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Rising Lake Morrow

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Canadian-American Relations and World Peace

An Address by

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With the Compliments of the
Rotary Club of Bangor, Maine
Canadian-American Relations
and
World Peace

is an address made at the Annual Conference of the 193d District, Rotary International at Quebec, May 25, 26 and 27, 1939, by Dr. Rising Lake Morrow, Assistant Professor of History and Government, University of Maine.

Dr. Morrow was the speaker on the Convention theme, Rotary an Adventure in World Friendship, at the luncheon, Saturday, May 27, which was conducted by the Rotary Club of Bangor, Maine, with Dr. Harry Trust, past president, presiding.

This pamphlet is published by the Rotary Club of Bangor, and is distributed with the greetings of the Club.
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and

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It goes without saying that I am deeply conscious of the honor paid me in asking me to speak at this luncheon. I accepted the invitation gladly, because I admire the work that Rotary is doing to promote peace and friendship among nations. Meetings of this sort can only work in that direction. What impresses me especially, is the fact that you have here a Rotary District whose boundary lines pay no attention to national boundary lines. The more lines we have, of whatever nature, economic, scientific, or social, cutting across national boundary lines, the easier it is for people to come to realize that they are all voyagers thru space on the little ship called earth, and that the welfare of any group is inextricably bound up with the welfare of all groups.

So I applaud the program of Rotary, as I do all the efforts to minimize the importance of political boundary lines. The greater the emphasis on political boundary lines, the more exaggerated the nationalism, the easier it is for war to develop.

As a matter of fact, war has developed and is being waged bitterly in two great sections of the world today.

In Asia the Japanese, with bombing and looting from Vladivostok to Singapore, are pushing forward their conquest of China in order to carry out what they call their heaven-sent destiny of dominating the Far East.

In Europe another war is being waged, not as
yet with force, but with bluff and counter-bluff, threat and counter-threat,—a war between two ideologies, Fascism and Democracy.

Abraham Lincoln in a frequently quoted statement once said that a house divided against itself could not stand, that America could not endure half-slave and half-free.

Hitler was saying essentially the same thing concerning the world when he wrote in a section of Mein Kampf which was omitted from the original English translation,

"Either the world will be governed by the ideology of modern democracy, in which case every issue will be decided in favor of the numerically stronger races; or it will be ruled by the laws of force, when the peoples of brutal determination, not those that show self-restraint, will triumph."

And Mussolini echoed this sentiment when he declared:

"The struggle between two worlds can permit no compromise. . . . Either we or they! Either their ideas or ours! Either our state or theirs."

These statements show what is essentially the issue. The war is on, and so far the victories have been all on one side.

The struggle is a titanic one. Last month a recognized authority on international affairs estimated that the economic activity of at least 1,000,000,000 people was being directly disrupted by the struggle. This figure represents about half the people of the earth.

But while this subject is a vital one and an interesting one, it is not the one I want to talk about. It so happens that two nations hold the balance of power in this struggle. They can give victory to one side or other as they wish, and
the responsibility for the defeat or victory of either the democracies or the Fascist powers, rests with them. The two nations, of course, are America and Canada, for in these countries are located vast stores of the supplies necessary to carry on modern war.

Consider, for example, nickel. It is not only an essential metal in modern industry, but it is necessary in the manufacture of heavy guns, armor plate, casings for rifle and machine gun bullets, etc. Canada produces 90% of the world supply of this important raw material. In 1927 the United States was producing 70% of the world’s supply of petroleum and a fair share of the remaining 30% came from Venezuela, Mexico, Columbia and Peru. These two countries produce just under 50% of the world’s coal and about 40% of the world’s iron ore. They produce over 50% of the world’s copper, about 45% of the world’s sulphur, and about 55% of the world’s cotton. And not only are raw materials and foodstuffs produced in such quantities within the boundaries of the two nations but, complementing the raw materials, one finds over half the machine power of the world concentrated in the same area.

My point is simply this, although we have not sought the responsibility, a situation has developed in which we hold, or seem to hold, the cards that will decide the issue both in Europe and in Asia. Cut off access of the democratic countries to these resources, and the fascist powers, who are cut off from them anyway by the naval power of the democracies, receive a tremendous advantage. Announce that these resources will be available to the democracies, and in all probability they could win a war without the Western Hemisphere sending a single soldier over seas.

If America were to stop the exportation of
war supplies to Japan, and were to continue to furnish China with such supplies as she could take and pay for, Japan's already difficult position would become far worse.

The Western Hemisphere, in short, is not the isolated and separate area that it was when distances from Europe and Asia were measured in weeks and months. The fact is that the Western Hemisphere is now the center of the stage. Struggles are taking place near the wings on either side and for the moment the spotlights play on those struggles, but the decisive action in the end will take place in the center of the stage, as it always does.

Theodore Roosevelt, in the years before the War, realized what was happening. On one occasion—referring, of course, to America alone, he said:

"We have not the choice as to whether or not this country will play a great part in the world, all we can decide is whether we will play it well or ill."

On another occasion, commenting on his intervention in the Russo-Japanese War in Asia and the German-French Moroccan crisis in Europe, he declared:

"As long as England succeeds in keeping the balance of power in Europe, well and good; should she, however, for some reason or other, fail in doing so, the United States would have to step in at least temporarily, in order to re-establish it. In fact, we ourselves are becoming, owing to our strength and geographical situation, more and more the balance of power of the whole globe."

Even Herbert Hoover, with his European experiences fresh in his mind, recognized this fact.
In 1919 he told an audience at Stanford University:

“We are forced to interest ourselves in the welfare of the world if we are to thrive. No American who has spent the last two months in Europe does not pray that we should get out of the sordid selfishness, the passions, the misery of the world. Our expansion overseas has entangled us for good or ill, and I stand for an honest attempt to join with Europe’s better spirits to prevent these entanglements from involving us in war.”

This situation places a great responsibility on Canada and America. The policies they follow may well decide the issue in the struggle now going on. And this means that the responsibility really lies with the citizens of the two nations, for in a democracy, in the long run at least, foreign policy is what the people wish it to be. Of course, when the policy leads them to war, they like to blame someone else, the munitions manufacturers, the international bankers, or anyone, or any group outside of themselves. Fundamentally, however, war comes because policies that the people as a whole have supported, have made it inevitable. The price of peace is the modification of national policies and, frequently, the sacrifice of national rights. And although people want peace, they are unwilling to pay this price.

The American people approved the action of the Senate in keeping America out of the League of Nations because they saw in the League a possible threat to American sovereignty, and to America’s complete freedom of action. The British people supported their government in its rejection of the Geneva Protocol, because under certain circumstances it gave the League Council
control over the British fleet for purposes of preserving world order. The Germans followed Stresemann to Geneva when they thought it would gain for them territorial revision and armament parity. They followed Hitler out when they did not get what they sought. The Japanese favored the League when it increased their prestige and deserted it when it opposed their Manchurian venture. In 1928, everybody cheered when their governments ratified the Kellogg Peace Pact, and they cheered just as hard when their governments buried the Pact under a mass of reservations.

Any study of international conferences in recent years, shows that it has not been the personal antagonisms of the delegates that caused the conferences to fail but the political fear of the majorities back home that forced the statesmen to take irreconcilable positions. The delegates at the Disarmament Conference in 1932 knew full well that the millions of people who signed the disarmament petitions that choked the corridors at Geneva, were the same millions who elected the representatives who were voting armament increases the world over. It is an axiom with American politicians that there is not a vote in the best international project, but there is sure election in the poorest nationalistic slogan.

In brief, we cannot escape our responsibility. We, the citizens, establish the fundamentals of our foreign policy.

This being the case, and with the world struggle between facism and democracy depending on our decision, what policy should we follow?

From a great many people in the United States and from at least in Canada, the answer has come in favor of neutrality. In America we have even passed so-called neutrality laws. This policy
does not seem to me to be an adequate answer to the situation with which we are faced.

In the first place it is, from a materialistic point of view, impossible to carry out in the case of a large or industrialized nation. In the present state of economic interdependence which the world has reached, belligerents are more dependent on neutrals than ever before, and when we think of the last war that is saying a great deal. Any war, anywhere, moreover, affects neutrals and the more industrialized they are the more they are affected.

But if it were, from this point of view, a practical policy, from other points of view, it is still impractical. It tries to solve the problem of war by ignoring it, and that is no solution. Every system of ethics that I know of demands that human beings should stand for right against wrong. This is certainly the teaching of the Christian religion. It is also the lesson of all political experience that right can only be maintained by the combined efforts of all against the wrong doer. That is why governments exist. The state that declares neutrality, says in effect, "what do I care which side wins, am I my brothers keeper?" The result is to elevate the rule that might makes right. And while this, in a particular instance, may not affect the state in question as a case of banditry in a given region may not affect many individuals there, the next act of banditry (and a successful act of banditry only encourages more banditry) may affect the state or the individuals who escaped the consequences of the first act. Society recognizes this and government is based on the principle of reciprocal aid.

Another difficulty, of course, is the fact that neutrality cannot be impartial today; if it ever could. Its inevitable result is to weaken the
weaker state and strengthen the stronger, and the stronger state is frequently the aggressor.

To surrender to war in this fashion means that the war making state is left free to become more and more powerful until the day arrives when it feels able to help itself to the supplies to be found in the vast storehouse of the western hemisphere. Far from bringing security, neutrality in the end invites attack. Neutrality has been said to be like climbing a tree to escape a forest fire, instead of working on the ground along with those who are attempting to control it.

In short, the fundamental issue is that of controlling war, not ignoring it, and the policy of neutrality (supposing for the moment that it could be followed in any war between first class powers) makes no contribution to the solution of that issue. Instead it stores up future trouble for its followers.

We must recognize that the western hemisphere is in and of the world, that world problems are our problems, and that we are vitally concerned in their solution.

In this situation has the western hemisphere anything to offer to the rest of the world toward the solution of the problem of war? It seems to me that it has.

Here in North America we have two great nations each pursuing its own interests and its own destiny with no thought of or preparation for war between them. Of course the two nations sometimes disagree. At formal and informal international conferences issues are argued and debated, sometimes with considerable heat, and yet, as a distinguished French scholar who attended one such conference, observed "underneath the disagreements there seems to be a fundamental unity."

We are perhaps not unlike a family group,
each person with his own individuality and interests, a group not free from bickering and disagreement, but a group recognizing certain fundamental rights and duties over the bounds of which no member will step. As the brilliant editor of the Winnipeg Free Press, Dr. John Defoe, has aptly put it, “Our regard for the rights of individuals, our conceptions of what nations owe to each other, the whole philosophy upon which our political and social structures rest are fundamentally the same.”

Now the remarkable thing is that this has not always been so. For generations, beginning perhaps with the battle between Samuel Champlain and his Algonquin Indians with the Iroquois about 1609, there was hostility and warfare between the people living north of the St. Lawrence and those living south of it. First it was the French against the Dutch. Then it was the French against the English in a series of wars lasting for nearly 100 years. Finally it was the Americans against the Canadians, and on frequent occasions the border was anything but a peaceful place. In Kingston, Ontario, there are today the well preserved remains of the most formidable fortifications ever built on this continent west of Quebec, fortifications which were built to defend the frontier against attack from the United States. These fortifications were garrisoned by British troops until the Confederation of the Dominion and by Canadian troops for years after that.

Perhaps some of you know that the original surveyors of the boundary line along the 45th parallel from the Connecticut River to the St. Lawrence made a mistake and curved the line about three quarters of a mile into Canadian territory at the outlet of Lake Champlain. When the mistake was discovered and Canada sug-
gested that the boundary be moved to the correct line, the United States objected because extensive and expensive fortifications had already been erected at that point to protect America from invasion from the north. In the final settlement the old erroneous boundary was made the definitive boundary and the United States kept its fort.

You might be interested also in the incident which occurred during the American Civil War when relations between the United States and Great Britain were strained over the famous Trent affair. Great Britain decided to send troops to Canada to be used in case war broke out. In dispatching their troops, however, British authorities had failed to reckon with the ice in the St. Lawrence river. They were compelled therefore to ask permission to land their troops at Portand, Maine. It may be said to the credit of the Union government, that it gave a willing assent.

Even as late as the opening years of the present century an American President was seriously threatening the use of troops to establish and hold a disputed boundary line between Alaska and Canada.

Now I bring up the memory of these grave crises (and I have mentioned only a few) not to rekindle old antagonisms, but to emphasize that the tradition of peace resulting from the last 100 years of Canadian-American relations, is one that has been tested in the fires of acrimonious debate and ominous action. It has not been maintained by idealists, whose dreams of international brotherhood have never been tested. The significance of our years of peace lies in the fact that peace has endured in spite of the unredressed grievances, of threats and aggravating policies, and of almost constant
economic strain. If the story of our relations means anything at all it means in the words of Prof. James T. Shotwell, "that where there is the will to peace, nations can learn to subordinate grievance to compromise." And the nations that have learned, have a duty to themselves and to mankind to point the way to other nations and to lead them toward it.

Holding as they do the balance of power in a war torn world, Canada and America should take the lead in revitalizing that significant second paragraph in the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact, in which the signatories agree never to settle their disputes by other than peaceful means. For their own sake, as well as for that of other nations, they should take the lead in the development of the sentiments and the instruments that will make possible peaceful adjustments in an ever-changing world.

That, fundamentally, is the heart of the peace problem, peaceful change. Mankind, as individuals, solved the problem ages ago by the creation of governments, courts and laws. Nations must solve it perhaps in much the same way or see this civilization perish.

There is an old axiom that "where there is no law there is no society," and another that "all things are uncertain the moment that men depart from law." The purpose of law fundamentally, is the maintenance of social order. The absence of social order means a reversion to anarchy and chaos, to the rule of the fang and claw, to the barbarism that we as civilized beings, supposed we had left behind us thousands of years ago.

If our two nations, in their relations with each other, have solved the problem of "peaceful change" or "adjustment," and if they have it in their power to influence other nations, let them
take the lead in opposition to lawlessness and war and in favor of law and peace.

We must remember that in this interdependent world, war anywhere affects everyone. In the long run we prosper together or we go down in the same crashing ruin.

In closing, let me repeat once more the words of Theodore Roosevelt, "We have not the choice as to whether or not we will play a great part in the world. All we can decide is whether we shall play it well or ill."