



ADDRESS

by

Senator Burton K. Wheeler



MADISON SQUARE GARDEN

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THE AMERICA FIRST COMMITTEE

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KEEPING this nation at peace and free from foreign wars is the most noble and patriotic service that an American can render the Republic. By these standards no man has served the United States more intelligently, more courageously, and more effectively than Col. Charles A. Lindbergh. Upon him the war mongers have turned their scorn and abuse. But he has continued to fight the fight of peace and democracy. To Col. Lindbergh, I say—the greatest eventual glory comes not from wars won or lost but from war prevented. Some day that glory will be accorded Col. Lindbergh, as it was accorded his illustrious father and Old Battling Bob LaFollette.

I SPEAK to you tonight—not as a Democrat—not as a Republican—but as a plain ordinary citizen who is deeply interested in this country of ours. I am here to urge you to muster the courage to fight as you have never fought before—to fight to save your sons from the bloody battlefields of Europe, Asia and Africa—to fight against one-man government in the United States.

PEACE or war is not a partisan issue—it is an American issue.

I HATE one-man government. I was denouncing Mussolini when Churchill was saying (1927) "If I were an Italian I would be a Fascist." I was denouncing Hitler when Lord Halifax was shooting wild boar with Goering in Germany. Today, I denounce Nazism, Fascism, and Communism.

I DENOUNCE British imperialists—American Tories and all war makers. If there be one or many within the range of my voice—who prefers the German, the Italian, the Russian, or the British systems to the American form of Government, I say—go there—and stay there. I say to them—there are those of us who believe in America, who have faith in American institutions, who have confidence in our ability to defend ourselves without the aid of England or any foreign power. Give us I say—an opportunity to remain at peace and to solve our domestic problems within the framework of the Constitution, to the end that we will build of this nation a greater and mightier republic.

DURING the past month or two I have travelled some 7600 miles through more than twenty states. I have addressed public meetings from one end of this country to the other. Whether it was business and professional men in Cincinnati, workers in Denver, farmers in Sioux Falls, miners in Butte—merchants in Boston, everywhere—East or West—it was the same, the American people are firmly resolved to avoid this war. Dr. Gallup may publish polls which indicate that American public would approve Convoys. He may with approval of Secretary Stimson poll our armed forces. Of course that venerable warrior, Mr. Stimson, expects a satisfactory result. He knows that every American soldier, sailor or pilot, has been fully informed about the fate of General Hugh Johnson and Colonel Lindbergh when they dared express their views. But, if I know anything of public sentiment, or the temper of the American people, I fear the fate of those who would take them into the hell of war today.

THESE crowded, overflow meetings from Boston to Denver, were composed of a cross section

of the population. They were not pro-nazi, pro-fascist, or pro-communist. They were simply pro-American. They, like myself, were sympathetic with the English people. No blood but English flows through my veins or any of my family. And next to being pro-American I am pro-English. I greatly admire the English. Unlike us they have never been accused of being sentimental suckers.

LORD PALMERSTON said: "England has no eternal enmities and no eternal friendships. She has only eternal interests." An Englishman loves England first. I only wish there were more Americans, who, like the English, loved America first.

WHEN the Willkie Crusade to preserve the Chinese way of life flopped Lord Halifax was rushed into the middle west. Talk of subversive activities—speak of fifth columnists—what brazen effrontery? A British Ambassador touring the United States to arouse our people to sacrifice their sons and their treasure to save the British Empire. The American people resent this abuse of diplomatic courtesy. They resent it just as they resent the untiring efforts of the Royal Refugees to plunge us into war. They know that these royalists did not give their subjects the democracy they now implore us to save. They know that these royalists did not solve the economic and social problems in their lands. They know that when cannon roared and death rained from the skies these royal refugees seized their gold and departed for safer lands. They left their subjects to do the fighting and dying they would now have us do. Yes, the American people are idealistic—but it is a practical idealism—one that cannot be pandered by propaganda. The American people would like to see the four freedoms established throughout the world, but first they

want freedom from want in the United States, first they want freedom of speech and freedom from lynching in Florida, first they want the four freedoms firmly and irrevocably established in this nation.

PLEAS for war from Secretary Stimson have fallen on deaf ears. In 1916 and 1917 Mr. Stimson conducted his first campaign for war. Then the Kaiser was going to invade the United States, invade this land with 330,000 men and 40,000 mules. A year ago Hitler was going to invade us at any moment with ships. Today, according to Secretary Stimson the invasion will be from the air. The American people recognize Mr. Stimson for what he is—an able genial gentleman, 72 years of age who is utilizing every device to get this country into war. I do not question his patriotism. I question his good judgment. What is there about war that so many of our elder statesmen want you to fight?

OTHER high ranking officials have vainly pleaded the war makers cause but all to no avail. Finally the Secretary of Agriculture was rushed into the field. He journeyed to the heart of the farming country and there he promised the farmers parity prices and luscious government subsidies on the one hand, and on the other the Secretary wanted them to come to war. But the American farmer and his wife are no Judas Iscariot—they will not sell their sons into war for thirty pieces of silver.

THE American people are still moved by noble emotions but they learned twenty-five years ago to their eternal sorrow that there is no idealism in war. They learned and President Wilson learned that economic or political spoils—not humanitarian

impulses — govern the Conquerors. They saw Democracy sacrificed on the altar of international selfishness, exchanged for more territory and reparations.

AND so today the war makers and all those who would so willingly sacrifice another's life to preserve the British Empire tell us we cannot live in a world dominated by a dictator. How familiar that statement is to patriotic Americans. Our forefathers carved a democracy in a world of autocratic monarchies in 1776. Less than thirty years later a great conqueror unleashed his armed might against England and against most of Europe. Then a Boston anglophile, Fisher Ames declared: "Great Britain is fighting our battles and the battles of mankind, and France is combatting for the power to enslave and plunder us and all the world."

THE tories of today who would engulf us in war for Great Britain had their tory forbears. How easily could the word Germany be substituted for the word France in the statement of John Lowell who prior to the war of 1812 said: "All thoughtful men know that Great Britain alone stood between us and that slavery which would be our portion if France should prevail."

TODAY our war makers in frightened tones and with tremors in their voices pose the question, "What if Germany seizes the British Fleet?" They imply all would be lost. They suggest that we would suffer an immediate invasion, that Panzer divisions would roll down Broadway, and that parachutists would be landing in Montana. How fantastic! How utterly ridiculous!

I AFFIRM with all my strength, my confidence and faith in the United States of America. I hold this nation's safety as dear as any man. We are no small, trembling, spineless nation. We are strong and growing stronger. We are mighty and becoming mightier. No nation dependent upon another is or can be an independent country. Those who parade as Americans but who tell us we are dependent upon the British Navy are unworthy of the name American.

TRUE the United States can breathe easier as long as the British Fleet survives. It is a luxury to our defense. It does implement our naval power as long as the United States and Britain cooperate and have no controversies.

WE are building a two-ocean navy. It will protect this hemisphere. Except for a few units it will be ready for service within two years. Unless Hitler can invade this hemisphere within the next few months he could never do it even though he captured the entire British Fleet and the remainder of the French and Italian Fleets were his to command. This is not idle talk from a swivel chair expert. Ask any top-ranking, active, working American naval officer.

LET us examine the facts. If Hitler seized the British Fleet tomorrow years would be required in which to train crews and officers to man these ships and to reach the high state of effectiveness of our navy. Each man must be trained for his task. Many require the greatest skill and longest experience. Likewise to command and to maneuver fleets demands years of study and then more years of drilling aboard ship. And each of these planes, submarines and ships must drill with each other before a fleet has been trained for action.

HITLER has no fleet now and he will not have a fleet until long after we are ready for him.

IT is inconceivable that the British Fleet would ever come into Hitler's hands. In 1918 the Germans sank their whole fleet rather than to deliver it to England. Without the British navy it would take Hitler at least seven years in which to build a fleet equal to ours.

TO invade South or North America the invader must have a tremendously superior fleet. It is significant that the British and French navies never attempted a coastal invasion of Germany. They always chose land operations.

ANY of our naval experts will tell you the German fleet today is inconsequential for invading purpose. The British have humbled the Italian Navy. For Hitler to attempt an invasion of the Americas would be suicide. Transports require fleet protection. Unprotected, a German transport with its small guns would be easy prey for the American Navy. German submarines are small. They were designed to operate close to their bases, within a few hundred miles of England. They could not be used to accompany transports in any great number.

AMERICAN submarines are large. They were built for long range. They can cross the Atlantic and back without refueling. They could harass and sink transports over the entire route. No invader could maintain a supply line from Dakar to South America or from Berlin to New York. American bombing planes protected by fighters would meet any invaders. Fighter planes, incapable of long

distance flights, aboard carriers would be the only real protection against these American bombers. And the number of foreign carriers is few—so few that they represent no serious problem.

ASSUME that the Germans captured the British fleet, assume that she had developed a powerful navy, assume that she had the airplane carriers necessary to protect the fleet from bomber attacks. Where would she get the ships to transport the troops? Two or three thousand transports for men; another thousand ships to carry the heavy tanks, the motor vehicles, the military supplies that would be necessary. Today it is doubtful whether Germany could obtain a hundred small transports. She has been almost reduced to using tugs and barges from the Rhine. It is barely possible that with complete mobilization of shipping Hitler could transport a hundred thousand men. No army of 100,000 men can invade the United States. Why we would blow them to bits.

IF we go into this war to win it means we will be the ones to provide the 3000 transports which do not exist. We will be the ones that must carry our bombers and fighters thousands of miles. It will be we who attempt to land in Europe against entrenched forces—giant cannons and the air might of Germany. We are the ones whose transports will be vulnerable to the short radius of active German submarines, speed boats and aircraft based on nearby German, French and Spanish ports. That will be different—far different than repelling any invading force of this hemisphere.

THUS a cold, dispassionate analysis of the facts explodes the fanciful threat of a military invasion of the Western Hemisphere. We are safe now and for years to come. But the war makers are

undaunted. They have conjured another threat—the threat of an economic invasion. And to those who preach economic defeatism I say, as I said to their craven-hearted allies who fear Hitler will soon be on Broadway—have faith in American industry, in American labor, in American business and in American genius. They are all first class. Free American industry is superior to controlled Nazi industry, free American workers can produce more than Nazi slaves and I know that American business men are smarter than any Nazi competitor.

IF the economic history of the world proves anything it proves that low wages and slave labor cannot compete with free labor. American wages have always been high and we have always competed and held our own in world trade. Chinese factories, owned and operated by the British with cheap coolie labor, have never been a real threat. And in India most factories are equipped with modern English machinery. The great majority of the executives and technical experts are British, the cheapest labor is employed and yet India is no economic threat.

THE plight of India's workers is tragic. Go there as I have gone there, see them earn a few pennies for their day's labor, see them spend it for the cheapest food, see them asleep at night on the public thoroughfares, on streets and on sidewalks, with only boards or concrete under them and nothing over them except the heavens and the British flag.

CHEAP labor, slave labor is no match for free workers. If it were, England, who controls the world's largest low-wage reservoir of supply, would dominate and monopolize world trade.

I AM not afraid of any of these imaginary threats conjured by those who want to take us into a jolly war. I am afraid that if President Roosevelt repudiates his election pledges to the American people, not to take us into a foreign war, that the American people will lose faith not only in their President but in their government.

I AM afraid that if our national debt grows greater and greater we will resort to debt repudiation or inflation. I am afraid that if the President accepts the advice of that little coterie who surround him—most of whom have never faced an electorate, or met a payroll, or tried a lawsuit and many of whom are impractical dreamers—he will wage an undeclared war. And then Constitutional democracy will end.

I AM afraid that when American boys return from Singapore, Dong-Dang, Bombay, Dakar and the Red Sea—armless, legless, maimed and insane—and when other American boys return to seek jobs when there are no jobs—they will be embittered and disheartened. Some of them will seek those who said election pledges of peace were mere campaign oratory.

I FEAR the aftermath of war. A post war period is far more threatening and dangerous to this democracy than any foreign military or naval force. When we enter the conflict we would become at that moment a regimented nation. We as individuals would be subordinated to one person, the Commander-in-chief, and to one objective—the waging of war. From such a state democracy could hardly be restored. Our men and women—disillusioned, disheartened and even destroyed mentally and morally—amid economic chaos and social dislocations would turn to the man on horseback. Then, and not before, would there arise little Am-

erican feuhrers and from them would come one native feuhrer—an American Il Duce, an American Hitler.

TONIGHT the war mongers and their satellites demand that President Roosevelt assume leadership in their crusade of blood and destruction. They decry his leadership. Why? Because he has merely taken us to the brink of war. These sordid romanticists—jingoistic journalists and saber-rattling bankers in New York criticize the President for barely keeping his promises. Only war—blood, sweat, tears and destruction—can satisfy their lust.

THE workers, the farmers, the business and professional men—people from every walk of American life look to the President for leadership—for another brand of guidance. They are not alone. The people of all the world look to Franklin D. Roosevelt. They look to him with upturned faces, with prayers on their lips and hope in their hearts. They see him, a symbol of liberty, a champion of the down-trodden—they see him as their knight, a leader for peace.

THESE people are realists — they are not dreamers. English mothers, Italian mothers, German mothers know what it is to have sons fighting, killing, destroying. Certainly all thinking people the world over understand the cost and futility of war. They want peace—peace before all the people of the world and civilization are doomed—before they sink into a common grave.

THE President of the United States could appeal to the world for peace—he could appeal not to Hitler or to Mussolini or Churchill but to the people of Germany, Italy, and England. He could demand that the war makers, the Hitlers of Germany, the Churchills in England and the Knoxes

and Stimsons step down and out. I believe he could dictate the peace of the world if he would. But first he must rid himself of those war makers who surround him—who refuse to understand the wishes of the people.

THE American people demand that American influence be diverted from the channels of war to the channels of peace. They demand that restitution be made for the bloody and unfilled promises of former Ambassador Bullitt, and Colonel Wild Bill Donovan. The American people know that Bullitt promised Poland we would enter the war when President Roosevelt was promising our people continued peace.

THE American people know that it was Colonel Donovan's promises that sent Yugoslavia into battle. All this they know and as practical idealists they now demand peace. If American war makers are really interested in preserving the British Empire and the British navy, then they too will join and work for peace now.

THE tremendous power—present and potential of the United States lent to the cause of peace — might well stop this heartless slaughter of humans and needless destruction of property. With the destiny of mankind in the balance the time has come to act—to act for a just peace not in the interest of the British Tories or imperialists, not in the interests of power or land-hungry dictators but in the interest of all the people in the world.

TONIGHT most of the world is engaged in bloody battle. I ask in behalf of millions that the President of the United States—at the risk of being called an appeaser—appeal to all the people of the world to stop War—now—before it is too late.

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