

COMMANDER'S BANQUET, AMERICAN LEGION,  
DEPARTMENT OF MARYLAND

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**T**WO great struggles are underway in the world today. Rather there are two theatres of action where the same great struggle is being waged. One is overseas. There the defenders of democracy and right, of reason and self-determination are holding at bay the powers of ruination.

The other is over here. It is a bloodless controversy, but is crucial. On its resolution may hang the outcome of what is happening abroad; may hang the immediate fate of what Americans call civilization.

I refer, of course, to the pending measures to stop the advance of the dictators. And when we say that the fate of civilization may hang upon its passage we are not willfully exaggerating. We are saying what, in all good conscience, we feel morally compelled to say; what we judge to be the considered opinion of the ablest and the best informed minds in the Country today.

The Lease-Lend Bill will pass Congress. Hardly anybody doubts that. The question is—when? How soon? The struggle in Washington is against time—against delay—against inertia.

For the spirit of this legislation has already been tested. The underlying principle has been approved by the people of this Nation. In self-defense we are overwhelmingly in favor of Great Britain. We are wholeheartedly for giving her material aid, so that the high seas may not be under partial control of the Twentieth-century pirates. This measure is, therefore, not a trial balloon to test the sentiment of the Country. It is an enabling act. Its purpose is to put teeth in our foreign policy and to speed the wheels of our defense program.

Time—that is the essence. Delay is danger, and inertia is our enemy. There is no telling from day to day how long the gallant Briton can keep the Hun from closing in. The Big Ditch, as Englishmen call the English Channel, is the *last* ditch.

If the Lease-Lend Bill takes as long for passage as the Selective Service Bill took, our regrets may take still longer to pass. If, when Churchill asks for planes to make a last desperate counter-attack, the President must say as he said to the French Premier, "Only the Congress can make such commitments"—why then Britain may go the way of France—and America will face a desperate stand of her own.

Time is everything.

We are a democracy. Our Government is representative and functions by parliamentary rules. The opposition must have a hearing. They deserve respect. But there is a difference between opposition and obstruction; between