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Speeches.

Address of Honorable John E. Fogarty, Representative of Second Congressional District, before Convention of Rhode Island State Branch, A.F. of L., Sunday, October 22, 1944, at the Harraganett Hotel.

It would appear -- from the runnings of some would-be statesmen -- to be next door to criminal -- to say a word of praise, for the working men and women of Rhode Island. It is "Catering to a small, noisy minority", or "a power hungry clique" to defend labor unions twenty months out of every two year period. But then, every election year we are treated to the spectacle of candidates for public office proclaiming to the four winds their great love of labor -- we have dimmed in our ears the insistence that all social progress has become an integral part of our National life -- Social progress which was torn from the grasp of the clutch of those same self-proclaimed saviors of the working class.

At the risk of being charged with making a demagogic appeal to your emotions and passions, I am glad to have here, as one of your own, to speak to you -- just as I was glad to do so last year, and the year before, and the year before that, -- just as I shall always be happy to be known as one of you.

We meet again in a war year -- pray God this will be the last wartime convention of the Rhode Island State Branch of the American Federation of Labor. But while the clouds of war hang heavy over the world, we must reaffirm our paramount purpose to get on with the winning of the war as speedily as is humanly possible.

We have a right to feel proud of the part we have played in the winning of this great struggle of men and arms. And we can take courage for the climb up the road to victory -- the road that is still steep and beset by many obstacles -- from the realization that five American labor has in the past few years caused our allies as well as horrified our enemies by the

colossal production which has been the fruit of the toil of free men - in a free country.

Glancing back for but a moment, we are in truth amazed at the great strides our Nation has made in the production of the tools of war. From small calibre pistol shells to the mightiest dreadnaughts that ever sailed the seas -- from delicate, finely balanced technical instruments to earth-shaking cannon -- our Nation has ground out, in ever increasing volume, the most superb fighting equipment; equipment which has enabled our armed forces to win victory on the field of battle.

There have been some black spots in this picture, it is true. We have exposed ourselves to criticism on some occasions, but, with all that, the Nation is proud and our Armed Forces are grateful for the tremendous job which has been done by free American labor.

When we first entered upon this world struggle -- we laid aside our differences and we settled down for the long pull with a fierce determination to see it through. Americans have never done anything in a half-hearted manner and our emotions in joining the Nation for the battle we faced were felt down deep in the heart of every working man and woman -- just as they inspired the determination and fired the courage of every man and woman in the country -- from whatever walk of life.

American labor knew we were in this thing to the finish and it determined the American Soldier -- Sailor -- and Marine would have the best in the world -- and would have it first. That we are doing the job is amply borne out by the words of our Commander-in-Chief who on Labor Day of this year declared: "American workers made possible the greatest production achievement in the world's history".

General Hap Arnold, Chief of the Army Air Forces said: "Labor delivered the goods -- the airplanes, the tanks, guns and munition. Goals

which were regarded as victories were attained and left behind".

Our own General Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, radiated from France: "From this battlefield American fighting troops send their grateful thanks to the workers of America for having made this the best equipped fighting force in all history. Each of you justly shares the credit for the tremendous successes the United Nations have gained on this important front".

And Secretary of the Navy, Forrestal, said: "The good news from every battlefield today is a tribute to the achievement of American Labor over the past year".

This praise was sincerely given for a job well done. All this praise serves as inspiration in tackling the job which is still ahead of us. In all the talk of V-E Day - in all the preparation for its observance - it would be well if we injected a word of caution. Instead of out-of-hand celebrations, it would be far more fitting if each of us said an extra prayer for the boys still out in the far Pacific, in the fox-holes and scaling the cliffs of impregnable islands - if each of us worked an extra hour and expended an extra pound of effort - because our job will be no more than half done, when the Nazi philosophy of life is finally wiped out.

Grateful, indeed, we shall be when the last gun is fired in Europe - but wild celebrations - any pause in production will actually be a dis-service to the brave men who carry our banner westward - and who are proceeding with the job of wiping out the Armies of the Japs who even now swarm over the mainland preparing for their final stand on the continent.

Only when this task shall have been completed -- only when America has thoroughly vanquished her enemies - can free labor in America return to the normal days which await us in the future of a greater and more glorious America.

For the fulfillment of our hopes in that future plans are now taking shape. The object of the planning by the greatest minds the Nation possesses can be summed up in one word - "Jobs". To guarantee that these plans do not bog down - to make certain these plans are given scope - to achieve the goal of a better America for all Americans - will be the constant objective of the working men and women of the Country.

The immediate post-war future will not be all milk and honey - there will be many difficulties - there will be set-backs. But we have overcome obstacles before - we shall do so again - but win we must!

There are ever-present those who just before election day pose as the champions of the working man and woman - they would point out the path we must follow if we would avoid complete destruction. They are those who assail our ears over the radio and over the public platform - and assault our eyes in the columns of the daily press, with their predictions of dire disaster should we continue to support the policies - the philosophy of government - which have brought to free labor in America an honorable place in the economic life of our land.

Yes - they tell us now they love us - and but a few days ago, those same interests were heaping ridicule and abuse on labor. Everything foul, everything mean, was laid at the feet of labor. No man who dared represent himself as a friend of labor, could entertain any noble motive. No man who dared to raise his voice in opposition to attacks on labor could be a patriot or even kindly disposed toward his fellow man.

I say to you - Beware of these new-born lovers. They come now in their shining armor. They would be your champions in the battle of life. Yet their records during the past months - during the years which are blood red in the minds of every one of us - reek with the insidious opposition of

every social reform which was intended to make life a little brighter for the man or woman who toiled at a machine, worked with his tools, or sweated in a foundry.

To speak of the past - to recall instances of bread lines - of soup kitchens - of apple warehouses - of veterans who bled for their country, only to be driven up Pennsylvania Avenue at the point of bayonet - all this is demagogic and cheap. All this is catering and appealing to the baser emotions of man and woman - man and woman who hungered - who cried - who hoarded scraps to feed young ones for whose future they often despaired.

But for those suddenly emerged buffaloes who will broaden Social Security and Unemployment Compensation - who will, they swear it - out do the New Deal - for them to scavenge for self-serving statements out of the record of the past - that is not cheap or demagogic - that is not catering to the baser emotions - not that - that comes under the head of enlightenment.

They scream now in mock horror when a vote-grubber from the South or West threatens to shut our plants. They didn't scream in any kind of horror, although God knows the textile workers did, when the interests they still represent tore the machinery off the floors of our mills and rushed truckloads after truckloads of looms and spinning machinery to the South - the South against which they are now up in arms. Why did they go to the South - why do they still oppose progress here? For one and the same reason - a cheap labor market.

They fled New England then - did you hear any veteran GOP legislator raise his voice at that time? - they'd flee again if the promise of big profits through the exploitation of cheap labor were still present.

They scream against the President and his Administration - they

may be that go if free Government is to be retained. But what better evidence can there be of free Government, than the fact of the present campaign. They tell you you'll starve, just as they told you grass would grow in the streets of our cities, if Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected in 1932. They say he is afraid of the future - the man who gave America its future, when the Nation faced nothing better than Hooverville. They tell you to vote for him is to vote against your own best interests. This, from the very interests who demanded the election of Hoover, Landon and Willkie. How can they expect to be received in good faith? How can they expect the working men and women in Rhode Island to forget those are the same ones who defended Hoover's depression and spent weeks and columns of valuable time and space, in denunciation of Social Security and Unemployment Compensation; who fought like tigers against the enactment of a State Labor Relations Act, against an Anti-Injunction Statute, and, despite their present pronouncements - in spite of their protestations of love for labor - they fought desperately against every single effort at social progress in our little State of Rhode Island - in fact they refused to accept this positive progress as a fact until it had been forced down their throats by outraged public opinion.

Yes - they're back again - just as they were two years ago - just as they will be two years hence - proving their love for the working man. They guarantee the fulfillment of all our desires - the gratification of all our wishes - but once November '72 will have passed into the realm of history - labor will once again become the poor relative - the problem which must be solved - the progressive group which is inimical to the best interests of the land.

I am confident - I am positive - the men and women of Rhode Island will not be deceived for one moment, by their outmoded campaign tactics - their

47
vicious invective - their willful screaming of hate. Such scavenging for
cotes went out with the North-light Parade.

We refuse to stay our onward march - Free Labor in America will not
turn back - and on November 7th, Free American Labor will not take any chances
on the promises of its former enemies or on the vows of undying affection
from its needy born lovers.

Eileen:

8 copies of this speech were made - original
and seven carbons. There are two carbons
here. The others were distributed:

Orig. and 1 copy to John
one copy to "Journal"
" " " Cranston "Herald"
" " " Pawtuxet Valley "Times"
" " " R. I. Free Press

1 sent to Labor Press, Federal
St., Worcester Mass
10/20/44 'E' Spec. Del.