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\* Suggested American Legion \*  
\* birth anniversary talk for \*  
\* March 15 to 17, 1948 \*  
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THE LEGION AND ITS MISSION

My Fellow Americans:

March 15 to 17, 1948, a grand, collective fellow has his 30th birthday. He is The American Legion -- the champion of disabled veterans, the protector of war widows and orphans, the defender of freedom and the unselfish servant of community, state and nation.

Three decades of impressive accomplishments for the good of The American Legion now lie behind the world's largest veterans' organization. They were years in which The American Legion has grown far beyond the fondest dreams of its founders in stature, in membership, in prosperity, in prestige, in influence and best of all in public esteem.

American Legion programs have enjoyed amazing successes. The secret of these achievements lies in the outlets which The American Legion provides through its remarkable nationwide organization to men and women to serve unselfishly in activities in which they have deep personal interests. Members who feel most keenly about the welfare of veterans have built up the unparalleled rehabilitation program of The American Legion. Those who have child care close to their hearts, have made The American Legion child welfare program the foremost in this field in America. Many thousands of other Legionnaires have specialized in Americanism activities, national defense, youth training and community services, becoming experts in these fields. The sum total of all these active participations by members who have made hobbies of these various programs represents the great work of The American Legion.

Impressive as have been the fruits of The American Legion's labor of love for America, the task ahead is still greater. Our country has grown too. Her needs and her responsibilities have multiplied as her leadership role in world affairs has grown.

Today America faces a two-fold challenge. She must preserve her own liberties against the greatest ideological attack ever launched against democratic institutions. And she must keep alive in a troubled and despairing world the last best hope of all mankind that freedom can prevail over tyranny.

The story of America's growth proves that there is strength in freedom. It demonstrates that only strong men and women can be free. Weaklings have never in all history broken their shackles. The founding fathers of America signed the Declaration of Independence knowing full well they might be signing their own death warrants. Freedom is only for the brave, for those who love it enough to work, to fight and to die for it.

The road to the perpetuation of a free America, and to the eventual freedom for all the world, is a hard, tough, up-hill road. In contrast the road to slavery is easy. It has the down-hill stretches of apathy, of doing nothing, of vacillation, of appeasement, of compromises, of false economy, of unwillingness to sacrifice, of failure to appreciate, and of being asleep at the switch.

As old-fashioned "unreconstructed patriots" who know what it has cost in sacrifice and blood and life to have freedom, American Legionnaires have chosen the tough, up-hill road that leads to holding freedom. It is not the path for men and women without red blood in their veins. It is a hardship highway often - especially in these perilous times - BUT IT IS LIBERTY LANE!

The American Legion's first mission is to develop that national strength which lies so potentially in our freedom.

It is fighting today for immediate enactment of Universal Military Training legislation to build the fighting strength which America must possess to defend herself and what is left of the free world against the rush of aggressive communism. UMT will provide the vital military punch if we make it the framework of our future defense establishment. Modern warfare calls for entire nations trained in military know-how. Atomic weapons are nation-killing weapons. UMT will spell the difference between free Americans who are doomed because of military ignorance and free Americans who are secure because of military know-how. That mass military know-how is all that will count tomorrow on the battlefields of freedom. War has become a struggle of endless specialists. The nation with the most trained replacements will be the winner.

But today it is not enough to arm ourselves against external enemies alone. Communism has perfected the technique of the fifth column. We have all just seen what has happened to Czechoslovakia. The complete sovietization of the land of the Czechs is final proof of the effectiveness of the boring-from-within tactics of red fascism. The case of the Czechs is a repetition of the fate of the Hungarians, Bulgarians, Poles, Rumanians, Jugoslavs, Lithuanians, Latvians and others. Wherever Communism has overwhelmed once free governments and peoples, the red victory was accomplished by a highly organized minority. Never forget that. It could happen in America. The communist cells in this country are virulently active. They are financed and directed from the Kremlin by experts in infiltration and penetration.

The American Legion is seeking to outlaw the Communist Party of the United States on the ground that it is not a political party in the accepted American sense but a revolutionary conspiracy aimed at overthrowing our form of government by force and violence.

But outlawing the Reds is not enough. Defense against subversive elements must go much further. The individual citizen must be ARMORPLATED against communist and all other alien propaganda. That can only be done by education.

The American Legion has undertaken to do this. It has launched a dynamic new program of education in basic Americanism. That program is designed to develop a great new love of America through an increased appreciation of her unmatched blessings.

We are doing this through The American Legion FREEDOM BOOKLETS which will explain the dividends from our democracy in terms of every day living. That explanation will tell the story of the accomplishments of our democracy in every day language - the language of home, shop or office. It will depict American superiority in individual freedoms and rights, in purchasing power, in automobiles, in radio, in electric refrigerators, in vacuum cleaners, in life insurance - in fact in every richness of daily American life which so common here that it is taken for granted but which in every case is a coveted luxury everywhere else. By furnishing the latest facts and figures about how much better off the average American is today, we are going to arm our people with the information with which to rebut all alien propaganda. Truth can always win over lies.

This is the mission to which The American Legion re-dedicates itself on its 30th birthday. We are going to build the fighting strength of America so that our peace will be respected by all and we can through that strength contribute endurance to the peace of the world. We are going to build the spiritual strength of America through a revitalized Americanism faith.

In that great crusade to KEEP AMERICA ALWAYS AMERICAN every true American has a role. The American Legion invites every one to join in this great mission to the end that we shall always be a people free in all legitimate human enjoyments, happy in all human progress and safe in peace through our strength.

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