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Address delivered by the Honorable John E. Fogarty, Member of Congress, 2d Rhode Island District, at the American Federation of Labor, Rhode Island State Convention, on Sunday, May 16, 1943, at the Narragansett Hotel in Providence, Rhode Island.

I am always glad to be with a gathering of union men and women, and I am particularly happy to be attending our convention today, because it is my considered opinion that labor in America is today facing its darkest hour. During the past fifty years Labor has made steady progress until today a man who works for a living is a recognized partner in the Nation's industrial and economic life. That has always been the goal of trade unionism because the early pioneers in the trade union movement recognized that once such recognition had been won - the men and women who do America's hard work could be sure of providing themselves and their children with proper living conditions.

There have been many obstacles placed in Labor's path, throughout the years. The trail up the hill to Social Justice has not been a smooth highway by any means. Blood has been shed along that trail, and it is marked by the broken hearts and broken homes of many, many God-fearing Americans.

There were the days of the lock-out and the blackjack in the hands of the company thugs. There were the days of the machine guns mounted at the mill gate and on the mill roofs. There were the injunctions and the flying squads to break up meetings in churches and in homes.

But then came the Norris-LaGuardia Act - the Wagner Act - and other acts of recognition that after all workmen and women were truly Americans and as such were entitled to the safety that is afforded by the laws of this Republic. Men walked a little more erect with this recognition. Trade-unionists became a little less furtive and soon there was an extra loaf of bread on the table, and the mother of the family had an extra pair of shoes for Church on Sunday. Labor felt it had arrived in this great Republic and it said to the Country - - we are partners in the life of America and we

demand that we shall be accorded the rights and the responsibilities of equal partners. That was its just and proper position.

But in speaking thus - it awoke all the hatred that has lingered in the breasts of those who can never look upon the common man as an equal - - who still in their hearts believe in the property-qualification and the gifts that go with power and position.

These haters of labor have raised their voices constantly in recent years, seeing in the war upon which we are engaged an opportunity to wrap themselves in the flag and proclaim that their actions - which are aimed at the complete destruction of organized labor, and, with its destruction, the degrading of all manual labor - were all for the good of the country and for the better prosecution of the war.

Always, though, labor was on the job. Labor had been diligent all through these years. It had been awake to the dangers that go with complacency. It refused to take anything for granted, and it had availed itself of the greatest right ever given any citizen - the right to a voice in his own Government. Working men and women had taken the trouble to register and to vote, and it elected to public office men who recognized the principles of justice and who fought for the advancement of the common man. These men in whom labor had placed its faith proved equal to their responsibility, and threw back wave after wave of reaction as it sought to destroy the social gains which organized labor had made possible.

Then labor became satisfied. It thought the battle was won and there was no longer any cause for alarm. Those who attempted to bestir the men and women to protect the right of franchise were accused of crying "Wolf", and they were dismissed with a shrug and a smile - - and Labor, by its own inactivity, allowed its friends in the Congress of the United States of America to be defeated at the polls and in their places labor permitted - because the working men and women of the Country would not take the

trouble to register and vote - Labor permitted their friends to be replaced by reactionary champions of the sweat-shop and starvation wages. In Rhode Island the working men and women went to the polls last November - - we all know the result.

***** (Tell the part labor played in the election of last Fall -- you told Washington about Labor's part in that election -- What happened thruout the Country because Labor didn't vote. The Hobbs Bill and your position on it.

Because labor thruout the rest of the Country neglected its solemn responsibility, what has happened? What is the situation today? Now the lobbies and the halls of Congress resound to the cry - "Organized Labor is licked". Profit and plunder are once more leaping for the saddle, and the race of privilege and position is once more under way.

In the Senate of the United States, just ten days ago, there was passed the infamous Connally Bill - and you look to the record - see how those men who were newly-elected to the Senate last November voted on that piece of legislation - a measure which denounces the man who works at the machine as a mere pawn of the bosses and condemns him to a state that is not a jot or tittle better than involuntary servitude. The result of labor's inactivity at the polls last November is the foisting on the House of Representatives by the Champion of reactionaries the despicable Smith Bill, conceived in horror that the working man should be considered an equal of all men, and brought forth with a snipe contempt for the liberty and freedom which its proponent professes to love.

These alleged Statesmen - whose fondest act is to wrap themselves in Old Glory - screech "Inflation" - and while they wring from the Treasury of the United States the last possible dollar, cry that their activities against Labor Unions are prompted only by their desire to help the boys who are fighting this war.

What is it that these men seek? Is it production for war? Is there a man alive who can point to a record of production that exceeds - or even approaches - the record of production that has been compiled by American Labor? Is there a man alive - friend

or enemy - who does not know that Labor's record of production surpasses anything ever conceived by this or any other Country?

When our Commander-in-Chief told the world about his plans for armament production in 1942, his remarks were received with skepticism here - and were openly laughed at abroad. What is the situation today? Those scoffers and doubters have been made humble by the millions of tons of armaments that have poured from the factories and shops in 1942 - and already in this year, the records are surpassing those totals. The would-be War Lords of Europe are even now being overrun by the sons of machinists, hod-carriers and laborers, who have made these records possible. Arms are being transported by rail, by ship, by plane, by truck, and by camel - - - to Africa - Egypt - Syria - India - China - and to literally every corner of this globe. Is that production?

The men and women in our factories are making these weapons of war. The great armies of the building trades have built these modern war factories in months - not days or hours - but months - under record time. They have built camps and barracks with speed that is nothing short of marvelous. Men and women in our shipyards - under the sun and under the arc-light - turn out the vital cargo space to haul this war equipment all over the oceans of the world. The teamsters, the truckmen - in the bright glare of daylight and in the inky black of night - travel the highroads of war-time America - - like their brother railroad men, they get this vital material through on time. The longshoremen - never ceasing in their toil - make ready to turn these vessels of America at war over to the unsung heroes of the modern world - the men who go down to the sea - our great Merchant Marine - facing untold horrors on every voyage - risking the scream of the bomb and the inferno of a blazing vessel - with the only alternative - endless days and nights in the freezing North Atlantic. Do these men contribute nothing to production for War? Are these men and women without value? Does America consider them vile and the fit subjects for punitive legislation?

What is it that these men seek? A speedy conclusion of the war? Doesn't the daily press carry the stories of the sacrifices that are being made by the working men and women of America in order to bring this war to a speedy conclusion?

Do these would-be dictators of the moral code of the Nation feel that the working men and women of the Country are not making sacrifices? Then what would they recommend? Less food? Less clothing? Less heat in our homes next winter? Heaven knows how well we are faring, and there is no man so brash as to recommend that our standard be cut lower in these respects.

Would they recommend we make greater investments in dollars in our Government's war effort? I'll risk a comparison of any union local - for war bond purchases - with any group of industrialists - - - and I'll lay odds on the result of that comparison.

Yes, we are all striving to bring this war to a speedy conclusion. The men and women in the shop want it brought to an end - not so they can go back to "normalcy and profit" - No - but so they can have their three, four and five sons back home. They want to take down the blue stars that hang in the window - and they pray God every night that those blue stars won't have to be replaced by gold ones. Yes, they are working and sacrificing to get this war won - to get their boys safe home - and they don't intend to stand idly by while those who preach about the greatness of the American Republic, but yet refuse to acknowledge that the laborers of the country contribute to that greatness, seek to destroy at home the very freedom from fear and from want that their sons are fighting to win elsewhere in the world.

What can it be then that these men seek by this legislation? It can be but one thing - the complete destruction of trade unions, and a return to the day of the supremacy of the industrial tycoon. It means the declaration by the Congress of these United States that labor shall have no voice in the operations of our economy. It means that when labor cries out against an injustice - against faulty statesmanship - against failure of industry or government - it will be told - "You have no right to voice any

protest - we, the elect, have said all conditions are frozen". The Connally bill says just that - it says in effect to labor - "If you claim you have a grievance - then you lie!"

When this measure was before the Senate of the United States - not after due deliberation with open hearings at which all men were allowed to voice their opinions - not in the sense of debate and comparison of honest opinions honestly arrived at - but in a surge of hysteria whipped into frenzy by the press of the Country - the press before which the Honorable Senators cringed - - when this measure was before that body, there were Senators who had the courage to rise in their places and attempt to point out to the proponent of the measure that there were serious defects in the bill. On each occasion, this august legislator replied, "alright then we'll change that - alright I don't object to striking that out - alright, there may be justice in what you say, we'll change that if you want to" - - but, when it was suggested that the bill be returned to the Judiciary Committee for proper, cool, honest deliberation - did the gentleman still agree to change the bill not even he understood? No! When that suggestion was made he accused the men who proposed such honest consideration of being cowards - Cowards! mark you well that word - Cowards! - because they dared argue for honest consideration of this legislation which bound up the lives of American working men and women whose sons fight to save this representative form of Government. Cowards, because they objected to the panicky enactment of legislation that made it a crime punishable by fine and imprisonment for a grocer to allow a striking worker to have bread for his children. Cowards, because they objected to legislation that would make it a crime for any person to give a striker refuge after he had been evicted from the company tenements - or to give aid or any other benefits to a person who struck against injustice.

Yes - when some Senators suggested more careful study of the situation, and suggested that cool heads were needed at such a time, this great legislator called them cowards, and compared the Senate of the United States with a livery stable, because

men dared to plead for their principles. All this, mind you, under the guise of helping to win the war.

This measure passed the Senate and was sent to the House of Representatives. Again we see these great champions of a free America - these great legislators who cry for greater production - a more speedy conclusion of the war - demonstrating their real purpose. Were they content with the travesty on justice that had just been perpetrated in the Senate? Oh, No - - they would go farther than their colleagues across the Hill. They immediately - not even a pretext of cool and considered judgment - immediately did they announce that the Connally Bill was not sufficiently severe - its lashes did not bite deep enough into the backs of American Labor - its teeth were not sufficiently long to reach the jugular vein of the teeming thousands of American war plant workers - its stench was not strong enough to asphyxiate the fathers and mothers of the boys in our Armed Forces - - "No", they said, "but fear not - you who toil at the machines - we who shall interpret the American way of life for you - we shall fix all that." These legislators, led by the personification of reaction, immediately forced the substitution of a more far-reaching measure. Why stop at merely punishing men who actually oppose injustices - - grab everything - - and to grab everything is their avowed purpose, as is clearly evident from even a cursory examination of the present form of the Connally Bill.

It will soon be debated in the House of Representatives. There have been no hearings on it, and there will be none! No one has been allowed to offer testimony in opposition to the bill. It has been handed to the Members of the House, and the same threats, the same abuse, that was bandied about in the Senate will be used in the House in order to secure passage of this measure which sounds the death-knell to trade unionism in America.

If it becomes law then trade unionism is on its way out, and the men and women who run the factories of America - who build our homes and our cities - who create the

ships that go down to the sea - will start their journey down the hill that is marked by the blood stained feet of America's pioneers in trade unionism - along the trail up which they toiled against all manner of opposition, to achieve for us the goals of social justice which have but yesterday become our right.

If it becomes law then the Country mocks the very freedoms from fear and from want for which we are now giving our all in a bloody, horrible war. A war to make sacred the home of the common man.

Yes, I know - the cry is we are fighting a war - a war for what? For the freedom of all the peoples of the world - while our own people return to the contempt and ridicule that greeted their fathers because their hands were dirty from honest toil? A war for what? To protect the trade of Empires while our own people are deprived of food and clothing - yet are told they must not attempt to bargain for their own protection, and must never cry out against existing injustices? A war for what? To make the future world safe for all peoples? Then who are the working men and women of America? Have they no right to be regarded as entitled to that same freedom? Is there a monopoly on freedom and liberty? Are working men and women to be deprived of their right to raise a voice in their own defense? Are they to be called cowards - and worse, traitors - because they demand consideration of their wants?

I know, too, the charge that is hurled at all who plead labor's cause. Demagogue, they say - - then, Demagogue let it be, but call it what you will - so long as there is left in my body the strength to utter one sound - so long as there is left to me the strength to lift one hand - that voice and that hand shall be raised in opposition to those who would return America to another depression, and, please God, that voice and that hand shall be raised this week against this dastardly Connally-Smith Bill - - the ill-considered - ill-timed - and ill-sponsored attempt to brand American men and women as Criminals - - - to return these men and women who make up the backbone of

America - who perform its manual labors and raise its families - who love the flag and who are giving their sons and brothers and fathers to die for that flag - this latest attempt to return America's workers to the sweatshops and to condemn them to a status of less than slaves.

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