

Woodrow Wilson *speaks*

History has already accorded Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924) a high rank as a dynamic leader of democracy. As a professor, political theorist, university president, writer, and President of the United States, he played a dominant role on the national stage. As President during World War I and as creator of the League of Nations, he played an equally significant part on the international stage.

Born on December 28, 1856 in Staunton, Virginia, he received his education in private schools, from tutors, and from his father (a Presbyterian minister). He graduated from Princeton, studied law at the University of Virginia, and won his Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins. After teaching at Bryn Mawr and Wesleyan University, he became professor of jurisprudence and political economy at Princeton. From 1902 until 1910 he served as its president, resigning to become governor of New Jersey.

In 1912 he was elected 28th President of the United States. Soon he was translating parts of what he called "The New Freedom" into a legislative program. During his two administrations the tariff was reduced, anti-trust legislation strengthened, the Federal Reserve and Federal Trade Commission acts passed, and Child Labor and Eight-Hour day legislation enacted.

Despite his passion for peace, Wilson finally called upon Congress to enter World War I on April 6, 1917. At the end of the war, he attended the Peace Conference in Paris, pressing for the creation of the League of Nations. While on tour in the United States to win support for the ratification of the Peace Treaty, he suffered a stroke and was incapacitated for the rest of his term. He died on February 3, 1924.

In the following paragraphs he still speaks:

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ON MORAL AND SPIRITUAL VALUES . . .

"A man has found himself when he has found his relation to the rest of the universe. . . . He knows the kingdom for which he is bound. He has seen the revelation of himself and his relations to mankind. He has seen the revelations of his relation to God and his Maker and therefore he has seen his responsibility in the world. This is the revelation of life and of peace."

"No thoughtful man ever came to the end of his life and had time and a little space of calm from which to look back upon it, who did not know and acknowledge that it was what he had done unselfishly and for others, and nothing else, that satisfied him in the retrospect and made him feel that he had played the man. That alone seems to him the real measure of himself, the real standard of his manhood. And so men grow by having responsibility laid upon them, the burden of other people's business. Their powers are put out at interest and they get usury in kind. They are like men multiplied."

"After all, the most vitalizing thing in the world is Christianity. The world has advanced, advanced in what we regard as real civilization, not by material but by spiritual means and one nation is distinguished from another nation by its ideals, not by its possessions; by what it believes in, by what it lives, by what it intends, by the visions which its young men dream and by the achievements which its mature men attempt."

"The one thing that the world cannot permanently resist is the moral force of great and triumphant convictions."

ON AMERICA . . .

"There have been other nations as rich as we; there have been other nations as powerful; there have been other nations as spirited; but I hope we shall never forget that we created this nation not to serve ourselves, but to serve mankind. . . . The United States were founded, not to provide free homes, but to assert human rights."

"When America ceases to be unselfish, she will cease to be America. When she forgets the tradition of devotion to human rights in general, which gave spirit and impulse to her founders, she will have lost title deeds to her own nationality."

"It is surely the manifest destiny of the United States to lead in the attempt to make this spirit (of democracy) prevail."

"America is not a mere body of traders; it is a body of free men. Our greatness is built upon our freedom—is moral, not material. We have a great ardor for gain; but we have a deep passion for the rights of man."

"The singular fascination of American history is that it has been a constant re-creation, of making over again in each generation the thing which was first conceived."

ON AMERICANS . . .

"Let us show ourselves Americans by showing that we do not want to go off in separate camps or groups by ourselves, but that we want to co-operate with all other classes and all other groups in the common enterprise. . . . I would be willing to set that up as the final test of an American."

"The American face mirrors the future and . . . the American purpose mirrors the future of the world."

ON DEMOCRACY . . .

"Democracy is unquestionably the most wholesome and livable kind of government the world has yet tried."

"Democracy is the most difficult form of government because it is the form under which you have to persuade the largest number of persons to do anything in particular. But I think we were the more pleased to undertake it because it is difficult. Anybody can do what is easy. We have shown that we could do what was hard."

"I have often thought that we overlook the fact that the real source of strength in the community comes from the bottom. . . . And so we must see to it that the bottom is left open. We must see to it that the soil of the common feeling, of the common consciousness, is always fertile and unclogged, for there can be no fruit unless the roots touch the rich sources of life."

"The commands of democracy are as imperative as its privileges."

ON DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF DEMOCRACY . . .

"There is a conviction all over the world that there is no use talking about political democracy unless you have also industrial democracy."

"Democracy means that women shall play their part in affairs alongside men and upon an equal footing with them."

"We need men of devotion as much as we need good laws. The two cannot be divorced and self-government survive."

ON REVOLUTION AND REFORM . . .

"Revolutions do not spring up overnight. Revolutions come from the long suppression of the human spirit. Revolutions come because men know that they have rights and that they are disregarded."

"Men in despair destroy governments."

ON GOVERNMENT . . .

"Government should serve society, by no means rule or dominate it. Government should not be an end in itself; it is a means only—a means to be freely adapted to advance the best interests of the social organism. The state exists for the sake of society, not society for the sake of the state."

"The business of government is to organize the common interest against the special interest."

"Politics is not a problem of setting interests off against each other upon such a plane that one cannot harm the other. The problem of politics is cooperation."

"As a matter of fact and experience, the more power is divided, the more irresponsible it becomes."

"No more vital truth was ever uttered than that freedom and free institutions cannot long be maintained by any people who do not understand the nature of their own government."

"Democratic institutions are never done — they are, like a living tissue, always a-making. It is a strenuous thing this living the life of a free people. . . ."

ON ISOLATIONISM . . .

"We can no longer indulge our traditional provincialism. We are to play a leading part in the world drama whether we wish it or not."

"The isolation of the United States is at an end not because we chose to go into the politics of the world, but because by the sheer genius of this people and the growth of our power, we have become a determining factor in the history of mankind."

ON INTERNATIONALISM . . .

"The brotherhood of mankind must no longer be a fair but empty phrase; it must be given a structure of force and reality. The nations must realize their common life and effect a workable partnership to secure that life against the aggressions of autocratic and self-pleasing power."

"We believe these fundamental things: First, that every people has the right to choose the sovereignty under which they shall live. . . . Second, that the small states of the world have a right to enjoy the same respect for their sovereignty and for their territorial integrity that great and powerful nations expect and insist upon."

"I can predict with absolute certainty that within another generation there will be another world war if the nations of the world do not concert the method by which to prevent it."

"When I pronounced for open diplomacy, I meant not that there should be no private discussions of delicate matters, but that no secret agreements should be entered upon and that all international relations, when fixed, should be open, above-board, and explicit."

ON EDUCATION . . .

"Now a kind of liberal education must underlie every wholesome political and social process, the kind of liberal education which connects a man's feeling and his comprehension with the general run of mankind, which disconnects him from special interests and marries his thought to the common interests of great communities and of great cities and of great nations, and, if possible, with that brotherhood of man that transcends the boundaries of nations themselves."

"The educated man is to be discovered by his point of view, by the temper of his mind, by his attitude towards life and his fair way of thinking. He can see, he can discriminate, he can combine ideas and perceive whither they lead; he has insight and comprehension. His mind is a practiced instrument of appreciation. He is more apt to contribute light than heat to a discussion, and will . . . show the power of uniting elements of a difficult subject in a whole view; he has a knowledge of the world which no one can have who knows only his own generation or only his own task."

"Your enlightenment depends on the company you keep. You do not know the world until you know the men who have possessed it and tried its ways before ever you were given your brief run upon it. And there is no sanity comparable with that which is schooled in the thoughts that will keep. It is such a schooling that we get from the world's literature."

"So long as instruction and life do not merge in our colleges, so long as what the undergraduates do and what they are taught occupy separate, air-tight compartments in their consciousness, so long will the college be ineffectual."

ON LEADERSHIP AND THE PRESIDENCY . . .

"A great nation is not led by a man who simply repeats the talk of the street corners or the opinions of the newspapers. A nation is led by a man who, hearing these things, understands them better, unites them, puts them into a common meaning . . . speaks a new principle for a new age."

"Let him (the President) once win the admiration and confidence of the country and no other single force can withstand him, no combination of forces will easily overpower him."

"His (the President's) office is anything he has the sagacity and force to make it."

"I not only use all the brains I have, but all I can borrow."

"If you think too much about being re-elected, it is very difficult to be worth re-electing."

"It is constantly necessary to come away from Washington and renew one's contact with the people who do not swarm there, who do not ask for anything, but who do trust you without their personal counsel to do your duty."

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