Armistice Day - address concerning the world situation and the significance of the Great War

Armistice day address
Thanksgiving concert - 1st Lutheran
Church 1925

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:-

Seven years ago the most terrible war the world has ever seen came to an end and to day we meet in Thanksgiving. What lessons have we learned from the four years of fearful carnage and these seven years of troubled peace? This was to be a war that would make the world safe for democracy Is democracy worth the struggle that was made? Do we ~~understand~~ realize the force of the great movement that is sweeping over the world and understand the fundamental principles upon which it is based. These are questions I should like to discuss with you this evening and I might perhaps entitle my address "The Spirit of Democracy."

We are today living in an age of revolution and intense social and political unrest. Throughout the world ancient institutions are tottering, powerful dynasties are being overthrown and new nations are being born. Autocracy is reaping the harvest of revolution from the seeds of oppression which it sowed throughout the ages. Russia has learned only too well the lessons of its revolutionary teachers: it has risen from its serfdom, overthrown the despotism of the Czars and establish

ed a communistic system which is perhaps as autocratic as the system it displaced. Republics have been established in the proud Empires of Germany and Austria, and a saddle maker sat in the seat of the Hohenzollerns. In the East, the Chinese Empire is a thing of the past. China has risen from her long slumber in an irritable and angry mood; she is torn with dissension and internal strife but a new sense of nationhood is impelling her to demand the right to work out her own problems free from the dominating interference of European powers. India is clamoring for the right of self-government. Every day brings its story of new uprisings: a struggle against Spanish domination in Morocco, a revolt against French control in Syria, a plot to establish a republic in Italy. A new national consciousness is growing in Egypt and in Arabia. There is an almost universal revolt against established authority: the spirit of democracy is rampant: ~~chaos and anarchy~~ chaos and confusion ride in its wake. Even in the new world the spirit of unrest prevails; there is a loosening in the family bonds, a lessening of parental authority, a growing disregard

for the law, an appalling increase in crime until United States stands forth today as the most lawless of the civilized countries of the world, and the wave of crime is rapidly swelling in our own Canadian cities. What is the world coming to? Where is the world peace we hoped for?

Yet this spirit of revolt against authority is not a new force in the history of the world. It has been the source of human progress, religious, economic and political. Martin Luther was a rebel against the authority of the Church of Rome and the Reformation had its origin in protest, claiming for man independence of religious thought and the right of free interpretation of the Scriptures. The Methodist church was born out of a revolt against the formality of the Church of England. Unitarianism is a protest of the mind against the creeds and dogmas of the Trinitarians. Old doctrines are losing their authoritative grip upon the minds of men. Religion is a living thing and cannot thrive in fetters; it casts aside all the shackles that hinder its search for the fundamental truths of life

Science knows no authority save the proven truth. Old theories, shewn to be false,

are cast aside and men are probing hitherto unfathomed depths of nature, untrammelled by the doctrines of the past.

Our economic system is under fire. The world is staggering under a load of debt and there are angry rumbles of capital levies and the conscription of wealth. Our system for the distribution of wealth is admittedly faulty. The battle between capital and labor goes on with increasing intensity. Efforts are being made to bridge the wide gulf between the rich and the poor that equality of opportunity may be afforded and the new movements of socialism and communism are gaining new adherents. The world, impatient of existing conditions, is struggling restlessly for a solution of its economic problems

This spirit of revolt against authority has prepared the road for the onward march of democracy. It is responsible for our most cherished political institutions, for our liberty of speech and person, for our political freedom and our right to self-government. The modern history of the world is the history of the growth of democracy. England was the first of the great countries of the world to

learn the lesson of democracy and she has learned the lesson well. From the time when the barons wrested Magna Charta from King John at Runnymede in 1215 England has jealously controlled the pow er of the Crown and has steadily advanced along the pathway of democracy. I cannot do more than indicate the outstanding stages of that steady advance, the struggle against the attempted despotism of the Stuart Kings, culminating in the execution of Charles I, the brief duration of the Cromwellian Republic, the return of Charles II, the Expulsion of James II and the Bill of Rights in 1688, the wide extension of the franchise by the Reform Bill of 1832, the growth of Liberalism in the Victorian era, the curbing of the power of the Hereditary House of Lords, the last stronghold of aristocracy, in 1910 that the will of the House of Commons, the elected representatives of the people might prevail. There has been a steady progress in self-government and this advance has in the main been ~~historic~~ accomplished with a minimum of disorder and with little bloodshed. New movements have sprung into being and

have been allowed to grow. Who would have prophesied, twenty-five years ago, that within a few years a Labor Government would control the destinies of the British Empire. Yet it came to pass without revolution and in a constitutional way. What a marvellous development and growth in the power of the laboring classes, in the right of self-government! What more striking testimony can we demand of the deep-rooted hold that democracy has gained in England.

And what a change there has been in the attitude of the British Empire towards its component parts. The loss of the American colonies was a step towards democracy for it brought in a new era of understanding, a realization of the rights of the colonies to their own development. To one after another the right of self government has been granted, to Canada, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa. The rights of Ireland have been recognized and the Home Rule for which she fought so long has been given to her. Control over Egypt has been surrendered. The old Imperialistic idea that the Empire existed for the benefit of England is losing ground. To-day we hear less of

the British Empire and more of the British Commonwealth of Nations, a community of sister nations, where the rights of each are understood and respected. The change is not merely a change in name, but a change in spirit, the spirit of democracy applied, not only to individuals in a nation, but to nations in a group of nations.

Yet democracy has not always won its victories in this peaceful way. It has more often marched along the bloody highways of revolution and war. The spirit of independence in the American colonies raised its ~~fa~~ head in protest against the authority of England and the American War of Independence gave birth to a new democracy in the new world based upon the doctrine of the freedom and equality of man. Until the United States partially closed her doors she was the open haven of liberty for the downtrodden peoples of Europe and she has a great part to play in the progress of the world

In France democracy was born in blood and has grown in war. The Fall of the Bastile, the French Revolution, the Reign of Terror ~~[illegible]~~

with its brutal guillotine tore the very heart out of the despotism of the Bourbons and in its place the French Republic was established. Twice since then Imperialism has raised its head, under Napoleon Bonaparte and under Napoleon III. Today the Third French Republic is working out its destiny, struggling with difficulty to realize the idealistic motto which it has adopted, the motto of Democracy "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity"

The Great War was a battle for life, for freedom from Imperial domination. The idea of impenalism fell before the irresistible march of democracy. Today the spirit of revolt against tyranny, the spirit of democracy is the most striking feature of world politics. A wave of democracy is engulfing the world.

There are many who would seek to crush this spirit of revolt, to stem this advancing tide. Mussolini, the dictator of Italy, sets himself up as the savior of his country, a mighty bulwark against the tide of democracy. Yet the Fascisti movement in Italy is pitiful in its futility. It is just as impossible to stop the onward march of democracy as it

would be to prevent the flowing of the tides of the sea for the spirit of democracy is based upon a fundamental truth, the right of every individual to the full development of himself, to his complete self realization. It is based upon ~~idealism~~ an idealistic view that it is part of the divine scheme that each person should have the opportunity of fanning into fix the divine spark that is in him.

Democracy is a great force for good, yet even great forces for good, if misdirected or improperly applied may become great forces for evil. The prevalence of crime in the United States is placed by many at the door of democracy. Yet, in my humble opinion, the blame is improperly placed. Democracy prevails as fully in England as it does in the United States, yet England is a law-abiding land. The cause for the prevalence of crime must be sought elsewhere. May I suggest that one of the causes is an intense unbridled individualism, that will tolerate no restraint, that is based on a misconception of personal freedom of action, that says to itself "I recognize no rights other than my own, I will get what I can for myself, let

no one stand in my way". There is a ruthless disregard for the rights of others. The people themselves are to blame for in guaranteeing the rights of the individual, they have forgotten to take adequate security that those rights will be properly exercised, they have forgotten to impose restraints. This unbridled individualism is not consistent with the spirit of democracy, but opposed to it. You must not use your liberty in such a way as to deprive me of mine. Your self development must not be at the expense of mine. The true spirit of democracy ~~hasss~~ is found in the idea, not that one individual may develop, but that all may do so. And so while democracy confers rights upon individuals, it likewise imposes duties and restraints. Your personal freedom and liberty must stop at that point when it deprives me of mine. An appreciation of the rights of others, toleration for other points of view is the very core of true democracy. Where that spirit of toleration does not prevail, democracy has not triumphed. There is no democracy, in its place there is unrestricted individualism, individuals predominate and rule for their own ad

vancement at the expense of others. The
self realization of every individual in the
state is rendered impossible and the
battle for the rights of man goes on, ~~and~~
until the lesson is learned that the
spirit of democracy is toleration and
understanding of the rights of others.

at that point when it deprives me of mine
of the, a spirit of toleration. Only in
all democracy lie. True democracy has for
its aim the full development of every
individual in the state, and in its aim
must place restrictions on the individu
al so that other individuals may develop
Toleration and appreciation for the rights
of others is the core of true democracy.
. Where that spirit
does not prevail there is no democracy,
but unbridled individualism. One
class of individual then predominates
in the state and the battle for the
rights of man goes on.

What lessons have we learned from
the war? To my mind it produced a
great idealist, who saw an old truth
with new light and clearness and
preached it to a hungry world. I refer to Wood
row Wilson and his statement that
the peace of the world depended on
the right of nations to their
own self-determination. They must be
allowed to develop themselves free from
the aggression of their more powerful

neighbors and in Europe ~~xxxxx~~ new nations have arisen, of whose prior existence we hardly knew. ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ Woodrow Wilson simply preached the doctrine of true democracy and applied it to international affairs. It was a doctrine of toleration understanding and restraint ~~xxxxx~~ ~~xxxxx~~. Toleration by the larger nations of the ~~xxxxxx~~ national, racial and religious aspirations of the smaller nations, understanding of their ~~xxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ difficulties and their problems, and a restraint upon the desire of the larger nations to ~~xxxxx~~ expand and grow, in order that the smaller nations may be safe. This doctrine of the rights of nations to their own self determination, preached with such idealism gave hope to the oppressed nations of the world, struggling for independent life ~~xxxxxxxxx~~. It is the foundation stone of the league of nations. Today 55 nations of the world are bound by solemn covenant to see to its enforcement. This the ~~xxxx~~ only path to international peace. It sought to kill the idea of ~~xxxxxxxx~~ such as that of Germany ~~xxxxxxx~~ which sought expansion. I would like to draw a line of distinction between the spirit of nationalism

a new spirit of nationalism is develop-
ing to replace the old, a nationalism
that seeks to develop all that is best
in a nation, a nationalism that
~~[illegible]~~

It seeks to kill the old idea of im-
perialism, a perverted sense of
nationalism that sought glorification
for the nation in a policy of aggres-
sion, that sought greatness for itself
at the expense of other nations. It will
be the duty of the League of nations to
repress and stamp out that old idea
that all nations may live free and
independent. Woodrow Wilson pointed
out the pathway towards world peace
and Europe today is struggling bravely
along that pathway. Germany and
France sit together in the League of
Nations, which in my ~~[illegible]~~ opinion
holds in its hands the key to inter-
national safety, ~~[illegible]~~ a realiza-
tion of the right of all nations to
their own development.

The desire for the development of national life is natural to all mankind. It is one of the bonds which tie men together for the prosecution of a common purpose. It is a source of great power for good, and if properly developed, it builds character. The great figures of history are men who have been strongly imbued with national feeling, a desire to create and build something more lasting than man himself. Men die that the nation may live. We in Canada are beginning to feel the urge of national consciousness. The spirit of democracy is carrying us onward in its sweeping tide. And we too must consider what the spirit of true democracy involves. We too have the right to work out our own development. What shall that development be? We have our problems economic as well as racial. We have just passed through an election which reveals distressing elements in our national life. Appeals to racial prejudice, the stirring up of old hatreds & suspicions, appeals for special privileges, sectional discontent, bitter

the spirit of impengalism. National-
ism seeks to develop all that is best in
that character and if it is confused
ness between East & west. All these dis
cordant elements must be united if Canada is to realize
her destiny as a nation. Men are
beginning to give their thoughts to the
development of true understanding
between various sections and various
interests in Canada. Never before has
there been so great a need for the
spirit of understanding and toler-
ance. True harmony and unity does not necessarily depend on uniformity. We cannot press all men into a com-
mon mould. Quebec cannot be
made English nor Ontario be made
French. Why should not we allow
Each to develop along its own lines
Cannot the economic needs of indus
trial and agricultural Canada
be developed together. Throughout the
land the spirit of compromise must
prevail. The health of the body de
pends upon the health of all its
organs. Canada can grow into a

united nation only if all its sections thrive and prosper. So long as one seeks to dominate the other, so long as one seeks to prosper at the expense of the other, so long as there is hatred and suspicion between its component parts, the battle for right will ~~continue~~ wage the struggle for equality will continue until the spirit of democracy is understood, the right of the individual and the community to its full development, until the spirit of tolerance and the appreciation of the rights of others prevails as the guiding controlling force in our national life. Then democracy shall truly have succeeded, unbridled individualism will be controlled and the rights of man prevail.