

DIGEST OF SPEECH DELIVERED BY  
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This postwar world offers a great opportunity to cooperative enterprise. Where democratic political institutions and capitalist production have broken down, the hope of rebuilding political and economic freedom rests in the development and progress of cooperative organization. America should look upon this opportunity as a challenge to our political and economic leadership. We ought to recognize by now that in great areas of this world democratic political institutions as we know them cannot survive unless there is an economic base which permits individual participation such as provided for in cooperatives.

In all too many sections of the world rigid statism, or national ownership without political freedom, has become the practice. Capitalism is gone in those areas, or in other words, that which we know as free enterprise has passed away. If we wish to maintain the principles of civil liberty and individual freedom, America must lend a helping hand and a friendly attitude to the development of economic programs which fit into the pattern of democratic government.

Democracy is more than government. It is an idea about man and his relationship to his fellow man. A democratic government must do something to develop and build the character of men, and not just govern them. A democratic government must not be a police system. It must not be negative or restrictive in its aims and objectives. It must actively work to see to it that everyone has an equal opportunity in the economic and political processes.

Democracy is fighting its battle at this moment. One of its inveterate enemies is the threat of monopoly, either political or economic. Our way of life depends upon competition of ideas. Unless there is competition in men's minds, there can be none in the market place. Unless there is understanding and tolerance

in the mind of man, we cannot build a cooperative community. The best short definition of democracy that I have heard is -- free speech and groceries -- and the two are inseparable. There can be no economic security unless man is permitted to govern himself. By the same token, poverty, economic chaos, and monopoly destroy the true meaning of political freedom as we know it. Hunger and want breed destruction. It is our task to demonstrate by living example that plain ordinary people by pooling their efforts and uniting for a common cause can build together. Cooperative enterprise is a living demonstration of building together. It is true democracy, both in the political and economic sphere. It is, as many a person has called it, the "middle way."

While preserving institutions of private property and individual choice, it does not permit the exploitation of human beings by monopolistic methods or the unrestricted profit motive.

The cooperative movement is as much a part of the American democratic way of life as the right of the ballot. But the cooperative movement today is engaged in a death struggle. Well healed and well financed organizations would pervert the truth in order to destroy cooperatives.

It is imperative that those of us who recognize the value of cooperatives fully understand the attack which is now being made against them. This attack is all the more bitter because of the phenomenal growth and success of cooperatives throughout America. The Midland Cooperative Wholesale is a cardinal example of what can be achieved under capable management and devotion to cooperative principles.

Any movement which can survive the perilous period from 1927 to the present day and show the remarkable growth that Midland Cooperative has shown, must have something to it. Midland stands as a testimonial to the soundness of cooperative ideals and business practice. It has been an inspiration to all Americans who believe in progressive democracy.

Those who profit from monopoly, those who influence our political institutions because of their economic power, are the enemies of cooperative action. It is our task to be ever alert to these threats, to rally our forces through the process of explaining our achievements. We must not only think of the preservation of cooperatives as we know them today, but must have in mind their extension and development in the future. This will be the inspiration and the guiding light that other people in other nations are hoping to have.

Just as we point with pride to our own achievements in cooperative enterprise, we must be ever mindful of the growth and development of cooperatives in the Scandinavian countries, and the British Isles. It isn't just coincidence that these nations have survived the war period holding intact their free political institutions. The men and women of these nations are adherents to cooperation, and they clearly understand that there can be no cooperation, no cooperative activity, unless there is freedom of expression and association.

It is to the credit of our farm people that they have learned the techniques of cooperative organization. Farmers have strengthened their economic position because of successful application of cooperative principles to the business economy.

We in Minneapolis extend our congratulations to our friends in the country. It is to our interest that agriculture be prosperous. A productive and balanced agricultural economy means jobs for city workers, business for city industry. There is a direct interdependence between the farm and the city. We need each other. Good wages, reasonable profits, depend upon a healthy economy. The farmer and the worker are the backbone of our political and economic system.

There are great social and economic issues being discussed in America today. Our educational system is suffering from poor financing and inadequate revenue. In the richest year of our history, American public education which means so much to our political and economic freedom, is struggling for its very existence. We

are spending less than 2% of our national income upon our schools. Our state legislature cannot seem to make up its mind as to the importance of a firm and sound financial base for our schools. A broadened national educational program is absolutely necessary if we are to preserve the fundamental institutions of our country. The education of our young people, and the protection of their health, must become two paramount issues for those who believe in cooperative enterprise.

Our America must make a decision. We cannot stay rich and strong in a world being devoured by poverty and disease. Sooner or later we must make our choice between totalitarianism or a democratic middle way system in which cooperatives, government, and private enterprise will all play their respective roles.



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