

47th Annual Convention R. I. St. Branch, AFH,
Crown Hotel, Sunday, Oct. 26, 1947. JEF's address

The late Franklin D. Roosevelt once said "This generation has a rendezvous with destiny".

It seems that each succeeding day brings that truth into sharper focus and the time grows exceedingly short, before we shall have decided whether we ~~shall~~ make that rendezvous as men of honor and courage and strength - or cowardly consign the future to greater dangers and horrors than those which we have known.

I have been privileged to sit among the lawmakers of this Nation as a representative of the people of my state.

I have been privileged to travel in foreign lands - to talk with many people there - and with statesmen and with soldiers. And I say to you, with the utmost sincerity, the decisions which are presently being formulated - by our Government and ~~by~~ ⁱⁿ the last analyses by the people of the United States will affect all of us - for good or evil - for many years to come.

It may ~~would~~ be that we could compromise with elements which are shaping our destiny - and in time pass from this mortal sphere leaving the fear and worry for others. But generations yet unborn ~~will~~ ^{would} curse us for having damned them to the slavery ~~they accepted~~ ^{their fathers accepted} in exchange for ~~relief~~ bread and clothing and shelter.

~~The~~ Your Government is coming to grips with this problem. It ~~shall~~ ^{will} soon be decided just what ~~action~~ ^{steps} we are to take relative to action in Europe and elsewhere abroad. But it is of great importance that you men - as representatives of the great body of working men and women ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ the land make yourselves familiar with the situation and make your voices heard so that the decision will not be that of ~~your~~ ^{officials} government alone - but will have the wholehearted support of all Americans.

Other generations of laborers have played a prominent part in the dev-

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elopment of our ~~great~~ country, They fought against what seemed impossible conditions and insurmountable obstacles to win for you and me the right to attend such gatherings as this one today. They were cursed and ~~shamed~~ abused - shot at and stoned. Many died in order to establish the fundamental rights of the individual worker to organize and exercise a voice in the conditions under which he labored.

Labor unions have ever been in the forefront along every ~~step~~ step on the road to social justice in the United States. We have a right - and a duty to continue in the forefront - in the never-ending struggle for justice - social, economic and political - throughout ~~the world~~ this world which has shrunk to such a small size in our ~~own~~ day.

It was the trade union which brought an end to child labor, the sweat shop, and banished the company store from the textile mill villages.

It was the trade union which produced decent working conditions in the factories and in the shops; which ~~drove~~ drove away the spectre of hunger and misery for the man injured at his employment - or forced to walk the streets through economic forces beyond his control.

It was the trade union which brought about a new conception of a decent wage and its attendant decent living conditions - and through that decent wage scale contributed immeasurably to the high standard of living which all Americans now enjoy.

Industry, through its scientists, engineers and technologists have accomplished seeming miracles in the production and distribution of the good things of life. But, without a decent income for the family wage earner, then all the instruments and gadgets of present day society might as well have ~~remained~~ *been left* on the drawing board for there would not have been enough consumers to justify throwing the switch on the first machine

You and I

~~We~~ have lived through a period when the Trade Union Movement in the United States came of age. We have seen the working men and women of the country come to occupy honored places in the ~~democratic~~ ~~system~~ industrial scheme. ~~Wax~~

We had confidently expected that Labor would go on to greater heights playing its proper role in our democratic system, contributing to the development of an even higher standard of living for all Americans and inspiring the little people ~~of the~~ everywhere with hope and faith in the ultimate success ~~for~~ of world peace and freedom.

We have expected - and ~~continue~~ continue to expect - that Labor in the United States will do more than its share in helping with the reconstruction of our world. But we are as certain as we are that the sun will rise in the morning that we can offer the world little - if we confine our activities to pouring out billions abroad - while we allow real democracy to die at home.

The Labor movement in the United States can be the world's great symbol of Sanity, Justice and Social Progress, and anyone who conspires to destroy Labor in the United States conspires deliberately to destroy the effectiveness of the American brand of Democracy.

The events of last Spring offered no encouragement to Labor in the United States or disciples of democracy abroad. It should be the firm purpose of all who believe in progress and social justice to wipe from the statute books the insidious creation of reactionaries which parades under the name of ^{the} Taft-Hartley Law.

That product of passion and viciousness can and has been criticised

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By intelligent men in ~~every~~^{all} walks of life. It can be attacked from many angles. It was poorly conceived. It is loosely drawn and it is impossible of administration.

It was the result of a wave of passion and hate at a time when every ~~possible means~~ available means was being employed to saddle Labor with ^{responsibility for} all the difficulties and problems which best ~~the~~^{our} economy of ~~our~~ country. It was ground through a Congress not fully familiar with its language or its implications. Its glaring shortcomings were coming too light before the ~~presses of the nation~~ ink was dry on the final draft of the law.

It was offered by its sponsors as an ideal measure for the promotion of industrial harmony. It was sloganed as the bill to restore sanity and calm to labor-management relations. Yet, there is scarcely a business man or a labor man in the Country who can predict with any degree of certainty what its effect will be from one day to the next.

Its champions - in the House and in the Senate - have spent the summer at touring the country - speaking ~~before~~ conventions, ~~dinners~~ banquets, clubs and committees; in ~~stadium~~ stadium and ball park; in big cities and at the cross roads - defending their brain child and loudly protesting its great value to the industrial life of the country.

I submit to you in all seriousness, if this measure were half the great masterpiece they claimed during the debate in Congress, then it would stand on its own feet and would not need this great outpouring of words from its apologists.

I am sure you will ~~recall~~ recall that these men who claimed sole credit for the Taft-Hartley Act stoutly denied that any lobbyists or trade associations of high priced legal talent ~~and~~ had anything to do with drafting it. Yet all during their incantations of the past few

months it has been extremely difficult, if not impossible, for any two of them to agree on the wording, the meaning or the application of the act.

They have confessed confusion. They have pleaded ignorance. ~~But they~~ *and we deny*
that they can claim
~~have never once claimed~~ good faith. They have disputed the interpretation of lawyers. They have denounced the decision of administrators. Even the officers charged directly with its administration have found it impossible to agree on the meaning of the act - and columnists and editors have predicted internal warfare in the agency ~~re~~ charged with the enforcement of its provisions.

All this from a piece of legislation which was announced as the harbinger of industrial harmony - but which has resulted instead in industrial disgust and disappointment.

With Taft criticising the decision of the omnipotent counsel which is the creature of his pen; Hartley denouncing the decision of the Board which over-ruled the great counsel - and Hoffman crying that the legislation is too weak and predicting more stringent provisions, how in the name of Justice is the poor business man or union man to know where we are going from here.

~~This is not only right and proper but what we should address~~

This legislation should be repealed - not merely because it strips Labor of rights which we regard as fundamental - but because it is a ~~black~~ brand which proclaims labor as uncooperative and unsympathetic to the principle of Private Enterprise; and because, regardless of the claims of its sponsors, it provides, ready at hand, for unscrupulous employers, the means for ~~effect~~ destroying the effectiveness of the Trade Union Movement.

This legislation denies that Labor can contribute to the development

of what we have come to know as the American Way of Life - ~~yes~~

Yet, Labor is the stoutest champion of the democratic system.

Labor is most keenly aware of the dangers that lie in Totalitarianism. Labor knows that only through the success of Private Enterprise can it hope to be free. We know well - from the experience of Labor in other lands - that Totalitarianism, under whatever name it parades - brings with it the complete control and domination of all segments of the country's economy - Labor and Industry alike.

It is for this reason that Labor is loud in its protest against encroachment in normal times - on the freedom of industry and the freedom of American Labor.

Not only has Labor been diligent in furthering American domestic ~~xxx~~ progress, it has also been vigilant in the constant fight against foreign ideologies.

The history of the way years contains a brilliant chapter describing the cooperation of American Labor in supplying the tools of war which were necessary ^{to} overcome our enemies abroad. Never before in history had the industrial machine of any Nation poured forth such a tremendous volume of material and equipment ~~which~~ which were the sinews of war.

Since we have done this for our country - faithfully and well - we expect to be called upon to do more in the troublous days which are ahead.

I am confident of the part American Labor will play in the struggle to maintain the honor of our country and the survival of the democratic system.

It will be to the everlasting honor of the Labor movement if we respond as never before, to produce and produce and produce - to make more and more of everything - faster than ever before. In doing this

we shall be contributing - as free men in a free society - to the establishment of a smoothly running economy here at home. We shall be helping improve the standard of living for all Americans - and we shall be making it ~~imp~~ possible for our statesmen to offer to the desperate peoples abraod - moral encouragement and hope - as well as material resources.

We shall be helping to win for our country - and generations which are to follow us - not the servile obedience of people we have fed - but the genuine respect and loyalty of ~~human~~ creatures of God whom we have helped to help themselves. - ~~the same as we do for ourselves and for the people of our faith in our own hearts~~