1917

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THE NEED OF UNITY AND THE DANGER OF DIVISION IN THE IMPENDING CRISIS.

Address Delivered by Samuel M. Wilson, of Lexington, Kentucky, Bar, Before the Board of Commerce, Wednesday, March 7th, 1917.

Mr Chairman and Gentlemen of the Members' Council of the Board of Commerce

It has not been an easy task for me to shape my thoughts for this occasion. When asked, a day or two ago, what would be the subject of my remarks, I could think of no better way to define it than by suggesting as the topic, "The Need of Unity and Danger of Division in the Impending Crisis."

The truth is, we no longer face a crisis, the crisis is upon us. Extraordinary as the statement may sound, war, in my judgment, is inevitable and a formal declaration of war by this country is a
The thought I would bring you today is the "Need of Unity" in this portentous crisis. The underlying idea is embodied in Kentucky's motto, "United we stand, divided we fall;" and, also, in the inscription borne by the Great Seal of the nation, *E pluribus unum*—One out of many. We are no longer a disjointed or loosely bound aggregation of confederated sovereign states. Since Lee's surrender at Appomattox, the American Republic has been in fact, as well as in theory, an united and unified nation, henceforth and forever, one and indivisible. It has become and exists today a world power, occupying an honorable place in the great family of nations and easily first and foremost among the free nations of the world. America is no longer insular and isolated, nor is it possible for this country to live its own life in a condition of detachment, or separate or apart from the other nations of the world.

A Nation's Strength.

We are not to be reminded that in union there is strength or that "a threefold cord is not quickly broken." Before the Civil War began, Mr. Lincoln had propounded to all America the solemn truth that a house divided against itself can not stand. In the religious world this truth had been known and recognized for centuries, but he it was who first gave to it the force of a political axiom. Lincoln truly declared that this nation could not endure half free and half slave, and today we are beginning to realize that it can not endure half American and half Prussian. It is a fundamental principle of the American people that the minority have an inalienable right to be heard, but hand in hand with this principle goes the equally important principle that the majority must rule, and that no minority, big or little, should be permitted to usurp the power or prerogatives of the majority. I would be the last to say
a word or to lift a finger looking to the curtailment or restriction of free speech. Freedom of speech is the inalienable birthright of every American, however humble or obscure, and whether in private or in public, in the home or on the street, in private social gatherings or in public assemblages, it would be an abdication of one of the dearest rights for which this government was established and for which its people have always stood, if in the passion of the moment we should allow ourselves to stifle or to throttle the utmost freedom of speech. At the same time, it would be the grossest sort of a wrong to permit a small, inconspicuous and almost contemptible minority, by their ceaseless clamor, to pretend to voice the real inbred and abiding sentiments of this great American people.

We are not met today for the purpose of indulging in wholesale or intemperate denunciation. It is not a time for crimination or recrimination. Much as I disapprove and condemn the obstructive tactics and discreditable conduct of that pitiful little handful of United States Senators, obsessed with arrogant egotism, who have the shameless hardihood to call themselves true Americans, in deliberately balking the will of an overwhelming majority of faithful representatives of the country at large, my quarrel today is not so much with their persistent and perverse assertion of what they do not want, as it is with our own inexcusable failure to make known hitherto in unmistakable, universal and emphatic terms, what it is we, in common with the overwhelming majority of the American people, do want, in the present emergency. We have seemingly been so tolerant and long-suffering, after our good-natured, amiable American fashion, with the noisy minority, that some, perhaps, have even begun to doubt whether the spokesmen for this insignificant minority did not really voice the prevailing sentiment of the whole people. In these circumstances, as it seems to me, the duty is laid upon us to correct any such wrong impression, which may have gained currency, and to disabuse the minds of the petty politicians and the false prophets of our own land, as well as the intriguing emissaries of foreign countries who have been studiously and unscrupulously striving to sow the seeds of dissension and discord among us.
Fear Foes Within.

What America has to fear is not enemies from without but foes from within. It is imperative that we guard at this time against "malice domestic" equally as zealously and carefully as against "foreign levy."

We have some undesirable citizens in this country who might leave their country for their country's good. They are, however, in a hopeless minority, and, while we need not fear them, they can do infinite mischief, if not checked. In this grave crisis, we are not called upon to convert these disloyal individuals from the grievous error of their way. It is far more important that we take counsel of ourselves. It is a time for self-examination. What the loyal sons of America need is a rebaptism of Americanism—not in name or outward seeming alone, but in truth and reality; in spirit, in purpose, in thought, in sentiment, and, above all, in prompt and vigorous action.

The United States has been truly called the Melting-Pot of the Nations. It has exhibited truly a prodigious power of absorption and assimilation, but this power, it is submitted, is not unlimited. The Anglo-Norman or older Scandinavian stock, which finds its best representatives here in our own beloved Commonwealth, is still prepotent and predominant and it behooves this unadulterated stock of genuine Americans, now and always in the ascendent on this continent, to vindicate its right to control the destinies of America and to give to all the world an impressive demonstration of its right to rule. From this little gathering, on this day, let us flash the message throughout the confines of Kentucky, and, from Kentucky throughout the whole broad land, and thence throughout the world, that forbearance on the part of the American people has ceased to be a virtue and that this people does not propose to have America Prussianized.

Exemplifying the inborn aspirations of all true Americans, Thomas Jefferson, more than a hundred years ago, declared "Peace is our passion," and, at the time of our first breach with Huerta, President Wilson frankly admitted, "I have no enthusiasm for
war." But it is nothing short of folly to cry Peace, Peace, when there is no peace. We prefer to join in Lowell's invocation:

"God, give us Peace! not such as lulls to sleep,
But sword on thigh and brow with purpose knit!
And let our Ship of State to harbor sweep,
Her ports all up, her battle lanterns lit,
And her leashed thunders gathering for their leap."

With Lincoln, President Wilson may no doubt truly say, "Events have controlled me far more than I have controlled events." But it would be shutting our eyes to the most obvious facts, if we refused to be taught by the experience of the past three years. When the European war broke out, those in this country, who advocated adequate preparedness, stood almost alone and, like the Baptist, they were "as the voice of one crying in the wilderness." Today, if we except those extreme advocates of passivity and pacifism who numerically rank in proportion to the whole people as the Quakers rank among Christian sects, it would be a bold or thoughtless man who would dare deny that military preparedness is the imperative demand of the most ordinary prudence. But the ceaseless agitation of those who from the first appreciated the wisdom and necessity for preparation and the unremitting campaign of education along that line, which has been conducted throughout the country for the past three years, will be thrown away, unless some sort of appropriate action commensurate with this widespread demand and in keeping with the crisis is taken and taken promptly by the legislative branch of the Government.

**Training is Urged.**

If some one asks what there is that we can do, what there is that this Members' Council of the Board of Commerce, of which it is a branch, can do to illustrate our firm and unshakable faith in the need of timely and adequate preparation, my answer is, go to the muster which has been called for next Tuesday night by Captain Fred Staples, a stalwart Kentucky soldier who has but lately returned from the border, and there enlist in his company of citizen
soldiers or, by your presence, make known your interest and demonstrate the countenance and encouragement you mean to give to this local movement to bring about the military training and military discipline which are so woefully lacking in our midst. If I may speak for myself, while I do not know that I am eligible or can qualify for admission to the ranks of the proposed company, I mean to be there at the appointed hour and to ask to be enrolled as a volunteer. Do you give credence to the sinister note dispatched to our unfriendly neighbor on the south the other day by Herr Zimmermann, the chief factotum of the foreign office at Berlin? Do you still harbor a suspicion, like that tentatively put forth the other day by my good friend, Harry Giovannoli, that in treating this war-like message as genuine it looked like your Uncle Samuel had been sold a gold brick? Of course, I know that he has recanted since, but if any one in this audience refuses now to believe that danger threatens or that the Imperial German Government has entertained evil designs against the American people, or doubts the danger disclosed by this bungling bit of Teutonic diplomacy, neither would he be convinced though one rose from the dead.

When I picked up The Lexington Herald this morning and read that striking letter from Alexander McClintock, written from an English hospital, I thought to myself that there is nothing I can possibly say before the Members' Council on this occasion half as interesting or half as impressive as the stirring appeal of this brave Kentucky boy who, not that he loved America less but liberty more, volunteered his services and risked both life and limb in the cause of the Allies on the battlefields of Europe. Thank God there are other Kentuckians in the world besides Senator Stone of Missouri. The simple unstudied sentences of this short letter outweigh in patriotism and statesmanship all the labored utterances and stupid inaction of the twelve United States Senators, who, on Saturday and Sunday last, proved so disgracefully recreant to their high trust. I beg you to note that notwithstanding the fact that in order to enlist in the Canadian regiment of which he became a member, this valiant young Kentuckian had to swear allegiance to King George, he still at heart remains an uncompromising American,
loyal to his native State, loyal to the country of his birth, and with unalterable devotion to his country's flag.

Millennium Still Distant.

However much we may desire it, and yearn after it, the Millennium has not yet arrived. America is still called upon to face and "wrestle against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." In his Second Inaugural Address delivered on Monday, the fifth of March, at the Nation's capital, before a monster meeting of cheering Americans, the President used these potent words:

"It is imperative that we should stand together. We are being forged into a new unity amidst the fires that now blaze throughout the world. In their ardent heat, we shall, in God's providence, let us hope, be purged of faction and division, purified of the arrant humors of party and of private interest and shall stand forth in the days to come with a new dignity of national pride and spirit. Let each man see to it that the dedication is in his own heart, the high purpose of the nation in his own mind, ruler of his own will and desire. * * * The thing I shall count upon, the thing without which neither counsel nor action will avail, is the unity of America—an America united in feeling, in purpose and in its vision of duty, of opportunity and of service. * * * Beware that no faction or disloyal intrigue break the harmony or embarrass the spirit of our people; * * * For myself, I beg your tolerance, your countenance and your united aid."

It is the easiest thing in the world to criticize and censure and condemn. It requires neither thought, nor reflection, nor conscience to write the verdict "Guilty." Let us bury our differences and eradicate every feeling of distrust and dissatisfaction and, hearkening to the duty of the hour, which calls for instant and whole-hearted performance, pledge to the Chief Magistrate of this united nation our unqualified and unaltering loyalty and support. Let us assure him of our confidence and of our resolute determination to stand by him and the administration of which he is the head, no matter what course it may take, believing, now that the time for
action has come, that action appropriate to the crisis will be taken, and taken with firmness and enthusiasm, unmarred by heart-breaking delay. Our bonds of union are many and diversified. They will be found in our common blood, our common language, our common laws, and in our community of ideals and aspirations. Remember Senator Daniel’s words:

“Washington is the place where the grist of all the differences of the American people is taken to be ground out. * * * The moment you get out of the atmosphere of Washington into the homes of the American people, you come to the conclusion that there isn’t so much difference after all. No; our unities are as the sands of the sea for number; our differences, you may count upon your fingers.”

Despite the large infusion of foreign blood into the body politic, our people are essentially homogeneous and our ideas and ideals are fast becoming identical. I have no words adequate to express the disgust and disappointment and detestation which I am sure are shared by me in common with each and all of you and in common with each and every true American throughout the length and breadth of this land at the disgraceful conduct of that “little group of wilful men,” representing, as the President fearlessly avowed, “no opinion but their own” who, by taking shelter under an antiquated and obsolete rule governing the procedure of the most august deliberative body in the world, thwarted and nullified the practically unanimous efforts of that body to give the President an authority to act commensurate with the crisis. At the same time, let us not make the mistake of supposing that this little baker’s dozen of benighted obstructionists in any true sense represented either the Congress of the United States or any respectable number of American people. Let us not rest content with denouncing this puny faction, whose tactics have for the time being rendered their country “contemptible,” if not “helpless,” in the eyes of the world. It is vastly more important that we place ourselves upon record; that the word go out from this gathering and from the City of Lexington, the noblest monument which exists to the first battle for independence in the American Revolution, that the American people are for action, for instant, aggressive and effective action, against
the ruthless powers which conspire against our lives and our liberties and our integrity as a nation.

The war in Europe is really a war between despotism and democracy; a gigantic clash between the divine right of kings and the divine right of humanity. It is a supreme assault upon self-government; a desperate effort to quench the spirit of democracy, which is only another name for the spirit of universal brotherhood. Certainly some of the nations at war have forgotten or have ceased to respect the "royal law" of neighborliness, of fraternalism and good-will, which ought to rule mankind. But we must not despair of the Republic, or grow pessimistic. Let each one of us take heart from Whitman's stirring assurance that "The bullets of tyrants have, since the first king ruled, never been able to put down the unquenchable thirst of man for his rights." Let us cherish the conviction, which impelled the fathers of the Republic and the founders of the Commonwealth that "Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God," and in this saving faith, may the doctrine and practice of "frightfulness" never affright us.

Example Teaches.

Edmund Burke, one of the wisest of statesmen, long ago declared that mankind will learn by example and nothing else. The crying need of the hour is that America, patriotic, liberty-loving and unterrified America, give to the world a nation-wide, overwhelming, practical and impressive example of its willingness and its ability to defend its rights, to establish and forever fortify its prestige and to vindicate, if need be, with the lives and fortunes of its people, its most sacred honor. "Union," says Henry VanDyke, "is as much a human necessity as liberty is a divine gift." I have always been taught to believe that, in America, party divisions and partisanship stopped at the waters' edge. I still believe it.

A peculiar duty rests upon each and every citizen in a democracy to declare himself in a crisis, to do what he can to form a wholesome, representative and forceful public opinion, the tone and temper of which cannot be mistaken. Public opinion with us
is not the product of coercion and intimidation as it is in autocratic or monarchical countries. It cannot be "inspired" by official utterance. Here each man is sovereign and in the exercise of that sovereignty it is his high privilege and his bounden duty to make his views known.

In this hour of trial, can not some one be found who, like the indomitable Decatur, will raise his voice like a clarion and again send, vibrating and resounding through this Commonwealth and throughout the nation, the thrilling watchword—"My country, may she be always in the right, but right or wrong, my country!" Once more is America called upon to exalt this sentiment.

Let us re-echo the words of Webster—"One country, one constitution, one destiny" for this "indissoluble union of indestructible states." Aye, "Liberty and union, now and forever, one and inseparable!" Let us proclaim with Rufus Choate that henceforth "we join ourselves to no party that does not carry the flag and keep step to the music of the Union."

With profuse apologies for having overstepped the time-limit vouchsafed me by your courteous indulgence, and with many thanks for your patient attention, I leave you with these ringing words of James Russell Lowell:

"O Beautiful! my Country! ours once more! Smoothing thy gold of war-dishevelled hair O'er such sweet brows as never other wore, And letting thy set lips, Freed from wrath's pale eclipse, The rosy edges of their smile lay bare, What words divine of lover or of poet, Could tell our love and make thee know it, Among the Nations bright beyond compare? What were our lives without thee? What all our lives to save thee? We reek not what we gave thee; We will not dare to doubt thee, But ask whatever else, and we will dare!"