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Address to be delivered by Honorable John E. Fogarty, Member of Congress from the Second Rhode Island Congressional District, at the American Legion State Convention in Providence, Rhode Island, on Sunday afternoon, June 18, 1944.

Speeches
1944

Twenty-six years ago today the great Allied Offensive, with which you men are so familiar, had but barely begun. There was action around Montdidier and Loyal, but the Hun was still athwart the Marne. It was still to be three long, bloody, heartbreaking months before the Stars and Stripes was to fly over the roads of Saint Mihiel and the Argonne - before the great 27th was to punch out the devastating breach in the vaunted Hindenburg Line.

Five months to the day, after that beginning in the Somme Department, the great German War Machine had been crushed and you men, with your buddies, raised your eyes from the muck of the trenches to thank Almighty God for a silent noon. The Angelus, ringing over the fields of France on that great November eleventh, vied with the cheers of grateful men who knew the struggle was at an end - that the long prayed for peace was at hand. The mighty foe had been vanquished and all the little peoples of the world had been made secure. At least - so the brave men of 1918 believed.

Just eleven days ago - not far from where you men leaped ahead at the zero hour - another great offensive got under way. Today your sons look ahead eager and determined to the fields of Saint Mihiel and the Argonne - Verdun and Montmedy. They look to the day when they shall drive ahead of them as their fathers did - the same enemy their fathers crushed. They look forward to the day of peace, just as you men did - and to a secure future back home - just as you men did.

We can't know when their task will be finished. We pray fervently no longer than that same five months will have elapsed. All we can do is carry out our assignment here at home. They must do the fighting - we must do the working and the praying, until that great day dawns, and they can plan their return to a grateful homeland - to a Nation of people who will have worked to provide for them the answers to their hopes and their dreams.

Pray God they will find what they seek - a secure and happy future in a free land, governed by the people's representatives - representatives who acknowledge the duty they owe the governed - to guard and protect them - to make government function for the welfare of all.

You men of the American Legion stand in a peculiar position. The Veteran has been personally intimate with the hardships and the sufferings of war. He has fought and bled, inspired by great ideals.

You men, in your youths, listened to the great declamations of the phrase-makers - of those who prated about lofty ideals while they sought only to exploit the natural horror of war for their personal aggrandizement. You were witnesses to the whole sorry story of political opportunists, turning their backs on those noble purposes which had been your shibboleth as you marched off to war. You saw them lead the people of the Country into a false sense of security - sowing by their misdeeds the seeds of the present titanic struggle which engages every fibre of the Nation's being.

You won the last great struggle between the Nations of the World - and then saw your sacrifices ignored, your promised security turn to a bubble and explode in a frenzy of greed and the thirst for economic and political power.

There is no need of my recounting the heartbreaking details of the years which followed your great victory. It is a period all of us would rather forget.

But, because of these things, your duty to the men now under arms is so much greater. It is natural they should look to you for the advice and the leadership they need to guarantee those crimes shall not be perpetrated a second time.

In discussions of America's future we hear great use of splendid expressions such as "Free Enterprise" and "The American Way of Life". Such terms appear to be in danger of falling into the same category as the word "Philosophy", which we hear on every streetcar and in every cigar store. They are expressions to which everyone subscribes - but which no one attempts to define.

I am one of those individuals who believe the American people have no need of subtle or elaborate phrases. In fact, it is my belief, they grow suspicious of high-sounding terms. For that reason, I grow a mite uneasy when I see the concerted program to put over the thought that we need, that we must have, if our America is to be successful in the years ahead - "Free Enterprise", without anyone telling us exactly what he means by free enterprise.

It seems to me - what America must have in the years ahead - what America will have - all the phrase-makers to the contrary notwithstanding - is security. Security in an economic sense - in a military sense - and in a political sense.

As a people, we have made great promises regarding the effort we will expend in the future ordering of the world's society. There are precious few people in the Country who have not subscribed wholeheartedly to these promises. Indeed, there are many who sincerely believe we have not yet gone far enough in our commitments for a better ordering of society throughout the world.

While many are motivated in such expressions and desires by a love of the homeland of their forebears - I submit to you, the impelling thought of the vast majority of the people, as they demand of their representatives in business and political life, an open avowal of the cause of world cooperation, is a hard-headed realistic acknowledgment that only through such cooperation in the future can they hope to find security against these periodic blood-lettings which drain our homes of the finest youth in all the world. I submit to you, this acknowledgment is one founded on old-fashioned reason and is evidence of an honest belief in the universal brotherhood of man - of a sincere endeavor to take the lives of their babies out of the hands of the time-servers - and to seek in the eternal principles of truth and justice, a solution of the world's disorders.

To my way of thinking, if we are to be worthy of the day in which we live, it is not sufficient that we greet every protestation of interest in International collaboration with rounds of applause. I believe, in all sincerity, that it is more important that

we should so conduct our affairs at home that we shall render ourselves fit and able to advise and assist in the establishment of a new world. This we shall do if we make known to all the world - not by grudging admission, or in meek submission to current events - but in a bold and fearless manner - that to us - "Free Enterprise" and the "American Way of Life" means a real, deep-seated respect for the dignity of the individual American.

To the great army of returning veterans The American Way of Life will not be a bleeding recollection of a past and dead era of frontiers beset by savages and bandits - nor will it be a cold, lifeless monument to an industrial period when the individual at the loom or the machine must doff his cap in humble gratitude for whatever pittance was cast at his feet.

No - to them, as to all Americans, Free Enterprise and the American Way of Life means freedom for every individual to bring out the best that is in him; equality of opportunity with special privileges for none. It means security - it means hope - it means faith.

In addition to the millions of men under arms - there are other millions who have been called upon to bear a portion of the sacrifice which is entailed as the Nation strains its every resource to bring to a victorious conclusion the struggle which absorbs our every thought. To these millions, too, some thought must be given. They are not privileged to don the uniform of their country - but they, too, have a stake in its future.

Just as every natural resource - every ounce of industrial energy - every man and every dollar - have been called upon to win victory in Total War - so, when hostilities cease - every individual will demand the complete harnessing of our resources and abilities to win victory for Total Peace - at home and abroad - for all people, everywhere.

The men who have assaulted the beaches in the Mediterranean - in the Pacific - and in France - have been the best fed - the best clothed and the best equipped fighting men in the world's history. You men must stare in amazement at the equipment which a proud

and powerful Nation now provides for its warriors. I marvel, too, at those who, without thinking, condemn the people at home and accuse them of failure to provide properly for our soldiers, when we know it is a fact that every soldier put down overseas requires - and has received - eight and one-half tons of supplies to maintain him for the first thirty days - and one and a half tons every month thereafter.

Our dollars were loaned gladly to provide for these, our greatest men - but it wasn't made possible by money alone. Industrial engineering, yes, and in greater measure - raw sweat. Great new machinery and inventions played a part - yes - and back-breaking work and long hours, contributed their goodly share.

Bitter invective - inflammatory denunciations are directed at the great body of American working men and women. They are accused of promoting dictatorship - of grasping for limitless power - of being on the very fringe of treason - all because they manifest an outspoken interest in the future of themselves and the country they would die to defend.

There have been some sad instances of strikes - we all admit - but, in God's name - are we to impugn the character of all humans because of the faults of a few? Are we to demand the obliteration of Military rank because of the wrongful act of an officer under the stress of violent emotion - or break up our Army because we have a problem with AWOLs?

Recriminations breed nothing but bitterness - and the refusal to admit that a man with a union card can possess any decent emotion, leads only to the setting of class against class. We don't want - we can't have - that in the American Way of Life. If Free Enterprise is to function we can't have prosperity and poverty. All Americans must be embraced. All Americans must be afforded an opportunity to live decently and to prosper.

There aren't many, Thank God, who preach hatred but to them I have felt like saying - "There are hundreds of thousands of Union Cards scattered around the fox-holes

and slit trenches of Italy - and France - and the Pacific Islands."

You can't read the names on them now - they've been smeared with mud - and blood.

I have felt I should tell them - You'll be glad to know the men who owned them are dead.

I beseech you to keep your minds and your hearts free from such bitterness. America is big. It's big enough for all of us if we work together. It's so big - we'll destroy it, if we fail to work together.

We've a tremendous job to do - let's all pitch in and get it done. What we do for any one America - we do for all.

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Room 1515, House Office Bldg.,
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