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National Conference of Christians and
Jews

ADDRESS

BY

HON. JAMES A. FARLEY

AT BOSTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

March 27, 1941

(Printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of
March 31, 1941)

Mr. O'MAHONEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the Appendix of the RECORD a notable address delivered by Hon. James A. Farley before the Massachusetts committee of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, at the Boston Chamber of Commerce, on Thursday, March 27, 1941.

There being no objection, the address was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Never in our history has a conference like this had greater significance. The National Conference of Christians and Jews, proclaiming as its purpose adherence to the principle of religious liberty and the promotion of that liberty, has a special meaning at this time, when democracy is being attacked all over the world. America, to a greater extent than ever before in history, is called upon to defend democracy in terms of clear thinking and vital action. It is seeking once more to prove democracy to be that form of government which has done most for the individual and most for humanity.

I shall not attempt to define the concept of democracy in exact terms. I merely wish to call attention to one or two of its aspects which are fundamental to the purposes for which we are gathered here.

If democracy means anything, it means the equality of men. That does not mean equality in all those capacities of mind and body which in the nature of things can never be equal. They cannot be equal for the simple reason that human beings are not identical. It does not apply to moral equality, for there will be some who are more kind, more charitable, and who live their lives more completely in obedience to the moral law. When the

Declaration of Independence speaks of the "self-evident truth" that "all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights" it speaks of equality in a vastly more fundamental sense. It means that no human being shall be so poor or so unfortunate or so incompetent, even so unworthy, that he is not deserving of recognition as an individual. Beyond that it means that, as an individual, he has certain rights that no one is justified in destroying or denying him. It means that so far as possible he deserves equality of opportunity—an equal chance—as an individual. It is the glory of this country that it has fought to maintain the principle that every man and woman deserves a share in the benefits of our society.

When we consider this principle of equality as the basis of our democratic faith, we must recognize two other major points. The first is that, when we proclaim that equality, we are granting the truth of a fundamental religious teaching. The belief in the political equality of men springs from the belief in the essential equality of men before the common Father. This idea of equality is part and parcel of the belief in the existence of a human soul in every individual person. More, it is part and parcel of the religious assertion that the soul is an immortal soul.

Unless it is, why should human personality be sacred? Unless it is, what inalienable rights could the individual possess? Unless it is, why do individuals give of their goods, their efforts, and their lives for the sake of principle? If the individual soul is a thing that vanishes like a spark falling in the water, then it is hard to see how men can be so indifferent to their personal comfort and interest as to make any sacrifice at all for principle. Democracy, therefore, fundamentally recognizes the necessity of religion and of the teachings of religion as a guaranty of its own vitality and its own perseverance in a world of danger. The equality to which we pay reverence when we dedicate ourselves to the principle of democracy, is the equality of the human soul. To paraphrase a great American thinker, it is because the human being has moral powers, because he carries a law in his own breast and was made to govern himself, that we cannot endure to see him become another person's slave or tool. It is because we see in him the Divine image, that we demand for him means of self-development, spheres for free action, and that we call society not to fetter but to aid his growth.

The second aspect of democracy is the principle of tolerance. It is the principle of respect by the individual and for the individual. It is the principle of the many living together in a common life, maintaining peace with each other, upholding justice in their relations and, above all, actively working together to protect those who need protection in the exercise of their legitimate rights.

It is interesting that tolerance became established only slowly, only in spite of the many forces that denied the possibility of tolerance. Take the word toleration—which, I need not remind you, has a slightly different definition than tolerance. Toleration, as a national principle, came after centuries of conflict. It came after nations stood exhausted, broken up into factions and clashing armies. It was not until blood had drenched the soil of Europe that people began to recognize the essential fact that two or more religions could exist in the same nation at the same time. This principle of toleration is another name for the principle of religious liberty. It is not only the mark of a great aspiration but the mark of a very definite legal concept.

Briefly, religious liberty manifests itself in three ways.

First, it gives to the individual the right to choose his own creed, his own church, his own form of religion, so far as the exercise of that right does not impair the fundamental rights of others.

Second, it grants autonomy to a religion as an institution. It gives a religious institution the right to the pursuit of its own purposes, so far as these purposes conform with those expressed laws of the land which are designed to protect one religion as against the other. Basically, as this principle operates in America, it means that religious institutions are free to gather new members and to grow, to own property, to carry on their legitimate religious services and ceremonies, and to speak freely in the forum of public opinion.

The third characteristic of religious liberty is a recognition by the Nation of the essential equality of the different religions. That means that a small religious institution with 50 members stands within the great principle of freedom with the same rights and privileges as the largest religious institution.

It is interesting that as the nations of the world slowly came to the principle of religious freedom over past generations, the nations have differed in their ways of maintaining what they have called religious freedom. In many nations, some of them on the continent of Europe, the state actively sought to regulate religions in order, it claimed, to maintain equal status among religions. The state exercised a definite supervision over religious institutions, and, in some cases made grave mistakes and committed serious injustices in exercising this supervision.

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America, however, has worked on a different principle. It seeks to maintain religious freedom by the entire separation of the church and state. We are proud, here in America, that without the active interference of the state, religions have grown, have cooperated, have recognized one another's rights, and have achieved a vital and commanding place in the great community of America.

But these formal, legal, technical aspects of toleration exist because basically the principle of tolerance is a principle that is cherished in every community that dares to call itself a civilized community. Tolerance is an expression of one of the most profoundly important qualities of a civilized human being—the capacity for self-restraint. I want to stress the word "civilized" in this connection. I want to say as strongly as I can here that the absence of tolerance is characteristic of the barbarian. I know you will understand to what I refer, for I know that all Americans feel this deeply. Tolerance is that admirable thing in a human being that makes him restrain his own power in order that others may enjoy the exercise of theirs. It is the principle that permits him to grant to his fellow man the right to be heard, that recognizes the virtue in the man on the other side of the street or in the other street or in the other town. It is the principle that prevails so magnificently in every manly sport—the thing we call sportsmanship—which, despite keen competition, restrains those who participate from a ruthless and unfair exercise of temporary advantage. It is the principle to which, in these serious days, we must rededicate ourselves.

Now that the great struggle for the existence of democracy in so many parts of the world is reaching a critical stage, the ideals of this conference assume a new—a unique—importance. They are essential to the defense of our Nation. They are also essential to the playing of our proper part in world affairs. The reason they are important to our national defense is that they are an outward sign of the principle of true unity. Only a nation that is thus united can effectively survive. Of course, there is another kind of unity in the world. That is the hard, enforced, cruel unity of dictatorship. It is a false—an artificial—unity. That is why it can be only a temporary and passing manifestation. No unity enforced in a nation by arms and power has ever survived. Such a unity is the unity of the jailer and the hangman. It is the unity of the prison and the grave. Human beings will not long submit to so vicious a denial of the simple dictates of humanity.

The unity that endures is the kind of unity we have in America. It is the unity of free people recognizing that only as others are free can they be free, recognizing that only as others are permitted to speak can they be permitted to speak, recognizing that only as others have rights can they maintain their own rights. That is the unity that quickens

the heart and lifts the head of an American when he sees the flag. It is the unity of free men and free religions in a free nation.

I need not remind you that those nations that maintain unity by persecution would seek and are seeking to destroy our kind of unity by dividing us among ourselves. You and I know too well how they proceed. Intolerance is the poison they use. By pamphlets, by speeches, by whispering campaigns they try to set group against group, religious believer against religious believer, neighbor against neighbor. Lying stories of the most revolting kind—from simple slander against one or two persons to elaborate fabrications involving whole groups—are spread among the gullible. These are efforts to divide us, to destroy our unity, to sap our strength, to throw us off our course, to render us ineffective; and these efforts are rewarded whenever an American says or does an intolerant thing. Whenever we make a distinction between men because of their religion or race, whenever we impute to a whole religious or social or economic group the sins or failings or the political beliefs of some of its members, whenever we spread slanderous whispers about a religion or those who believe in it—whenever we do these things, we are helping those who wish to shatter our American unity. Intolerance is the deadliest enemy of true unity. It is the destroyer of democracy.

As I have lived and grown older in this world, I have learned not only the ethical value of tolerance but its practical necessity. Whenever, in dealing with another man, we have to stop to think of that man as a Catholic or a Jew or a Protestant and shape our methods of dealing with him in accordance with a conception of something in him peculiar to his own religion, we fail in the practical purposes for which we all deal with each other. We cannot think straight and we cannot think effectively and we cannot get results when we have to stop and gear ourselves to supposed religious differences. Effective dealing with neighbors and friends and political and business associates means dealing with them as human beings and Americans, subject to the same fundamental desires and purposes. I have found that tolerance is not only a good moral principle; it is the only sound, practical means of successful living.

But much as we love our liberty and much as we extol the virtues we have learned over the generations in America, we must always be aware that there is such a thing as tolerance in our dealing with the world. Let us be proud, but not conceited. Let us avoid the self-deception practiced by the Pharisee who stood in the temple and thanked God that he was not as other men. Let us rather approach our national problems and responsibilities with the quiet assurance that our light will shine in the darkness around us because of what we are rather than because of what we say we are.

In the task before us, we must prevail in the spirit of our institutions. In combating intolerance in others we must not become

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intolerant ourselves. If we do, those against whom we struggle will have achieved the ultimate victory over us. They will have made us become as they are. They will have transformed us into the evil thing we set out to oppose. Let us, in fighting for tolerance, observe among our own people, among our own religions, the finest, greatest, most enduring unity—the unity of free men and free religions.

Jackson Day Dinner Address

ADDRESS

OF

HON. JAMES A. FARLEY

OF NEW YORK

March 29, 1941

(Printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of April 1, 1941)

Mr. MERRITT. Mr. Speaker, under leave to extend my remarks in the RECORD, I include the following address delivered by our former Postmaster General, the Honorable James A. Farley, chairman of the New York State Democratic Committee, at the Jackson Day Dinner, March 29, 1941, held at the Hotel Commodore, New York. His remarks, you will note, are most timely and it is needless to say that those in attendance were deeply impressed:

In 1936, after 3 years' experience as national chairman, I approved a plan submitted by the late Forbes Morgan, treasurer of the Democratic National Committee, to make the celebration of Jackson Day an event that would contribute material assistance to the party. Since then these annual dinners have been the means, not only of providing funds for party activities, but also of promoting party strength and party enthusiasm, and the three together have been in a large measure responsible for party success.

The first of these dinners held in New York was under the chairmanship of the Honorable James W. Gerard, who had the cooperation of the late Daniel H. Skilling as secretary, and Clarence H. Low as treasurer. This is the sixth in the series, and as Democratic State chairman, I want to extend my appreciation and the thanks of the Democratic Party to the dinner chairman, de Lancey Kountze, the treasurer, Clarence H. Low, and the secretary, Albert L. Ward, as well as to all the members of the committee, and to you present who have cooperated so finely in making this another in a series of outstanding Jackson Day accomplishments.

May I also at this time express my gratitude, and the gratitude, I am sure, of every

leader of our party in the State; for the able assistance that has been given me and been given you for more than a decade, by my associate and close friend, Vincent Dailey.

These are trying days. No one recognizes more than I, that this is a time when partisanship must be submerged in the interest of national unity. I have recently returned from an extended business tour of South America. Since returning I have been in touch with friends all over our own country. I am definitely satisfied that in this Western Hemisphere the vast majority of all peoples are of one mind, that free democracies, as we know them, must and shall be preserved.

A great part of the friendly feeling toward us so evident in the Latin nations below the equator is due to the patient work done among them by our diplomatic representatives. These are the ambassadors, the ministers, and the consuls who have been the eyes and the ears as well as the emissaries of our State Department. They have performed well the tasks assigned them, and their achievements have been the greater because of the wise planning, the able direction, and the understanding cooperation that have been rendered them, by support, by encouragement, and by personal visits to the southern countries, of that greatest of our long list of great Secretaries of State, the distinguished Tennessean, the Honorable Cordell Hull.

But statecraft in times of conflict and peril must be backed up by national unity and national strength. The American people made their decision last November and since then there have been such evidences of our ability to bury partisan motives that our actions in this direction alone must constitute a source of wonderment and despair to the wishful-thinking dictators.

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Couple with this national unity our willingness as a Nation to reconstruct by democratic action our industrial system to the purposes of defense, and our social system to the purposes of manning the machinery of that defense, and you have a complete picture of a determined democratic people willing to risk everything, even life, that the principles upon which our Nation was founded may persevere.

Leadership was never more necessary than now. Leadership we have, and it is the duty of every American to support it. As there can be only one general to the army, one admiral to the navy, there can be only one Commander in Chief in America, and that one is Franklin D. Roosevelt.

In this Empire State we, too, have a far-seeing administration, headed by a great Governor, who is doing all in his power to lend the support of New York to the cause of America. Like him, Governors of other States, regardless of party, are doing the same. Theirs is a position only second to that of the President. We take pride, not only as Democrats but as citizens, in the fact that in this emergency we have at the helm of this greatest of all the State governments such a tireless, experienced, and unselfish chief executive as is Herbert H. Lehman.

As a parting word, may I say for myself that I am deeply grateful for the generous support that has ever been given me in both public and party office. As chairman of the Democratic State committee, I hope to continue my efforts in every way possible for the advancement of the affairs of my country and my party. In these days I assure you that such efforts will be directed wholly toward increasing national unity, to the end that American democracy will carry out its responsibility in a world that needs the support, the example, and the wisdom of enlightened leadership more than ever before in history.