

Address delivered by Honorable John E. Fogarty, Member of Congress from the Second Rhode Island Congressional District, at the American Federation of Labor Convention, Narragansett Hotel, Providence, R. I., on Sunday afternoon, April 8, 1945.

WEAN
3:30 - 4:00

We live in a day that witnesses the greatest positive effort of all time to produce an honest understanding among the Nations of the world, to the end that peace may be made a permanent fixture.

Men of all classes and creeds and colors are devoting their talents to the attainment of this objective. From the elder statesmen of Nations, drawing on their vast store of knowledge, accumulated through the years, to the young High School students expressing the principles of freedom and justice which have recently been taught them, we see a concentrated effort to promote a feeling of cooperation among men - in order that there need be no more of these carnivals of death which have from time to time throughout the centuries bathed Nations and continents in a sea of blood - and left sorrow and destitution in their wake.

We can thank our God that this is so. The object justifies all the attention it receives. There could be no more laudable purpose. White crosses which dot the countryside of Europe and the greensward and volcanic ash of Pacific Islands are for us a silent pledge that we shall not fail in this great effort.

But there is, part and parcel of this great purpose, a job to be done at home. A job, without which, all our great international efforts cannot succeed. The one-ness of purpose which we seek to establish among all the Nations of the world - the prayerful desire for peace and security among all peoples - must have its solid foundation in the security and happiness of the American people - of the American working man and woman - or all the plans of all the great statesmen of this earth will be but words and phrases - lofty of sentiment, but with a foundation in sand.

The Brotherhood of man - and its attainment - is the primary purpose of the era in which we live. The peoples of the world realize they must join hands if their mutual security is to be achieved and maintained.

In America this necessity is plain to labor - perhaps more so than to any other group of our population. The working man can never forget the importance of collective action. His efforts to win the right to bargain collectively are told in the blood and tears of the pioneers in the Labor movement. Those efforts have resulted, in our time, in the emancipation of American Labor; in a recognition of the Labor Union as an American Institution. Those efforts have finally brought an admission of the dignity of the individual working man and woman, and, today, Labor in the United States occupies a position which its pioneers feared might never be attained.

Gone are the shackles which held the laborer to a life of poverty and suffering. Gone are the social and legal restrictions of the past which forced factory workers to labor under insufferable conditions at starvation wages, while the Barons of Industry grew fat and soft on their ill-gotten spoils.

To join a labor union was regarded, not so many years ago, as an illegal act. It was considered a conspiracy, and the machinery of the criminal law was set in motion frequently to blast the efforts of working men to organize and bargain collectively. Organizers were thrown in jail, and skilled mechanics who dared signify an intention to join a union were turned into the streets - often in a one-industry town - to watch their families grow thin with hunger while they tramped the roads and lanes looking for odd-jobs and scraps of food.

Not so long ago factory owners were known to condemn an entire community to death, while the industry moved on to fresher fields, rather than permit their employees to band together for the purpose of advancing their economic condition.

We have been privileged to see an end to all that. There is no longer the Bosses' goons, with lead pipe and rifle to cow, and often to club, the employees into submission. The yell-dog contract is a thing of the past, as is the vicious injunction which so often forced tears from the eyes of the blind goddess.

Yes, we live in a great age. We have seen the enactment of laws which have made it an honor to work for a living. Laws, founded on public policy, which have acknowledged the right of the laboring man and woman to join an association of his own choosing. Those

laws were not dictated by any special group of citizens. They were the outgrowth of an enlightened public opinion, a public opinion that had come to recognize the fact that we are all one in this society of ours; that we succeed or fail together; that it behooves all of us to recognize the rights of our brothers - and to protect and foster those rights - whether our brothers wear overalls or white collars.

With the winning of this honored position by Labor, there has been a corresponding increase in the responsibility of Labor to the community. Never before in the history of any nation did Labor have presented to it a greater opportunity for service, and the rendering of that service must henceforth be our primary concern.

Though it might be referred to by many names - the goal of Labor, of Industry, and of the public in general is one and the same. We all aspire to security - and every man directs his efforts to the winning of that security.

We who are members of trade unions are conscious of the fact that we have come a long way since the days of the stretch-out, the "Dollar-a-Day" standard, and the company store. With the betterment in the economic condition of the working man and woman of America, there has been a corresponding rise in the standard of living of all the people of the country. We are, in truth, through the joint efforts of all, gradually approaching the goal of security, toward which we strive, and the Labor Unions of America can and will contribute in great measure to the winning of our objective.

Perhaps the pursuit of happiness will never cease to be a life-long pursuit. We don't deceive ourselves that we shall soon reach perfection. We know we still have a long way to go, if, in fact, we can ever be content and relax in our efforts.

But there is one great stride we can take - there is one method by which we can accomplish a great deal; that is, by fostering a spirit of genuine cooperation among Labor, Management and Government. By such an activity Labor will be honestly discharging its responsibility to the public, and Management will be discharging its responsibility to all members of the community.

We are all familiar with the wave of unity which swept the country immediately after Pearl Harbor. As a people we were one, and there was but one voice ringing through the land. There was no evidence of pulling and hauling; instead, there was an instant realization that without complete cooperation the goals of production which we set for ourselves could not be reached. That those goals were reached and surpassed, needs no assertion - the proof is scattered all over this earth.

We witness now, in some quarters, the beginning of the struggle for advantage in the post-war period. There is evidence that some are no longer interested in maintaining that spirit of cooperation, hoping, in the period of cut-backs in war production, that trade unions can be discredited - their members set to competing with each other for employment in a sharply curtailed labor market - while industry goes about the business of gorging itself in a civilian market bursting at the seams with pent-up demands.

This attitude is not a general one, we know. We have recently seen the finest evidence of Labor's desire to cooperate with industry in the statement issued jointly by William Green, Philip Murray, and Eric Johnston. This is a demonstration of an honest attempt to recognize and help solve each other's problems, not for the benefit of trade unions, or of industry, alone, but in the interest of benefitting the entire country through the promotion of continuous full employment and full production.

The alternative to that cooperation is a regulated economy - an economy in which all independence both of industry and labor will disappear, and the individual will be submerged in a collectivist state.

This is not alarmist talk - it is a fact borne out by all the evidence which is there to be seen.

Many remember the days when men walked the streets, out of work because the mill had closed. Men patiently waited for "times to get better" - 'til there was a blast of the mill whistle, or smoke was seen emerging from the stack as the boilers were fired.

Many remember when they thought depressions were unavoidable, when panics were occasional phenomena through which we were compelled to struggle as best we could.

It was revulsion at such conditions that finally produced the day in which we live - which finally produced the conception that every man has a right to live in security - to raise a family - to own his home - to educate his children, and to be free from fear of want in his old age.

We have seen the awakening of a new concept of Government - it is no longer a fantastic thing that existed apart from us, and sought merely to guarantee that we should not be molested in the enjoyment of our daily lives. We have seen government come to mean more than a safeguard of our individual liberties and possessions. We have come to look upon government as a positive force in the winning of economic betterment for all the people. It is no longer the servant of special interests - to speak or be kept silent as the interests of the ruling group might dictate. Government has become a positive force in the daily life of every one of us.

Under the stress of war, there is scarcely a phase of our existence that is free from Governmental restriction and regulation. We readily agree that restrictions in the interest of the proper prosecution of the war are necessary. They are, in a sense, welcome, although we strain at the leash and wish we were rid of them.

However, there is a vast difference between the controls we are forced to accept in order to achieve a speedy victory in war, and those controls which would exist were the Federal Government to attempt to regulate our economic life after victory has been won.

I have heard many of the arguments advanced in support of such a program. I can find no sympathy with them, for, whether we continued to call our country a Democracy, or gave it some other high-sounding title, we would have seen an end to the America we love - we would have seen an end to the liberty and freedom, of which as Americans we are all so proud.

I admit it is easy to listen to the explanation that such regulation is intended primarily to protect the working man; that it is necessary only to have a little regulation, and that we need not go as far as did Fascism and Nazism and Communism. But it is hard for me to believe that once having tasted the drug of such regulation - a government would deny

itself the thrill of increasing its power. Regulation begets regulation, and once embarked on such a planned economy, we would soon find ourselves fast in the meshes of a genuine collectivist state.

This, none of us want. We all affirm our determination to fight to the death against such a possibility.

But, there is only one way to avoid it - and that is by the promotion of and maintenance of a prosperous and happy America. That can be had through full production and full employment at high wages. That goal can be achieved only through the cooperation of Labor, Management and Government.

We fight for abroad - we struggle to maintain at home - the Political Democracy which is ours. If that Political Democracy is to survive the pressure of the years which will follow the end of the war, it will do so only in the sweet-smelling air of economic democracy. Political Democracy will not continue to stand side by side with an economic Oligarchy. We shall have to go all the way. It is our responsibility, in part, to determine that it shall be the American way.

We anticipate a curtailment in production of the tools of war. We also look forward to the day when our Armed Forces will be demobilized and the veterans of this war will return to seek a steady job in the America they have made secure.

These veterans will not be content to stand around and wait until times get better. Nor will the men and women who have worked in the shops and the mills to produce the guns and munitions, the ships and the cannon, the clothes and the medicines for those veterans, be satisfied to stand by a cold hearth listening - listening for that blast of the factory whistle that never comes.

Those veterans will want jobs - those war workers will want jobs. The merchants, the business men, the professional people of the community all will want jobs. All will be interested in the maintenance of a steady level of income, and it will be hard on the man in Labor or Industry or Government who attempts to still their fears with promises that times will get better.

There are no magic formulas I know. There will be hardship in some cases no matter what we do, but the job can be done if we bend our efforts to getting it done.

Most essential is an attitude of good-will. Those who continue to think in terms which harrassed our grandfathers contribute less than nothing to the success of our task. One big handicap is the ever-present desire of some to place emphasis on the points wherein Labor and Management disagree, instead of emphasizing the great field in which there is accord. This is a confession of distrust and lack of faith. We know there are those who won't admit it can be done - but there were also those who refused to think the train could ever span the continent or that planes would get off the ground.

In the steady March of Progress, American has seen such men fall by the way. We shall see them fall again.

Trade Unions know and value their freedom. They know they can have it only in a free America. They are determined to contribute to the building of a greater America. The Labor Unions can and will help in establishing a prosperous and a free America - where all can share in the products and the benefits of our great industrial system. We are determined that our Country shall continue to be the envy of the world.

John E. Fogarty, M. C.,
Room 1515, House Office Bldg.,
Washington, D. C.