to a love of democracy. Such posters could be turned out best by the WPA art projects, but Washington red tape is holding up the program."

"Our Liberty and Liberties"

Rev. Francis X. Talbot, March 23, 1941

"Our liberty could be lost through some external power such as aggression, as it has in European countries. It might be lost, again, by the reckless granting of power to one branch of government, particularly the executive branch. Such a concession would inevitably lead to bureaucracy and eventually create a dictator.

"Our liberty could also be lost by the ambition of certain groups who wish to centralize power. Intolerance on the part of the general populace

would be still another liberty destroyer, while a fifth cause would be cowardice and fear on the part of leaders of the opposition or minority party.

"But we most certainly will lose it if we lose the spirit of democracy through apathy, supineness, and ignorance."

"The Order of the Day"

Thomas Mann, October 17, 1943

"A new humanism and a world community of mutual dependence and responsibility for which the American Bill of Rights will serve as a model will be the outcome of the present international struggle.

"Revolution can rehabilitate Germany. The Nazis' monstrous attempt at world domination is approaching its end. Fascism is a sickness of the times and no country is free. Let us hope German universalism will be helped to find its place."

"Problems of the Middle Aged"

Dr. Albert E. Wiggam, December 26, 1943

"People should have their birthdays forgotten as soon as they are born. Classifying people according to their age makes many a man and woman feel and look old.

"Eskimos have the right idea about age. No eskimo knows his age. Once when a psychologist asked an Eskimo chief to estimate how old he thought he was, the Eskimo asked, 'Why should I want to know how old I am?'

"Altogether too much emphasis is placed on the age of the other chap. The learning ability of an average mind does not decrease with age. With age, mental speed decreases as mental power increases. And in the end, increase of mental power offsets the decrease of mental speed."

"A Fighting Faith for America"

Professor Max Lerner, October 26, 1941

"The America First Committee is openly using every technique of the Nazi propaganda lords. Those techniques are anti-Semitic, anti-capitalistic, antilabor, antiliberal, and anti-British. We are witnessing the increasingly open use of those techniques by what is becoming in this country an increasingly open Fascist movement. The United States needs to enter the war, not alone for American material interests but for the sake of humanity and human liberties."

**Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt (George Coleman's 80th birthday banquet),
May 15, 1947**

"The American people must think as a democracy in order to live as a democracy. We don't like to think about it, but we are required to make up our minds to get along with other people, if it is worth the effort. If we do not take the trouble, the world is headed for destruction."

"How to Live While Neurotic"

Dr. David Seabury, February 23, 1947

"If American husbands were not so dull and stupid, American women would not be so possessive with their sons and, as a result, tend to make neurotics out of them.

"The American husband, in presenting his wife after a day of business and golf, says "Meet the wife," as if she were an institution instead of a charming woman whom he married to love.

"The American woman has to love and be loved by someone, and so she becomes too possessive of her boy. The American husband makes no effort to make himself interesting to his wife."

"Why Do Human Beings Act the Way They Do?"

Dr. Oscar W. Junek, December 7, 1947

"Women should be given a try at ruling the world for the next 1000 years. There would be fewer wars — if any — with women in control. Men have been running things rather badly for the past 10,000 years or so.

"The increased number of women in Congress is all to the good, and they should now become forceful in the Cabinet. Women are natural peacemakers. This is because they hold sacred three things: the family, the home, and peace. And they are conservative by nature.

"But a man is pugnacious. He wants to fight. I have that on good authority. Women are great social cleansers and are willing to march up on a city hall when civic conditions become corrupt. While women rulers wouldn't be as likely to declare war, they could be tough customers in the defense of what they deemed right and just."

Q: How can you defend your theory in view of the great number of divorces in the United States, where women have a great say in things? This proves that women fight too.

A: Not at all. It merely shows what happens to a woman's disposition in the presence of males.

"The Women Offender in Massachusetts"

Dr. Miriam Van Waters, April 10, 1949

"Women prisoners are usually harder to reform permanently than men because of the different attitudes that society takes toward male and female offenders. The rules laid down for women in our society are much more stringent than for men.

"The man in prison can be retrained to prepare for a good job when he is released and the chances in such cases are that he won't go back to prison. But industrial training is no guarantee that a woman won't return. Hardly 3% of the women sent to jail are there for stealing anything. They are there for illicit sex, neglect of children, drinking — and these are the things that bring her back.

"I hope that in the future society will provide institutional shelters, not as we know them today, for misfits, such as confirmed alcoholics and emotional midgets who cannot stand the competition of life."

Chapter 6

The 1950s

The war over, Americans turned their attention to their way of life. Democracy vs. socialism vs. communism, euthanasia, defense research, the low level of "goodness" in our society, and the need for a world peace organization – Forum speakers addressed all of these questions and more during the country's postwar period of economic boom. Robert Frost's "annual meetings" continued, giving Forum audiences a rare glimpse of that inspiration behind the meter and rhyme.

Ralph Bunche, U.N. undersecretary and a chief architect of both the 1949 and 1956 peace arrangements in the Middle East, sagely announced: "Time alone will not solve the problems of the Middle East. More active work must be done on solving territorial refuge, water rights, and coastal access problems." The dangers of radioactive fallout were voiced by Dr. Ralph E. Lapp, physicist and writer on atomic energy, who charged that the government and the Atomic Energy commission had failed to inform the people fully on the highly radioactive aftermath of an H-bomb explosion.

Reuben L. Lurie, Massachusetts Commissioner of Corrections, succeeded the late George Coleman as president and chairman of the Forum. He continued the tradition of defending every point of view from hecklers and others with closed minds. This support was appreciated by Soviet representative to the United Nations Arkady A. Sobolev, who carried on with his staunch defense of communism in the face of loud hecklers. Two men and a boy were arrested in the disturbance, but Mr. Sobolev finished his talk. And Martin Luther King, in a seminal talk on race relations, announced what we know to be true in all facets of life: "We have come a long, long way but we have a long, long way to go."

"Euthanasia: Is Merciful Release Wrong?"

Rev. Michael J. Ahern, S.J., January 15, 1950

"To take any innocent person's life, even to the shortening of that life by a fraction of a second, is against the moral law as had been held by the vast majority of mankind from the very beginning of the history of the human race and is also against the positive divine law as is summarized in the Ten Commandments.

"Suffering has a value for the life eternal and the patient bearing of suffering makes the sufferer like Christ. If we adopt the principle that destruction of the chronic sick and the unfit is the best solution of the social problem they occasion, then we are on the road to a dictatorship under the aegis of a so-called democracy."

"Individual Freedom and National Security"

Prof. Kirtley F. Mather, February 19, 1950

"Some American scientists have taken an informal vow not to participate in any research having destruction as its basic purpose. But there is nothing to be gained if American scientists suddenly decide they are master politicians while their Russian counterparts go busily about preparing to blow this country off the face of the earth.

"Certain scientists with grave reservations about the atomic bomb gave their services during World War II only because of the danger that Germany might get there first. They do not now feel themselves under any such compunction with respect to Soviet Russia.

"It is now proving extremely difficult for the Atomic Energy Commission to mobilize scientists needed for the H-bomb. You will observe that quite a few men are not leaving their jobs to do this work and universities aren't taking it on."

"The Moral Foundations of Government"

Charles Phelps Taft, November 18, 1951

"America must sell to the world the realities inherent in its way of life that make that way of life possible. We are doubted by people in Europe and Asia who are neither wicked nor ignorant. It is time for us to stop telling them about our bazookas, atomic bombs, gadgets, automobiles, and TV sets and start exporting the ideas and attitudes which gave us our tremendous capacity for creative work.

"Disunity is the hope and aim of every Russian maneuver, and America needs to disseminate the truth to prevent that disunity from occurring."

"Dishonest Communists vs. Honest Liberals"

Herbert Philbrick, April 6, 1952

"The controlling core of the communist party in America is underground, composed of men and women who do not admit their affiliations and in control of front groups often composed of sincere, patriotic Americans.

"The Russian War Relief, the American Soviet Friendship Society, and the Spanish Refugee Appeal were supported by Americans about whose patriotism there was no question, yet were controlled by people I knew in the communist party, on direct orders from their superiors."

Q: Do you believe loyalty oaths are effective?

A: No, one of the first things I was ordered to do was deny my membership in the communist party.

"The United States and World Leadership"

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, March 28, 1954

"We have shown the free world that we can lead in military and economic matters, but the areas of spiritual and moral leadership we

have found far more difficult to encompass.

"The Soviet Union does a better propoganda job throughout the world than we do. Their promises are made very alluring.

"In areas of the world where starvation has always been imminent and where the mass of people have suffered for the benefit of the privileged few, it is highly effective for the Soviet Union to say, "We believe all men are brothers" and "We will see to it that we share and share alike."

"We must remember that the Soviet Union does not reveal its doings and that most Asiatics have no knowledge whatever of the physical and mental slavery created by Lenin and Stalin. To them communism is simply an economic theory of Marxism. And since their condition is often more than desperate, that is often a very attractive theory.

"In India in 1952 people were dying of hunger in great numbers. We voted to give them some of our surplus wheat but our congressmen argued for six months about who was to pay for the ships to take it there. The obvious question of the Indians was, 'Didn't your people know that we were dying? Didn't they care enough to get the wheat to us when we needed it?'

"We have done about two-thirds of our job of leading the world. We still must prove to the people of the world that we have the vision, that we can do the work, and that we can learn from them as well as give to them, so that we can build an atmosphere in which every nation will be able to strive toward peace together."

"Freedom Must Take the Offensive"

Walter Reuther, February 22, 1953

"Freedom must be an aggressive movement in order to combat the totalitarian ideas being spread around the world.

"The Red labor leader is nothing but a colonial agent for the Soviet Union. He has no interest in the welfare of American workers. He does not want to see democracy work in the field of labor relations.

"The Red leader, like the union racketeer, cannot get decent wages for his workers because he has been compromised before negotiations begin. There are unscrupulous employees who will deal with a communist or a racketeer because they think it's cheaper to pay off the union leader than to pay their workers.

"There is no easy pill that will purge communists from an organization. It takes old-fashioned work. You have to outfight them, outvote them, get up early before they do, and stay up after they've gone. You've got to be more tireless than they are. And you've got to prove what they're trying to prevent: that democracy works at all levels of human association."

"An Evening of Poetry"

Robert Frost, December 4, 1955

"Some folks call me an individualist. I think they mean I'm a cranky Yankee!

"They say that every poem has its ulteriority, its hidden meaning. I know that. To me, a poem is like a pond. Every once in a while a fish will break the surface for a quick instant, a bit of the meaning beneath the surface shows somewhere – in a line, a phrase, a single word even.

"Freedom happens to me in bondage. Before you have any ideas at all you have to give up some freedom. Someone has said that the true poet never writes. He is free of the bonds of language and is a poet just the same. But I write, I write with meter and rhyme, which proves, I suppose, that I'm old-fashioned. Those are the bonds I choose for my freedom."

"Desegregation: The American Dilemma"

Roy Wilkins, March 25, 1956

"There is no dilemma that cannot be resolved by moves to obey the law. Legal action is the principal weapon where the states have chosen the extreme position of point-blank refusal to comply. In states where repeated attempts by Negro parents have failed to elicit a response from school authorities, legal actions are planned that will advance the situation to a point where a beginning toward compliance can be required by federal judges.

"Such a strategy is of the very essence of moderation. To do less would not be moderate; it would be abandoning the cause of desegregation to those who have sworn that it shall never come to pass."

"A Realistic Look at Race Relations"

Dr. Martin Luther King, October 28, 1956

"Negroes everywhere should refuse in a nonviolent sense to cooperate with the evils of segregation. We refuse to pay a dime to be abused [referring to the boycott by his people of the Montgomery bus system] and walk instead of using public and segregated transportation.

"We prefer tired feet to tired souls. I and others with me will walk until the walls of segregation are broken down by the battering ram of justice.

"We have come a long, long way but we have a long, long way to go."

"Eyewitness Report I: The Russian Dilemma"

Senator Henry M. Jackson, March 10, 1957

"Soviet scientific and technological success contains the seeds of Soviet political failure, which is the 'Soviet dilemma'! The Kremlin must grant some freedom in order to maintain technical growth, but allowing freedom undermines communist ideology and discipline.

"The Russian leaders are building up a class of thinking people who will not accept Soviet doctrine without questioning it. Their most important goal is to achieve industrial supremacy over the United States. The only way they can hope to do this is by educating people to run the industries, businesses, and laboratories. Thus they are building up a large class of thinking people – and certainly that effort is incompatible with the Soviet system. There is an irreconcilable conflict that they must face up to."

"The Public and Modern Art"

Paul Sample, Mitchell Siporin, and Bartless Hayes, Jr., April 14, 1957

"The need for understanding modern art is more serious than may commonly be supposed. There is the strong impression in Europe that American cultural prestige is seriously hurt by our failure to adequately support and demonstrate experiments in the fine arts in a manner parallel to our approval of experiments in science."

"Has U.S. Communism a Future?"

John Gates vs. Granville Hicks, November 24, 1957

Gates - YES: "The communist party has a future, because socialism is the future of the United States. We no longer insist, however, that we are God's chosen people and that only we can lead America to socialism. The communist party of the United States is proud of its contributions but conscious of its mistakes. A big change has taken place. Today we do not endorse everything the Soviet Union does. But a struggle continues in the communist party of the United States between those who favor the new plan and those who favor the old.

Hicks - NO: "The answer is as clear as it can possibly be. The communist party has no future in the United States. And furthermore, it never did have. The old guard of the American communist party, which regards it as an extension and mouthpiece of the communist party in the Soviet Union, is gathering up its strength and preparing to drop the ax on Gates."

Q: Where do you expect to get the people who will believe you and follow you in view of your 40 years of misleadership?

A: (Gates) I know a lot of parties that have attracted quite a following in spite of misleadership! If we can convince you that we are sincere and deserving your support, we will get it; if we can't, we won't.

Q: (to Hicks) You say communism in the United States has no future. Has communism anywhere a future?

A: (Hicks) The Soviet Union, like it or not, will go on a long, long time.

Q: How do you explain the Soviet arms buildup?

A: (Hicks) Unlike here in the United States, nobody in a socialist land profits from war or war preparation and the Soviet Union is heavily armed because it has been twice attacked in modern history. Opinions on who was to blame should not keep sensible people from agreeing that war is unthinkable and that the bomb tests poisoning the air must be stopped by mutual agreement.

(Gates) If we stop war, time will tell, the people will decide, who is right, whether capitalism or socialism is better. [loud applause]

"Peace with Russia?"

Averell Harriman, October 4, 1959

"The United States should adopt a new concept in dealing with Russia - stressing democracy against dictatorship rather than capitalism against communism, the dignity of the individual against the

almighty state.

"Capitalism in the minds of the peoples of Asia is almost synonymous with colonialism. It seems to me that we should not permit Mr. Krushchev or any other communist to write us down as the standard bearer of capitalism. Our economic system has little resemblance to the century-old Marxist concept of capitalism and we should abandon the word. We are a democracy against a dictatorship."

"Our Low Level of Goodness"

Margaret Mead, November 1, 1959.

"A beatnik is a person who can't tolerate the meaninglessness of the low level of goodness, and just because it is both low level and good casts his artistic rebellions in bizarre and often misunderstood forms."

"American society has sunk to a low-level goodness that forms a basis for juvenile delinquency, creates beat generation addiction, and stunts incentive among young people in business and professional pursuits."

"The ethic of low-level goodness only requires that everyone be as good as they are; so instead of reorganizing our cities, we scold a few parents or threaten to pass laws making parents, already completely robbed of any relationship to their children, responsible for the property their children destroy."

"Or, we even take out insurance policies against any damage our children may do - so everybody is protected from unpleasantness."

"Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear War"

Dr. Linus Pauling, November 16, 1958

"We should create a World Peace Research Organization in the United Nations that would be like a great university. The research institute would have thousands of scientists, economists, geographers, specialists on international affairs, historians, and experts of all sorts working year after year on the problem of preserving peace in the world."

"My concern grows over the recklessness of atomic bomb research. To order a test of a great nuclear bomb device is to sacrifice the lives of 15,000 unborn children. The estimate that I have made of the amount of this damage is of the order of 15,000 people now living who will probably die of leukemia, bone cancer, and other diseases as a result of radioactive materials liberated each year of testing nuclear weapons."

"Peaceful Coexistence between the USSR and the USA"

Arkady A. Sobolev, April 6, 1958

"We are confident in the final victory of the ideas of communism, but we have never imposed and we do not intend to impose the Socialist way of life, and you should not expect us to give up ours."

Q: Have you and Comrade Krushchev abandoned your personal habits of liquidating millions of innocent people? Butcher!

A: The answer is very clear; neither Mr. Khrushchev nor myself has a policy of exterminating people by the millions.

Q: Is the Soviet Union going to introduce into the United States the same kind of peaceful coexistence recently introduced in the Baltic states, East Germany, and most recently in Hungary, deporting thousands to Siberia?

A: I don't know who this gentleman represents.

Q: I represent freedom!

A: As regards Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, they are members of the Soviet Union. They freely chose their life.

"Our Foreign Policy - Right or Wrong?"

Norman Thomas vs. Dr. William McGovern, November 30, 1952

Thomas: "Our foreign policy should work toward a transfer of world conflict out of the realm of atomic warfare and toward the conquest of poverty wherever it exists in the world.

"The United States is no longer the master of its own foreign policy. World conditions are far too complex to enable us to sit tight on a given decision without it being frustrated by some act or acts incompatible with that position.

"One thing I do know is that it is absolutely impossible to continue the present arms race without it breaking into a general war."

McGovern: "Truman and Acheson completely misread the intentions of Stalin. If they had had proper intelligence, and if they had interpreted available information correctly, they would have realized there is no possibility of world peace so long as the communist menace exists."

Chapter 7

The Sixties

The sixties brought with them an increasing diversity of topics concerned with the quality of life — chief among them issues of segregation, corruption, the United States' position in Viet Nam, and political philosophies. The *Boston Globe* announced in bold headlines "1000 Roused by Bomb Hoax" — referring to a scare that broke up a Ford Hall Forum discussion about the John Birch Society and the Black Muslim movement. President Reuben Lurie deplored the interruption, which occurred as Dr. C. Eric Lincoln began discussing the Black Muslim movement as a "religion of protest, complete with a black mythology and a black God." Lurie countermanded: "I'd like to know what kind of a society this is when police can break up a peaceful and important meeting by 'taking over' under such a pretext as this. Nothing, not even a concert, would be safe if this is to continue."

More temperate evenings included talks by Eleanor Roosevelt, Margaret Mead, Ayn Rand, and evenings with Robert Frost, who noted "My poems need not be dissected and examined for symbolism in order to be understood." In like manner, excerpts from some of the sixties' forums are presented in this chapter for you to hear their own tunes, without dissection after the fact.

"The Long Look Ahead"

Henry A. Wallace, March 27, 1960

"The Chinese people are destined to take over the H-Bomb and their own economy. In addition, they will divide the world along color lines and Russia will be forced to ally herself with the West.

"America's supply of raw materials will begin to run out, and imports will become larger and larger. Roads, hospitals, and schools will be choked and overcrowded.

"Cities will continue to expand at the expense of the countryside: Industrial and agricultural efficiency will continue to increase at a faster rate than the expansion of the population.

"Farms will become larger and will eventually come under the control of corporate executives residing in the cities. Farmers will simply be a part of a gigantic vertical integration scheme. The Chinese have the capacity to outbreed, outwork, and outlast the weak, flabby, overfed peoples of the West.

"We need general disarmament, a U.N. world police force, and a U.N. directed development fund, supported by all the 'have' nations, including Russia."

"Is America Facing World Leadership?"

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, November 13, 1960

"Unless America faces up to true world leadership, the country may well go under. But the American people have never failed to meet a challenge.

"The primary problem is what kind of life we are going to establish to point out to the rest of the world that what we offer is more worthwhile than what communism has to offer.

"No country can be a real leader unless it really wants to demonstrate moral strength and a true desire to serve. I think the peoples in the uncommitted and neutralist countries know we are asleep.

"But I have absolute faith in our nation, with its motto of one nation under God, we will meet the challenge and we will win. Unless we win the Cold War struggle with the Soviet Union, Khrushchev's prediction that all of our grandchildren will be communists may well come true.

"We can watch ourselves slowly approach destruction or we can wake up, try to find new ways, new ideas. For unless we face up to the problems of world leadership, we may well go under."

"South Africa Today"

Ambassador W.C. Naude, April 9, 1961

"South Africa would like to be left alone to solve her unique racial problems while continuing as a beacon of Western civilization that we intend to keep alight in Africa.

"Most Americans simply don't understand our policy of apartheid. The apartheid policy in South Africa is a traditional separateness and a positive policy to protect the interests of the weaker citizens. The economically weak and primitive Bantu quite possibly would have gone to the wall except for that protective policy.

"South Africa has contributed substantially to the security of the Western world. Today we are maintaining an undisturbed, peaceful sector of Africa. I ask you to think what a frightened problem the Congo has become for the Western world."

"Waste Makers"

Vance Packard, April 16, 1961

"America is in danger of becoming a nation of happiness seekers building a fun culture. We are spending three times more on chewing gum than on medical research, and more on jewelry than on basic research.

"Problems confronting Americans are not primarily economic but rather problems involving our total well being and with roots in the spiritual aspects.

"Americans need to develop more deeply felt personal standards of good and evil, success and failure — not for other people but for themselves."

"Corruption in Massachusetts"

Elliott L. Richardson, October 22, 1961

"The real cost of corruption in Massachusetts is the corrosion of democracy itself. The forces necessary for an all-out attack on corruption are gathering. We need:

"First, a stronger corruption practices act.

"Second, a state constitutional amendment providing that any public officeholder can be interrogated about any official act that occurred during his tenure of office and providing that contractors and others doing business with the commonwealth be required by law to waive the privilege against self-incrimination regarding inquiries into contract business.

"Third, a much stronger conflict-of-interest law than that passed last spring, which is only a code of ethics.

"Fourth, strengthening of bribery laws to prevent kickbacks to public officeholders."

"America's Persecuted Minority: Big Business"

Ayn Rand, December 17, 1961

"Under the antitrust laws — which are a mess of uncompliant, unjudicable contradictions — a man becomes a criminal from the moment he goes into business, no matter what he does.

"There is only one difference in the legal treatment according to a criminal or a businessman: The criminal's rights are protected much more securely and objectively than the businessman's.

"Every dictatorship or potential dictatorship needs some minority group as a scapegoat which it can blame for the nation's troubles and use as a justification of its own demands for dictatorial powers.

"In Soviet Russia, the scapegoat was the bourgeoisie; in Nazi Germany it was the Jewish people; in America it is the businessman.

"How can people who profess to oppose discrimination against any minority reconcile their stand with the fact that they recognize the workers' right to their livelihood, yet deny the businessmen's right to their livelihood?"

"Explosive South America: Democracy, Communism, or Fascism?"

Roscoe Drummond, October 15, 1962

"The United States may win the battle against Castro but lose the war against communism in South America. All power at the disposal of the Pentagon will not be sufficient to brook the penetration of communism to Latin America if economic and social injustices are allowed to continue.

"The Soviet bloc is pouring \$100 million a year into agitation and propaganda in a massive effort to exploit grave social injustice.

"Castro can be quarantined by force, but communism cannot. The only weapons equal to the larger threat are economic and political, and apart

from subversion, the only enemy is economic stagnation and explosive social frustration, both of which are on the march across the whole face of South America.

"It is essential that the United States actively support Latin American democracies. I am convinced that the United States will do more to win long-term support and respect by remaining true to itself and actively standing against dictatorship in every form or guise. Some Latin American groups and politicians will rant against us for interference, but most South American people will say 'Thank God,' at first under their breath and later openly."

"A Brief Introduction to the John Birch Society"

Robert Welch, November 4, 1962

"Those that have come to see the size and color of my horns will be disappointed. They are retractable. And since my wife forgot to get the laundry yesterday, I had to wear an ordinary white shirt instead of my regular brown one with the black armband.

Membership in the John Birch Society necessitates goodwill, good conscience, and religious morals. Communists are against religion because they say that the ends justify the means. Most religions say good ends don't justify bad means.

"Communists have control in mass media. People don't learn the real truth. *Time*, *Look*, and the *New York Times* have swallowed lies of communists.

"The John Birch Society feels it is better to light one candle than curse the darkness. We therefore try to circulate information and try to organize 'fronts of Americanism' in order to help the world 'climb out' of the morass of collectivism.

"Prejudices about most groups are unjust. Only with communists can you make sweeping generalizations, because their system wipes out the ethical and moral values of the individual and makes him an unthinking member of the organization."

"New Trends in the Civil Rights Struggle"

James Farmer, November 22, 1964

"The civil rights revolution is not complete. The Kennedy administration had served as a catalyst to thrust civil rights forward.

"The civil rights revolution is not complete. The Kennedy administration had served as a catalyst to thrust civil rights forward.

"The Civil Rights Act is a tool with which to work. Now, de jure segregation in the South will soon become de facto segregation such as the North possesses.

"With the aid of the Johnson administration, I foresee a massive remedial education program in the South for both whites and Negroes. There is a need for quality education through junior colleges. I see a renaissance [in my race] in art, culture, literature, and music.

"The economic changes will come through a pooling of resources to start cooperatives and credit unions. The strife for freedom that my people are pursuing involves a freedom to make a meaningful choice in society."

**"Hot and Cold Wars Around the World —
From Israel to Viet Nam"**

General S.L.A. Marshall, December 7, 1964

"The United States must enter a full-scale alliance with South Viet Nam or face the end of free society in Southeast Asia. The advisory position the United States now maintains in Viet Nam, at the cost of \$1 million per day, is futile. The Vietnamese Army has not launched a single major offensive nor won a major victory in the six months since General Maxwell Taylor became ambassador to South Viet Nam.

"General Taylor's problems are too much for any one man. You cannot expect one man to unscrew the inscrutable.

"The South Vietnamese soldier possesses courage in an uncommon degree, but in every Viet household there is a feeling that the cause is lost.

"The Vietnamese, with the help of the United States, have the three necessary ingredients to win — superior numbers, firepower, and defensive positions. At present they are not making full use of any of these. The mark of a losing war is that the Viet Army has little or no control over its own communications.

"I refuse to believe that the President and the National Security Council cannot bring themselves to take the risks involved in escalating the war.

"Grim alternatives necessitate grim risks. During the Kennedy years we decidedly strengthened our numbers of line troops, ostensibly for brushfire wars, according to the Secretary of Defense."

"Education for All Boston's Children"

Noel A. Day, April 4, 1965

"The schools have a detrimental effect or are unable to counterbalance any environmental effects. This, to me, is a clear measure of failure. Boston public schools, in effect, have destroyed the children.

"The movements of Negroes to urban ghettos and whites to suburban areas have made the pattern of segregation in education and housing increasingly rigid and have made it easier to confirm the Negro to the 'compound' — and have had profound effects on the schools.

"Every school has a hidden curriculum. Because the Negro student sees few white faces in his school and because he senses that everyone considers his school inferior, it is inferior.

"The fact of segregated schools says to the Negro student every day, 'You are a failure. You should be white if you really want to make it in this society.'

"We must insist on massive changes. Segregated schools must be integrated if that will improve education. Curricula should be changed to give the student a better perspective on our society and to deal with the ever-increasing challenges of automation and other technological advances. Yet the school system must recognize that there are many culturally deprived white children too."

"Is Civil Disobedience Justified?"

Rev. William Sloane Coffin, Jr., October 28, 1968

"Every man has the responsibility to obey the law; but there are times when some men have the duty to break the law. If we do not concern ourselves with what is moral, then we have abdicated our moral responsibility. And if the people of this country abdicate their moral responsibility, we will have moral oblivion, and God save this nation from moral oblivion.

"If the question of whether the executive branch has usurped the power of the legislative branch on declaring a war and if the question of the legality of the war is not decided by the courts, then it will be decided by a power play and that is no way to settle such an issue.

"Whether or not my actions and those of other antidraft demonstrators are right perhaps will not be decided for 50 or 100 years. But Jefferson, Washington, Sam Adams, and other American revolutionaries were traitors until they were successful. And Thoreau, who was never read and thought of as a criminal, is now, beard and all, on the face of a stamp."

"The Rhetoric and Reality Gap"

Senator George McGovern, September 28, 1969

"No conceivable value could come of continuing the war, with its mounting death toll for both sides. The American people have been more than patient in giving Mr. Nixon ample time to reveal his disengagement plan, but his present pace of withdrawal will take years to execute and will produce no better solution than the one that would come now.

"It's outrageous for Thieu to assume he has a veto on American foreign policy and that we should be committed to years and years of troop disengagement. I believe our entire nation, as well as the people of Vietnam, would rejoice if president Nixon would announce a plan tomorrow to extricate all American forces from that tragic land in the next few months.

"This involvement is the nation's greatest moral, political, and military disaster. Sometimes we have forgotten where America leaves off and where other nations' interests begin. Our preoccupation with planting American ideas around the globe has taken a tragic toll in this country.

"The right of dissent in this country is one that ought not be questioned, no matter how disagreeable it may be to policymakers."

"Apollo II: The End or the Beginning of an Age?"

Isaac Asimov, November 30, 1969

"Any large city on earth is as far removed from the original state of things to which man has adapted as is the moon. Though man has a poor record in using his knowledge, I'm hopeful that through a moon colony he would take an intelligent interest in his modification. Moon colonization could give us an example of a small society functioning in a completely engineered, artificial environment.

"Thus far, intelligence has been a great cross for humanity. It has done much damage. Our quest should be to seek a brotherhood of intelligence. The moon colonists would be better suited for this task than earthbound adventurers.

"There are no more physical frontiers on earth. Man can stultify this drive for problem solving. But it would lead man to despair if he quailed before the difficult."

Chapter 8

The Seventies

"The Safety Valve of Democracy" is the best theme for the Forum of the seventies — featuring such speakers as Pulitzer-Prize-winner David Halberstam on the media's power, a debate between two MIT professors of future applications and the safety of nuclear power, a conference on the challenges of making peace in the Middle East, and a debate between Phyllis Schlafly and Karen DeCrow on the ERA. The energy issue was also looming, and Ralph Nader and Samuel Schwartz (then vice president of Continental Oil) discussed the energy outlook. Nader commented in a manner we can still appreciate today: "The United States should put as much time and effort into developing alternative energy sources as it puts into the space program. The energy sources of the future belong to the American people because the natural gas, oil, and coal resources are found in federal lands."

Ayn Rand continued her annual spring talks, with lines forming since 9 in the morning to hear the Objectivist leader, who made no other public appearances anywhere else in the United States.

For Hall Forum was chosen in January 1975 to host NBC-TV's annual "Year End Review," which featured five distinguished NBC newscasters. The session wryly ended on the theme: "Cheer up; things may get worse at a slower rate." And Angela Davis, in October 1975, spoke of how "insecure, frustrated white people make black people and other minorities the scapegoats for their troubles."

Organizationally, Superior Court Judge Reuben L. Lurie was elected Honorary President for Life; Emanuel M. Gilbert was elected Ford Hall Forum President in September 1974. And the Forum, in April 1976, turned over its archives to the Boston Public Library — emphasizing its dedication to the free flow of ideas and to the principle that honest dispute through the medium of the spoken word is the means by which society resolves its conflicts.

"The Right to Know"

Tom Wicker, September 30, 1973

"After much bad work, the press has reaffirmed its position as one of the few remaining challengers to the overriding power of governmental imperialism and has reasserted itself as one of the last great weapons of individual freedom.

"Reporting on Watergate showed the press at its best, in pursuit of truth and willing to disclose it.

"News coverage of Vietnam was the press at its worst, with reliance almost entirely on official source, official spokesmen, official information and disclaimers, while Watergate has reestablished the press's

great strength as the watchdog of truth, honesty, and individual freedom.

"However, the press is a flawed institution, a great watchdog with numerous flaws. Despite the elevated euphoria about Watergate coverage, governmental power has been rising on a profound scale, with the presidency becoming an imperial office almost immune to liberal control, and to sustain the new enthusiasm generated by Watergate, the press will have to correct its flaws to set right the troubles within our system."

"Organized Struggle Against Racist and Political Repression"

Angela Davis, October 5, 1975

"My top priority is a national effort to free people imprisoned because of racist and political oppression, as cochairman of the National Alliance Against Political and Racist Oppression.

"Capitalism is failing as an economic system in the United States because it is designed to help the few rather than the working class.

"Frustrated white people — insecure because of inflation, unemployment, and other problems — make black people and other nonwhite the scapegoats for their troubles. This is the element behind such groups as ROAR (Restore Our Alienated Rights), an antibusing group.

"Government officials have not been able to resolve key issues facing the nation at any level — federal, state, or local — but people can work together to solve problems.

"People do not realize that today's racism in America parallels the anti-Semitism of Hitler's Germany. I am a communist but I work with people of all facets — Democrats, Republicans, conservatives, socialists — based on the tradition of this nation."

"The Sex Revolution and the Future of the Family"

Bruno Bettelheim, April 18, 1976

"Many of the problems that middle-class parents face today can be traced to the shifting socioeconomic basis of the family. A hundred and fifty years ago all that was expected of a child was that he contribute to the economic well being of the family. Today, however, a child is expected by his family and by himself to be a success in life.

"I submit that it's considerably easier to work in the fields or in the family shop than it is to be a success in life. I have seen so much damage done. Children blaming parents. Parents blaming children. I am not interested in blame. I am interested in remedy.

"To be a success in life is a terrible situation to put a child in. It used to be that craftsmanship was a tremendous bond between the generations — between fathers and sons, mothers and daughters. In each case the craft was handed down. Since the parents were primary teachers of the children, the children didn't have to be told to honor and respect their parents. It flowed naturally. Honor and respect can go a long way, in the absence of love.

"Where Do We Go from Here? The Economy of the Future"
Eliot Janeway, April 25, 1976

"Any durable recovery from recession, any basis for a prosperous economy, cannot be based on oil at \$11 a barrel. At \$5 [a barrel] oil, we could forget our recent worries about recession and shake off the present drag which is keeping the economy from flourishing. If the virus of oil inflation and currency deflation spreads to the other side of the world and Japan decides the only way which she can come into our ports is by undercutting our prices, forget about recovery.

"U.S. banks should use their economic muscle to force oil-producing nations to lower prices. The State Department should also take a stronger role. Right now, the State Department is nothing more than a receiving window rented out from the Western Union.

"If Japan can go into Venezuela and Indonesia and get oil at \$8 a barrel, why can't we? Japan has nothing. They have plants and they have people. But they know how to make their way in the outside world."

"Give the People a Vision"
Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, October 31, 1976

"People who don't vote do vote. A nonvote for one candidate is, in fact, a vote for the other.

"Black Americans have, by law, conquered the mountain of opportunity and the next mountain to conquer is the mountain of atmosphere. The racial polarization is tighter today than it was ten years ago. Unemployment is on the rise and political corruption has not stopped — the atmosphere is not good.

"Many people cannot breathe in it [the moral decadence in America] and they give up and drop out of life. One thing that's worse than racism is cynicism, because cynicism is in the heart of the victim.

"It is a crime that radio and television have replaced churches and schools as the center of social order. Those with the most information talk to the fewest people, and those with the least information talk to the most. People become the victims of songs proclaiming it's all right to make love on the first meeting and television violence, because we learn how to become good killers and baby makers but not how to be good, responsible people.

"The United States is gripped by malaise and mediocrity of spirit. The death of ethics is the sabotage of excellence. People want maximum pay for minimum work, which is very close to students who want maximum brains for minimum of study.

"People must become self-reliant. I'm convinced that nobody will save us from us, or for us."

"Presidential Politics and Television"
Roger Mudd, October 2, 1977

"The U.S. presidency is trapped under an avalanche of expectations

generated by television news. The press has played a major role in the magnification of the powers and importance of the executive branch beyond its role of one important gear in an exceedingly complex machine.

"Vietnam-era presidents equated popularity poll gains following televised press conferences with support for their positions. These gains were a function of the facility with which presidents used the media — and the absence of alternatives and opposition views presented in such conferences.

"The poor showing most congressmen seem to make on television results in a hampered congressional role of checking presidential power.

"Sixty-five percent of America's voters rely on the three networks as their most reliable source of information in choosing their candidate. There are three, so that one can act as a tie breaker. Many politicians seem to believe that what didn't happen on television didn't happen."

"Politics 1977"

Bella Abzug, October 23, 1977

"America is the greatest democracy in the world, but we began as a flawed democracy. The Constitution provides for the inalienable rights of *men*. The cure for the injustices women have suffered under this flawed system is the women's movement.

"Women *never* had any rights. Our forefathers didn't give a hoot about our foremothers. American history is a charter of the American women's commitment to human rights. Anita Bryant has no respect for any rights at all, and Phyllis Schlafly is a housewife who is never in the house.

"Being a homemaker isn't bad, so long as there's a choice. I like the word 'homemaker' because 'housewife' implies there's a wife somewhere else.

"Our children's children will be amazed to learn that women were once denied control of themselves and their bodies. By 1985, the last year of the United Nations' proclaimed decade for women, everything will be done under the law [for equality] that can be done."

"Is Nuclear Energy Safe?"

Prof. Norman Rasmussen vs. Prof. Henry Kendall, April 8, 1979

Prof. Rasmussen (head of MIT's Dept. of Nuclear Engineering):

"Despite the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island, nuclear power is the cleanest and most efficient form of energy available and should remain a key component of the U.S. energy picture.

"No new energy discovery will result in a sudden solution to the electricity supply problem. Even with a full commitment to alternative energy sources like solar, geothermal, and nuclear fusion, the implementation and commercial use of these technologies is 25 years away. The safety record of the nuclear industry is outstanding, and industry can learn from Three Mile Island and prevent similar incidents in the future. With the myriad different uses and demands for energy today, it is

unrealistic to expect that the United States could get along with less power in the future than it currently consumes. Forcing industry to curtail its consumption of power could cause more unemployment and an adverse ripple effect on the economy. If we wait for a no-risk solution to the energy problem, we'll surely get no solution at all."

Prof. Henry Kendall: "Industry and government are recklessly promoting nuclear growth at the expense of safety and, unless this course is reversed, nuclear accidents like Three Mile Island will occur every year or two."

"Three Mile Island was a near brush with catastrophe. The risks of nuclear power are unacceptable. Government and industry have concealed and misrepresented the risks of nuclear power and delayed the implementation of safety programs. The government has violated the public trust in the question of nuclear power."

"We need nuclear programs that are above suspicion; all nuclear plants around the country should be reinspected and, in some cases, shut down in order to be retrofitted for safety."

"The Myth of the Equal Rights Amendment"

Phyllis Schafly vs. Karen DeCrow, April 29, 1979

Schafly: "The ERA's requirement that women be assigned to military combat is the greatest take-away of women's rights. History offers no example of wars won with coed battles."

DeCrow: "People are laughing at the new draft proposal. They are saying that we will lose our military strength if women are drafted. But given today's weapons, physical strength is not an issue."

Schafly: "ERA has nothing to do with equal pay or equal rights."

DeCrow: ERA will make the gains made in overcoming sexual discrimination permanent. 51% of the population is female, 17% hold jobs with a salary of \$15,000 or more, and for every dollar a man earns, a woman earns 50 cents. You can change these statistics by lending your support to get the three remaining states left to ratify the amendment."

Schafly: "The ERA would require that husbands no longer support wives. You don't have to accept that husbands should support the wives, but ERA would not make it a free decision."

DeCrow: "In the fight for ERA, there is the myth that women need to be protected and that ERA will take this protection away."

Schafly: "Forty million husbands support their wives. Should we tell them that their support is wrong because we have entered a new era? We don't have the right to change these terms."

DeCrow: "The person who has the most to gain from the ERA is the housewife. According to a survey, the housewife performs \$3.4 billion of services each year. Yet she is entitled to no money but the money her husband chooses to give her. It is time to change that. ERA will not change the country overnight but it will end sexism under the law."

Chaflly: "All I see in ERA is the takeaway of the rights women already have."

DeCrow: "It is disgusting for a nation who holds itself out as a leader in human rights not to hold out equal rights for women. Women might not have been at the last supper but they certainly will be at the next."

"The Power of the Media"

David Halberstam, October 7, 1979

"Television is dangerous; it has strengthened some institutions and weakened others. It has made society more volatile and far less structured.

"The Pope and Ted Kennedy have the gift of theatre that makes them effective on television; it has given us a whole new kind of candidate. The coming of television ushered out the era of party system politics.

"Americans know the government as slow, corroded, and awkward. They search for the nonpolitician who has style but not necessarily substance. One reason the president's power has increased is that he can get on TV anytime he wants. With this unlimited exposure goes the danger that the people may get too much of him. The demented media hype raises expectations higher than the capacity of government to fulfill them.

"TV has also come to determine what is news. Asking if a demonstration really happened if it is not covered by the media is akin to asking if a tree that falls in a forest with no one around makes a noise.

"Print is more important than ever before. TV evaporates. A newspaper holds its turf. It becomes the daily menu."

"Must We Have Inflation, Recession, or Both?"

J. K. Galbraith, October 14, 1979

"The great conservative revolution is no more than old conservatives talking louder. A large share of all economic comment comes from people with comfortable economic positions, who have access to the media. And as the conservative voice becomes louder, it seems to suggest that the tide of public opinion has shifted to the right.

"It is the beginning of wisdom to mistrust these great right-wing revivalists. Many of their ideas are deeply in conflict with reality. Their philosophy can be summarized as 'Services are a burden hoisted on the unwilling taxpayer for no particular reason by bureaucrats.'

"The ideal free market system is inoperable in today's economy because of monopolies and oligarchies. Something is wrong when economists argue that Exxon and neighborhood newsboys are operating under the same economic forces.

"The argument that the market gives people choices while the intervention of government takes choice away ignores the fact that government intervention gives freedom to the poor although it takes some freedom away from the more affluent."

Chapter 9

The Eighties

Where are we today – and where are we going? Ford Hall Forum continues to echo diverse concerns and philosophies from its famed spectrum of speakers – from William F. Buckley, Jr., Harvard Law Professor Arthur Miller, and anchorwoman Natalie Jacobson to 1982's recipient of the First Amendment Award, poet, writer, and artist Maya Angelou. The latter punctuated her sweeping, strutting, moving presentation with truisms like: "Courage is the most important of all the virtues; without it, you can't practice the others." "I am a human being; nothing human can be alien to me." "If any human did anything, I can do it too." And about women: "Our measure has not been taken because no one is capable of taking it."

1982 was also the year Ayn Rand died; Leonard Peikoff took the podium in her stead and read a speech she had prepared in which she again praised the Forum and its purpose: "Ford Hall is honest and open to dissent and new ideas, not like some other intellectual traditions." Her speech ended with the admonition: "The world you desire can be won . . . to win it requires your total dedication and a break with the tradition of man as a sacrificial animal. Yours is the morality of life."

"The Problems of Freedom"

William F. Buckley, April 13, 1980

"For an American citizen, voting is a civil sacrament and should not be done without careful preparation when choosing a president. I am not bothered that fewer people are voting in each election. It might be better if only 35% of the people did, or if 100% voted but did some homework first on the candidates and issues. People should vote for the prosperity of the commonwealth and not for a pressure group.

"One of the problems of freedom is diminishing ignorance in the matter of income redistribution. The idea is to take from those who have more than they need and give it to those who do not. It seems sensible to tax the richer states for the poorer states. But we tax everybody to better everybody. This does not work in redistributing wealth because people are sent to Congress with the notion of getting back as much as they can from the national pool. This causes one state to commit piracy to sister states.

"Conservatives are in better touch with reality when it comes to money. George McGovern attracted only the American poor – not a significant American minority when he proposed taking \$1,000 from those making over \$12,000 a year and giving it to those making less than \$12,000. The problem was that people making over \$12,000 did not want to give away \$1,000, and no incentive was given to poorer families to reach a \$12,000 income so they could give away \$1,000.

"We should be proud. Only 11% of our population is now poor. At the turn of the century, 90% of Americans were poor.

"Certain freedoms may mean a great deal to you and may mean nothing to me. Elimination of any freedom means the elimination of all freedom."

"The Right to Privacy versus Free Press"

CBS News' Correspondent Fred Graham vs. Harvard Law Professor Arthur R. Miller, April 20, 1980

Miller: "Every institution must be answerable to someone, and the media is no exception. Our media is an institution unique in the world, but it should not blind us to the cost of privacy and individuality. 'It will benefit the public' is a typical cliché. Reporters have trespassed, gained access to personal files illegally, and used investigative techniques they should not – all in the name of 'the people's right to know.'

"Interesting is not synonymous for newsworthy. Jackie O's latest adventure is not newsworthy and is only printed to satisfy curiosity.

"The computer is a central figure in privacy questions today. Powerful people and institutions covet, collect, and abuse personal information.

"Dozens of decisions about us are made on the basis of files containing information we have no control over. Arrest records should not be made available to the public or employment offices. All an arrest is, is a charge. It is not a conviction.

"Shielding journalists for printing the truth creates a license for excess. A probing magazine, TV station, or newspaper can affect a person as much as the FBI or CIA.

Graham: "'Shield Laws' should be adopted to protect journalists who publish the records of someone involved in a contemporary event. News is what the public wants to know and what the public needs to know.

"Sacrificing the facts because of the 'small danger' of 'hurt feelings' is a threat to First Amendment rights. Privacy laws have a beneficial value in our society. But blanket privacy laws that conceal not only embarrassing information but all information should be cleaned up.

"Adult criminal records should be given out without restrictions, except for less serious first offender cases. Records of government dealings or any past or present government employees or people getting money from the government should be open."

"Prominent Bostonians View the '80s"

Natalie Jacobson vs. Cleveland Amory

Jacobson: "Television has changed our lifestyle perhaps more significantly than any war, any government, any technological change. Within the decade banking services, home energy management, burglar and fire alarms, and facsimiles of newspaper articles all will be available through cable TV hookups with keyboard attachments. Personal information stored in cable TV computers could be abused if proper safeguards

are not developed. Above all, we must make sure we don't become programmed robots ourselves. It's up to us to make it work for us."

Amory: "A 'curmudgeon' is a very good thing to be. It's the last thing a man can be that a woman can't be – there's no such thing as a 'curmudgeoness.' My plea is a return to the great days of Calvin Coolidge. He not only never did anything, he never said anything. Coolidge took a nap every day from 2 to 4 p.m. That's not the solution to everything – just for between the hours of 2 and 4."

"Scientific Explosion: Public Perils and Ethical Crisis"

Vance Packard, May 4, 1980

"The energy crisis is with us and the only way to deal with it in the next five years is to use cold turkey conservation. One of the most promising energy resources in the future will be nuclear fusion. But it will take 15 to 20 years before it will be fully developed. For the present coal is one of the solutions for the energy crisis, but coal is a nasty business. All alternative energy sources are promising but not for the next five years.

"We didn't want to face the fact that we lived in a finite society, and today we are paying the price of our ignorance. Some people think it is their God-given right to jump into their air-conditioned cars and go to a night football game, which lights the whole area for miles around with oil. In five years we will be in a serious energy crisis, and in 15 years we will be out of petroleum.

"I don't believe Reagan when he says we can become energy self-sufficient if we decontrol the oil industry. One way to alleviate the oil crisis is to develop synthetic fuels. Another way is the use of corn as a fuel. But the use of corn might raise some moral questions: What is more important, gasohol or the use of corn as food for starving countries?"

"Disasters that Threaten Our World"

Isaac Asimov, October 12, 1980

"I predict an enormous industrial revolution in space. I foresee interplanetary expansion and industrialization as viable ways of solving many world and natural crises.

"All worldwide organizations will strive to work toward planetary expansion. Disasters such as the effects of a possible nuclear war, diminishing oil supplies, volcanic eruptions, and other possible mishaps could, if not addressed, lead to compounded problems.

"We should be spreading ourselves throughout the universe. Interplanetary expansion could lead to possible solutions to these problems and also serve as an alternative place for people to pioneer to in the event of a catastrophe.

"More money should be invested in space exploration activities. There are enormous industrial resources in space. The true catastrophe is men using their time on foolish parochial projects.

"Unity among nations is essential if interplanetary expansion is to be considered. Nations must work together in order for expansionism and

building or space settlements to take place.”

“Energy and Environment: A Conflict of Our Times”

Daniel Yergin vs. Barry Commoner, October 26, 1980

Commoner: “Our growing dependence on foreign oil is because of actions taken by the oil companies in their own self-interest. Oil companies should be turned into public utilities. People, not company profits, should run the American economic system.

“In the 1950s, U.S. oil companies switched their emphasis from domestic to foreign oil discovery and production. By charging the same for both domestic and imported oil, the companies increased their profits tremendously. They used their capital to manipulate our dependency on oil. Aside from turning the oil companies into public utilities, I will look into renewable solar energy as a solution to shortage problems. Brazil will begin relying on alcohol as a cheaper, low-pollution energy source within four years. The United States should make the conversion from oil to alcohol even faster. Continued dependence on nonrenewable energy sources cannibalizes the economic system it is intended to support.”

Yergin: “Although oil companies do make large profits, attacking them diverts attention from the real cause of the energy crisis – the political and economic implications of the world’s limited oil supply. The United States could use 30-40% less energy without sacrificing its present standard of living. Energy conservation is an issue of survival.”

First Amendment Award Lecture

Norman Lear, March 29, 1981

“The religious New Right has grown so strong that it threatens the spirit of liberty for this generation. The ‘Christian New Right’ is threatening the freedom of expression of others through a rapidly growing network of TV and radio stations that is blanketing the country, espousing the same far right, fundamentalist points of view while attacking the integrity and the character of anyone who does not stand with them.

“These leaders and organizations have every First Amendment right to express themselves as they wish. But if we agree that the American experiment is based on the conviction that a healthy society is best maintained – not by an attempt to impose uniformity but through a free and open interchange of differing opinions – then the dogma of the religious New Right violates the spirit of the First Amendment and the spirit of liberty by claiming a kind of infallibility.

“The religious New Right is making a claim to infallibility. To disagree with their conclusions on numerous matters of morality and politics is to be labeled a poor Christian or unpatriotic or antifamily.

“The root cause of America’s problems is our choice of bottom-line behavior. No one will take the chance with an original idea – not when the name of the game is to win fast. In industry, government, or academia, leadership everywhere seems all too ready to sell the future short for a moment of success.”

"The New Right and the New Left - Their Place in Government and Politics"

Congressman Barney Frank vs. Cal Thomas, October 4, 1983

Thomas: "The Moral Majority's main tenets are prolife, support of the traditional male-female relationship, antipornography and against legalization of drugs, and pro-American.

"Today religion and religious principles are suffering from discrimination. The trend in America is to secularize government and bleach the culture clean from religious influence. The Moral Majority is a pluralistic political group whose supporters are mad and not going to take it any more. However, the organization does not act as a political arm twister."

Frank: "The Moral Majority invokes religious positions to argue for the illegitimacy of its opponents' positions."

Thomas: "The Moral Majority deplors the double standard toward the voice of the left vs. the voice of the right. Both sides have their nuts. We're dealing with ours and I hope the left is dealing with theirs."

Frank: "There are excesses by the new left that I find objectionable. The Moral Majority supports legislators who oppose abortions but also oppose child nutrition and day care. From their perspective, life begins at conception and ends at birth."

Thomas: "The greatest danger, something worse than war, is to be silent, and the Moral Majority will never be guilty of that. We would rather be arrogant and accurate than be wishy-washy and afraid to speak out."

Frank: "The Moral Majority's attitude is, 'We will decide and if you disagree you are immoral.'"

"The Continuing Struggle for Human Rights"

Alexander Ginzburg, October 18, 1981

"A totalitarian government usually arises with the help of one factor, namely mass terror. The human rights movement in the USSR began in the mid-1950s; it could not have come into being earlier because right before this, in the Soviet Union, there was a 40-year period of bloody, mass terror; approximately 66 million people were killed.

"After the October 1917 revolution, the number of intellectuals who remained could be counted on your fingers. The next victims were the peasants because they were the best carriers of the nation's historical memory. By the mid-1940s, entire national groups were exterminated.

"Stalin's death in 1953 ended the most severe and bloodiest repressions in the country. By 1956, people began to feel that they could no longer live under repression and wanted to be heard by the government.

"I had written a lot and was published a great deal but became frustrated with government censorship. The Soviet Secret Police arrested me after I had put out three issues of a magazine called *Syntaxis*. This 'childish amusement' cost me two years of my life spent in a labor camp.

"The human rights movement in the Soviet Union has attempted to form free trade unions, much as the Solidarity movement in Poland. But so far Solidarity has not been successful in becoming a mass trade union movement. In 1977 the first trade union leaders were placed in insane asylums (by the KGB) and still are sitting there."

Chapter 10

Looking Ahead: The Forum's Role

The purpose of the Ford Hall Forum has been, and will continue to be, to make the opinion of experts available to everyone. Board Chairman Frances Smith adds, "We have no restrictions on who our speakers may be. It's a question of whether you believe in ideas. If you're unwilling to expose unpopular ideas to the public, you never get anywhere. And, after all, there's the question period afterward for people to challenge a speaker. There is no other forum in the country dedicated to giving a platform to people with ideas.

"The Forum is like the difference between television and live theatre. It's like seeing the body and being able to confront it. That's why people continue to come. You can't talk back to television, but anybody can get up at the Forum and question a speaker about an issue that concerns him. It's also important to speakers. Where else can they find out what's really bothering the rank and file public?"

Over the years, since its founding in 1908, the basic issues have remained the same – politics, economics, basic adjustments to life. But over the past few decades, three new, important themes have emerged as Forum topics: ecology, energy, and women's issues. And with its basic purpose to make people think, the Forum is trying to get more two-sided talks, with two speakers on the platform to share the presentation and question-and-answer time – with the all-important audience acting as devil's advocate.

The Forum in the eighties attracts mostly those in the 30 to 50-year-old bracket, with considerably more women attending than during its early years. (However, women always had a voice at Forum meetings.) And the transient student population at Forum meetings swells with "crisis" issues important to them. Today, total attendance at Ford Hall Forum meetings at Northeastern's Alumni Auditorium averages 800 per evening – varying between 1300 and 500 depending on how well known the speaker of the evening is.

Looking toward the future, the Forum is considering cable television to reach other parts of the country, just as WGBH does on National Public Radio. (Currently, WGBH broadcasts Forum evenings a week later and distributes tapes to member stations across the country.) Another thought – again to reach a larger audience – is to establish satellite programs in the suburbs of Boston to show others what the Forum is all about. And to encourage greater involvement on the parts of high school students in the Boston area, the Forum is investigating the possibility of videotaping some of the talks and taking the tapes to high schools for assembly periods – literally "bringing the Forum" to the students.

Ford Hall Forum has much to be proud of, not the least of which is the long-standing voluntary service of those who have served in its leadership positions: George W. Coleman, Founder and President, 1908-1950; David K. Niles, Director, 1928-1952; Louis P. Smith, Treasurer and Director, 1952-1975. Judge Reuben L. Lurie, now Honorary President, served for more than 50 years, and Board Chairman Frances Smith has been active for 33 years.

Literally a legend in Boston, Ford Hall Forum approaches its 75th anniversary in glowing colors. Perhaps the *Boston Herald's* 1982 "Salute to the Forum" is a fitting way to lead it into the future while celebrating its fine traditions:

"The Ford Hall Forum is one of those special institutions that help make Boston the kind of stimulating cultural mecca that draws people from all over the world as visitors and residents. It has for 75 years been a voice of reason and intelligence, of wit and humor, of caring. It has provided not only a Forum for ideas but has kept alive the fine art of public speaking. May its voice never be stilled."