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A R M Y I N D U S T R I A L C O L L E G E

WASHINGTON, D. C.

LABOR

MR. WILLIAM GREEN,  
PRESIDENT, AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR.

June 10, 1925.

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"L A B O R"

General Patrick, Members of the Army Industrial College, Fellow Citizens and Friends:

I cannot begin to tell you how much I appreciate this opportunity of meeting with you, speaking to you and becoming acquainted with you. I esteem it a very great pleasure, a privilege, and a very great honor.

War is so serious that the average person is inclined to shrink from considering or discussing it. It involves so much of human suffering, waste and sacrifice that the individual is appalled by its consequence. Notwithstanding these impressions, reasonable minded people realize we are living in a very practical world and that while many agencies are at work seeking to promote the cause of peace and justice, the peoples of the world have not yet reached the point where the menace of war has entirely disappeared.

I would not be so presumptuous as to attempt to discuss with you the science of war or the plans of war-fare. These are matters that are of especial concern to you. You and those you represent have given years of study to the consideration of these questions. They are intricate and difficult and the laymen cannot grasp their full significance or complexity. The citizenship of our land must rely and does rely upon you and your associates to master these problems and to comprehend and understand them fully, not only from the standpoint of experts but also from the standpoint of preparedness against attack and aggression. In your mastery of the science of war and in your consideration of the subject of the organization of the Nation's resources and in the organization of the manpower of the Nation, it is necessary for you to review, from time to time, the whole field of labor and, in this way, to keep informed about the means and methods which may be employed in the utilization of the forces of production and industry in the event of war. It is upon this phase of the subject I can presume to speak, because during my life's association with labor, I have endeavored to comprehend and understand the psychological and moral attitude of the workers toward war and preparations for war. My task, in addressing you, is made easy because the work, plans, policies and proceedings of the American Federation of Labor and its affiliated units are open to the public, the press and to all Departments of the Government. There is nothing secretive about the plans, declarations, policies and work of organized labor. Its representatives are glad to supply you and those you represent with information regarding its work and its activities. It is in this spirit that I come to meet with you and to speak to you today.

On a number of occasions my illustrious predecessor, the late Mr. Gompers, appeared before you and addressed you. I am sure you recall, with very great interest and much satisfaction his patriotic, interesting and instructive addresses. A study of his reported utterances reveals the helpful advice he gave and the valuable information he imparted. His service in this way was a district contribution to your fund of

information and to the best interests and general welfare of the Government. All during the weeks and months preceding the participation of our Government in the World War, during the war period, and ever since that time I have served as a member of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor. It was my privilege to serve as a fellow-officer with Mr. Gompers and to assume responsibility with him in formulating and outlining the policy of the American Federation of Labor during those trying days which were fraught with such momentous consequence. I recall very distinctly the meeting of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, which was held about four weeks before the declaration of war on April 6, 1917, by the Congress of the United States, when the statement of the position of the American Federation of Labor, in war and in peace, was prepared for submission to a conference of the representatives of all international and national unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. The report, prepared and submitted by the Executive Council, was unanimously adopted by the conference. It was a historic meeting and the document, as drafted and published, created a profound impression and resulted in the crystallization of sentiment among the working people of our country in support of America's position and America's entry into the World War. I am sure I can say with all truthfulness that the Executive Council and the representatives of the American Federation of Labor performed a most profound and patriotic service, not only to the Republic of the United States but to the world at large, when, through the official declaration to which I have referred, it placed organized labor solidly behind the Government of the United States in the prosecution of the War. I was in thorough accord with the action and declaration of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor. I took a lively interest in all of the work of the Executive Council, and I was in thorough accord with Mr. Gompers and my associates on the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor in the formulation and in the adoption of the program and policy which was outlined and carried out by the American Federation of Labor during the World War.

Furthermore, it might not be amiss for me to advise that at this same period I was serving as the International Financial Officer of the International Union of the United Mine Workers of America. As you will recall, the problem of supplying fuel for the Nation became acute. Associated with this great basic industry of coal mining, I came to understand most clearly that an adequate supply of coal was essential to the winning of the war. It was indeed a pleasure to use my influence in every way possible in stimulating and accelerating the production of coal so that not only the war needs but the domestic needs of the Nation might be adequately supplied. The records show that the miners of our country responded to the call for service by mining and supplying coal in such quantities as to tax the transportation systems of our country far beyond their capacities.

Everyone who is in close touch with public sentiment must understand and know that the American people desire peace and wish to promote peace and the settlement of differences between nations through peaceful methods. This sentiment is most pronounced among the working people in all sections of our country. If anything, it is more pronounced

among this group or class of American citizens than among any other group or class of American citizens. This is, in part, due to the fact that they are numerically greater than any other class of our citizenship, and because war and the effects of war affect them more widely and to a greater degree than others.

After all, this attitude of the workers is quite similar to the attitude which prevails generally among all classes of the American people. We are committed to a program of peace. That is the traditional American policy. It is inconceivable that America would ever engage in a war or aggression of for the acquisition of territory. Our national policy rests squarely upon the basis of righteousness, justice and fair-dealing with all the nations of the world. There is nothing we wish to take from any other nation, and there is nothing that any other nation possesses which we covet. Our whole national policy, just preceding our entrance into the World War and all during the continuation of the World War, and in the negotiations of the Peace Treaty, showed the unselfish and unaggressive attitude of the Government of the United States.

But America's passion for peace cannot prevent war. Merely wishing for or willing a state of peace does not necessarily mean that peace will always prevail. Human nature, with all its weaknesses, manifested among all elements of society throughout the world, must be taken into account when we consider the subjects of peace and war. Men and nations are what they are and not what we may wish them to be. Both as individuals and as a Nation, we can be patient and generous under great provocation but in exercising these qualities we can reach a point where our honor and dignity and self respect require us to defend ourselves. This is a characteristic which will spontaneously assert itself when either an individual or a nation becomes the object of an unjust attack. Working people of America possess a very keen sense of justice. They quickly resent the imposition of injustice or wrong. It is this quality which inspires them to respond to the call to defend their country and which incites their patriotic impulses and fervor when they clearly understand and appreciate that our nation is engaged in a defensive war having for its purpose the advancement of freedom, the correction of wrong and injustice, and the perpetuation of peace. History shows that in every way in which America has engaged, the forces of labor have rallied and have generously and nobly supported the Government. It is reasonable to conclude that they will repeat this experience if America should ever be forced into another war in defense of its lofty ideals and traditions.

The Government, as well as the people of America, learned many lessons during the World War. Not the least of these was the relation of industry, the productive elements in industry and the agricultural forces of our country to the needs of the Army and the Navy. We learned how necessary it was to mobilize all these forces. In the light of the experience we gained during the World War, and with the knowledge we have acquired regarding the advancement made by science and engineering, in the development of war agencies and war mechanism, we are confident that industry and the elements of production will play an increasing part in the conduct of any future

war in which our Government may become engaged. Quite another important lesson was the necessity of maintaining the morale of all the people at its highest point. The German war machine collapsed because the morale of the German people broke down at a crucial moment when they became conscious of the fact that their army was confronted by the superior forces of the Allies and the dash and spirit of the American troops. They could not meet this supreme test and Germany was lost.

In connection with this subject, I am wondering whether or not the owners and managers of many large corporations and some employers in America think straight about the value of patriotic devotion and love of country which should be encouraged and inspired among the masses of our land. Are they serving the best interest of their employees by denying them the right to organize for mutual helpfulness and protection? Surely, from a patriotic standpoint and in order to promote and foster love for America, and love for American institutions, employers of labor should not oppose men and women in the exercise of their moral and legitimate right to organize into trade unions and to bargain collectively. They should be allowed to participate in the working out of wage scales and should be permitted to negotiate with employers regarding conditions of employment. In this way employers of labor could do much in the furtherance of national interest and domestic tranquillity. A free exercise on the part of the workers of the commonly accepted rights to organize, to bargain collectively and to enjoy freedom, liberty and democracy would result in the creation of a spirit which would inspire the workers to rally to the support of that Government which makes possible the enjoyment of these common blessings and benefits.

All during the World War, organization among the working people of America produced increased productivity, higher skill and a finer morale. These essential qualifications were enhanced through the influence of the officers and leaders of the organized labor movement of our land. For example, when war was declared, the Government was confronted with the question "How can the forces of labor be successfully and efficiently mobilized?". Instinctively it turned to the organization which the workers had formed and constructed. The machinery of organized labor was available for the use of the Government. Through this agency the Government was served and assisted in making a survey of available labor supply and manpower, and it utilized the services of the officers and representatives of organized labor in its work of organization, coordination and mobilization.

Would it not be the part of wisdom for the Government, when considering its preparedness program, to take into account the efficiency, availability and constructive use of a strong, comprehensive and resourceful organization of American working men and women? The question as to how the manpower, wealth and industrial resources of the Nation might be mobilized and used by the Government in case of future war, is one which must be considered as a result of the experience of the World War and from the standpoint of national and domestic interest. The consideration of this subject involved consideration of all the elements which must be used in the conduct of war. In my opinion, it

would be inadvisable, in the absence of any threat of war, to erect any definite standards or to adopt any inflexible rule to be followed in the formation of that part of a preparedness program which would relate to the development and organization of all the elements associated with industrial productivity.

Our forefathers fought for the freedom which we are now permitted to enjoy. The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States have meant more to the masses of the people of our Republic than they could mean to those who have been more favored. It has been and is, to them, the Magna Charta which must be preserved, if liberty, freedom and independence are to be enjoyed both now and in the future. These priceless blessings can only be maintained and enjoyed by a people who not only appreciate them but are willing to defend and protect them.

No nation is fit or worthy to enjoy the benefits of a free government and to exercise the right of self-government unless its people are willing to fight for the preservation of such a government and its free institutions.

I am confident this is the spirit prevailing among the working people, of our land, so much so that if these principles, fought for and established by our forefathers, or its foundations, were assailed or attacked, the working people would respond with enthusiasm and with an irresistible vigor in its defense and for its preservation.

The organized labor movement of America is founded on faith. The membership are brought together because they believe in each other. If, in the conduct of their own affairs, they must have an abundance of faith in each other, then they will, in like manner, look with faith to their Government and its chosen leaders. The most valuable asset a nation can possess is the exercise of immeasurable faith on the part of its people in the Government and in its governmental institutions.

The people who make up the organized labor movement of America, and for whom I have authority to speak, have confidence in our Government. They are loyal and patriotic and are proud of American history and American traditions. The security of America's position and of the Republic can never be questioned or jeopardized so long as this great mass of our American citizenship has faith and confidence in the Government. It is my purpose to do what I can to increase and maintain this faith and confidence, and to develop on the part of the working people everywhere a full appreciation of the blessings and benefits of American justice, freedom and liberty.

OPEN DISCUSSION FOLLOWING ADDRESS

QUESTION. Mr. Green, will you tell us something of the view of the American Federation of Labor regarding communism?

ANSWER. That is the force with which the American Federation of Labor is dealing in close quarters. We are, figuratively speaking, like the advance guard of an army; we are in the front trenches and we are dealing and grappling with communism and those representing communism. I presume we come in closer contact with communism than members of any other group of American citizens. That is because communism seeks to proselyte actively among the working people of our country. They seem to think that they can find, in periods of depression of business and in moments of discontent, a fertile field in which they may carry on their propaganda. I make these few preliminary remarks in answer to your question.

American labor is grappling and fighting communism and will continue to fight and grapple with communism until either the American labor movement is destroyed or communism meets its death. We regard communism not only as a menace to our free institutions and our Government, but we also regard it as labor's greatest enemy. Labor organizations as founded upon the American trade unionism and communism both cannot live in the same country. It will either destroy us or we will destroy it. There is no compromise, there can be none and never will be, and we will continue our policy of fighting it as long as the American Federation of Labor exists.

QUESTION. Will you tell us, frankly, of what the ordinary workman thinks of the Army, its purpose and its ideals?

ANSWER. The communists are constantly at work seeking to undermine and destroy the confidence of the average working man, not only in America and in the American form of Government, but in the Army as well. This movement is seeking to create an impression in the minds of the working people that the Army is their foe, and we have that to contend with. I am sure you men can appreciate that when unemployment prevails to a very great extent, when strikes of a bitter character exist, and where industrial conditions are unfavorable this propaganda influences men who are susceptible and who are suffering because of unemployment, of strikes and of unfavorable conditions. They are creatures of environment. There is a psychological condition there that is favorable and the communists take advantage of it. The American Federation of Labor is seeking to counteract that.

Now, among the average outstanding American working men there is a respect for the Army. That respect has grown and increased, in my judgement, since the termination of the World War. So long as the Army is not used in the interest of employers, in industrial

disputes, conflicts arising between capital and labor, I am confident that the American working man will continue to have the respect for the Army that is manifest among all other groups of people.

QUESTION. Would you favor, in event of a calamity of war, the drafting of American capital and money, all resources and labor, under the direction of the Government and the valuation of prices until a proper readjustment could be made, in conference with labor and others, so that we could have something definite to start on?

ANSWER. I am not prepared to answer you, either affirmatively or negatively, at this time because your question involves so much. It might be that such a thing would be necessary. I should not think the Government should go that far unless we had reached a condition where it was absolutely necessary. There is something of very great value that must be considered in the formulation of governmental policies during war periods. I referred to that in my address, in a general way, and that is the proper morale of the people back home. It is necessary to have morale and discipline in the Army, and it is very, very essential that the morale back home among all classes of people should be maintained at its highest point. The army in the field must be supported financially, industrially, morally, and with equipment - and the people back home must supply it. If the suggestion you made would tend to break down the morale of the people because it would be so revolutionary, then I think the Government should not attempt to put it in force. However, if the Government had reached a point in the prosecution of a war, a righteous war, a just war and one in defense of and for all the things which America stands, then the Government would be justified, in an emergency, in going to any length it thought it should go in order to win.