

THE DUTY OF EVERY AMERICAN

FROM AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE A DELEGATION
OF NEW YORK BUSINESS MEN IN BEHALF OF THE
THIRD LIBERTY LOAN, AT OYSTER BAY, LONG IS-
LAND, APRIL, 1917

THE first thing that I wish to do is, as an American, heartily to thank you men and women who have done and are doing the actual work of floating the Liberty Bonds. It is a vitally important work, and it is as laborious and exhausting as it is important. I wish that the worthy

people who think the governmental processes, even so far as they affect the public, go on without effort, might have a little of the experience you have had in handling this work that you have been on, and they would learn the necessity of co-ordinated effort.

There are several hundred of you men, all above or below the military age, except, as I have been informed, three who have been exempted because of dependent families and one man who has been doing his best to get into the army but has been rejected for physical reasons. I dwell upon that fact because, as you know, I feel that the prime duty of the fighting man who can get to the front is to try to get to the front. The thing that primarily counts in this war is the strength of the fighting man. The primary work is the work of the men at the front, but the men at the front cannot do that work unless they have the weapons, the instrumentalities with which to do it.

It is only you and those like you who can furnish the means to secure those instrumentalities, and therefore the work of you and of those like you has been second in importance only to the work of the men at the front. Without it the work of the men at the front could not go on. You men and women have devoted every energy to it, have sacrificed all your private interests, and have acted in the broadest and fullest spirit of patriotism. A loan does not float itself. No governmental work does itself. Somebody has to do it. You and your associates in the other districts of the country have assumed this burden of disinterested service to the country.

I appeal to our people to back you to the fullest

limit. This is the people's war. It is America's war. It is a war for our children and for the welfare of our children's children. If we do not win now, fighting abroad beside our allies, then sooner or later our sons or our grandsons will have to fight here at home without allies. We are fighting in our own quarrel. The man who does not think that it was America's duty to fight for her own sake in view of the infamous conduct of Germany toward us stands on a level with a man who wouldn't think it necessary to fight in a private quarrel because his wife's face was slapped.

We have a special and intolerable grievance against Germany, and we are warranted in fighting in the war, because of that special injury of our own. Warranted is not a strong enough word: We were *required* to go to war, if we were ever hereafter individually to hold up our heads as citizens of a free nation. But in addition to these special grievances that we as citizens of the United States had against Germany, we also are fighting in the quarrel of civilization against barbarism, of liberty against tyranny: Germany has become a menace to the whole world. She is the most dangerous enemy of liberty now existing. She has shown herself utterly ruthless, treacherous and brutal. When I use those words, I use them with scientific precision. The American who is not now heart and soul against her and heart and soul in favor of fighting this war through to a victorious conclusion, to the peace of overwhelming victory, is a traitor to this country and a traitor to mankind. He is unfit to live in America. He is unfit to be a free man, for his soul is the soul of a slave. And if that American has associated himself with

other Americans in order to work against the interests of America, as has been done in the case of the German-American Alliance, then I hope with all my heart that Congress and the State legislatures will act, will dissolve the German-American Alliance, and if there is a method of getting at the leaders of it, will get at them in any way that is necessary.

No man can serve two masters in this country at this time. There can be no such thing as a fifty-fifty allegiance here. If the man is not an American, and nothing else, he should be sent out of this country. (Applause.) If he plays the part of sedition in this country, he should be shot. But if he is just neutral, then let him get out to some other neutral country. Don't let him be neutral here any longer. And, incidentally, I wish to say that is my view of the conscientious objector, too.

Now and then I receive protests from some conscientious objector who says that he expects me to respect his conscience. I will. But he has got to respect mine, too. In the first place, if his conscience makes him act either a fool or a traitor, then I should advise him to take it out and look at it and see if it is in good working order. In the next place, I would try to find out what he is conscientious about. He may be conscientious about killing somebody else. He may be conscientious about keeping his own carcass safe from injury. Now, if he merely objects to killing some one else, then send him to the front with a spade to dig trenches, in the danger zone, or else put him on a mine sweeper. Do you know about mine sweepers? They go about and collect mines. If they don't collect them just right,

they go up. If you put a conscientious objector on a mine sweeper, he is not in danger of killing any one else. But I cannot guarantee his own personal safety. Now, if he will do that work, all right, I have got nothing to say — treat him all right. But if he won't do that work, if he says that his conscience forbids him to do any of the necessary work of national self-defense, then I would answer that my conscience would forbid me to let him vote in a country which can only exist at all because its sons are willing to fight for it.

So it is our business to stand by the men at the front. We can stand by them effectively only through action, such as you here and your associates and those like you in other districts are taking and have taken. We cannot fight this war without vast numbers of soldiers, ships, guns and airplanes, and vast quantities of food and munitions. For all this we must pay money. As the war is the war of all of us, so each of us, according to his or her ability, should bear some part of the burden. I want to etch that in. If there is an American in this country who at this time is not bearing some part of the common burden, then he is not fit to be in the country at all.

No man now-a-days should be able to feel that he has a right to a night's sleep at the end of the day unless during the day he has done something for the common cause, the cause of all of us. Each of us should gladly and cheerfully sacrifice everything necessary in order to win this war. The men at the front, the men whose high privilege it is to be at the front, stand ready to sacrifice life and limb and health for our dear land. We who are not given that high privilege, we

who cannot go to the front, must at least back them to the limit with the work of head and of hand, with our dollar and our self-sacrifice, our courage and endurance, our thrift and our intelligence, our labor and our money. Do the thing that is next, that is always the important point to make. Don't resolve in a glow of virtue how good you are going to be next year. Do it now.

Do the thing that is next, and at this moment the thing that is next for us here and for millions like us elsewhere in the land, the thing that is next is to raise the money for the Liberty Loan.

I have said before this is the people's war. Let us make the people themselves the owners of the debt incurred for the sake of the people. Every man, big or little, has a chance to subscribe. Let every wage-earner and every farmer subscribe what he can. He will thereby serve the country and he will thereby serve himself and his family, for he will strengthen his own economic position. I would like to drive that point home.

Now, there are some forms of activity where no one can promise any money return for what is done, of course, that is especially the case with men who go to the front. There can be no money reward in any way adequate for what they do. Again, it is true of such work as the work of the Red Cross, of the Y. M. C. A., of the Knights of Columbus, or all kindred organizations. If you put your money into them, you have put it in, making the sacrifice gladly and not expecting anything back. But in the case of the Liberty Loan, I am asking you to help the nation and help yourselves at the same time.

The greatest good that can come to the individual himself is to put his money in the Liberty

Loan. That is the way he can best help the nation at this time, and he will help it as an incident to helping himself. The older among you will remember listening in time past now and then to frothy orators who in the name of the people denounced the bondholders. You have heard them say, "Stand up for the people against the bondholders." Fine! Now, let us stand up for the people against the bondholders, by making the people the bondholders.

Let us make the people and the bondholders interchangeable terms; and after these loans have been floated let it be remembered that no human being without hypocrisy can denounce the bondholders without denouncing the people, for the chance is open to every man to become one of the bondholders, and when I say to every man, I mean to every man. The conditions are such that anybody with a little self-denial and a little thrift can become to a certain extent a holder of the bonds of the United States. And the effort of you men and of those like you elsewhere has consistently been to make it especially easy for the men and women of small means to subscribe to the loans. And the security is the best in the world, for it will be good as long as this nation endures, and if the nation breaks, we shall all of us be broken, nothing will make any difference to any of us.

Now, friends, I wish I could adequately express to you my sense of appreciation of the work that you and those like you are doing. The financial standing of this country depends primarily now upon the work of just such organizations as your organization here, and the welfare of our soldiers, the weight of our part in the war, de-

pends upon your success. It depends upon other things in addition. We of course must see that there is the highest grade of efficiency reached by our public servants in handling the funds thus provided. But the funds have to be provided before they are handled. That ought to be accepted as an axiomatic truth. So, you men and women here and the men and women like you engaged in similar tasks elsewhere through the country are standing by our soldiers in the trenches at the front.

I thank you as an American and wish you well, and I am mighty glad to see you. /