

THE CRISIS IN AMERICAN CIVILIZATION ¹⁹

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Will Durant delivered this speech at the 171st annual banquet of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York, held at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City, on November 16, 1939. Mr. Durant for the past fifteen or twenty years has not only been a best seller in the field of non-fiction, but has been widely popular as a platform lecturer, in company with John Mason Brown, William Lyon Phelps, and others greatly in demand for occasional lectures. Durant's delivery is rapid, lively, conversational, mentally stimulating. Through humor, emotional drive, variety and connotative excellence of language, through parallelism, balance, citation of historical, philosophical, and other references, organic structure, ethical appeal (personal reference to experience and authority), a colloquial spirit combined with sufficient intellectual breadth, he achieves excellent results before audiences.

Concerning his speech training and methods of preparation and delivery, Durant states, "The Jesuits who educated me gave me a rigorous course in 'elocution' and debate. I was on the debating team at college. I never write out a speech; instead, I draw up an outline, as logically arranged as I can make it, and usually running three hundred words or so; I use the outline when making the address for the first two or three times, after which I use no notes or manuscript.

"I never follow a manuscript except over the radio. In the speech you have used I had no notes or manuscript, and it was extempore except as regards the thought.

"My advice to young speakers is: (a) Study your subject carefully; get available data, statistics, etc.; (b) Divide your logic into heads, sub-heads and sub-subheads, so logically that one division will naturally lead to the next, so helping the memory of the speaker and the understanding of the audience; (c) Distribute your collected material (preferably on manipulable cards) under the appropriate headings; (d) Write out the outline—i.e., the headings and the essential material; (e) Speak extempore; (f) Avoid long introductory remarks; plunge at once into what you have to say; (g) Cut out generalities, platitudes, stock phrases; (h) Don't talk as long as I do." ²¹

¹⁹ By permission and through the courtesy of Will Durant. The report of the address is a stenographic one, "corrected only as to punctuation."

²⁰ For biographical sketch see Appendix.

²¹ Letter to the author, May 6, 1940.

The compiler of this volume has heard Mr. Durant at least six or seven times before university audiences. Durant has without exception made a highly favorable impression as a speaker and although on each occasion he talked for forty or fifty minutes did not speak too long. Superior speakers, and they only, should talk for more than five or ten minutes.

I wish to consider with you the basic problems of our contemporary American life, from the standpoint not of one who seeks political office or economic advancement, but of one free to face the facts with a fair degree of impartiality, resigned to accept the limitations of human nature, and moved only by the aspiration to protect for his children the achievements of our past, and to explore for them the reasonable possibilities of our future.

I look upon the American scene with an attempt to see it in a semi-total perspective, as one vast moving, growing, possibly disintegrating civilization, and I see underneath it certain foundations which are the foundations of every civilization.

I see the soil, the physical foundation.

I see the humanity, the biological foundation of that civilization.

I see the moral code, which gives the connective tissue of human citizenship and social behavior, and thereby makes civilization possible.

I see an economic system, transforming the potential values of the soil into the usable goods of daily life.

I see a political organization, a form of government slowly evolving, struggling against competing forces, bungling and trying, growing, perhaps dying.

It dawns upon me that every one of these foundations of our American life is today threatened in its very basis, and that probably no other civilization has ever faced so many fundamental challenges as this one in which we live.

The physical foundation, the very soil out of which we derive our being, by whose permission, so to speak, we have civilization,

may be slipping from under our feet as we eat and drink and think tonight.

Day by day the patient processes of natural erosion; the reckless ravages of deforestation; the ruthless dust storms that take up soils that should never have been denuded, scatter them over once fertile regions, and destroy the value of these to mankind; the unhindered waters that flood the lowlands, turn them into useless mud, and carry the precious inch or two of our topsoil down into the streams and the oceans; the improvident tenant tillage whereby half the tilled soil of America is tilled by men who have no stake of ownership in the land that they use, but who take out of it all that they can get, and put into it as little as they may, and, having ruined it, pass to other areas to ruin them in turn:—these processes, natural and artificial, devilish and human, if continued at their present rate for one century, will destroy the soil of the United States, will render our soil within a century incapable of supporting even the sparse population that lives on it today.

That is the first and simplest of the challenges to which we must direct our constructive thinking.

A profounder challenge, one much more difficult to realize, and certainly more difficult to meet, is the biological challenge, the possible decay of ourselves.

Civilization requires men, as well as land. There must be a certain minimum of intelligence, courage and enterprise, in order to make a civilization. That, in general, is what I should call the biological level of capacity or ability in a people.

Normally, that level of ability is maintained, generation unto generation, by a brutal process called natural selection, whereby the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, the struggles and competitions of life, the diseases, the wars, the catastrophes, strike down, by and large, the weak, the incompetent, the timid, the uninventive—strike them down sooner and in greater number than they strike down the intelligent, the brave, and the strong—

With the result that ordinarily, in the brutal process of time, a larger number of the strong and the able survive than of the weak and the timid—

With the result that until modern inventions come to disturb the sequence, a larger proportion of the next generation is born from the strong and the intelligent and the brave than from the timid and the foolish—

With the result that year by year, generation by generation, the level of capacity and courage is raised.

That has been the bloody road that mankind has traveled from the slime or the ape to you. But in developed civilizations men do not like natural selection. We protest that it violates the deepest feelings of our moral sensitivity. Our profoundest religions are against it. Inevitably, as civilization grows, human action generates a thousand forms of charity and generosity; mutual aid increases, and proliferates into free medicine, free hospitalization, public sanitation, into a thousand good things that enable the timid and the weak and the incompetent and the sickly to escape natural selection, and to live at least to the age of marriage.

Through the timidity of the brave, and the recklessness of the timid, in the face of matrimony, you arrive at a condition where the age of marriage comes much sooner among the weak than among the strong. Finally you turn natural selection on its head by the sly institution of family limitation. The result is that whereas in ancient days you bred more from the strong and less from the weak, today you breed from the weak, and sterilize the strong.

I wonder what is going to happen to a civilization based upon democracy and public intelligence, but depending upon a birth rate that puts a premium upon the multiplication of muscle and puts every discouragement upon the perpetuation of brains.

Now, it is barely possible that that is a mistaken analysis. I am always checked up in my flights of philosophy with the awful thought that there is a slight possibility that I may be

wrong. (Laughter.) I used to suppose that in this rare suspicion lay the difference between philosophy and theology, until I talked with the Bishop [Manning] tonight, and found his genial and tolerant spirit a very education.

But even though this heredity that I have taken for granted should not operate as directly as I have supposed; even though you may wish to believe that two morons, married together, have as much likelihood of generating capacity as two able persons married together; even if you console yourself with that which I think to be a cowardly delusion,—yet, we can reformulate the problem in environmental terms, and say that those homes that are adequate to bring up ability, to give it facilities, instrumentalities, and sustenance, are relatively empty; while the homes that are not fitted to develop whatever capacity is born among them, are full, and fill the streets and fill the schools.

The educator is like Sisyphus, rolling his huge stone up a high hill, in Homer's "Hades," always to have it fall between his legs as he nears the top.

Generation after generation, the boys and girls that come to the educators are not the children of those whom they educated, not the children of the ten per cent that went through high school. They are the children of the others, and the educator must start all over again at the bottom, with no help at all from the biological process of heredity.

And as if to make the process complete, we periodically have a great war, and have a very ruthless selective test as to who shall be killed in that war.

Any man who is not physically fit is not allowed to be killed. He is rejected in the draft, and is sent home to propagate his like, and make the next generation. But if you are perfectly sound, you have the honor of going off and being shot to pieces somewhere, before you have had any chance, as like as not, of depositing your soundness and ability into the blood of the race. In this way the vast contra-selection of modern war adds

its dysgenic effect to family limitation, with the result that the greatest problem faced by Western civilization is that it is breeding from the bottom and dying at the top.

I cannot see any future for our civilization on that basis. I speak not merely as one looking upon this contemporary scene, but I speak as one who knows what happened in the past, under precisely similar conditions.

It would be the simplest thing in the world to show what happened in ancient Athens, where family limitation was as popular as in New York City today. It would be the simplest thing in the world to show what happened in ancient Rome. I could quote to you the legislative worries of Julius Caesar, who tried to get the Roman women to have children by ruling that they should not be allowed to wear jewelry unless they had children. (They simply wore it when he wasn't around.) (Laughter.) I could detail for you the remarkable social legislation of Augustus, who offered all kinds of rewards to those who would have children; who disqualified from public office those who had none; who periodically scolded those who were not married, or those who were married and had no children.

Perhaps the rule of Augustus was the greatest epoch in the history of human statesmanship. Yet, though he succeeded in a thousand things, he failed to restore the birth rate of the Roman element in Rome. Instead, welling up from below, came a slow pullulation of groups that had contributed only in a physical way to the history of Rome, men who were called "proletarians" because of their prolific breeding, men of whom 250,000 were on public relief, fed by state corn and amused by free circuses.

In those days, the government gave them bread and circuses. Today we give them bread and elections, but it is just a change in the style of periodical amusement. (Laughter.)

After a while Rome had to recruit its army from the immigrating Germans. After a while the generals were Germans. After a while the German generals controlled the Pretorian

guard. After a while they made themselves emperors. After a while Italy was German. It was not German arms that conquered Rome; it was German babes in arms that conquered Rome. (Laughter.)

A civilization is not destroyed by barbarian invasion from without; it is destroyed by barbarian multiplication within. (Laughter and applause.)

A civilization is a precarious tip built upon a very volcano of barbarism everywhere. It has to be fought for and guarded and preserved, and in any generation that volcanic mass underneath may destroy the little Japanese bungalow that you call your civilization, sitting up there perilously on the top.

That is the second challenge that we face; and the third is still more difficult to express, certainly with any decent brevity. It is the possible breakdown of our moral life, not only here in America, but in all Western civilization. That is this side of the Rhine. You might speak of the Rhine as our moral frontier. (Laughter.)

I suppose we all accept the necessity of social organization. It is one of the great inventions of nature. Once we were individual animals, like the tiger. We had to carry with us, as organs of our bodies, all the weapons of offense and defense—hides and tusks and claws—that were indispensable to our security as individual, solitary beasts.

But nature learned the secret of getting individuals to live together, so that their number would give them protection, and they would not have to carry with them all these organs of offense and defense on their individual bodies. It created the ant, that has no organs of offense or defense; and it created man.

Now, in order to make possible that marvelous social organization which is the basic strength of man, some rules of conduct must be accepted by the constituent individuals,—rules of living together without destructive fratricide.

Those rules are what we call "morality." It has been the experience of mankind that the social instincts that make for

living together are weaker than the individualistic instincts that make for personal acquisition, aggrandizement, and pugnacity, and the racial instincts that make for mating and continuity. Therefore, to make society possible, it has been necessary in every civilization to find some supports for the social instincts, so that they may be able to cope with the individualistic and the racial instincts, the instincts of getting and mating—instincts which, uncontrolled, would tear any society to pieces, and, indeed, would tear any individual to pieces.

Civilization has used three means to strengthen the social instincts and make society possible. It has used the family, as a moralizing organization; it has used the school, to generate character as well as intellect; it has used the church, to give supernatural sanctions to a moral code which, without those sanctions, would become a mere calculus of expediency, and would have no efficacy where there were no policemen.

The family took the natural animalism of the child, and transformed it by parental authority and brotherly discipline into some kind of social behavior. The family did this first because it was large. In the old days we were educated by attrition: we had eight or nine brothers or sisters, and were knocked down sufficiently to become civilized. But when you are the *only child*, who can civilize you? Even the father cannot knock you down now, for the latest books are against it.

Once the father owned land. The son wanted a share of it when he married, and had an excellent economic reason for listening to the old man now and then. But in the cities the father owns, as like as not, nothing, and the economic bases of parental authority and family discipline have been taken away by the Industrial Revolution.

The family is no longer the unit of economic production, as it was on the farm. In the old days, the sons went out with the father at break of day, and were not only his sons, bound to him in obedience by filial duty, but they were his employees, bound to him in obedience by the very necessity of nature itself,

compelled to get certain things done by certain times, disciplined by the routine of the seasons. So that every man who grew up on a farm developed character. He may not have developed intellect, but he developed character.

I think it is obvious that in the city the family is no longer the unit of production or work. The unit of production is the individual or the corporation, and between them the family loses its ancient economic function.

I believe the family was founded for economic reasons, not for reproductive reasons. There were many other modes of perpetuating the race before the family was developed. Marriage too was an economic association of helpmates. It wasn't invented to continue the race; the race had been reproduced a million years before marriage was ever invented. Both of these institutions, the family and marriage, have lost their economic functions. That is the basis of their perilous situation today.

Well, the family is weakened; the school is weakened. Once an educator thought that his chief task was to make men as well as minds; but now, yielding to the specialization of science, we fragmentate our teachers into a professor of physics, a professor of chemistry, a professor of history, a professor of English. Each conveys one intellectual fragment to a student who, when he graduates, can be certified to be a properly filled receptacle of intellectual fragments. (Laughter.) Nobody—no teacher in the school—is responsible for making a man out of that student; he need only make an intellect out of him.

I have seen villages in India whose sole source of order and authority was one solitary Englishman,—villages of ten or twenty thousand people. That Englishman had no gun; he had no arms of any kind,—nothing more terrible than his quiet blue eyes, and yet he was the source of order there, possibly because there were guns in the distance, but also because he had character.

We put all our money on intellect in modern education, and character wins every time. If I made a study of the men in this room, I should probably find a great deal of intellect,

but I leave it to your intellect: would I not also find more character? That is the thing that makes a nation or a man or a family, and we do almost nothing to build character today.

The church was once an instrument for the formation and the transmission of a moral code, and warmed it up into a code of devotion by giving it those supernatural sanctions without which, it is possible, no moral code can long survive. What is going to happen to Western civilization if the faith that offered a basis for our moral code loses its hold upon more and more of those who are to come after us?

As Renan said, "Nous vivons d'un ombre d'un ombre,"—"We are living on the shadow of a shadow." Men like myself, or Renan, if I may dare to mention myself in the same breath with him, have inherited from their boyhood training a certain aftermath, a *nachschein*, as Carlyle called it, of the ancient religious teaching; even when the old theology left them, the moral code and habits conveyed by religion kept their conduct steady, no matter how wrong their heads may have been. I have always felt that I am perfectly sound from the neck down. (Laughter.)

I sometimes wonder what is going to happen when even that spark of religion is not given or received. It will be a tremendous experiment, and I should imagine, with Voltaire, that if we were all philosophers we might possibly get along without supernatural sanctions for our moral code. But what are you going to do between now and the time when we have all become philosophers? (Laughter.)

Meanwhile life becomes increasingly individualistic. The human intellect is almost by definition individualistic. When it frees itself and begins to think, it first discovers the individual, and thinks of itself. Only when it is old does it discover society, and realize that it is a member of something far greater than any individual. But in that time, the human intellect becomes, I think, a force that rather takes the structure of life apart than keeps it together.

This, then, is the third great problem facing our time: the disintegration of morality by the weakening of its ancient supports in the family, the school, and the church. Out of this comes the growth of sexual irregularity, the postponement and early disruption of marriage, the growth of class hatred and crime, the debasement of manners and tastes, and the triumph of vulgarity in life and art.

I come to the fourth problem, which is relatively simple: the economic problem (laughter)—the possible collapse of our economic system. I think it might be put in five simple sentences.

First, the American economic system depends upon mass production.

Second, mass production depends upon mass consumption.

Third, mass consumption requires a wide distribution of wealth.

Fourth, the wide distribution of wealth is made difficult or impossible by the concentration of wealth.

Fifth, the concentration of wealth is made inevitable by the natural inequality of men. (Laughter.)

Out of that situation you must get either depression or war. If consumption cannot keep up with production; if the standard of living does not rise as rapidly as the fertility of invention multiplies the productivity of every man in the country, then, sooner or later, you will have to stop production to let consumption catch up. That is what we mean by "depression."

There is an alternative to that, and the Japanese prefer the alternative, which is a war for foreign markets. I am not sure which is the worse, and I am not sure whether or not we are about to try the second after running up a tree on the first. In any case our economic system faces the double danger of internal combustion through repeated depressions, or external collapse through war.

The political problem can be more easily phrased, of course, than solved. It is this: that, faced with all these challenges, we need statesmanship, and to get statesmanship, we have political machines. That is all. (Laughter.)

It will not be enough for us to love democracy. It will not be enough for us to say that we enjoy a system of liberty. We will have to show that that system of freedom and self-government is more competent than the systems that challenge it and rival it today. For every system, too, must face natural selection. Every idea must fight for its life in the struggle for existence of ideas, of ways of doing things.

Democracy today is obviously challenged on every hand. It is challenged from within and without. Within it is challenged from below and from on top: from Communist ideas at the bottom, aspiring to overthrow it and to establish a dictatorship of bootblacks; and on the top, from a few powerful minds and fortunes that dream of establishing a Fascist dictatorship free from all the nuisance of voting and parliamentary palaver, free from an envious democracy that has discovered a thousand ways of voting money into its pockets out of the pockets of other men.

I am not sure how long democracy can survive with that upper and nether millstone grinding it between them; but if it does survive, it has to face the chaos of the whole world.

It has to make up its mind whether it is going to war to save what democracy is left in Europe, and then it has to ask the question whether its own democracy could survive its going to war.

At every turn that most precious element of our Western heritage, the freedom of the individual soul, is hanging in the balance, and whether the Communist wins, or the Fascist, or the military dictator, all those liberties of speech and press and assemblage and worship and enterprise, that have been the very vital medium of Western civilization, will be snuffed out like a candle in the night, and America might as well never have been.

That, ladies and gentlemen, is what I mean by the crisis in American civilization.

I wish to devote the remainder of my time to a consideration of what can be done to meet these challenges, and I trust that you will forgive the egotism of any one mind attempting to see this vast challenge in all its scope at once.

I propose to make to you certain specific suggestions, at least half of which you will resent (laughter), but if you can carry away with you and approve of and perhaps work for one of them, that will be a sufficient achievement for one evening.

My first proposal is not as specific as those which will follow. It is a vague and general proposition.

I propose that America shall use the intelligence that exists in America to help it face these problems. I propose that that intelligence which is now scattered in a thousand directions and professions shall be, in some way, brought together as a kind of national brain to serve these states.

I propose that the Congress shall legalize a National Advisory Council, to be composed of men and women chosen by us, not in our geographical divisions, voting for men and women whose qualifications we can hardly judge, men and women whom we hardly know, but men and women chosen by us in our professional and occupational groups.

I aspire to see a body of men and women in Washington that shall include some great physician—Alexis Carrel, for example—chosen by the medical profession of America.

I look to the time when we may have the engineers choose a great engineer, like Owen Young, or Herbert Hoover, to such an organization. (Applause.) It is a pity that the intelligence, the ability of such men, should be confined either to one solitary industry and perhaps a school in up-state New York, or to vouchsafing critical comments which are enormously valuable, but which certainly do not exhaust the capacity and the value of our ex-President. He should be part of the structure and service of the American government today.

I should like to see every science represented in that Council,—every science, at least, that can shed light upon human government and society, its development and possibilities. I think there is a place for a great biologist in such a group. There might be a place for a historian, who could inquire what

were the past precedents, past performances, as Mr. Annenberg might say (laughter), of various solutions offered.

I should like to see all the great organizations of America represented there: some representative of the United States Chamber of Commerce, a representative of the National Association of Manufacturers, a representative of the A. F. of L., a representative of the C. I. O. It would be, I think, a great thing if we could take that powerful chin of John L. Lewis, and make it talk and think for the United States, instead of for a small slice of the American people. (Applause.)

I picture the lawyers sending a lawyer to represent them there. That is the easiest thing in the world to picture.

I picture the farmers sending a farmer. That is not so easy to picture. I picture the clergymen sending a representative there. I picture the economists—yes, we might even use an economist, if there are any left. (Laughter.) We ought to have a representative of the banking fraternity there, a representative of the teaching fraternity, and perhaps of the writers.

Now, I would not give to that Council any legislative power. That would require a Constitutional amendment, and life is so short. (Laughter.) But I would ask it to consider the long-term problems of American life, problems so vast in their scope and extent that Congressmen elected for two years cannot be expected to face those problems.

We must find a longer term of office for this national brain. I should say ten years. I would repay its members munificently with your money. I am sure Mr. Lawrence will raise objections at this point (laughter), but they would get at least \$10,000 a year each, and I would ask nothing of them except to think, to study, perhaps to carry on certain social investigations,—even experiments.

Let us have for one hundred years, for example, an experiment to look into the question whether the children of able people are by birth more able or more likely to become able

under equal conditions than the children of incapable people. Let us solve that tremendous problem of heredity versus environment, which, from Plato on to Dewey, has racked the brains of philosophers, to little, and certainly to unintelligible, results.

I would ask that Council periodically to recommend to Congress its conclusions, along with the specific data upon which it has based those conclusions. At the same time, perhaps, this Council might publish those conclusions and those data to the American people through the press and the air. In that way we might have a more enlightened public opinion, perhaps more enlightened legislation. The essential thing is that Congress would have found an investigatory, fact-finding committee, just as the President can appoint such committees for his own illumination today. It would give Congress an immensely greater backing, in science and history, in knowledge and wisdom, than its legislation can have today. It would not interfere with Congress. The ultimate right of legislation would still be in that constitutional body.

Now, while that Council remains a mere idea in a few heads, perhaps we ought to come down to realities, and make specific suggestions.

The first is that the United States Army, if I may dare to speak for it and of it in the presence of some of its greatest leaders here, shall be devoted, in peace time, and during such time as it does not have to prepare for war—that it shall be devoted to preserving the soil of America for our children's children; and that there shall be given to the Army, as its proletarian wing and aid, a permanent Civilian Conservation Corps, perhaps made more attractive by better remuneration.

If I had my way, every boy in America would join the Civilian Conservation Corps for one year of his life. Rich and poor would work together there, in a wholesome discipline of the out-of-doors, and get one year of democracy in operation, and one year of character before his intellect be-

comes too emancipated. (Laughter and applause.) Perhaps we might lure the majority of American boys into such an organization by promising them in return for that year of service a certain measure of free medical care, under certain limitations, for the rest of their lives. We so love health that we might even be willing to give a year of our lives to prolong our longevity.

Under the biological head, I would ask the states to offer to every woman a maternity endowment equivalent to the cost of caring for one year for each child born to her, provided that before risking motherhood she should submit herself and her mate to responsible medical examination, and solemnly promise, by legally enforceable document, to refrain from parentage, at least with that mate, if she or he should be shown to have some serious and transmissible defect.

I do not mean the wrong political opinions. (Laughter.) I mean such things as epilepsy, feeble-mindedness, serious venereal disease, advanced tuberculosis, hemophilia, perhaps chronic criminality. There are certain persons who have no divine right to breed their like into the blood of America's future. I hope for the time when we shall understand that we must either go back to natural selection, with all its brutality, or replace it with some form of social selection that will make parentage a privilege and not an accident.

I would give to the feeble-minded a simple choice between sterilization and sexual segregation. I would try to encourage a higher birth rate in the middle classes by attempting to diminish the economic handicaps and discouragements to parentage, and I would begin with that large portion of the middle class—I don't know whether it is a majority or minority—that is employed by the United States Government. (Laughter.)

And I would ask the government to make an experiment which might not cost it anything. That is, to begin the remuneration of regular governmental employees a little lower

than now, but automatically to raise that remuneration when the employee adds any child to his family.

I go further. I suggest to you businessmen that you should begin seriously to think what is happening to an industrial system that every year needs less and less muscle and more and more brains, if it is living amid a birth rate that every year gives more and more muscle per hundred children and less and less brains. How can you run a modern economic system with a birthrate that litters your streets with muscle, but that sterilizes intelligence with contraception?

I hope that before I die, great corporations like General Motors will apply to their salaried employees this same principle of automatically raising the remuneration by perhaps a modest but appreciable amount every time a child is added to their families.

I think we spend too much time entirely upon our economic worries. If you solve for me the biological problem of America, and the moral problem, I care not what solution you give to the economic problem. What do I care whether the government owns the railroads or not, or owns the steel companies or not, if your birth rate and your moral code are destroying you? A nation well born and well bred will make a go of any institution and any laws, but a nation born from the dregs and brought up in the moral chaos of our cities will make a mess of any institutions. (Applause.)

And since decay may be environmental rather than hereditary, it seems obvious that the provision of low cost housing, which no longer attracts private capital, shall be accepted by all as one of the first obligations of a modern government. In that matter we are far behind most of the governments of Western civilization.

I would approach the moral problem by asking the teachers and the clergy and the physicians of each state to appoint a group of their finest members to sit for any length of time and draw up carefully a code of honor for modern life that

will point the nose of modern youth to the specific temptations of an industrial and urban civilization, a society in which, for example, the employer hardly ever sees the employee, a society in which there is every stimulus to sex and every discouragement to marriage.

I should like to see a code of honor stir up the soul of youth to some sense of nobility in facing situations of this kind. I should like to see that code of honor engraved on every diploma, taught in every grade of school from kindergarten to Ph.D.

I should like to see it made the center of a textbook of character, that would be drawn up by philosophers like John Dewey, but written by literary artists like Van Loon, so that somebody might understand what it was all about (laughter); and then I would like to see that textbook of character made the center of a course in character, not in goodness, but in being something,—a course in character that would receive as much attention and effort from the teacher, and as much time in the curriculum, as any subject whatever.

I think educators should be chosen not merely for their special qualifications, but for their personality and their character, because we teach more by what we are than by what we teach.

I think educators should have the courage to restore the old conceptions of duty, and to bring the curtain down upon the age of Ibsen, which laughed at all obligations.

I think that we parents of the middle class, instead of waiting until our deaths to share our savings with our children, should return to the old custom of the dowry, and thereby help our children to marry at an earlier age; for we must either restore marriage to a more natural age, or surrender that moral mode of self-restraint which made some of the strongest characters in modern history.

Under the economic head, I begin by rejecting two solutions.

I think it is obvious that Communism is a problem and not a solution. The problem of Communism is this: does an exploiter cease to be an exploiter when you put brass buttons upon him, and call him an agent of the government? My answer is No; you do not change human nature by putting a uniform on it. But more than that, I don't think any adult mind looks with any relish upon a society in which every job is owned by the government; in which, therefore, every employee is owned by the government; in which, therefore, every mind is owned by the government. I think that capitalism at its worst would be infinitely preferable to such a universal serfdom. (Applause.)

The second proposed solution is Fascism. I would define Fascism simply as martial law applied to industry. Does any man in his sanity aspire to a life in which industry shall be subject to martial law?

We deceive ourselves in thinking of Fascism as a form of government. It is not. It is a form of war, and it is tolerable under war conditions. We would have it the morning after we declared war; we couldn't avoid it. But that anyone should want it in peace time, is almost beyond imagination.

So that we are driven back to the old philosophy of freedom, and to that disreputable thing called the profit system.

When I was in Russia in 1932, I left the hotel one day for a moment, because I had lost my tooth-brush, and I went around from store to store, and corner to corner, and street to street, looking for a tooth-brush.

I couldn't find one. So far as I could discover, there wasn't a tooth-brush in all the empire of Russia. There may have been, but I couldn't find any.

Another time I wanted an orange. They had filled me with the idea that the orange had vitamins, and I went around looking for oranges. I couldn't find any. There wasn't an orange in Russia, or, at least, in Moscow.

Then it dawned upon me. How is it that if I were deposited at almost any part of the United States, I could find a thousand tooth-brushes and a thousand oranges within a stone's throw of wherever I landed?

The answer was clear. First, because it had been to the profit of somebody—risking his money but hoping for gain—to dig certain things out of the soil, or to make them grow out of the soil. It had been to the profit of somebody else to transport this material to some place where it was turned into a finished article.

It had been to the profit of somebody to finish it, to make it usable. It had been to the profit of somebody else to take it to the city or the town; and it had been to the profit of someone to keep it on the shelves until I, in my lordly capacity as the ultimate consumer, took it into my head that at least I was willing to buy this thing. And finally, when I wanted it, there it was.

When I thought about the matter, it seemed to me to be a beneficent miracle, and I am puzzled over the question as to how anything could ever replace this motive. I cannot find such a substitute for the profit motive in human nature today.

Therefore I am more and more convinced of the ultimate creativeness of human freedom. But freedom is a challenge. It requires order in economic enterprise as well as in philosophical thought.

When liberty destroys order, the hunger for order will destroy liberty. That is why you have Mussolini in Italy; that is why you got Hitler in Germany. I don't know what you will get here, if we cannot learn to reconcile liberty, even in industry, with order.

We have to learn to spread our wealth so that there will be a continuity of American industry. I hope that every American corporation will think of establishing some form of profit-sharing in the distribution of its proceeds; and that American business—with the change, if necessary, of our anti-trust laws—

will devote some of its genius to creating a voluntary NRA and a practicable profit-sharing plan that will make the American way the happiest as well as the most productive economic system in the history of mankind.

The last problem is political. I can only scratch the surface of it.

I suggest that we begin to require, for eligibility to public office, specific and technical preparation in the functions to be performed. I propose that our universities shall establish schools of government as rigorous in their requirements and their curricula as the finest schools of medicine in the land.

I hope that the United States Government will establish at Washington a United States Civil Academy—corresponding to the academies at West Point and Annapolis—which will take men and women from all our states, as democratically selected as our corruption will permit (laughter), and train them there in the art and science of public administration.

I believe that such men would look upon politics as a profession, and would give to it some of the devotion and skill of the scientifically trained mind.

I believe that our municipalities would take such men for their minor offices; that those men would graduate from lower to higher office, and add experience to their preparation; that we should in that way slowly build up a body of civil servants as fine as that which England has developed in the course of her centuries.

That is all I ask of you for the time being. (Laughter.) This is an opportunity which will perhaps never be given to me again, but I feel that I have here almost the brains of this state, and if I could only persuade you to forget for a moment the business to which you devote your genius, and think in terms of America—if we could only begin to build a communal brain right here, then I see no limit to the things that could be done.

I think America is richer in intelligence than any other country in the world; and that its intelligence is more scattered than in any other country of the world. I beg of you to think how it may be brought together.

I think that it will come together, that it will meet these problems and solve them, and that we shall realize a goodly measure of the magnificent dream that America has been in the minds of philosophers and in the hearts of men.