

Clopper, Edward Nicholas

Convocation Address

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What of the world to-day, this world in which we all have to live and play our parts? We can be sure of one thing: it will not be the same after this war. But as a matter of fact, it never was the same! Some wag has said there is only one thing which is constant, and that is change! The prospect should not terrify us, however, for there can be no getting ahead without change.

Whatever the new conditions may be, there are certain things basic in our way of life to which we must cling. One of these is our belief in the dignity of the individual.

Since the days of feudalism in England we have been slowly building up the concept of the individual's right to his own individuality, within the limits of the common welfare, and, after centuries of more or less peaceful evolution, the Anglo-Saxon peoples have brought it to approximate reality.

One's individuality is often manifested in curious ways.

That every person is an individual and as such differs from every other person is obvious and yet, while we recognise this fact, it is difficult for us to keep it in mind when we propose any social action. Most of our social action is a levelling process, based on the contrary assumption that people are all alike---partly because we have not yet learned how to translate the individual concept into the social concept and partly because it is easier to administer social control on the wholesale basis. Moreover, our general tendency is to conform with a pattern, to standardise. Against this tendency individuality protests and asserts itself. *The conflict between these two forces within us accounts for the history of the world.*

The balance between what are conceived to be individual rights and what social rights is never at rest---changing conditions, changing attitudes, changing states of mind weight it now on one side, now on the other. To-day social rights are becoming world-wide and in giving them due weight in the new order of things we must not neglect to redress the balance by preserving individual rights---what we call personal freedom---for this is our goal in the struggle. In time of war it is necessary to centralise power but when the

peace comes we shall be faced with the delicate and vital task of liberating the individual everywhere so far as this can be accomplished in the general interest.

In the not very remote past our social system was feudalistic and the individual was bound to his superior in a rigid organisation rising by grades up to the lord of the soil who dominated all. The most significant thing about the decline of this system and, in fact, the cause of its decline, was the emergence of the individual as a personality. It is that hard-won heritage for which we fight to-day.

Only a century and a half ago feudalism was smashed in France by revolution. Only a quarter of a century ago it was smashed in Russia by another revolution. One reason why the Russians now fight with such remarkable courage is that the days of their feudalism are still fresh in their memory and they know and appreciate what they have since gained.

Our enemies would impose a new kind of feudalism upon the world. They would rob us of our gains. They do not call it feudalism but that is what it is, for it would crush individual liberty and exalt the state---the lord of the people. We hold that education is for the development of the individual; our enemies hold that it is for the creation of Nazis. We hold that government is for the people; our enemies hold that the people are for the government. There can be no compromise between these two positions.

What we are fighting for is not for ourselves alone---we fight for the freedom of the individual in every land. We are fired by that higher patriotism which seeks to protect human rights. We are loyal to the United States but at the same time we recognise the right of others to freedom wherever they may live, so long as that freedom does not trespass upon the well-being of all.

The individual unaided can no longer maintain his dignity as a person. The days of the pioneer are past. It requires the power of all to safeguard the rights of each. The individual can be free only by means of social control---a seeming paradox. The object of social legislation is to

secure freedom to the individual in these complex times, with due regard to the rights of all.

In the nineteenth century individualism was carried to excess and there were great abuses, particularly in the field of labor. Social forces had to be strengthened and brought into play to control the conditions. In this way the exploited were set free.

No individual should enjoy the freedom which comes from social control without being aware of his social obligations and without contributing towards the maintenance of that common freedom by making appropriate sacrifices. Many are now making the supreme sacrifice in its behalf.

Just as no individual can properly give expression to his personality without being a member of the group, so no state can live to itself alone. The joint action of all free states is necessary to preserve the independence of each. We have a larger loyalty to develop. The social control of the future, upon which individual freedom depends, must be international in scope. After this war no nation can be wholly independent, just as, at present, no individual can be so.

In our country it took us a long time to become federally-minded. When the colonies became states they were reluctant to surrender any of their sovereign rights to the national government, hence the nation under the Articles of Confederation was weak. Even after they had yielded stronger powers to it under the Constitution, the states were not firmly bound together until the Civil War brought about unity by force of arms. More than forty years after the adoption of the Constitution, South Carolina was insisting that every state had the right to refuse to obey any national law which it believed to be contrary to the Constitution; and thirty years still later the issue was joined in civil war.

From the Declaration of Independence to the end of the Civil War was a period of eighty-nine years---three generations---it took us that long to become a union in fact. Now seventy-seven years have passed since the end of the Civil War and during this time our interests have steadily broadened, but

we are not yet internationally-minded. This World War will make us so. There is greater international awareness among us now than ever before. We understand that the feeble League of Nations was a step towards international organisation, an approach to a form of federation of free peoples, like our own first step under the Articles of Confederation---and we know now, as we learned then, that what we need most of all is "a more perfect union".

Isolationists believe that everything which is essential for our purposes is comprehended within the limits of the United States. They think of our country as so self-sufficient politically and its activities as so all-embracing that the old satire on spread-eagle oratory seems to them not unreasonable:

Bounded on the north by the aurora borealis,
On the east by the advance of civilisation,
On the south by the precession of the equinoxes,
And on the west by the Day of Judgment!

Our nation is an individual among its freedom-loving fellows. To protect its individuality it must associate itself with others that are like-minded and willing to stand together for what we all believe in.

"The laws of political government are sanctioned ultimately by the authority of physical force" and will be so sanctioned until we reach a higher plane, hence the new association of nations must have the power to keep the peace. It cannot rely solely on good faith, as did the League of Nations, for our enemies are powerful and practise treachery. Just as a city must have a police force to maintain order, and a state its militia to uphold its authority, so must the coming federation of nations have force at its command to compel respect and make its will prevail.

Loyalty to one's own---whether home, church, school, employer, city, state, or nation---is the driving strength which makes us move ahead. That loyalty ever widens as our concepts and our interests grow broader. While fostering these fundamental and more intimate kinds, we must set ourselves to

learn the new loyalty to the common welfare on the international scale. We do not give up loyalty to our local community in being loyal to our country,--the one forms the basis for the other. We cannot have democracy unless we are concerned about our local political affairs as well as about the national. We cannot have freedom unless we are concerned about our country's relations with the world. The individual person and the individual state can flourish in the future only as each works with his fellows to keep his freedom safe. The prospect is stimulating, the field world-wide, and the opportunity for service unparalleled for the graduates of to-day.

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