STATEMENT OF UNITED STATES SENATOR GEORGE W. NORRIS

Since my recent defeat for re-election to the United States Senate, I have been receiving letters of encouragement from all over the United States. These letters have come by the thousands and are still coming in great numbers every day. They are the most beautiful letters of commendation I have ever received during my public service. They come mostly from people whom I have never seen and who have never seen me. Many of them come from young people, boys and girls in high school, in colleges, mostly the smaller colleges, from every part of the nation. A large number come from those in our armed forces.

Each one of these letters deserves a personal answer but this is a physical impossibility and I hope that every one of these friends, under the circumstances, will accept this statement as a personal answer.

I wish I had the command of language to express properly and fully to each one of those who have written me my appreciation for their kindness, as well as their patriotic interest in the future of our country.

I had an ambition to remain in the Senate to participate in the making of the peace which shall come after this war is won. I do not believe I am immodest when I say that I felt my experience in the public service during the past forty years, most of which was spent in the Senate, has fitted me for this work and, therefore, I desired to remain in a position where I would have officially something to do with the drafting of this peace.

To my mind the peace is just as important as the victory. In fact, a victory without a proper peace would mean that all our suffering and sacrifices would be of no avail. Unless we can draft a satisfactory and permanent peace, then all the agony, the suffering, and the misery of this war has been in vain. A permanent peace means one that will consider first of all the welfare of millions and millions of people who are yet unborn. To bring about such a peace, it seems to me that the most necessary thing of all is to have complete disarmament of our enemies. We must absolutely annihilate every military machine or instrumentality which exists within the enemy borders or under their control. We must for a time see to it that these countries remain disarmed but, when we have completely provided for such a permanent disarmament, we must treat our former enemies fairly, justly, and as equals. We must drive from our hearts all hatred and animosity. We must approach the peace table with an unselfish heart and, if necessary, lend a helping hand to the fallen foe. We must feed the hungry and clothe the naked. We must be the Good Samaritan. We must bring upon them no humiliation and must treat them with absolute justice and fairness. In no other way, as I see it, can we obtain a permanent peace. We must not exact impossible reparations. The treaty which followed the last world war imposed upon the defeated nations the payment of a debt which everyone, both friend and foe, knew was an impossibility. We must not impose upon our fallen foes conditions that we are fighting this war to prevent being forced upon us. No nation in the world—no combination of nations—can ever pay in money for the damage, the suffering, the misery, and the agony this war has brought.

I felt as though I would like to remain in the Senate until such a treaty should become a reality. To be denied this privilege by the people I have tried to serve for forty years was indeed a bitter disappointment to me but my defeat was brought about in a perfectly democratic way. One of the most fundamental and precious ideals of a democracy is that every voter should have the right to cast a secret ballot expressing his judgment without domination of any kind whatsoever. I have long fought for this principle—I believe in it—and it must be preserved regardless of how it may occasionally affect any individual. I do not question, even in the innermost recesses of my heart, the right of the people in any democracy to take such action as my people have taken. After all, it is the democratic way—it is the proper way—the individual is of but little consequence.

I have been gratified beyond expression at the sentiments contained in these letters I have received. I only wish I were worthy of the commendation and praise they give me. I want to take this way—it seems to me it is the only possible way—to say to these people that their expressions of kindness and appreciation have done much to encourage me to go on as best I can in the struggle for the preservation of that philosophy of government I have tried my best to represent. The recollection of the sentiments expressed in these letters will go with me, and remain with me, to the end.

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