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We face a critical year ahead. We face great challenges, both in our international relations and in our domestic affairs. Grave decisions must be made, that may decide one way or another the future of our democracy, our progress, and our prosperity.

The new Congress will have a heavy work load, with issues before it that deserve more than perfunctory consideration and hasty action. Delaying tactics, study commissions, and postponements of the first half of the session will no longer suffice. The hour of decision is at hand. Expiring laws make necessary extensions or new versions of many laws that will vitally affect the social progress of our country.

Key issues before us will be foreign aid and defense, including the vital question of reciprocal trade; rewriting of the tax laws; improving or undermining our social security program; labor-management legislation; a decision on agricultural price supports; the St. Lawrence seaway; getting rid of injustices in our immigration laws; further progress on civil rights; protection of natural resources and re-examination of public power policies; slum clearance and public housing.

What is decided on these issues will be of concern to almost every American, one way or another. We're all so interdependent that whatever means a setback or progress for one segment of the economy, usually reflects into a setback or progress for all of us.

A good example right now is the farm situation. Labor should understand what they have at stake in a sound farm economy. It doesn't take long for declining farm purchasing power to reflect itself to Main Street merchants, and

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then to workers laid off from factories. We're already experiencing that drag on our entire economy. We can't forget that past depressions started with a collapse in the farm economy. All that farmers ask is reasonable protection such as minimum wage laws provide for labor, fair trade laws provide for business, and tariffs and subsidies provide for industry.

Farmers have learned more and more that their best friends are to be found in organized labor, not only as customers, but as men and women devoted to decent treatment for everyone. And farmers have learned, too, that good wages and full employment in the industrial economy help sustain better farm markets, better farm income. It's good to remember how much both groups have in common.

Taxation is another issue to which every working man should remain alert. We must resist a sales tax and not be misled by any fancy names it may be called, such as "manufacturers' excise tax".

Good union members are good citizens, and as such should be interested in every legislative issue in which the public good is involved. And they shouldn't hesitate to make their views known, either, for it is the responsibility of Congress to try and reflect the will of the American people. Unfortunately, a vocal minority can often drown out a silent -- and complacent -- majority.

With all of the problems confronting us -- the uncertainties still existing in the world, the danger signs on the horizon of our domestic economy, and the reactionary influences at work against social progress -- 1954 can still be a good new year, if we help make it such. Each must share part of that

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responsibility. These problems are your problems - not the problems of Congress alone.

My wish for the new year is that this country can bring an end to the growing era of hate, harangues, and hysteria, and return instead to the steady path of progress, peace, and prosperity, with equal fair treatment for all.



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