

FOR RELEASE UPON DELIVERY

AN ADDRESS

BY

TOM C. CLARK

Attorney General of the United States

PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

Before the

SECOND NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CITIZENSHIP

Hotel Statler

Boston, Massachusetts

Saturday, May 10, 1947

12:30 P. M.

I am happy, indeed to be with you and to address this Second National Conference on Citizenship, dedicated to our country's welfare through the active strengthening of the Nation's greatest bulwark, the individual citizen.

A National Conference on Citizenship, meeting annually, is a great dream, the fulfillment of which augurs well for the future of America.

Unfolding here is an idea that can become a powerful force for the building of a better America and a better world -- a force needed now as never before in our history.

I heartily endorse the worthy objectives of this Conference, especially those that emphasize:

" -- That the torch of liberty and freedom must be kept burning,

- That the responsibilities of citizenship must be discharged, and

- That the opportunities of citizenship must be appreciated"

Saint Paul, as he admonished the Corinthians, might instead have been writing an Epistle to Americans of 1947, when he said:

"But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: Nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

Yea, much more than those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: \* \* \*

That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another."

Pearl Harbor, Bataan, Corregidor, Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, North Africa, Italy, Normandy, the Battle of the Bulge, and all the other far-flung places of World War II, waged that liberty should not perish from the earth, kindled

(OVER)

a great flame of unity and patriotism in America's heart.

That flame must never die out!

But in peace time when the fire flickers low, it needs to be re-kindled by "an active, alert, enlightened, conscientious, and progressive citizenry."

All too frequently we go to war to fight the enemy on foreign soil but, when the war is over, disregard the enemies of peace who are within our borders.

We are patriotic and work unselfishly and unceasingly for our country in war time.

We are willing to die for American principles in war, yet we fail to defend, and to live for, these same principles in peace.

The recent world crisis to us Americans was a battle for the soul of man - a fight for the worth and dignity of human personality, a fight for the basic American principle of the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It was a struggle against a philosophy that recognized no inalienable rights, that made the individual a slave of the sovereign state, that crushed initiative, blocked social and cultural progress, and killed the joy of living.

Although we were conquerors on the field of battle, the fight is not over.

Philosophies, alien to our democratic concept, are still abroad in the world; they can grow into a real threat to our freedom here in America, and to that of the rest of mankind.

We would be untrue to ourselves, and false to mankind, if we minimized this peril.

I have pledged that all elements, subversive to our form of government, shall be eliminated, and I mean just that.

I wish to assure you, however, that there will be no witch hunts. The clock will not be turned back to the time when such activities took place near this historic setting of liberty.

We must ever remember that we have a Bill of Rights - a priceless charter of human liberty - which guarantees to the American citizen that his basic freedoms shall not be invaded.

Implied in our Bill of Rights, is a Bill of Responsibilities. One of my responsibilities is to see that Federal laws are obeyed, and that the individual is protected in his basic rights.

For all of us, there can be no right without a corresponding duty, no privilege without a related responsibility - a responsibility for loyalty to the ideals of American citizenship 365 days in the year.

In the final analysis, our best defense against subversive elements is to make the ideal of democracy a living fact - a way of life such as to enlist the loyalty of the individual in thought, in feeling, and in behavior.

Bringing the American ideal to fruition is a challenge to this Conference and to every citizen of our land.

With all of our glorious history, our country is not perfect. Many inadequacies still exist in the American way of life. Our ideal has never been fully realized.

A good America can become a better America.

Much remains to be done that will add to the happiness of our people and to the strength of the Nation.

We must be concerned with the problem of meeting the basic human needs, spiritual as well as physical.

(OVER)

We must make possible some of the good things of life to those who have too little.

We must provide equality of opportunity to millions now denied it in this land of equal opportunity.

We must do all of these things and more, otherwise we fail democracy and make its name a misnomer.

I observe that the sessions of this Conference on citizenship have been largely devoted to an emphasis upon those traditional institutions of American community life - the home, the church, the school, and related activities that are essential to the normal growth and wholesome living of our citizens. That emphasis is not misplaced.

The home lies at the very foundation of effective American citizenship.

Parents are still the most important influence in the lives of their children. Through them, children should experience affection, security and guidance, indispensable elements in child growth.

Everything possible should be done to give vitality to family life.

Through parent education, family counseling service, forums, classes and institutes, the church, the school, and other forces in the communities can strengthen the home to the end that parents may better discharge their responsibilities in preparing youth to meet the problems of tomorrow.

In this connection, it should be pointed out that millions of Americans, especially youths recently returned from the battlefields of freedom, do not have a house in which to begin a home.

And some of our citizens are responsible for that!

The church can help to guide youth in the formation of a scale of values in keeping with the principles of democratic living.

In its spiritual and educational functions, the church can build right attitudes, war against pitfalls, and shape personal character.

One layman suggested a slogan for church effort in these words: "Better to build than rebuild; better to form than reform; better to prevent than repent."

Alert to the principle, "I am my brother's keeper," the church is a powerful force for good, particularly in helping to free the community of many evils that cause boys and girls to stumble into delinquency and crime.

The School is strategically placed to reach practically all children and many adults.

It reaches children at an early and impressionable age when character is shaped.

It, therefore, plays a vital part in the building of good citizens.

Yet, throughout America, many poverty-stricken and broken-down schools are mocking paradoxes to the idea of equal educational opportunity for all.

In this land where men are born free and equal, millions of our children are denied equal educational opportunities.

They are herded into over-crowded class rooms, which are staffed, in many instances, by teachers who are paid only enough to keep body and soul together, while their task is to build boys and girls for the serious responsibilities of citizenship.

More than 2 million children attend our lowest-average schools, on which only \$500.00 a year per class room unit is spent.

Millions of other children are not in school at all.

Three million adults in the United States have never attended any kind of school.

(OVER)

Ten million adults have had so little schooling that they are virtual illiterates.

During the greatest crisis in our history, our Nation lost a vast manpower because of illiteracy.

Five million young men, almost one out of three, were rejected for military service on account of physical, mental and educational deficiencies.

350,000 school teachers have left the schools since 1939, many of them lost forever to the teaching profession.

The national average salary of a school teacher in 1943-44, was \$1,728.

In 4 States, the state-wide average salary was less than \$1,000.

More than 40,000 teachers were paid less than \$600.00 per year.

Since 1944, the salary level in some sections has advanced slightly, but the teacher's dollar has shrunk in value.

The incentive to enter teaching is gone when the elevator girl is paid more than the beginning teacher -- And I do not mean to convey the idea that the elevator girl does not earn her pay.

The American school teacher today has neither an adequate wage, nor professional security, both of which are essential to a successful teacher.

All our children are citizens of the United States. Children born in poverty-stricken areas are no less American citizens than those born in richer areas. The education of both groups is of vital national concern, for ignorance cannot be quarantined.

Sub-standard schools are a matter for serious consideration of the Nation, regardless of where they are located. Wherever they exist they leave a blight on the future citizens of our country.

As good citizens, then, our first and urgent concern is to eliminate the slums of American education.

The home, the church, the school, and related activities are all a part of the community.

The ideals of this Conference will come to fruition only when they are translated into action in the home community.

For if we do not make democracy work locally, it will not work nationally.

We must, therefore, become community conscious and want wholesome communities in which to live and to bring up our children to do their part in the building of a better America.

If we have given little or nothing toward the development of our home town, we are isolationists of the worst type.

If we are not conscious of the slum situation across the railroad tracks, the growing delinquency problem, the broken-down school system, the recreation problem, and other community problems, we are failing miserably in our responsibility as citizens.

A certain city in the United States, with a population of around 40,000, has over 400 different organized groups, including civic, fraternal, religious, educational, labor, business and patriotic. With an organized membership running into thousands devoted to community welfare, its people have an opportunity to assure living conditions that make for a meaningful, healthy and happy life.

Some of our clubs, I am sorry to say, however, meet only to eat. Occasionally they vote a scholarship to some poor lad, or donate baskets to the Salvation Army for distribution to the poor at Christmas time.

Other clubs, mindful of their civic obligations, study their community's health problem, demand efficient and honest police departments, call for pure

(OVER)



water supply, labor for adequate recreational facilities, urge people to register and vote, foster town meetings, or other media, for discussion of public questions, and perform many other duties that help to build their community.

We are not discharging our responsibilities of citizenship, when 4 million American children have defective eyesight; one million, defective hearing; when three-fourths of our children need dental care, and hundreds of thousands of American families can not afford adequate medical care.

We are asleep if we fail to remember that democracy is split assunder when prejudice and bigotry possess our people in their human relationships.

Sheet-covered breeders, carriers, and spreaders of hate and intolerance strike at the very heart of the institutions upon which our liberties rest.

Millions of our citizens do not take the trouble to vote in presidential elections or to cast their ballots in local elections.

It is estimated that 47 percent, or more than 41 million, of the men and women of voting age failed to cast their ballots in the 1944 Presidential election.

61 percent, or 57 million, failed to vote in the 1946 elections.

With all of our emphasis upon suffrage, there has been a downward trend through participation in the ballot.

In 1896, 79.6 percent of those eligible voted.

In 1944, 53 percent cast their ballots.

In 1946, only 39 percent went to the polls, a situation to be considered seriously when we discuss strengthening American citizenship.

Some of our best citizens from Chambers of Commerce, civic clubs, patriotic organizations, ministerial bodies, bar and medical associations

and women's clubs still subscribe to the principle that they cannot afford to take part in politics.

They complain of corruption and inefficiency in government, yet miss the precious American opportunity for bettering conditions by their failure to vote.

Politics is nothing more or less than the science of government. Our government, therefore, will be good or bad in the same proportion that our citizens participate in politics.

All of us need to get on more intimate terms with democracy, know its needs, become aware of its meaning and imbued with its spirit.

When we become concerned one for another, there will be no schism in the body about which Saint Paul spoke in the long ago.

Our America - vast, rich, and powerful - living and growing - holds forth a magnificent challenge, not only to our own people, but to liberty-loving peoples everywhere.

An America that sends forth into the world heart-warming rays of happiness and security and good will - and peace for all - must not fail.