

"Americanism" Speech by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1920

Much has been said of late about good Americanism. It is right that it should have been said.

And it is right that every chance should be seized to repeat the basic truths underlying our prosperity and our national existence itself.

But it would be an unusual and much to be wished-for thing, if in the coming presentation of the issue a new note of fairness and generosity could be struck. Littleness, meanness, falsehood, extreme partisanship: these are not in accord with the American spirit.

I like to think that in this respect also we are moving forward. Let me be concrete. We have passed through a great war.

An armed conflict which called forth every resource, every effort, on the part of the whole population.

The war was won by Republicans as well as by Democrats.

Men of all parties served in our armed forces.

Men and women of all parties served the government at home.

They strived honestly, as Americans, not as mere partisans.

Republicans and Democrats alike worked in administrative positions, raised Liberty Loans, administered food control, toiled in munitions plants, built ships.

The war was brought to a successful conclusion by a glorious common effort -- one which in the years to come will be a national pride.

I feel very certain that our children will come to regard our participation as memorable for the broad honor and honesty which marked it; for the absence of unfortunate scandal and for the splendid unity of action which extended to every portion of the nation.

It would therefore not only serve little purpose, but would conform ill to our high standards, if any person should, in the heat of political rivalry, seek to manufacture political advantage out of a nationally conducted struggle.

We have seen things on too large a scale to listen at this date to trifles, or to believe in the adequacy of trifling men.

It is that same vision of the higher outlook of national and individual life which will, I am sure, lead us to demand that the men who represent us in the affairs of government shall be more than politicians; that they shall subordinate always the individual ambitions and the party advantage to the national good.

In the long run, the true statements and the honestly forward looking party will prevail.

Even if a nation entered the war for an ideal, so it has emerged from the war with the determination that this ideal shall not die.

It is idle to pretend that the declaration of war of April 6, 1917 was a mere act of self-defense, or that the object of our participation was solely to defeat the military power of the central nations of Europe.

We knew then as a nation, even as we know today, that success on land and sea could be but half a victory.

The other half is not won yet.

The cry of the French at Verdun, "They shall not pass" and the cheer of our own men in the Argonne, "We shall go Law and order through," these were essential glories, yet they are incomplete.

To them we must write the binding finish — it shall not occur again — for America demands that the crime of war shall cease.