

To me it seems that in peace-time every advocate of every social, economic, or political reform has the right to be heard. Every believer in the dictatorship of a powerful central government, every advocate of the destruction of the balance of power has the right to the form of public opinion to present his case.

But during critical periods, such as we are now witnessing, the situation is greatly altered. For a pressure group to insist on special advantages for itself, for any small coterie to stop production by reason of their disputes, for the bureaucrats to seize the opportunity to break down still further the Federal-State relationship which is one of the foundations of local self-government, are simply unpatriotic in a time of National peril. These things strike at the National Unity, they cause us either to surrender our liberties at home or to deflect necessary attentions from the war and the National emergency.

Is there anything of value in self-government? Let me read to you what Woodrow Wilson had to say on the subject in 1912:

"The history of Liberty is the history of the limitation of governmental power, not the increase of it. When we resist, therefore, the concentration of power, we are resisting the processes of death, because concentration of power is what always precedes the destruction of human liberties."

The history of free government proves beyond cavil and beyond the shadow of a doubt that when men cease to exercise their privileges as citizens in the conduct of their local affairs, they lose the strength and the fiber requisite to the retention of freedom itself. Just as an athlete, when he ceases to use his muscles becomes soft and flabby, just so do the minds of men not sharpened by the exercise of political freedoms, become soft and flabby. Although many reasons have been assigned for the downfall of France, the political disintegration through the usurpation of power by favored groups, was without question the major cause.

Remember our several million men in uniform. We who remain at home are trustees for them. No one has the right, while they are in the uniform of our Country, to bring about a change in the social or the economic structure of this land, more than is absolutely essential to win the war in which they are engaged.

You men, who represent the leadership of this community, are the custodians. It is your responsibility to be constantly on the alert and forever vigilant. The power of free speech is still your priceless heritage. Your elected representatives in Washington should be anxious for your guidance and opinions.

But the greatest use of the judgment and experience of private citizens can be made by government in planning for the post war period, to insure that the millions here in America and in the United Nations do not lose the peace after they have sacrificed so much to win the war.

Many considerations must enter into such planning. Nationally, and internationally, the United Nations must see to it that the threat of military despotism, once broken, must not be permitted to raise its head again, in Germany or anywhere.