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# DEMOCRACY AND SERVICE



BY  
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Address delivered Armistice Day  
November 11, 1919 at Wheeling

UNDER AUSPICES OF THE WHEELING  
BRANCH OF THE AMERICAN LEGION



We celebrate to-night perhaps the most momentous anniversary in all history. We are like men who have struggled through a great storm. The war is still too close to us to measure it accurately, to weigh the forces which it let loose and to estimate their effect upon the future. We can only feel that things can never be again as they were five years ago; that out of this welter of suffering a better condition for men must come; that the dawn of a new day is upon us, and some of the things which that day will bring we may sense and feel, even if we cannot see them clearly.

We realize now that it was the fighting strength and the material resources of America that won the war. It fell to us to take the place made vacant by the collapse of the mighty Russian Empire. We poured out with lavish hand the millions of sturdy youth that were needed to restore the balance of man power between the Allies and the German nations. We furnished the inspiration and the hope which in the last crucial hour nerved the arm of every fighting man on that great western front. More, perhaps, than the actual military performance of our armies in France; more potential, perhaps, than your brilliant courage and sacrifice on the battlefield, was the knowledge which sank deep into every German heart that back of you men in khaki, back of the men on the firing line, there were countless thousands more ready to come, and ready to serve. The knowledge that the sword of one hundred million American freemen had been drawn in deadly earnest and that that sword would not be sheathed until it had drunk deep of the blood of its foe. In this great war the favorite hour of attack was just before dawn, the hour when darkness was deepest; when gloom gave the advantage of surprise, and the following sunlight made possible the continuance of a military advance, and that was the hour in which America struck. The English armies had been broken and beaten back almost to the channel ports. Haig had sent out his despairing appeal for every man to fight as if his back were to the wall. The victorious Huns were making their final lunge at Paris and were closer to it than they had been in 1914, and then it was that John J. Pershing put the first American army at the disposal of Marshal Foch, the army which had been forming and training slowly in the camps behind the line, and in the quiet trenches. It struck at dawn and with the dawn came victory. That army swung into line at Chateau Thierry, the very apex of the German lunge. It gave the Hun a taste of a new kind of metal.

It stopped him in his tracks, and from that day whenever the Hun moved at all, he moved backwards, and within a few weeks he began to move mighty fast. It will not do vaingloriously to magnify your services, or to belittle the splendid sacrifice and steadfastness of your magnificent allies. Yet we know that it was America, through you and boys like you, that put the finishing touches on the great war, and snatched victory from the very jaws of defeat.

I cannot recall the roll of those glorious days of the Summer and Fall of 1918. On a hundred different fields in France our boys in khaki won immortality. The enemy never saw their back. No American division ever retreated. No American force ever acknowledge defeat. Your march was onward, ever onward.

It is not unfair to say that the crowning victory of the war was the great battle of the Argonne, which was purely an American victory. In that battle, which lasted over three weeks, American doughboys led by American officers manhandled, maltreated and used up forty-seven different German divisions, more than one-fourth of the entire fighting force of the German army. It made its slow but steady advance inch by inch and foot by foot over ground that was called impossible, and against defenses that were called impregnable, but to the American doughboy no ground was impossible, and no defense was impregnable, and after three weeks of fighting, on November 6, 1918, an American army stood on the banks of the Meuse river, and American guns commanded the fortress of Sedan and the railroads leading out from it. The great route of communication, north and south, between the German armies was cut. Their life line was sundered; their armies beaten and divided, and there was nothing for the Hun to do but to surrender, or else face a breaking and a scattering of his army, and a military debacle on a scale unprecedented and unparalleled in all



history. He chose to surrender to save what he could, and one year ago that surrender came.

Now, men, men of the American Legion, what does this all mean to us?

Did we go through this war merely for the purpose of making a display of military strength? Did your country call you from your places of work, take you from your homes, and your families, and put uniforms on your backs, and guns in your hands, and send you forth to risk your lives merely on a warlike adventure?

No. No, a thousand times no.

Did we seek lands, or wealth, or power? No. No. It was for none of these things that we fought. We went into the war because we saw on the fields of France and Belgium civilization crumbling before barbarism, Christian ideals falling before brute force; because we saw women being outraged, children murdered, homes burned and churches desecrated; because we saw freedom and truth, and decency, and virtue, and every thing that makes life worth living being ruthlessly ground into dust, and on their ruins a cruel and hideous despotism rearing itself to threaten every free nation in the world; and, after long months of that monstrous spectacle, the conviction came home to our hearts that it was time for America to step in, and we did step in.

And men, having risked and fought for world freedom, what are we going to do?

Are we going to quit? Are we going selfishly to isolate ourselves? Are we going to refuse to bear any part of the world's responsibilities? Are we, in short, going to allow a generation hence, things to happen again as they did in August, 1914?

No. No. I can't think that is possible. We went into this war I firmly believe because, under the direction of Almighty Providence, we were trained, prepared, made ready and called to save humanity, and having heard the call once, we can never again turn a deaf ear to it.

Like the Crusader, who has put on the sacred emblem of the cross, we can not take it off.

It is to me an amazing fact that in spite of the lessons of American history, particularly the lessons of the great war, we find many men amongst us who would deny the destiny of the United States, who would shut their eyes to the mission of world service. There are men who would have us, the greatest free republic in the world, say to the new republics of Poland, of Finland, of Hungary, of Jugo-Slavia, of Czecho-Slovakia, "We have no interest in your life. You can stand or fall. It matters not to us. You can prosper if you can, or you may become the prey of some new world power; some new war lord. We will have no help to give you and no hand to hold out to you." Why, men, that is not democracy; that is not Americanism; that is not the spirit in which this great country of ours was founded, and has been built up. To the right-thinking man, the conditions of life, the wrongs and the suffering of every human being on earth, white or black, brown or yellow, is a matter of some concern, and this republic, whose people have been blessed more than any other, cannot refuse to lend its help to right wrong, to uphold stable government, to protect free institutions, in whatever corner of the earth, and by whatever power they are threatened.

Some of these statesmen of ours, who talk about our independence and our national sovereignty, are wont to quote much from the fathers of this republic, men who lived in a different day, and under widely different conditions. Why, men, if the thought which inspires some of these critics had been held by the fathers of this republic, this government of ours, instead of spreading from ocean to ocean and from the Lakes to the Gulf, would have remained a narrow fringe of English-speaking colonies between the Atlantic ocean and the Allegheny mountains. A French state might to-day be filling the Mississippi valley. A Spanish state might to-day cover Texas and California and New Mexico. Another Spanish state might survive in Florida and Alabama, and an English or Scandinavian state in the great northwest, and this great American continent, instead of being inhabited by a homogeneous and peaceful people, would be as full of dissension, and clashing ambitions, and racial strife as Europe has been for centuries. It was the courage of our forefathers and their vision of the usefulness of



the American republic that prevented this very thing. Those weak souls to-day who quote the wise injunctions of George Washington against the policy of entangling alliances for the youthful republic forget that George Washington did not hesitate to make an alliance with both France and Spain in the interest of this republic, and only a few years later did not shrink from war with the French Directory to vindicate the honor of our flag.

There never was a stricter constructionist of the American constitution than Thomas Jefferson. To him this republic was not a nation. It was only a confederation of independent states, each granting a small measure of power to the government at Washington. Yet when the time came, Thomas Jefferson did not stop a minute to violate the constitutional doctrine, he had ever preached, and to use the money of all the states to buy from Napoleon the great Mississippi valley, and to make it America's. Thomas Jefferson had a vision of the power and sweep of the great American people, and that vision gave him the sublime courage to be inconsistent with himself in order to be consistent with the future of the American state.

And Andrew Jackson was another strict constructionist of the constitution, but Andrew Jackson, without authority from Washington, and without warrant of law, marched his army of frontier's men into Florida, burnt Spanish forts, hung traitors and ran up the American flag on Spanish soil, there to remain until Florida became forever a part of this republic.

And in 1846 there were other timid souls, lots of them, who quoted the constitution and the wise injunction of the fathers against the annexation of Texas. But the will of the mighty Anglo-Saxon race would not be held. Texas was annexed. The Mexican war followed. Some of the most glorious pages of American history were written, and the fairest provinces of the great southwest were redeemed from the blighting touch of the Mexican greaser, and made the home lands of millions of God-fearing American citizens. Who to-day, viewing conditions as they are on both sides of the Mexican border, would dare to say that the Mexican war was not a work of eternal righteousness?

And in 1899, when the rich island of Cuba, with a large liberty-loving and intelligent population was groaning under the accumulated horrors of Spanish tyranny; when men, women and children were dying like flies in Weyler's concentration camps, there were other timid souls who said that Cuba's woe was not our affair; that we should not waste American lives to wipe out a moral plague spot; but American red blood spurned this poltroon advice. We served notice on Spain to get out, and when she didn't get out, we kicked her out. We gave freedom to the slaves of Cuba, of Porto Rico, and the Philippines, and we furnished the world an instance of disinterested service that will be an inspiration and an example for ages to come. The proudest thing in all American history is not the Declaration of Independence; not in the Monroe Doctrine not in the freeing of the slave, but it is in the fact that we poured out our treasure and our blood to free an oppressed people at our very door, and having won that freedom we handed it back to them, without purchase or price, a splendid gift from one nation of liberty-loving men and women to another.

And when we went into the great world war, there were other timid people, men of little courage and little vision, who said that we should keep hands off; that the sinking of the Lusitania was only a mistake and that we were being deceived by England, and others said that if we did make war, we should keep our armies and our fleets at home and defend our own shores, and still others thought we ought not to draft soldiers. We all know now how perilous, how foolish, weak and selfish such council was. We know now that we did the only wise thing in going into the war, with every ounce of our strength, and our resources. We know now that we had a man's size job to do, and it took a man's effort to do it.

So it has been through our entire history. This country has grown great and powerful because in every crisis it has had courage and vision, because it has looked past narrow boundaries and seen the opportunity for world service. Why, the very Monroe



Doctrine of which these timid counsellors make so much, and which they would guard so zealously, breathes a spirit of altruism that belies the words of the men who invoke it to-day.

In 1823, we were still a small country with scarcely ten million people; yet James Monroe served notice on the Holy Alliance, the Russian Czar, the Austrian Emperor, the Prussian King, and the Bourbon Monarchs of France and Spain, that they must keep hands off the republics of the new world; that the republics set up in South and Central America were our brethren and no one might harm them with impunity, and if in 1823, when it took a sailing vessel three months to come from a South American port to New York, the maintenance of a republican government in a South American state appealed so to the United States, that they were willing to fight the mightiest powers on earth for it, how much more should the maintenance and defense of that splendid sisterhood of small republics that have been formed in Central Europe appeal to us now? We helped bring them into the world, and we must help guide their footsteps on the hard and stony paths that lead upward to the broad and sunlit plains of orderly and stable self-government. Under the inspiration of our example and under the broad shield of this great republic, free institutions in every corner of the globe are springing up and flowering as they never did before. The world is being made democratic and as it is being made democratic it is being made a world of peace.

We have before the Senate of the United States to-day, the covenant of a great league designed to bind the nations of the earth in the bond of friendship and amity. There are those amongst us who would assassinate that covenant; and, if not that, would limit the participation of this country under its obligations. With the covenant of the League of Nations, it is easy for any man to find fault. It would have been amazing, indeed, if a new agreement covering entirely new lines of thought and new fields of activity had not been full of features of which captious fault-finders could make much. But, remember this, the covenant of the League of Nations as it stands to-day was the work of the choice minds of the world. To that great council at Paris, the nations of the earth sent their best men, their men of widest experience, the deepest conviction and the highest vision. It is the production of the ablest statesmen of the world, and as such it is entitled to the most respectful consideration of every patriotic citizen. Moreover, the choice between accepting the covenant and rejecting it is the choice between responding to a call to world service or rejecting that call. It is a choice between selfish concentration of ourselves within ourselves, and of dedication of our strength, our means and our influence to the betterment of all men. I have no fear as to the decision that Americans will eventually make. Should the covenant and the league fail, it will not be long before another covenant and another league are presented in a new form, and eventually we will see the light of duty and follow it; but this covenant and this league need not fail. Let us make what reservations we may deem necessary to protect American sovereignty. Let us make such explanations as we will in order to make clear our understanding of our obligations. Let us reserve explicitly the domestic problems which we deem peculiarly our own, and then with faith in our own future, with confidence in our own ability to help work out the problems of humanity, let us accept the League of Nations as the greatest step towards universal peace that men have ever taken. Let us go forward with high purpose towards that time when war will cease, and the peoples of the earth will sing in gladness to each other across the seas.

The great war is over; our dead have been gathered from the battlefield; our armies have been demobilized; our boys are back home, but we do not have peace. Look over the land to-day and we see industrial and social unrest everywhere. At a very time when we need a greater production of all useful goods than ever before; when we need to grow more food, to mine more coal, to make more steel, to build more railroads, to furnish more clothing, to make boots and shoes, to build more houses, we have men idle for one cause or another, and more preaching of unrest than we had even in the darkest days of depression and want.



Why this turmoil? Why this breaking out of new isms? Why this threatened overturn of all society?

Because in a dim and uncertain way the world has come to feel that the freedom for which we have done battle, the democracy for which we have fought, is not merely a political freedom; it is not simply a form of government. It is more than that; it is something vital; it is something which has to do with our everyday life.

Democracy is equality of opportunity, not equality at the ballot box, or equality before the draft board.

But equality of opportunity in every walk of life; equality of opportunity in employment; equality of opportunity in business; equality of opportunity, in short, to make use of all the talents and strength and wisdom and character that God has given us; and human institutions and customs, whatever they may be, that stand in the path of that kind of democracy are sooner or later going to vanish from this free land of ours. The mighty wave of democracy rolls on, and the barriers that hold it back are going to be broken down and thrown upon the seashore like so many bits of worthless wreckage.

Equality of opportunity means first of all that every child brought into this world, whether it opens its eyes in the home of the millionaire or of the day laborer, has a right to be born under decent conditions; under conditions that so far as are humanly possible, will insure shelter and comfort and health both to mother and child for an indefinite time, and whether it be through maternity hospitals or through community health service, it should be the work of society in a free democracy to see that every child has that first decent and fair start in life.

And equality of opportunity means another thing. It means that no boy or girl of tender years will be kept working long hours in mine, or workshop, or farm, or factory when he ought to be at school. It means that every one in this broad land is going to have a fair chance to learn the duties and the responsibilities of American citizenship; that he is going to be brought in touch with the inspiration that comes from the glorious lives of such men as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt.

And equality of opportunity means still another thing. It means that the choice places in factories, the superior places in business are not to be held open only to the sons of the owners and managers. It means opportunity in industry; it means that in our schools we are more and more every year going to train the hands and the minds of our boys and girls in the useful trades. We are going to give them more skill, and to make better and better workmen of them; and more than that, in this great democracy, we must build more places of higher technical training; schools in which the ambitious boy, though he be the son of the day laborer or the ditch digger without money and without price, will get an insight and an understanding of the profound secrets of successful industry; the chemistry of iron and steel and glass and pottery; the lessons of business, so that he may expect reasonably to share in the greater and broader work that comes to the expert.

And equality of opportunity means still more—far more. For one thing it means an equal chance in the battle, not of life, but for life, an equal right to live, an equal chance to fight disease. We know that no laws can make all men and women equally healthy; that some must inherit physical weakness and some contract diseases from which no help can save them, but there are certain well-defined diseases which society can resist. The means of fighting these diseases should be open on equal terms to all, rich and poor, strong and weak. For instance, we know that tuberculosis is not only a preventable, but a curable disease. Why should a rich man's child escape this white plague and a poor man's child be condemned to die of it? That such a thing is; that such a thing continues is a shame and a disgrace to a civilized state.

Here, in this state of West Virginia, we have one tuberculosis sanitarium at Terra Alta. It has been established only a few years. It has a capacity to care for 150 patients, and throughout the state of West Virginia there are over a thousand



tuberculosis patients crying out for aid, calling to the sanitarium and being denied admittance and help because there is no room for them. It ought not be possible in this or any other state that a man, woman or child, suffering from disease requiring special treatment, should fail to receive that treatment merely because he does not live in a fine home or have a bank account. A really democratic state will learn how to give an equal chance for life to every one of its citizens. We are fast approaching that day, and you men who fought for freedom can and will hasten its coming.

And last, and perhaps most important of all:—

Equality of opportunity means equality in industry; equality in those dealings in which every man must engage in order to keep himself and his family. Equality of opportunity is for the laborer who has his labor to sell and the employer who buys it. It means that they must be able to meet on the same broad level, with the same freedom of action and with no club held over either of them. What does it profit you men who have risked your lives for world freedom; what does it profit you when you have beaten the Prussian autocracy if you find in your own home a capitalistic autocracy before which you must bend your knee in humble submission before you are even allowed to earn an honest living? We have autocracies and would-be autocracies in industry which we ought not to have. We have Kaisers and Czars and would-be Kaisers and Czars that we will have to get rid of. The great capitalist who employs thousands of men, and who sits in his palatial office and arbitrarily dictates the conditions under which his men shall live, the wages they shall get, the hours they shall work, who, in fact, doles out to them the food for their mouths and the clothes for their backs; and who, secure in his power, shuts his ears to all appeal, is an autocrat who has no place in a democracy. He may be a wise and a generous autocrat; he may be a humane employer; but the power which he exercises over the fortunes and the lives of tens of thousands of his fellow human beings ought not to exist in a free and democratic state, and it will not be allowed to exist indefinitely. And there is another kind of autocracy in industry just as hateful and just as dangerous as the capitalist autocrat. The labor union, controlling the production of a necessary of life, which threatens to stop, and does try to stop, the production of that necessary of life, while it holds the people up by the throat and enforces its arbitrary will, is an autocrat, or a would-be autocrat, that has no right to exist in a free state, and sooner or later we will get along without it.

The day of the industrial democracy approaches, and you men must help bring it. I don't know; no one knows exactly what form the industrial democracy is going to take. When our forefathers signed the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and pledged themselves to destroy the autocracy of George III in the new world, they did not know exactly what form of a political constitution they were going to set up ten years later. But they did know that there were certain great essential principles which they were going to set up and maintain. And so in the industrial democracy there are certain essential principles which will be recognized:

First: The right of collective bargaining: the right of employes, wherever gathered in considerable numbers, to join in presenting terms and conditions to employers through whatever responsible agency they choose, and the right of that agency to be recognized and to deal for the whole body of employes.

Second: The right of capital to receive fair and liberal returns upon actual investment, a return that will not only represent interest, but will also cover the risk of investment, and furnish security against periods of depression.

Third, and most important: The right of the consuming public, whose patronage makes the employment of labor and the profits of capital possible—the right of the consuming public—to continuous service at a fair price.

This is entirely too big a subject to discuss at length to-night, but eventually, with the coming of real democracy, something like this will come about. The creation of great industrial boards, having general supervision of particular trades. On these boards labor will be represented; capital will be represented, and the consuming public



will be represented. These boards, having a broad knowledge of business conditions, of costs, of profits, will fix wages and working conditions intelligently, will eliminate destructive and wasteful competition and duplication, will stabilize prices, and will insure continuous operation of industry. When that time comes, we will have no steel strikes; we will have no coal strikes; we will have no threats to paralyze the business and industry of our people. Industrial war will cease, and all humanity will rejoice in the coming of an ideal democracy on earth and real freedom among men. Only last Saturday, a committee of the U. S. Senate, which spent several weeks investigating the great steel strike, made its report, and among other things it said that the conditions in the steel industry were industrial barbarism, or the very opposite, the antithesis of democracy. There never was a free democracy in a barbarous state. Democracy requires enlightenment. It thrives only on the clear, pure air of intelligent thought. And to wipe out that barbarism in the steel industry, to wipe out industrial barbarism in the coal industry, to wipe out industrial barbarism everywhere and to replace it with an industrial democracy is the high purpose to which I summon you to-night. You have fought. You have risked your lives for political freedom; for a democracy of government. You have now the opportunity to give your lives to making democracy real; to preserve for your children the precious institutions which we inherited from our fathers, and to scatter the blessings of those institutions with equal hand among all your fellowmen.

Listen, a message comes to us to-night. It is borne on the whispering winds. It comes from those lonely graves in France and Belgium, the last resting place of the boys who, like you, went out from their homes to serve their country, the boys who stood shoulder by shoulder with many of you here; the boys who lined the trenches; who faced the Hun on bloody battle fields, and died gloriously; you heard the death rattle, and took from them their last message. Those graves send greeting to you:—

“Carry on, carry on, the work that we began. Save freedom, not alone for yourselves, but for all men.

“A new day breaks, and in the sunlight of that day, when shackles are broken and men meet as brothers, we will rejoice together that we did not die in vain.”

That is the message that comes from those graves in France. That is the unspoken word borne to us to-night from your brethren in arms who have gone on before. To you men of the American Legion, it is a solemn call. It has been given to you more than to any other men to serve and to sacrifice in a world cause, and from service and sacrifice you have gotten a clearer vision of duty, a higher conception of responsibility, a finer feeling of fraternity than you could have gotten in any other way. The sacred heritage of world freedom is in your hands. On your shoulders more than on any other men rests the responsibility for the stability of government, and the future of free institutions.

Pray God that you hear the call clearly. Pray God that you measure up to the responsibility.

“O freedom, thou art not, as poets dream,  
A fair young girl with light and delicate limbs,  
And wavy tresses gushing from the cap  
With which the Roman master crowned his slave,  
When he took off the gyves. A bearded man,  
Arm'd to the teeth, art thou; one mailed hand  
Grasps the broad shield and one the sword; thy brow  
Glorious in beauty though it be, is scarr'd  
With tokens of old wars; thy massive limbs  
Are strong and struggling. . . . Oh, not yet,  
May'st thou unbrace thy corselet nor lay by  
Thy sword; nor yet, O Freedom, close thy lids  
In slumber; for thine enemy never sleeps,  
And thou must watch and combat till the day  
Of the new earth and heaven.”