From National Publicity Division, The American Legion, Indianapolis, Ind.

American Holidays
Armistice Day

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* Suggested 1944 Armistice Day Address *
* for American Legion Speakers *
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My Fellow Americans:

Millions of American fighting men and women are overseas today putting finishing touches to our victory on both the European and Pacific fronts of World War II as we humbly assemble to observe the 26th anniversary of the armistice which triumphantly climaxed our fighting in World War I.

We won a great triumph on November 11, 1918, but not a victory. There is no victory save in a lasting peace. What we won on the field of battle we lost in postwar lack of vision.

This time we must make sure that we will win a victory - a peace that will endure. That is the solemn task to which all of us must dedicate ourselves today. Only by succeeding in that objective will we redeem in fullest measure the sacrifices of American blood, lives and treasure in both world wars.

Of course, the brave Americans who died in the last war did not die in vain. They died in a just cause and a necessary cause. If that cause had failed our free way of life would have perished. By their sacrifices they gave our freedom a new lease on life for 24 years. We are now engaged in a tremendous effort to extend that lease. This is but the second phase of the last war - the war to make men free and keep them free.

There is no tribute high enough or great enough, which we, the living, can offer to those valiant soldiers and sailors who gave their lives in the cause of liberty in the first world war. Nor is there any effort or any sacrifice too great, which we, at home, can and must offer to the valiant Americans who are fighting and dying to win this conflict.

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But this time, we the living, must go further than mere tribute or sacrifice or effort. In the name of those who are now fighting - and in the name of those who have died and who are yet to die - we, as a nation, must solemnly pledge that, this time, this war will not end with another mocking armistice but with a genuine peace which will be preserved.

We know now we shall have victory in this war, for it is already within our grasp. The brave men who fought and fell at Corregidor, in Tunisia, at Salerno, on Guadacanal, at Tarawa, in Normandy, at Midway, and elsewhere in this war, have assured that. Our task now must be to translate victory into lasting peace. Our job is to extract the greatest possible human dividends from the tragic costs we

have paid - the dividends of a long era in which war shall be unknown. The honored dead of both wars have tossed us the torch of liberty. It is our obligation to hold it aloft lest it be trampled and extinguished, not only during our time, but for a period that stretches endlessly into the future.

To translate our victory into enduring peace will require realistic thinking and courageous action. We must be practical. We must not be deluded into believing that having won this war we have ended all wars and can relax in rosy dreams. This war will not end wars unless we set up to the extent of our capabilities precautions against war as great as possible. To drift along on mere wishful thinking will but inevitably invite another global conflict.

The American Legion believes that the way to enduring peace for the world can be found in honest agreements between free and sovereign nations to maintain order and to repress aggression or the threat of aggression.

At our 1944 national convention in Chicago, we said, in part:

"No peace, however welcome, however promising, can long endure unless it be made secure by the nations which have won it; nations which must ever be prepared in every sense to fight for the rights of free men and of freedom-loving peoples.

"We cannot escape, we will not evade, our own responsibility for the maintenance of that peace. We must not forget our stake in it. Every consideration of national interest dictates that we prevent recurrence of the conditions which led to this war.

"Our own national interests must ever be our first concern, and we believe that our nation can best serve and protect its national interests, commensurate with its power and responsibilities, by participation in the establishment and maintenance of an association of free and sovereign nations, implemented with whatever force may be necessary to maintain world peace and prevent a recurrence of war. It must be obvious now to all the world that no peace can be lasting and secure for nations that are not fully prepared to maintain peace."

In a recent conference between Secretary of State Cordell Hull and National Commander Edward N. Scheiberling, this subject was discussed at length and general agreement was reached on the following points:

1 - There must be complete realization throughout the country that, as the true interests, the welfare, and the fate of all nations large and small are irrevocably tied together, we must all cooperate closely in support of an international peace and security organization.

2 - Leaders of thought in this country must endeavor to turn people's attention away from minor incidents in the international situation and help educate them to an appreciation of fundamental principles.

3 - The international peace and security problem must be kept entirely out of domestic politics.

Thus the first step toward building an enduring peace must be a stern will for peace - a will on our part and on the part of other peace-loving nations associated with us. We must want enduring peace enough to do something about it, to sacrifice for it if need be.

But that will must have a punch behind it. That punch must be American strength, American readiness to enforce its will. Otherwise our participation in any association with other peace-loving nations in the cause of enduring peace will be but lip service.

The American Legion believes the way to an unbreakable peace for the United States can be found in a government which reflects the collective determination of the American people to back its will for peace with strength and prepardness to defend that peace.

We must maintain as the punch behind our will for peace, a strong Army, a strong Navy, a strong Air Force, and the military training of our youth.

The American Legion in all its history has ever been right on the important issue of national defense. It has been right because it has been grimly realistic.

Our national defense needs never called for more realistic appraisal than today. Military warfare has been revolutionized by the robot bomb, the rocket plane, electronics and the development of amphibious operations. This necessitates revolutionizing our whole national defense policy.

We know today that these horrible new inventions of destruction have eliminated our former natural barriers, the oceans. We must accept that new condition and act accordingly.

We know today that the next war may swoop down on us in a sudden unexpected hurricane of death-dealing monsters of the sky, loosed at our principal cities without warning, from thousands of miles away. Modern weapons have become complex machines. Soldiers and sailors today must be specialists. It takes training to use modern weapons.

We know also, as any probably next Hitler will know, that America has been the stumbling block in two world wars to world conquest. We must anticipate that the next possible aggressor will have as his first objective the knocking out of America with one sudden, swift stroke. He will try to defeat us before we can get ready to fight.

That means we will have no time to train to fight. The next time we will have to mobilize to fight, not to train and to produce. Time will be of the utmost essense in the next attack and in the next defense.

That is why The American Legion is now advocating required peacetime military training for all fit American youth. We propose that every young male American between the ages of 18 and 22 be given the benefits of military training for one year, training integrated with his academic education. Following his training he should serve for a reasonable period in the reserve components of our armed forces.

Such a plan, if put into effect, will give our nation a continuous reservoir of trained manpower. It will serve notice to all the world that America is serious about keeping her peace unbroken. Knowledge that America is prepared will discourage would-be aggressors. They can only be encouraged by a belief that we are once again napping and unready.

The proposed military training program will eliminate the need for America to maintain a colossal, professional military establishment at a stupendous cost to taxpayers.

It will pay the youth of America fine dividends in better health, development of self-reliance, and bring it the benefits of discipline and respect for authority. Young men will develop latent leadership qualities. They will learn how to obey as well as how to command.

It will bring them too a better realization of the great benefits of American citizenship. That realization will come through the training to defend their freedom of assembly, of speech, of press, of religion, of choice of occupation, and all the other rights enjoyed by Americans. Obviously no American can and should accept the full responsibilities and priveleges of citizenship unless he is willing and able to defend them.

Of course, the victory and peace to come will be a hollow mockery unless they can be shared with dignity by those who have fought to win them. The American Legion is supremely interested in restoring the disabled to full ability to aid themselves to live a life of useful citizenship. The American Legion believes that our future happiness and prosperity rests upon our ability, as a nation, to provide jobs, homes and equal opportunity for those who have kept the Gestapo from our very doors. For that The American Legion fathered the G.I. Bill of Rights for World War II veterans.

The American Legion holds this truth to be self-evident: that the flower of America's manhood now fighting this war can also become after this war is over, the dominant force in leading this nation along the paths of peace to a happy and prosperous future. We have chosen them as our best in war. Let us proudly remember this fact as we plan now to enjoy the liberties which they are winning at so dear a price.

Let me assure these fighting men and women that it will ever be the first aim of The American Legion to see that their sacrifices are not forgotten, and that they did not fight in vain.

This then is The American Legion blue print.

A will for peace.

Teamwork with other nations for peace.

A punch behind our will for peace.

Military training of our youth, the core of that punch.

That is a program in which The American Legion prays that every loyal citizen joins it. For to attain the objective of a safe, secure America, protected against the periodic catastrophe of war, we must have unity in every community throughout our land.

There is no better occasion for a dedication to that unity than this day of anniversary of the end of the last war.

The poet has said:

"How sleep the brave, who sink to rest

"By all their country's wishes blest!"

On this Armistice Day anniversary let us change the "country's wishes" to the 'country's vows" that:

"War shall not happen again!"

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10/10/44