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OPPORTUNITY AND SECURITY

An Address by

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before the

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OF LABOR



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OPPORTUNITY AND SECURITY

Organized labor has long been accustomed to hearing at this season from all sorts of speakers who modestly describe themselves as "the best friend labor ever had". Sometimes the main object of the speech is to disown everything that the speaker has done since he saw you the last time. Of course, the mistake that such men make is to forget that long ago organized labor learned--the hard way--how to recognize friends and evaluate people.

You know your friends, the genuine ones, the ones who are honestly and sincerely concerned with the rights and the security of America's working men and women. You certainly don't need me to tell you who they are. And you really don't need to be told by me of the great and good friends of labor you have in your own ranks here in Minnesota; but I should like to pay tribute to at least two of them, anyway: your distinguished president, Robert Olson, whom I shall call "Bob" the way everyone else does; and your beloved Secretary-Treasurer, George Lawson, who for thirty years has buttressed the cause of organized labor and is an inspiring symbol of the finest in American citizenship.

As I see the progress of this political campaign, the Republicans, split internally on foreign issues between the militant isolationists on the one hand, and those who very genuinely had in the past followed Mr. Willkie's lead to a greater European responsibility on the other, will avoid the great issues of foreign policy and a new world order, and concentrate their efforts on what they are pleased to select as the domestic issues. Indeed, the Republican candidate for the White House has already so indicated. I suggest that it was with some relief that he, so to speak, entered an armistice on the foreign front. For what else, indeed, could he do? Searching his more recent past he would remember that before December 8, 1941, he had leaned,

(OVER)

mildly perhaps compared to some of his colleagues like Mr. Ham Fish or Colonel McCormick, towards isolationism. Thus cogitating he might have remembered a little uncomfortably his suggestion that the lend-lease bill was "an attempt to abolish free government in the United States." And, frankly, he didn't know what one should say about our relation to Russia or to England - it might heat up certain segments of the voters. Besides, the foreign show was going pretty well. There were not many flaws he could pick. And the war was going awfully well - and he couldn't very well prove that the President had nothing to do with the war.

At that point he may have scratched his head.

Of course he might split the Commander-in-Chief away from the war, and decide he had nothing to do with the war, and shouldn't interfere the way that man had been doing.

So he wrote in his acceptance speech: "Let me make it crystal clear that a change next January cannot and will not involve any change in the military conduct of the war. If there is not now any civilian interference with the military and naval commands, a change in administration will not alter that status. If there is civilian interference, the new administration will put a stop to it forthwith." Under the Constitution of the United States the President is the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. He must assume that responsibility. And that responsibility will necessarily involve major decisions in determining the whole strategy of the war against Japan, the war of the Pacific. The Commander-in-Chief must act. He cannot, as Mr. Dewey suggests, evade this great, this necessary duty.

But the strategy of the Republican party in this campaign is to confine discussion to domestic issues; and it is therefore about domestic issues that I shall talk to you today. But even on the domestic front the issues will not be discussed by the Republicans, for they are caught in the same dilemma that Mr. Willkie faced in 1940. They would like, of course, to attack the policies that during the last eleven years the Democratic party has not only talked about, but expressed in legislation, that have now become deeply rooted in the approval of the American people. All that Mr. Willkie could do four years ago - and he believed what he said - was to approve the far reaching New Deal program that had proved so popular and effective, and to argue that he and the Republicans could do it better. And Mr. Dewey cannot escape that dilemma. There was a not to be neglected group of liberal Republicans who believed in social reform, just as there was a substantial number who hated isolationism. And there are those same groups in the rank and file of the Republican Party today. One must make a gesture in that direction. So in his opening campaign speech in Philadelphia the Governor of New York said:

"Of course, we need security regulation.  
Of course, we need bank deposit insurance.  
Of course, we need price support for  
agriculture. Of course, the farmers of  
this country cannot be left to the hazards  
of a world price while they buy their goods  
on an American price. Of course, we need  
unemployment insurance and old-age pensions  
and also relief whenever there are not enough  
jobs. Of course, the rights of labor to  
organize and bargain collectively are fundamental."

No, social reforms wouldn't make an issue.

(OVER)

He would have to follow the technique of 1940 - Of course we believe in the social reform of these last eleven years - so it ran - but we can do it better. [ It was true the New Dealers had passed the legislation, and enforced it, but they were Bureaucrats, Communists, Fascists, who with unholy hands were destroying the Constitution. ] Turn them out, and let us in, we are for free enterprise, free enterprisé as it existed in the good old days before 1932. On September 14, in Sheridan, Wyoming, to quote the newspaper account - "New York's Republican presidential candidate told a railroad station audience that the voters this fall would be able to choose whether we shall go down the New Deal road towards a completely regimented and totalitarian society, or whether we shall start going up the road toward a free society in which we can achieve both security and jobs for all."

"Jobs for all" - let us pick out that issue, the paramount issue to you American workmen, with those splendid last four years of production behind you, and the next four years, with their unanswered questions, ahead.

Reduced to its simplest form our major post-war problem is this: To reconvert industry and employment from war to civilian production without substantial loss to either.

What does this mean in terms of money and men?

Well, for one thing, in the past four years we have doubled our national production roughly from one hundred to two hundred billion dollars. About half this is war production. Our major domestic post-war problem, therefore, will be to transfer a high percentage of this war production into civilian goods and level off at a civilian production which must start at a minimum of a hundred and fifty or a hundred and sixty billion dollars; then to go ahead building up America to greater heights from there on out. And this minimum beginning means 50% or 60% over 1940.

In terms of employment it means that we must find jobs for many more workers than we employed in 1940. In 1940, 53,000,000 men and women were employed in the United States; in the summer of this year, approximately 66,000,000--an increase of 13,000,000. The Department of Commerce estimates that full post-war employment means jobs for approximately 55,000,000. That is eleven million more than were employed in 1940.-- and eleven million is just about the total of the men and women now in the armed forces. The demobilization of the military and of the great army of industrial workers who must be transferred from war to peace is part of this same basic problem. It is estimated that in Connecticut soldiers and war workers representing 49% of the pre-war employment will be demobilized; in Michigan, 59%, in Pennsylvania, 38%, the number of those employed in 1940. In your own State of Minnesota the estimate is about 23%. In other words, this means that, based on Minnesota's 1940 employment of 931,500, there will be a demobilization after the war of 212,600.

Of course this demobilization will not come immediately, or even after the defeat of Germany. Presumably it will be spread over a period of time, and will therefore be gradual. As peace production is thus gradually being reinstated - and the shift has already begun on a small scale and, under careful timing and strict government controls - we shall have an immense consumer demand for peace-time goods, augmented by the huge savings in the hands of the public - today they are estimated at one hundred billion as against seven and a half billion in 1940, an increase of 1200%. That peace-time consumer demand certainly will be ready to absorb the new production.

No, the problems though immense, are by no means insuperable. If we Americans can produce so superbly in war there is no reason we should not be able to do so in peace.

All men agree that these are the major political issues - the problem involves maintaining higher levels of food production, better homes, recreation facilities and health standards - in a word, consumption on a far larger scale, - full employment and full production. The question for voters to decide is therefore under which political leadership are they more likely to get full protection and full employment.

The Republican Party does not pretend that it has changed. It does not exactly point with pride to the twelve years of its achievements that ended in the great depression, to the Harding, Coolidge, Hoover era. But it keeps emphasizing that it always has been and still is the party of "private enterprise." Now just what is meant by that? Does it mean that if full employment is not brought about by private industry, government must not interfere? For the first time in our history the Democratic Party preached the doctrine that the right to a job was a fundamental right of all men, which the government should protect. This basic Democratic philosophy was summed up by President Roosevelt as an Economic Bill of Rights in his annual message to Congress on January 11, 1944, in which he listed these economic rights:

"The right to a useful and remunerative job in the industries or shops or farms or mines of the Nation.

"The right to earn enough to provide adequate food and clothing and recreation.

"The right of every family to a decent home.

"The right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health.

"The right to adequate protection from the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident and unemployment."

The President was but summarizing his philosophy of the service state, a recent conception for us, the duty of the state to provide these rights if they do not flow from the normal operation of free enterprise. Perhaps this is what the Republican candidate meant when he talked about "the New Deal road toward a completely regimented and totalitarian society." But we do not believe, for example, that a free society involves the abolition of Federal child labor legislation. When society tells us as individuals, "You can't put your twelve-year-old son or daughter to work in a factory," we do not tell ourselves that we are being dangerously regimented. Of course, that law interferes with the "free enterprise" of sweating our children, but we still believe in the law. We are proud that we obtained the passage of the minimum wages and maximum hours law. Is that the type of legislation which the Republican stalwarts have in mind when they call us Communists? No doubt; for the House Republicans were able to shelve the wage and hour bill temporarily in 1938 by voting almost solidly against it, 83 to 6, while in the Senate only two Republicans voted for the passage of the bill. [Social Security was established by the New Deal. Was that communistic or totalitarian? Many Republicans once said so.] We Democrats think that the provisions of the Social Security Act should be substantially expanded; and Senator Wagner has introduced a bill for that purpose.

I notice that in their platform the Republicans would return the public employment office system to the states--in a word responsibility for labor's welfare should be left to the states. I am not surprised that in this day and time the Republicans champion States' rights. They don't like interference with what they call the laws of nature, and they think there will

(over)

be less "interference" from the States. Of course, as I have said before, they pay lip service to social legislation and to government controls. But in their hearts they distrust and detest such controls. And now and then the hatred for these controls comes out, as in the plank in their platform which deals with control over inflation, characterized by Walter Lippman as "A program for Chaos." That plank pledges the Republican party--I quote--"to take government out of competition with private industry and terminate rationing, price fixing and all other emergency powers."

Would you also turn the T.V.A. back to the Commonwealth and Southern, Mr. Dewey?

And when we begin to buy peace-time goods, and goods are scarce and cash plentiful, would you, too, terminate price control and let inflation cloud our lives, so as to satisfy your nostalgia for free enterprise? Do you stand on this plank of your party platform?

I do not know what the Republicans mean by "free enterprise." But I do know that there must be full employment and that in times when private business cannot provide for it--times such as we witnessed during the Hoover administration, the government cannot let its people down the way that administration did.

Our critics, expert in creating choices that do not exist, tell us that the New Deal has softened the fibre of the Nation by its emphasis on security as contrasted with opportunity. I do not believe that the Nation has been softened by unemployment relief or the limitation in hours of work. I do not believe that the 3,000,000 boys in the CCC camps were injured by their training and education, when there were no jobs for them and when they

were loose on the streets and in pool halls. I do not conclude that the million borrowers from Home Owners Loan Corporation were pampered because the government helped them save their homes; or that the \$13,000,000,000 spent by WPA on permanent improvements in municipalities to provide jobs weakened the character of the men and women who got them; or that the two and a half million boys and girls who were taken off relief and given work and education were morally impaired. I do not believe that the Copeland Act or the Walsh-Healy Act or the Wagner Act has much impaired the moral stamina of men and women who work.

All these things don't seem to have softened the American doughboys if you can judge by the way they have fought on the beaches of Tarawa and the jungles of the Pacific and through the hedgerows of Normandy. Softened fibres? Ask the Nazis who tried to defend Cherbourg or Avranches. Ask the Japs--those still living--who once held Saipan.

I am convinced that the dilemma, as the gentlemen who attack the Democratic Party's program would have us believe, is not between security and opportunity. For one cannot exist, in the modern industrial state, without the other. A boy who pounds the street looking for a job won't be satisfied if you talk to him about the moral value of "free enterprise" as creating opportunity.

So that although I hope and believe with all my heart that private industry, magnificent in its powers to produce as it has so completely demonstrated in this war, will also be able to produce for peace. But I also believe that we must not again subject our people to the fear and want they suffered in the early thirties. Private industry, operating free from the

(over)

dead hand of monopolistic control, can offer a great deal of the protection our working people need. Useful public works needed to enlarge the scope and opportunity of private industry itself will add further to that protection. We must plan now therefore, and plan on far larger scales, for such public works as in an emergency of unemployment may be needed and are in themselves necessary for the growth of our Nation--government housing river development, irrigation, reforestation, the supply of decent medical services to our people--there is so much that can be done.

For the life of a democracy is the development of its men and women; and the government which they create must ever serve the ends of their human welfare.