

"I AM AN AMERICAN DAY" MEETING

Baltimore Stadium, May 20, 1941

Baltimore

THIS Country of ours, conceived by our gallant forebears, many of whom had felt to the fullest the heavy hand of oppression, is the grandest conception of government ever known to man. Through it, oppressed humanity was restored to self-respect; under it, man for the first time enjoyed the rights to which he was by his very nature, entitled. For more than one hundred and fifty years the American system of free enterprise, under which everyone was encouraged to work out his individual destiny as he preferred, spurred our forefathers on to make this what it is today, a nation without parallel in the history of the universe.

Just to look about us this evening, and to realize what America has given to all of us here present, is to be confirmed for ever in the realization that American citizenship, under our present form of Government, is the most valuable civic possession obtainable in the world today.

I believe, and every person here believes with me, I am sure, that to permit American ideals of government to be laid aside would be an everlasting blot upon the conscience of every American. The American system with its recognition of the individual as the sole cause of government is the truest realization of an ideal of government that exists in the world today. It is little wonder our forefathers found it such an inspiration, it is little wonder that throughout all the years Americans were ever ready to give their all to defend it. Surely today with conditions as they are throughout the world we should be poor Americans indeed, if we did not measure up to the high standards of national conduct set by those who preceded us. It is a wonderful thing to be so privileged in a national sense as we are. It must not be forgotten, however, that every privilege enjoyed entails corresponding response. We have enjoyed our privileges to the fullest; now we must not shirk our responsibilities.

Today in face of the dangers that threaten our Country from without, and with full knowledge of the forces seeking to weaken us from within, I contend that now as never before it is the duty of every American citizen to give deep and solemn thought to the liberties he enjoys, and to the responsibilities his American citizenship entails.

There is immensely more to being an American than mere acceptance of the gifts that America showers upon us so lavishly. Unless we accept along with these gifts our responsibilities, we are poor Americans, indeed, unworthy to retain the prize that was won for us at so great a cost.

To every newly-naturalized American, to every young man and woman who has come to maturity during the past year, I throw down the gauge of true Americanism. You cannot accept your Country's gifts without shoulder-