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LIBERALISM IN THIS TIRED WORLD

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We are living in a tired world. It is also a disappointed world. The truly great movement of constructive and forward-facing liberal opinion which began to manifest itself with great power some four centuries ago, has become weak and exhausted. The record which that movement made in writing modern history and in shaping the thought and the institutions of men is without parallel.

It brought about, first, the English revolution of the seventeenth century, and then, in part through the effect of that revolution which reached France through Voltaire's famous *Lettres sur les Anglais*, it brought about, in concurrence with other forces, the great French Revolution of the close of the eighteenth century. Meanwhile, it had brought into existence on this side of the Atlantic, the Federal Union of thirteen states and had written the famous Bill of Rights into the Federal Constitution of those United States, marking its supreme achievement. There is no like record of accomplishment for any force or ideals since the beginning of history.

Then came, for a quarter century, the powerful reaction led by Napoleon Bonaparte; and it seemed for a time as if that liberal movement had come to its end. But there was a Waterloo. After Waterloo, liberal, constructive political, social and economic philosophy re-

sumed its march. It became particularly powerful in England and in France and in the smaller European countries.

What truly great names are those which are associated with that movement from the middle of the eighteenth century on toward the close of the nineteenth! In England, there are the names of Chatham and of Burke, of Fox and of Pitt, of Palmerston and of Cobden, of Bright and of Gladstone. In France, there are those of Chateaubriand and of Lamartine, of Thiers and of Gambetta; and in Italy the names of Mazzini and of Cavour. On our side of the Atlantic, we write on the high places of history the names of Washington and of Franklin, of Hamilton and of Jefferson, of Madison and of Clay, of Webster and of Lincoln. Where else, in all the history of mankind, can be found a group of names like these, names of men who, in England, in France, in Italy and in the United States, transplanted liberalism to a new soil, put its roots down deep, and had it bear rich fruit in the thought and the institutions of mankind?

And then came the evidences of fatigue. They began to manifest themselves at the turn of the last century, when this great development, three hundred and fifty years old, found itself confronted by an entirely new series of facts and forces which were the result of the industrial revolution, now more than a hundred years old, and of the stupendous achievements in the field of science and invention, which had so completely altered the facts of daily life and of every industry, of commerce and of finance.

Confronted by that stupendous series of problems,

constructive liberalism began to falter and to halt. Men began to turn backward and to ask whether perhaps we had not gone too far in establishing and defending human liberty, in making possible freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of thought, freedom of work, freedom of religion, and whether there should not be a closer and more highly centralized organization of all human effort.

There had been individuals preaching this reactionary doctrine for the better part of a hundred years, but they were not listened to in any great degree until these new industrial, social and economic problems began to face the whole world with such force and in such number that men hesitated to act in terms of what had been for generations their fundamental underlying convictions.

And there is where the world is today. It is tired by that stupendous effort. It is disappointed that the great movement of progress has been checked. It has been checked because the liberal philosophy, sound as it is, had not yet obtained a sufficient hold over the minds of great masses of men, despite the teachings of leaders of opinion and of the intellectual life, to enable them to approach these new problems in its spirit. Therefore they were ready to hesitate instead of to act. It is one more illustration of the truth of the maxim that "he who hesitates is lost."

Our liberal philosophy has hesitated. It has undertaken to question some of its own fundamental principles and it has opened the door to the greatest reactionary force the world knows, which is armed force. The moment that liberalism halts, sooner or later men

in so-called free countries under free forms of government will always find themselves confronted by reactionary radicalism. It is characteristic of reactionary radicalism that it calls itself liberal. It is in truth the very contradiction of everything for which liberalism stands. It is radical because it wishes to pull up by the roots whatever exists. It is reactionary because it wishes to go back and begin all over again that advance of mankind which for four thousand years has been developing toward this liberal social order which came to such a climax and bore such fruit in the period through which civilization has just now passed.

What has been the aim of liberalism? The aim of liberalism has been to make it plain that the individual is not to be subject to the compulsion of the group, but that the group is organized in a political or economic state for a common purpose which will leave the individual free in his thought, in his speech, in his religion, and in his press. This radical movement is an attempt to substitute compulsion for freedom. It is an attempt to substitute a common possession of all the world's product instead of encouraging the individual himself to do his best in a spirit, not of gain-seeking only, but of human service. And there is the fundamental conflict in every form of human life. It is gain-seeking versus human service. Unless gain-seeking be subordinated to human service, no social or economic society can survive or ought to survive.

If the individual is set free, it is with the expectation and the hope that his controlling motive will be ultimately human service. He will then do his best. He will earn, he will save, he will contribute; but the earn-

ing and the savings will be incidental and secondary to a spirit of helping and guiding his fellow men. That conception of a liberal society is what marked and characterized the great historic liberal movement of which I speak. That which has made that movement grow tired is the failure of that motive of human service to hold its own in the face of new and desperately difficult problems which, I repeat, the industrial revolution and the epoch-marking advances in science and invention have brought to mankind.

When we examine these well-known historic facts, we are confronted by the question of what our own present attitude should be. To that question, I give but one answer. It must never be surrender! It must never be apathy. It must never be cowardice. It must never be a perpetual state of intellectual, moral, economic and political fatigue. We must and shall resume that march, repel and hold back this new instrument of brute force, so cruelly exercised, and go behind it to the very people in whose name it is now used and who themselves are being desperately oppressed by it. We must go back to a conception of an orderly and liberal being and friendly society toward which we had made so great progress when the twentieth century opened.

That requires courage. That requires capacity for work in a spirit of unselfish human service. That requires insight. If this world is ever going to have perpetual peace, we must have, first, a community of principle which leads to a community of action, and which in turn ultimately leads to a community of interest. We can make conflicting interests cease to conflict only if we can get below the surface of things and show men in

what their community of interest consists, be it individual or group or national or international.

It will not do for the English-speaking peoples to weaken in their leadership of the liberal movement in politics, in the social and economic order and in the intellectual life. They are committed to that movement by their achievement and by their great leaders of the mind. The greater part of their history is a glorious tribute to its success and its distinction.

No, for the Pilgrims and those for whom they speak—our fellow men in the British Commonwealth of Nations, in old Greece with its glorious achievement of today, or in any other part of the world where these fundamental principles are accepted, defended and illustrated—there is our opportunity for leadership and for co-operation!

Let me quote, as a suitable motto for the Pilgrims at this crisis, the very remarkable paragraph with which the President of the United States ended his third inaugural address:

We do not retreat. We are not content to stand still. As Americans, we go forward in the service of our country, by the will of God!

I give that as a motto for the Pilgrims of today and tomorrow.