

## APOSTLES OF FOLLY AND FATUITY

A LETTER TO THE CONGRESS OF CONSTRUCTIVE  
PATRIOTISM HELD UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE  
NATIONAL SECURITY LEAGUE ON JANUARY 26,  
1917

As it is unfortunately impossible for me to be present in person, I desire in this letter to express my heartiest good wishes for the success of your meeting and my belief that the movement in which you are engaged is one of the really vital movements — indeed at the moment it is I think *the* really vital movement — for the ultimate honor and welfare of this country.

We need, more than anything else in this country, thorough-going Americanism,— for unless we are Americans and nothing else, we are not a nation at all — and thorough-going preparedness in time of peace against war,— for if we are not thus prepared we shall remain a nation only until some more virile nation finds it worth while to conquer us.

The work of preparedness — spiritual and material, civic, industrial and military — and the work of Americanization are simply the two paramount phases or elements of the work of con-

structive patriotism which your Congress has gathered to foster. There can be no real preparedness in this country unless this country is thoroughly Americanized; for only a patriotic people will prepare; and there can be no deep national feeling for America until we are all of us Americans through and through.

Americanism means many things. It means equality of rights and, therefore, equality of duty and of obligation. It means service to our common country. It means loyalty to one flag, to our flag, the flag of all of us. It means on the part of each of us respect for the rights of the rest of us. It means that all of us guarantee the rights of each of us. It means free education, genuinely representative government, freedom of speech and thought, equality before the law for all men, genuine political and religious freedom, and the democratizing of industry so as to give at least a measurable equality of opportunity for all, and so as to place before us as our ideal in all industries where this ideal is possible of attainment, the system of coöperative ownership and management, in order that the tool users may, so far as possible, become the tool owners. Everything is un-American that tends either to government by a plutocracy or government by a mob. To divide along the lines of section or caste or creed is un-American. All privileges based on wealth, and all enmity to honest men merely because they are wealthy, are un-American — both of them equally so. Americanism means the virtues of courage, honor, justice, truth, sincerity, and hardihood — the virtues that made America. The things that will destroy America are prosperity-at-any-price, peace-at-any-price, safety-first instead of duty-

first, the love of soft living and the get-rich-quick theory of life.

Preparedness must be of the soul no less than of the body. We must keep lofty ideals steadily before us, and must train ourselves in practical fashion so that we may realize these ideals. Throughout our whole land we must have fundamental common purposes, to be achieved through education, through intelligent organization and through the recognition of the great vital standards of life and living. We must make Americanism and Americanization mean the same thing to the native born and to the foreign born; to the man and to the woman; to the rich and to the poor; to the employer and to the wage-worker. If we believe in American standards, we shall insist that all privileges springing from them be extended to immigrants, and that they in return accept these standards with whole-hearted and entire loyalty. Either we must stand absolutely by our ideals and conceptions of duty, or else we are against them. There is no middle course, and if we attempt to find one, we insure for ourselves defeat and disaster.

Citizenship must mean an undivided loyalty to America; there can be no citizenship on the 50-50 basis; there can be no loyalty half to America and half to Germany or England or France or Ireland, or any other country. Our citizens must be Americans, and nothing else, and if they try to be something else in addition, then they should be sent out of this country and back to the other country to which, in their hearts, they pay allegiance. We must have one American language; the language of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, of Lincoln's Gettysburg

Speech and Second Inaugural, and of Washington's farewell address. The American standard of living conditions and the American standard of working conditions both must be high. We must insist upon them for immigrants as well as for the native born. We must insist that the people who work here, live here; that they are not mere birds of passage from abroad. We must insist upon industrial justice, and we cannot get it if we let ignorance and need be preyed upon either by vulpine cunning or by wolfish brutality, and if we do not train the ignorant and the needy up to self-reliance and efficiency.

Preparedness does not mean merely a man with a gun. It means that too; but it means a great deal more. It means that in this country we must secure conditions which will make the farmer and the working man understand that it is in a special sense their country; that the work of preparedness is entered into for the defense of the country which belongs to them, to all of us, and the government of which is administered in their interest, in the interest of all of us. At this moment Lloyd George is able to do more than any other man in rallying the people of Great Britain to the defense of that Empire, because the working men, the men who actually do the manual labor, know that he has their welfare at heart, that the national ideal for which he is fighting is that which will give them the best chance for self-development, and for that happiness which comes to the man who achieves his rights at the same time that he performs his duties. He is followed by the people as a whole because they know that he stands for the people as a whole. We in America who are striving for preparedness

must make it evident that the preparedness is to serve the people as a whole. The war on the other side has shown that there can be no efficient army in the field unless the men behind are trained and efficient and unless they are whole-heartedly loyal in their patriotic devotion to their country. Here in America we must do justice to the workers, or they will not feel that this is the country to which their devotion is due; and we must exact patriotic devotion to the flag from them, for if they fail to render it they are unfit to live in this country at all. I appeal to all Americans to join in the common effort for the common good. Any man who holds back and refuses to serve his country with whole-hearted devotion, on the ground that enough has not been done for him, will do well to remember that any such holding back or lukewarmness of patriotism is itself an admission of inferiority, and admission of personal unfitness for citizenship in a democracy, and ought to deprive him of the rights of citizenship. As for the men of means, from whom we have the right to expect a special quality of leadership, let them remember that, as much has been given to them so much will be expected of them, and that they have no moral right whatsoever to the enjoyment of the ease and the comforts of life beyond what their fellows enjoy unless they render service beyond what their fellows render.

I advocate military preparedness not for the sake of war, but for the sake of safe-guarding this nation against war so long as that is possible, and of guaranteeing its honor and safety if war should nevertheless come. We hope ultimately the day will come on this earth when wars will cease. But at present the realization of that



hope seems as far in the future as the realization of that other hope, that some day in the future all crime shall cease. By wise action, based equally on observed good faith and on thoroughly prepared strength — the precise characteristics which during the last few years we have failed to show — we may hope to limit the probable field of wars; but at present it is as certain as anything can be that every great nation will at some time or other, as generations follow generations, have to face war, and that ours will be no exception to the rule. It is, therefore, not merely folly, but criminal and unpatriotic folly, to fail to prepare, or to preach the ignoble cult of the professional pacifist, the peace-at-any-price man.

We need first and foremost a thoroughly efficient and large Navy; a navy kept under professional guidance; a navy trained at every point with the sole purpose of making it the most formidable possible instrument of war the moment that war comes; a navy, the mismanagement of which shall be treated as a capital offense against the nation. In the next place, we need a small but highly efficient regular army, of say a quarter million men; an army where provision is made for a certain proportion of the promotions to be by merit, instead of merely seniority; an army of short-term soldiers, better paid than at present; and an army which, like the navy, shall be under the guidance of a general staff. Moreover, every year there should be at one time field maneuvers of from fifty to one hundred thousand men, so that the Army Commander, the Corps Commanders, the Division, Brigade and Regimental Commanders, who would have to face a foe at the outbreak of war, would all have had experience in

performing their duties, under actual field conditions, in time of peace.

The events of the last summer have shown that the Hay Bill was as foolish and unpatriotic a bit of flintlock legislation as was ever put on the statute book. I have the greatest admiration and respect for the individual militiamen who went to the border. But the system under which they were sent worked rank injustice to most of them, rank favoritism for some of them, and was worse than ineffective from the national standpoint. It is folly and worse than folly, to pretend that the National Guard is an efficient second line of defense. Remember also that the laws passed nominally for the betterment of the regular army and navy are producing almost no result. The delays in building the ships are extraordinary. The shortage of enlisted men in the navy and army is appalling, nor is it being made good. It cannot wholly be made good under the volunteer system. But much could be done. Our first care should be to make the navy and the regular army thoroughly efficient.

But this is not enough. To trust only to the Navy and the regular Army amounts merely to preparing to let the other men do it. If we ordinary citizens are fit to be citizens of this country, we shall fit ourselves to defend this country. No man has a right to citizenship in a democracy if, for any cause whatsoever, he is unwilling to fight, or is morally or mentally incapable of fighting, for the defense of that democracy against a powerful alien aggressor. If a man is physically unfit but is right in his soul and in his head, then he can render high service to the nation although incapable of bearing arms. But, if from any

moral or mental causes, he is unwilling to train himself to bear arms, and to bear them if necessary in his country's cause, then he has no moral right to vote.

Be it remembered that such a national armed force as that for which I ask, while very powerful for defense would be almost useless for aggression. I wish to see our Navy second only to that of Great Britain, because Great Britain is the only power whose naval needs are greater than ours. I do not ask that our Army become second, or anywhere near second, to Germany's, because Germany's military needs are far greater than ours; but merely that relatively to our size our Army be made to correspond to that of Switzerland.

This would mean that for the last two or three years of school our boys would have some military training, substantially such as is given in the Swiss and Australian schools; and that at about the age of nineteen they would spend six months in actual service in the field (or at sea with the fleet) with the colors, and would thereafter for three or four years be required to spend a couple of weeks each year with the colors. Each year, among those who had served well for the six months, a number could be chosen to be trained as officers. These would then be given by the nation for two years, free, a training somewhat like that at West Point, although not as rigid or as thorough. They would be required to pay for this training by, for a certain number of months during each of the few following years, doing their part in drilling the recruits of that year. It would probably be necessary to pay the recruits a small minimum wage so as to be sure

that the poorest family would not suffer hardship because of the absence of the young man for six months. No man would be allowed to purchase exemption. The sons of the richest men in the land would have to serve exactly like any one else and do exactly the same work — which, incidentally, would be a bit of uncommon good fortune for them.

Side by side with this preparation of the manhood of the country must go the preparation of its resources. The Government should keep a record of every factory or work shop of any kind which would be called upon to render service in war, and of all the railroads. All the workers in such factories and railroads should be tabulated so that in the event of war they would not be sent to the front if they could do better service where they were — although as far as possible every strong man should be sent to the front, to the position of danger, while work done in safety should be done by women and old men. The transportation system should receive special study. Factories which would be needed in time of war should be encouraged by the Government to keep themselves properly prepared in time of peace, and should be required to fill specimen orders, so that there would be no chance of their breaking down in the event of a sudden call at the outbreak of war. Industrial preparedness must go hand in hand with military preparedness.

Indeed, this military preparedness and the acceptance by the nation of the principle of universal, obligatory military training in time of peace as a basis of universal, obligatory service in time of war, would do more than anything else to help us solve our most pressing social and indus-



trial problems in time of peace. It would Americanize and nationalize our people as nothing else could possibly do. It would teach our young men that there are other ideals besides making money. It would render them alert, energetic, self-reliant, capable of command and willing to obey; respectful to others and demanding respect from others for themselves. It would be the best possible way to teach us how to use our collective strength in order to accomplish those social and industrial tasks which must be done by all of us collectively if we are to do them well.

Just before this war began, the male and female apostles of folly and fatuity were at their highest pitch of denunciation of preparedness, and were announcing at the tops of their voices that never again would there be a great war. These preachers of professional pacifism, of peace-at-any-price, of peace put before righteousness and honor and duty, temporarily lead astray many good and earnest men and women. These good, honest, intelligent men and women can be shown the facts and when shown the facts will ultimately see the profound immorality as well as the utter folly of the professional pacifist or peace-at-any-price position. There is, however, little to hope for as regards the professional pacifists themselves. The antics of their brethren in England has shown that even although brayed in a mortar their folly shall not depart from them. At the moment, their clamor is drowned by the thunder of the great war. But when this war comes to an end their voices will be as loud as ever on behalf of folly and wickedness, and their brazen effrontery will be proof against all shame as well as against all wisdom. They will unblushingly re-

peat every prophecy that has just been falsified by the merciless march of events; they will reiterate all the promises that have always been broken in the past and will always be broken in the future. They are in the majority of cases primarily concerned for the safety of their own wretched bodies, and they are physically safe in the course they follow, for if the disaster they court should come upon this nation, they would themselves instantly flee to safety, while their folly and wrong doing would be atoned for by the blood of better and braver men.

It is useless to appeal to these persons. But it is necessary to warn our people against them. If our people fail to prepare, whatever the real reason may be and whatever the reason is which they allege, their fate in the end will be the same. Sooner or later, in such case, either we ourselves or our children will tread the stony path of disaster and eat the bitter bread of shame. Faithfully yours, THEODORE ROOSEVELT.