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AMERICA FIRST

The Opportunities and Responsibilities
of Citizenship

by

H. C. OGDEN

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**Mr. Toastmaster, Honored Guests, Members of the Wheeling Chamber
of Commerce:*

A kind of Americanism that was once popular in this country has gone out of fashion. I mean hyphenated Americanism that took a foreign name for a handle. The German-American, the Italian-American, and the Scandanivian-American, thank God, are gone, and we hope forever. But there is a different kind of hyphenated Americanism that has not disappeared, and of the necessity for the abolition of that kind of Americanism I want to speak to this audience of American business men. If this republic is to live in strength and majesty, we must accentuate Americanism that embraces the whole people against the American of a class. We must keep this government as our forefathers planned, a government in which all men stand alike before the law, a government under which opportunity is open on equal terms to all, a government that knows neither rich nor poor, strong nor weak that distinguishes not between employer and employe, that keeps not a stern, severe and relent-

less justice for the offender who does not happen to belong to a particular class or organization, and a kind and lenient justice for the offender who does belong to some powerful body of voters. A real democracy spreads its benefits, its responsibilities, and its demands with even hand over all its people. It commands the devotions of its citizens because of the liberality of its institutions, and the justice of its laws.

This country is not threatened from without. We can conceive of no foreign power that would be able, permanently, to invade our coasts, and maintains a foothold upon our territories. It is threatened from within, and the danger from within, though it may be magnified and exaggerated, is a danger to which we should not close our eyes.

Karl Marx, the father of modern-day Socialism, a German Jew, and long-time exile from his native land, preached the breaking down of international boundaries. To him patriotism was folly, love of native land a delusion, and the ownership of property a crime. Internationalism was his gospel. His works, which have been read, probably more earnestly than any other book except the Bible, preach that the great war of the future will not be a war between France and Germany; between Russia or Great Britain, or between any division of the nations of the world, but a war of the labor of the world against capital of the world, a war of the men who work with their hands against the men who work with their brains. Writing at a time when the development of manufacturing in Europe was just beginning, when improved machinery was displacing hand workers, and when production in many lines was outstripping the means of distribution, he predicted that machinery would make idleness; that idleness would lower wages and the status of the workers, and the inevitable result of the industrial age would be finally to create a larger class of propertyless workers, and a relatively small class of very rich employers. When that came he predicted the coming of the social revolution, by which everywhere, workers would take into their own hands, the control of the machinery of production, and of distribution, and wipe out and destroy the employing class. The books of Karl Marx, written fifty years ago, are read today in America, and in every other industrial country of the world, and though his predictions have not yet come true, the gospel which he preached is making converts, and the effects of that gospel can be seen wherever men labor, and wherever other men employ labor.

Mr. Wm. Z. Foster, organizer of the American Federation of Labor, and leader of the late steel strike, a man who never worked a day in a steel mill, and yet had the power to cause over 200,000 steel workers to drop their tools and quit, in his testimony before the U. S. Senate Com-

mittee, admitted that he had advocated in his books, the overthrow of the present industrial system by force. In short he was the preacher of a revolution—not a peaceful, social revolution, but a revolution of riot and murder of bloodshed and terror, the red revolution of anarchy—and in spite of those teachings, because of them perhaps he had been put at the head of a great labor movement in this country, in which the foundation of all organized society is obedience by all the people to the laws which the people themselves make.

A few weeks ago, Mr. John Fitzpatrick, another representative of the American Federation of Labor, and another powerful figure in the late steel strike, declared in a Chicago newspaper that the labor candidate for President would be elected this year. "Labor," he said, "intends to take over the government at Washington." Soon thereafter, Samuel Gompers, head of the American Federation of Labor, a man who is justly regarded as one of the most conservative of labor chiefs, announced that it was the purpose of his great organization to go into every Congressional district of the United States, and to support those candidates who had shown themselves especially friendly to the ideas of the unions; to reward their friends, and to punish their enemies. In other words, four million American citizens are being appealed to by these and other leaders, some of them even more radical, to forget every other duty as citizens, to submerge every relation in life, except the relation to a labor union, and to resolve every political question which as citizens they must consider, solely upon the ground of its accidental relationship to their particular class and to their particular organization. John Fitzpatrick and men like him propose to translate into action, the ideas of Karl Marx, a doctrine which means the penalizing of enterprise, brains and superior ability, a doctrine which means the making this government of ours purely a government of class; one body of men legislating in their own interest, and making laws, and enforcing them for their own benefit, appropriating property, and taxing wealth for their own use. Logically the Fosters and Fitzpatricks mean social revolution. There is not an iota of difference between their political program and the program of the Russian Bolshevik. The Bolshevik is only a little more out-spoken, and a little more sincere. The Bolshevik accomplishes and maintains the government of a class in Russia by the simple process of denying the ballot, and denying every legal right to all who do not work, or at least, pretend to work, with their hands. The priest of the church, the learned doctor, the studious lawyer, the manufacturer, the banker and the merchant, are disfranchised and reduced to political and social servitude. Mr. Fitzpatrick will allow all men to vote, but their vote is to be reduced to a nullity, and the government in the end is to be taken over and operated by his followers, and for their own benefit. Yet I don't think that Mr. Fitzpatrick and men like

him are going to take over our government in this year of Grace, 1920, or for many years to come. They have undertaken a very big job, and so long as the hearts of the American people beat true it will be too big for them or for any other class, or interest.

In our sister city of Bridgeport before this section went dry, a gentleman having indulged too much, and fired with the spirit of conquest, as the German emperor was, in a loud voice announced that he could whip any man standing around. No one took notice. A little later in a louder voice he added that he could whip any man in Bridgeport. Still no notice. A little later in a still louder voice he announced that he could whip any man in the town of Bridgeport or the city of Wheeling, then someone reached over and gave him a punch in the jaw and laid him out. After he came too, he rose, rubbed his sore jaw, hiccupped and remarked, "I make a mishtake. I took in too darned much territory." And so Mr. Fitzpatrick and his friends, when they undertake to take over this great government for their particular class, will find that they are trying to take in too much territory. It is unthinkable that the one hundred and ten million prosperous and happy people in this great country; the most fortunate people ever gathered together under one government, and speaking one tongue, the world has even seen; with their seven million farms owned in most cases by the men who live on them and work them, with their thirty million bank depositors, with their twenty million bond owners and with countless homes of men and women who have toiled and saved, dotting the hillside and valleys and crowding the villages and country—it is inconceivable that such a people can accept a doctrine that aims to destroy private property, to punish thrift, while it rewards the lazy, the indifferent, the thriftless and the criminal.

But as citizens we must not shut our eyes to this propaganda, and to the danger which it portends. We need only read history to be impressed with the thought that the American republic will be subject to trials, that may test its strength to the utmost. Every human institution is born with the seeds of sickness and death within its own body. We may anticipate the some time in the future the weaknesses of human nature, the errors, and passions of men are likely to imperil this mighty republic, whose foundations today we conceive to be so firmly built, and so solidly intrenched. No republic ever fell from attack from without that was not first ruined by class dissensions from within. The first pure democracy of which we have knowledge was the democracy of Athens, and the first tyrant to overthrow democracy in Athens was a demagogue who preached classism, who organized the farmers and the working men of the Athenian republic, and through their support, made himself the dictator of the state. The great Roman republic, which stood for six hun-

dred years, which extended its domain throughout the known world, and maintained an existence as an autocracy long after it ceased to be a republic, became the prey of class dissension, which destroyed liberty. The war of the plebeians under Marius, and the patricians under Sulla drenched the Roman state in blood and paved the way for Caesar, the military conqueror, who came with the support of a large class of the common people to disperse the Roman senate, to proscribe the senators, and to set up an imperial autocracy. What has happened in the past may happen in the future. Not exactly in the same form, but from the same cause, and if we allow the accentuation of class in this country over and above our Americanism; if we allow the division of our citizenship to be so clearly defined between the rich and the poor, the employer and the employe, we will sow the seeds that will grow into the social revolution which Mr. Fitzpatrick is working for, and which Karl Marx predicted.

Against that hideous doctrine of Karl Marx, and against the propaganda of such men as John Fitzpatrick, we have the words of the greatest American that the nineteenth century produced, Abraham Lincoln. He said:

"I happen temporarily to occupy this White House. I am a living witness that anyone of your children may look to come here as my father's child has * * * * * Property is the fruit of labor; property is desirable, and a positive good to the world. That some should be rich shows that others may become rich, and hence is just encouragement to industry and enterprise."

It is a simple and plain statement of the theory of property and the spirit of American institutions. Democracy, and the essence of this government is democracy; democracy means, not merely the right of the ballot, or equal standing before the law. It means something grander than these things. It means equality of opportunity, and equality of opportunity is the thing we must maintain in this country if class and classism are to be held in check.

"I happen temporarily to occupy the White House. I am a living witness that any one of your children may look to come here as my father's child has." This is equality of opportunity in this great land of ours, a land in which the highest honors, the opportunity for greatest service, the chance for the richest rewards have been and ought to be open on equal terms to the ambitious and deserving boy and girl whatever the rank and station of their family. We may question whether or not we still maintain equality of opportunity in this country as thoroughly as we should. In the days of Abraham Lincoln, the plains of the Middle

West had scarcely been touched by the hand of man. Great areas of the richest farm lands of the world were waiting for the plow and for the husbandman. The ambitious boy with no more capital than his axe could mark for himself, a homestead, and by steady toil rear a home and gain a competency. The skilled worker, the carpenter and the blacksmith in the few and thinly populated settlements could set up for himself in a small plant, become his own employer and his own employe, and within a few years, establish his complete independence. To some degree, perhaps, to a very great degree these conditions have changed. The mighty plains of the West have been filled up with busy peoples. The lands which in the day of Abraham Lincoln could be had for the taking now sells at hundreds per acre. There are no unfilled fields. The development of industrial plants employing thousands of men has created a class of experts in industry; who from the very nature of their situation find it harder and harder to change their positions, and to cross over from the ranks of employes to the ranks of the employers. However, while these forces have operated in some degree to lessen opportunities for advancement, new fields have opened up. The doors of opportunity still swing open. The demand for expert labor is greater than it was before. The call for skilled men cannot be satisfied. The cry for the highest type of executive capacity becomes louder and louder, and the capacity to fill responsible position brings reward such as could not have been dreamed of half a century ago. The great natural resources of this country have only been touched. The fortunes that have been made, the wealth that has been taken out of our lands is a fraction compared with the wealth that is going to be taken out in the next fifty years, and in the transformation of industry existent, in the development of our great mineral wealth, in the multiplication of manufactures, there will be countless opportunities for the enterprising boy of superior ability, and superior brains. Those opportunities must be kept free on just terms to men of every class. One way we can help keep these opportunities open is by increasing the amount of industrial education, which is given in our manufacturing towns. We are spending a few thousands or dollars per year in the city of Wheeling in training boys and girls in industry. If, where we spend one dollar, we spent ten dollars we would not be spending too much. In this country we have been educating superior boys and girls away from industry. We thought it a desirable thing to make lawyers and doctors and clerks out of a great many bright and enterprising boys who would have made better mechanics, better superintendents, better chemists and better manufacturers.

This city might well, and profitably invest in its educational organization enough money to create and operate a model iron and steel plant; a model pottery, a model glass house, and we ought to have in this valley,

with its doors open to every ambitious boy, who wants to learn, without price and without charge, technical institutions, in which boys of superior ability could get some insight into the mysteries of manufacturing, the chemistry of industry, the why of things. In our splendid State University we have a fine law school. The state maintains a great library; it pays skilled lawyers, and in that school model courts are maintained; cases are tried and under the direction of trained teachers scores of young men are taught the theory of the law and are experienced in its practice. If it is worth while to spend thousands of dollars each year to train lawyers, to create a body of men who make no wealth, and who must live off the work of others, why isn't it worth while to spend money to make trained iron and steel workers, good potters, skilled glass blowers, and expert draughtsmen?

There are many other things; the Workmen's Compensation law, the Child Labor laws, the Factory Inspection laws, the Mothers' Pension, these are lines of work in which we have, in a feeble way, made adventures. We could safely go much farther. In the state of West Virginia, for instance, we are spending a few thousand dollars every year in the maintenance of public hospitals. We ought to spend a hundred dollars where we are now spending one. In every industrial community in West Virginia, the public should maintain hospitals, open without charge, and not as a matter of charity, to every citizen who has just occasion to use them. These are some of the services which a thoroughly democratic state should perform for its people. They are not Socialism. They are far distant from the rule of class, from the abolition of private property. Every bit of advanced social legislation that we put on the statute books becomes a guarantee that democracy will be maintained, and the rule of class will never triumph in this dear land of ours. This is, in effect a call to the man who has prospered to help others to prosper. The State says to him: "You have been fortunate; you have enjoyed the benefits and opportunities of this great rich free land. We call on you to help others to enjoy the same benefits, and opportunities," and gentlemen, just in the measure that you all respond to that call do you help make certain the preservation of American institutions. Karl Marx was right on one thing. That is, if a great propertyless class of workers is ever created in this country, a class that has neither comfort in the present, nor a hope for the future, the social revolution will be at hand; and the way, the only way, to avert that revolution is to help make it easy for other men to prosper as you have prospered; for other men to gain wealth by industry, and thrift as you have gained it, and for other men to enjoy some of the better things of life that you enjoy.

Tonight I wish to give you this thought, America first, and America not only against any other country in the world, but America first as against every class in America, whether it be the class of the rich, the prosperous and the favored, or the class of the needy and the unfortunate. That is the ideal of the American state. Let this be in our minds, and our hearts above self-interest, and above personal prejudices. Whatever may be our world duties, and I do not minimize them, our first duty is to this, our own country. Let us put and keep our own house in order. Let us cease to regard ourselves as bankers, as merchants, as manufacturers, or as working men. Sink accidental and often temporary differences of place and position in the great sea of Americanism. Let us exalt our membership in the freest and most blessed society of men and women ever gathered together under one government in all history; teach in our schools and in our homes that to be one of the rulers of this self-ruling nation is the most precious heritage that child is born to. In this land, as in every other land, in which many millions of people of different types and training live, there must be many different minds, and many different thoughts, but let us learn to compose these differences with a view to the safety of the whole state and not to the selfish interest of a particular class, or of our own class, and in that common bond of fidelity make sure that this government of the people, the greatest achievement of free men, the hope of humanity, will long survive, like a mighty monarch of the forest, to gather and protect under its wide spreading arms our children and our children's children in long centuries of justice, security and fraternal peace.