

THE UNITED STATES AND THE WAR

To the Editor of The Globe and Mail:

Impatience here toward the United States grows under our war duress. This is quite human of us, but less reasonable. Let any outsider tell us how to run Canada and there is a chip on every shoulder. Shoulders in the United States are set the same, and chips are handy. Britain herself shows an extremely wise attitude toward the crosscurrents of American sentiment. Her patience is born of understanding. Her emotion is in admirable control.

Congress is made up of politicians—with a statesman here and there. The man in the street here is sometimes heard to speak similarly of Parliaments in Canada. Politicians are not the people, here nor there. They speak copiously to the people, but they do not speak for the people until the people, having crystallized their own thought, speak to them. Then there is a great scurrying, because with politicians votes mean more than principles. No man who saw it happen can forget the repeal of prohibition over there. It followed fast a Literary Digest poll, which surprisingly showed that the majority of the people were fed up with a law that was doing far more harm than good. The antics of some politicians who had voted and nobly orated for prohibition, in Congress, and drunk generously in private, furnished a comedy.

The politician is subject to a dread disease—one which dulls his sight to principle but magnifies expediency, which vitiates his moral courage, and causes such loss of memory that he forgets the fundamentals of patriotism, including the oath he took when he was sworn in. There is only one cure; it begins when his voters will have no more of him. Few true statesmen get into politics. Politicians don't like them—too inconvenient.

Mr. Roosevelt has richly enjoyed those influences of inheritance, environment, education and experience that develop a statesman. But equally in his case they have developed a politician. Few fair observers would deny that his administration has been an inextricable mixture of high statesmanship and power politics. Those of us who long for more statesmanship in public life deplore the taint which his propensity to political expediency has so often given to his statesmanship. Those who revel in exhibitions of smart politics adore him while he is in power, and care little about statesmanship.

Had Mr. Lincoln been in the White House the last three years it is not certain that the United States would have been in the war with us today. While Mr. Roosevelt has done pretty well by the Allies, considering the expediences of home politics, he, unlike Mr. Lincoln, will equivocate in the face of stern principle. So it seems certain that in the days leading to Munich, and since, Mr. Lincoln would have spoken in pure strain from his fearless, statesmanlike mind. His words would have had the typical Lincoln clarity and memorability. They have no taint of political contamination. After permeating American thought we can reasonably assume that they would have led our Anglo-Saxon neighbor with growing unity of purpose to stand side by side with us. (The American people are predominantly like us in ways of thought and sense of values.)

Mr. Roosevelt, it can be believed, is definitely pro-Ally, for sentimental reasons, if you will, but assuredly because he is fully capable of analyzing the world scene, fully capable of drawing the obvious conclusions. Though he is a Roosevelt of Roosevelts, from a great family noted equally for courage for high public service and for a "Jehovah complex," he will have none of your Hitler-Stalin-Mussolini domination. He knows what a sorry world they would give us. No one knows better than he what Britain's navy has done for liberty. He is an inveterate navy man of vast international grasp.

But Mr. Roosevelt cannot all at once speak as he thinks about this war. He has Mr. Lincoln's job, but does not wear his shoes. Were he to adopt the Lincoln manner, or equal, he would defeat those friendly ends with which many credit him. Lincoln could say, "We must stand with the Allies to preserve life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Mr. Roosevelt cannot. If he did his legion of political enemies, made largely by his own ruthlessness and inconsistencies, would exult. They, as is the way with politicians, have hung on every word he has spoken on this war, hoping for "the slip that would give them the issue they want to take to American mothers, fathers, sisters in exchange for votes. It has been amusing to listen to his so very careful utterances, his impeccable recognition of the right of Congress to declare war, that same Congress he belabored on other issues and tried to purge.

Mr. Roosevelt himself has mixed politics and statesmanship so often to the discomfiture of his opponents that a politically premature war statement, if plummeted into the American scene, would mix things up there for a long

time to come, might make it impossible for American help to get going in time to save the Allied cause, if such acute need arose. Almost anything he wants today is opposed by a potent body of politicians and voters, not because what he wants may be unwise, but because it is he that wants it.

American politics are difficult to understand, even to an American (as was this writer for thirty-five years). For example, take the Republican Party. This party gave the country its greatest President—Mr. Lincoln. He was also the first President elected by that party. Many statesmanlike courses during its history stand to the credit of that party. As it gained in strength its politicians and their particular friends, industry and capital, gained in voracity. From time to time Republican aggrandizement furnished the issues for Democratic victory. A wave of reform, at first honest, would follow. This would last until the country, weary of reform which gradually turned to political ends, frightened of the economic consequences of too much political disturbance, would again elect a Republican President and Congress. This process became a cycle that is still recurring. The country got more needed reform from the Democrats, more and steadier government from the Republicans. Neither party is trusted by the majority of the people. Their politicians, as in every democracy, would in the mad game of politics wreck anything, even the country, unless the people stopped them.

Now Woodrow Wilson is in power, a sound reformer, somewhat academic, not a radical, not a politician—a true statesman. Membership in the League of Nations is before the Senate. Under the lead of scholarly, able Senator Lodge of all Senators, it was the Republican Party, of all parties, which kept our neighbor out of that League. The League was a Wilsonian conception that could have initiated a totally new and better epoch in the world's affairs. It contained the groundwork of new principles of equity in international relations. It should have, and doubtless could have, obviated World War II. Yet in the heat of home politics and their hatreds (Lodge was a celebrated hater) the best device ever conceived "to make the world safe for democracy" to make it safe for industry and business and foreign trade, was weakened disastrously by that party which has proverbially warned "business under its wing." Again, with another Democrat in power. Mr. Roosevelt, had the United States served unequivocal notice on Messrs. Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini some years back that she, with Great Britain and France, favored peace, and would fight immediately any disturber of the peace (preparing meanwhile with the others to do so), history since would have been different. In this vein voices spoke at the time. The politicians couldn't hear them. So today again it is the Republican Party, aided by some politically angry Democrats who force a neutrality act we cannot believe Mr. Roosevelt and millions of voters wanted, who sheepishly yield to the belligerents American merchantmen's rights to sail in safety where they please. It is the friends of this party, industry and capital, who have most to gain from a well and quickly licked Hitler—from a real peace that could, might follow. Their sentimental and reasoned friendship is with the Allies, as is that of an overwhelming majority of Americans. Why, then, these tragic inconsistencies? The old answer since organized governments began—politics.

At the moment hatred and distrust of the political Mr. Roosevelt has acquired such force that the statesmanlike Mr. Roosevelt is not functioning nobly in the Lincoln manner. The atmosphere is supercharged with home politics. Vision of many is temporarily obscured.

Today's stew in the American political pot is largely of Mr. Roosevelt's own making, and is not suitable for the table of statesmanship. He might be re-elected. Opinion is divided. Certainly, with the influence of vast moneys politically spent, in part, behind him, he would not be swept out. But it is not conceivable that he could ever again be swept in.

Granting the American people the right to run their own show, which they do about as well as we run ours; granting that democracy government, at best ponderous, faulty, addicted to phases in which small issues obscure big ones, does in a manner preserve personal liberty, we can be patient with our neighbor.

In the meantime pro-Ally sentiment is rolling up over the border. Given the right combination of stars, political or otherwise, it could start snowballing. Such a letter as Mr. Lawrence Hunt's which the New York Times published recently makes illuminating and comforting reading for any British subject. Millions of Americans think as he does, have as he has, fine discriminating minds. The people may speak to the politicians. Finland has added an immense star.

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