

If the people of France had done just that, instead of permitting shallow-thinking and self-seeking politicians to confuse them, we wouldn't have the sad spectacle of a once-proud free nation being led around by the nose by goose-stepping militarists, while innocent French women and children face a future of starvation and virtual slavery.

Unity must be the watchword of the hour, or even we, strong and confident as we are, may wake some day in the near future to find that dissensions have so divided us, subversive elements have so undermined us, that we no longer are able to match the armed might of the dictators.

And when that day comes, if it ever does, the hungry hordes of the Axis nations will descend upon us like locusts and strip us of everything we now prize.

For more than 20 years the American Legion has preserved the wholesome doctrines of patriotism and preparedness. Now, in this critical hour, the Legion along with the other veterans organizations, offers to the Nation an example of unified purpose that is valuable beyond computing. This is the hour of need for which the Legion has been girding its loins for these 20 years or more. This is the zero hour when every ounce of effort must be put forth to win our Country and its millions to unity, to solid backing of the defense efforts that, even at this late hour are lagging and being threatened with disruption and strikes and dissension.

Those who say that "This is not our fight" will some day, if they have any gratitude in their makeup, pay deepest homage and thanks to the Legion and to the millions of loyal Americans who were not afraid to accept the implications that this picture held for us.

We do not have to be war-mongers to be realists. We can see the handwriting on the walls that spells disaster unless we continue to pursue and to intensify the activities that will lead us to self-sufficiency in defense. The old Biblical story about the strong man keeping his court never had truer application than today. And we must see to it that a stronger force does not overcome us.

Whatever be the circumstances, the trials, the provocations; we as citizens of the greatest Democracy on the face of the earth, are lifted and inspired, like generations before us, by the noblest principles of human rights, as lettered in the most complete alphabet of Government—the Declaration of Independence and the American Constitution.

At this moment in a free and open gathering, we stand united under a flag that knows no partisanship, and where every man, in spite of race, color or creed, may walk the earth his own master, the equal of every other man, to go his own way, work out his own will weave into the warp and woof of the magic days the dreams that inspire and urge him on to accomplishment.

Let us never forget today that, in these United States, every man, rich or poor, high or low, can rise to any heights that his own capacities, virtues and energies allow him.

Moreover, we have the greatest intellectual and religious freedom known to man which is coveted by myriad millions throughout the world. All these