CONSCRIPTS OR VOLUNTEERS

Hon. Joe R. Hanley
before the Muscatine
County Bar Association
Banquet, February 22, 1941.

In a current issue of a popular publication appeared the story of a colored
gentleman who had reached a remarkable old age. When he was asked the usual question
as to what he attributed his long life, he responded: "Ise learned to cooperate with
the inevitable". In that one sentence he summed up the philosophy of safety of both men
and nations. Dictators and tyrants are possible because society and nations have not
learned to "cooperate with the inevitable".

For a number of years some of us have realized that our system of government and
style of living would not stand unless we protected it. As science and education have
advanced, so have the forces of destruction progressed. Our fore-fathers lived in constant
danger of the savage. Every whisper on the breeze, each movement of the grass was watched
anxiously. The law of the wilderness was supreme; the weak perished; the strong survived.
Every cabin held a rifle. Each boy and girl learned to shoot and, more important, not to
miss. But today we are just beginning to learn that lesson. Our weapons have been neglected.
We do not know how to defend ourselves. Even when our neighbors were dying, even when the
skies were aglow with the destruction of nations, we waited. We failed to remember the
lessons of yesterday. For years some of us have been crying for preparedness--only to
be mocked, laughed at, termed super-patriots, etc. Now all is changed. We are spending
huge sums, exerting every effort, calling our youth into service, in order to get ready.

We are learning that we must volunteer to sacrifice, to get ready, or we will be
conscripted by the conqueror. We must cooperate with the inevitable. "Only the strong
can remain free", but only the wise can live in freedom.

Humanity is on the march. Society and nations must keep step or they join the
slave gang. There is the inevitable law of personal responsibility. No one lives unto
himself. Capital is a power that may be as dangerous to the owner as it may be to society.
Gradually we find that great wealth must be used for the benefit of all. One side of the
road cannot have care, beautiful homes, lovely clothes, travel, and luxury while the other
side starves. One child dying of hunger makes a greater impact than a dozen gifts to
charity. Capital has died in those countries where it has not "cooperated with the in-
evitable".

The very genius which brought about its accumulation must be used in its
possession. Staling in Russia, Mussolini in Italy, Hitler in Germany, all took advantage
of the evasion of this responsibility. Where capital had not learned this law and volunteered to be in tune with the needs of the times, dictators were enabled to conscript it. Today they control it all by fiat, and we see its great power turned to destruction.

We have great wealth. Shall we be able to administer it for the benefit of all or shall it be used one of these days by some power for its own ends? It is up to us.

This war is "down our alley". The machines that are doing the destruction and fighting the war came from us. We gave the world the submarine. Peoria, Illinois, brought into being the tank. The man who produced the airplane still lives in Dayton, Ohio. Machine war—why, we made the machine age. But something seems to be wrong. We can't get going very fast--too much talking, not enough performance. With a dramatic gesture we call for 50,000 planes a year, a two-ocean navy, 25,000 tanks. No one seems to know exactly how much we are getting but we do know that it has fallen away short.

Industry seems to be out of step. We spend too much energy in fighting the inevitable. This crisis is universal. There is no time to argue over payments, over future taxes, over profits. In Germany there was a great industrial genius. His factories were many and large. His mines were among the most extensive in the world. His employees numbered tens of thousands. He could see only the past. When the Republic inaugurated the eight-hour day, the unemployment act, the collective bargaining measure, when his government demanded payment of taxes until his net income was low, he resisted. He forgot he owed all to his country. He gathered like-minded, powerful leaders around him. He began to struggle for control. He turned to a painter called Hitler, and, with him, threw all these social reforms and progressive laws out the window. He would not volunteer. Today this great, powerful industrialist is awaiting courtmartial and death in a concentration camp.

We must keep step with the needs and with the progress of humanity. This is industry's great opportunity. They can if they will and they must or perish. I am not a socialist. I am for our system of private enterprise. It is our way of life. Those who control the vital production of these times must volunteer at any cost. If they will not volunteer, if they cannot cooperate, they open wide the door to the one thing we all fear and hate--conscription.

Industry is only one part of the machine; labor is the other. They should realize that rights they have obtained must be deserved. Labor has come farther in the last twenty-five years than in a hundred years previous. But they are a part of our civilization. When they enlisted under Hitler's banner in Germany they signed their own death warrant.
Today we are watching to see how they will respond in this country to our needs. We believe in their rights, we believe they should maintain all their gains, but at the same time, we know that our life as a nation is at stake. Today the picture is not attractive. Strike after strike, lock-outs, disputes, and as a consequence production lags. It is entirely too much like France before the war to make us feel at ease.

I, for one, do not want to see all labor's rights overthrown. No laborer, man or woman, can maintain his rights or be happy under a dictator. This is the challenge of today. Can we rise to meet it? There must be no industrial slaves in America. There can be nothing else under tyrants.

The President says we are on the list of nations to be overthrown. We can and must prevent that. There is no choice. Labor must give us what we need and give it to us in a hurry, or they will fall with us. Labor must volunteer—it dare not risk conscription.

Freedom to think, freedom to speak, and freedom to know the facts, have always been ours. Humanity has always had its thinkers and we have our full share. We sacrifice and save to make our institutions of learning available to all. To them we send our children and from them we expect our finished product—the future citizen. We give great latitude to the instructors. We are rather chary at restrictions. But now in this crisis we find things in a few quarters that cause us to be apprehensive. Are our youth prepared to assume the duties of citizenship? Is there a knowledge of the real fundamentals of government? And above all, is there an appreciation and love of our country? It is an inevitable law that you cannot pollute the spring and have the stream run clear. Do we want our institutions of learning directed by one central power?

This is practically the only country in the world today where you have freedom of speech. We must keep it so. However, if we adopt the theories and doctrines advocated by many under the privilege of free speech, we would reach the place where we would be afraid to speak, even in our own families. We must learn control or submit to it. We must volunteer or be conscripted.

"Freedom of the Press"—how easily we say it, but how precious it is. There is no freedom of the press anywhere else. We are volunteering to censor our own publications. Here the government asks—elsewhere it demands. Here we select our own news—there it is handed to them. Here we make our own choices—there they have no choice. It must not happen here. We want facts, only facts, but not those facts that
to publish would be injurious to our nation. You must be free or you will smother. I personally believe that the public press is the finest, most self-controlled, independent institution in our nation today. May it always be so. So far the press has kept step with the march of progress. It will be a calamity if conscription of the news channels ever takes place. There are evidences of its presence in some quarters. The best way to kill it and prevent its progress is to "cooperate with the inevitable" as we are doing.

When that great patriot, Benjamin Franklin, signed the Constitution of the United States, his fingers were trembling so he could hardly hold the pen. A young delegate said, "Of what are you so frightened, Mr. Franklin", to which the great statesman replied: "I am afraid of nothing and never was. I am only trembling with apprehension that one hundred and fifty years from now this nation we have brought into being with so much suffering and sacrifice will be unworthy to endure".

The fears of the great Mr. Franklin will be realized unless we appreciate one of the inevitable laws of national safety, namely; that you cannot build for perpetuity by mechanical, industrial or material strength alone. What made this nation survive its Valley Forge's, its Gettysburg's and its Chateau Thierry's was not superior machinery or equipment, but character. As an English observer said about the battle of Manila, "It's the man behind the gun that counts". We may fill the skies with airplanes, build a massive navy on both oceans, fairly shake the ground with the weight of our armaments and tanks, but we cannot save this nation unless we have the right type of morale. It is not material but morale that wins wars. It is not wealth but character that creates safety. You cannot buy liberty, you must earn it, and to be able to preserve it, you must be worthy of its blessings. The character of our people, the morale of our citizenry and the spiritual force of our individuals will make or destroy this nation.

Centuries ago a great prophet said "Where there is no vision, the people perish". May we have the necessary insight and ability to see and realize not only our peril but our security and our resources. This nation has always survived its hours of peril and its moments of crisis and it will rise supreme in this time. It may cost and it will cost in heartaches, sorrow, money, sacrifices and lives, but the victory will be worth it all. A democracy, bright and glorious, amid the ruins of the dictatorships.