

Address delivered by Hon. John E. Fogarty, MC at the Tenth Annual Convention of the Rhode Island State Industrial Union Council, CIO, at the Narragansett Hotel, Providence, Sunday December 7, 1947

I am happy to appear before you, members of the CIO, to speak to you about matters which are of concern to you and to me - as citizens of this great Republic - and as representatives of the great body of working men and women in Rhode Island.

Upon receiving the kind invitation of your committee - affording me the honor of addressing you men and women - I pondered over what I might say which would justify my occupying so much of your time.

I dislike - just as I am certain you do - listening to those who are determined to remind us of all that is wrong with the world. But I have to admit - along with every thinking person - that I find a plenitude of depressing items in the day to day news reports - and little that is cause for jubilation or confidence.

There was a time when the report of some crisis or other - at home or abroad - was enough to cause all of us to halt in our tracks, pray to Heaven for guidance, and strive to do whatever we could as individuals to avert the effects of that crisis.

But in our time, it seems that one crisis follows so swiftly on the heels of its predecessor that we run the risk of growing callous - and of consigning our fellow citizen - of the United States and of the world - to whatever limbo or hell might be the consequence of the plight into which he has fallen.

Not many months ago the earth trembled to the beat of marching men and shook to the crashing thunder of death-dealing machines. The oceans of the globe churned with the fury of racing men of war. All civilized society



feared and prayed.

The cream of the youth of the world was laid on the altar of sacrifice. The wealth of nations was poured down the rat-hole created by that conflict of arms.

At home, our previous concept of government's place in our daily lives was set to one side while we accepted regulations and restrictions - many discouraging - all at least irritating. Forests were felled. Mountains were levelled. Our Natural resources, of all kinds, shrunk to new lows - all in the interest of winning the most deadly of all deadly wars.

In those days we looked forward to an era of peace - confident in the knowledge that God was on the side of our banner - that victory would be ours - and that through the efforts of our brave youth, peace would be restored to a world which would have learned - at what a cost - to live as brothers - or at least as neighbors in a friendly community of Nations.

We were kept buoyed up in those days by faith in our strength and ability to meet and surmount all difficulties - and a hope that there would never again be the need for this outpouring of our wealth in men and resources.

As we look about us today - we are shocked by the realization that this faith which was our great strength in time of trouble - to some is now becoming a shaky memory; and the hope which was our guide through the wilderness of war - is now rapidly fading into the mist.

If we lose that faith in the strength and ability of the people of America and their sacred institutions; if we allow that hope of peace and security to die - then we shall have to concede that the last war indeed



wrote finish to the noble aspirations and ideals of civilized society.

These were the thoughts that filled my mind as I pondered what I might say to you men and women. And I realized, that if I were to say anything of importance - it must be something that would help to give new fire to your faith and added support to your hope that all would yet be well with the world.

Then it occurred to me that there is no greater example of the faith we need and the hope we still have than this meeting of yours.

You men and women are not a pollyglot crew - drawn together by the shrill shrieks of some spell-binder who pretends to offer a panacea for all your ills and worries.

You are the duly elected and appointed representatives of a great trade union organization. You are the delegates chosen by the rank and file of the Congress of Industrial Organizations in the State of Rhode Island; chosen to meet here to examine the past and plan for the future - and the faith and the hope of every one of those working men and women rests with the manner in which you conduct your affairs.

You do not meet with the purpose of brow-beating and defying your government. But you do meet to plan the methods whereby you can convince your Government that it must give heed to the pleas of every American and take what action is necessary to satisfy their natural and just demands.

You know there are members of your unions who find it difficult - yes, practically impossible - to make both ends meet. Squeezed between constantly rising prices and the shrinking value of a dollar, many working men and women worry from pay day to pay day - playing the grocer off against



the doctor - and one creditor against another.

You know the working men and women are involved in a never-ending search for substitutes for the daily table - while the once great cry of a political party "Two chickens in every pot" has been replaced by the old Yankee slogan "Eat it up, Patch it up, Make it do".

While we plead for some relief from, or protection against still-rising prices - we are given handouts containing all the old shibboleths such as rugged individualism and freedom of initiative.

We are told that eating less will cure our economic system - when every housewife knows her greatest problem is to avoid the squawks that come from the family facing the same dish over and over again.

We were assured just a few months back that the operation of the basic laws of economics would restore plenty at low prices. But today these disciples of special privilege insist it is better that the meek should suffer than have any blasphemy of their great god or profit.

These same promoters assured the country there would be a return to normalcy if they were entrusted with the reins of government. The normalcy we returned to is one we believed had long since been abandoned as unfair - unjust and un-American.

For years we boasted about our constantly rising standard of living, but it would seem that some politicians desire to call a halt while the chosen few feather their nests in anticipation of depression.

They scream loud and long that we must have no legislation which smacks of what they term "Planned Economy" - but their day-to-day actions smack of what I term "Planned Boom and Bust".



They offer as a cure for our economic ills, a higher level of production. At the same time they demonstrate their confidence in and affection for the working people of the country with a Taft-Hartley frame of mind. They maintain the country cannot succeed in its efforts to rise from its present difficulties without the full cooperation of American labor. Yet, they refuse to remove the viciousness of the Taft-Hartley Law; refuse to raise the minimum wage; refuse to extend Social Security coverage; refuse to restrict speculation and keep profits within decent bounds. The only thing affirmative they offer - are more and tighter regulations on the normal operations of Labor Unions.

To this type of governmental thinking you men and women must direct your plans. Your members expect it of you and you break faith with them if you abandon the constant struggle for social justice in this great nation.

Yes - you represent a great Democratic institution. Your meeting here, in this - your annual convention - is proof that Democracy is still alive and thriving. Danger does not lie in meetings like this. But there is danger - if you fail to meet and plan and strive.

You have much to be proud of in the fact that you are members of labor unions. Unions have honestly and honorably striven to advance the lot of their members - and in doing so they have advanced the position of all the people of the country.

The history of the development of the trade Union movement in our country is one and the same with the history of the social progress of our country.

It is true that we have run into difficulties in recent months. We have been confronted with legislation definitely hostile to the normal growth



and development of trade unions. We are faced now with economic distortions which reduce our wages - at a time when we hoped we could make it possible for the working families to enjoy more and more of the great wealth of this nation.

We are face to face also with crises abroad which seem to grow in intensity from day to day. It is beyond the shadow of a doubt that these developments abroad will have their effect on us. We may be called upon to make new sacrifices. The day of our recovery from the dislocations of war may be postponed. But - we cannot allow ourselves to be discouraged - to lose faith - to lose hope. Nor can any one of us afford to contemplate the notion - "I am not my brother's keeper".

And, it is in just such meetings as this that the greatest hope of our survival and success remains.

It is not true that Labor Unions must remain hamstrung by repressive legislation. Nor is it true that housewives must reconcile themselves to the discouraging prospect of stretching fifty cents over the area once covered by a dollar.

If you men and women go back to your local organizations and awaken your members to the needs of the hour; if you plan intelligently and well; if you will make certain that all your members have all the facts; then, you will be fortified by the knowledge that you are right and have the enthusiastic support of your members, you will have an alert citizenry willing and able to cope with and conquer the many problems which face us.

Labor Unions have faced far graver economic problems in the past. They have faced at least equally hostile National Legislatures. The example of the victories which have been won in the past, in both fields, can be an



inspiration to all of us - to win future victories through our resort to the democratic process. We can exclude from our ranks those who seek to destroy these processes through an appeal to our pressing needs. We not only can - we must prevent the creeping paralysis which strikes democratic action when Communism begins to exert its strength.

In other lands we see activity which approaches rebellion against organized authority - and boldly proclaims the promise of open civil war.

A philosophy of Government which is unalterably opposed to everything we hold dear seeks to sow discord among people who are hungry - ill-fed and ill-clothed. Promising to make every man a king - but actually providing means for National suicide. What we once referred to as the spectre of Communism has become a diabolical actuality seeking to destroy man's faith in God - and pride in his country, his family and his friends.

Hungry and cold people - in whom the fire of national pride once flamed - are the best fuel for the fires of fanatical Communism.

People - just like ourselves - separated from us only by a difference in the language which the tongue finds handy - clamor for bread - eager to preserve the dignity God gave them - and willing to fight against the evil influence which would destroy them. They know - as well as we know - there is only one source to which they can look for the help they must have.

If we fail them - because we consider our own problems OUR ONLY concern - then their lamp goes out. All the boasts we have made about the greatness of our Democratic system mean nothing to them. They lose the strength to fight against what would destroy their independence; they care nothing for their God-given dignity; they will accept their daily bread from whatever source it comes; willingly accepting the bonds of Social and Economic slavery.



As Americans, we have a great opportunity. We are not alms-givers but we are the champions of a great cause. We have it within our means to prove that Democracy can function for the good of all. We can demonstrate what we have been able to do. We can demonstrate what great promise the future holds. We can contribute to the restoration of sanity in the world by helping our friends to help themselves.

The efforts we have applied in helping our fellow Americans rise to a position where they can enjoy the fullness of a free country, we can direct toward helping our fellow men in other lands to know and appreciate the blessings which are ours.

We don't have to do this. There are many who sincerely believe we shouldn't. But I am confident that every soldier who fought in Europe - every parent of a soldier who crossed the ocean - prays God - and appeals to statesmen - to take whatever steps may be necessary or advisable - to guarantee, so far as mortals have it in their power - that we need erect no more long rows of small white crosses in any foreign land.