

APPENDIX IV.—ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE DELEGATES ATTENDING THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE

White House, Washington, D.C., 17 May, 1944

It is a great pleasure to have you with us here in the White House again. As I pointed out to you when we last met—two and a half years ago—taking part in a Conference of the International Labour Organization is not a new experience for me. I take pride in the fact that I was permitted to play a part in the first Conference of the Organization that was held here in Washington in 1919.

Those were indeed trying days when last we met in 1941. The fate of the free peoples of the entire world hung in the balance. Yet with the courage and foresight that have always characterized the International Labour Organization, you as representatives of Governments, workers and employers had the boldness to come together from all parts of the world to formulate plans for reconstruction.

You have been meeting in Philadelphia where, one hundred sixty-eight years ago, the Fathers of this Republic affirmed certain truths to be self-evident. They declared that among other things all men are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among them life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In these words are expressed the abiding purpose of all peoples imbued with the ideals of freedom and democracy.

The Declaration which you have formulated in Philadelphia may well acquire a similar significance. In it you have reaffirmed principles which are the essential bulwarks of any permanent peace. With the expanding use of machinery and the revolution in transportation, it is well that the world should recognize the fundamental principle of your Declaration: "Poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere." This principle is a guide to all of our international economic deliberations.

You have affirmed the right of all human beings to material well-being and spiritual development under conditions of freedom and dignity and under conditions of economic security and opportunity. The attainment of those conditions must constitute a central aim of national and international policy. Indeed, the worthiness and success of international policies will be measured in the future by the extent to which they promote the achievement of this end.

Your Declaration sums up the aspirations of an epoch which has known two world wars. I confidently believe that future generations will look back upon it as a landmark in world thinking. I am glad to have this opportunity of endorsing its specific terms on behalf of the United States. I trust, also, that within a short time its specific terms will be whole-heartedly endorsed by all of the United Nations.

As I look over the report of your work, I see that you have, for the first time in history, set out in a form which could be adopted as a treaty by the nations, a particular series of social objectives. I note that among other things they include full employment, wages and working conditions calculated to ensure a just share of the fruits of progress to all, the extension of social security, the recognition of the right of collective bargaining, provision for child welfare and the assurance of adequate educational and vocational opportunities. It will be your responsibility to promote these objectives through your own Organization and through such international agencies as may be created.

With great wisdom you have realized that these social objectives cannot be attained and supported without a high level of useful economic activity. You have recommended a series of economic policies and undertakings designed to bring about a material economy which will make it possible to maintain them.

You have also wisely provided for the further development and reorganization of the International Labour Organization itself so that it may be broadened and strengthened for carrying out these social objectives, and at the same time integrated on a co-operative basis with whatever new international agency or agencies are created by the United Nations. This forms an admirable pattern for formulating certain aspects of the peace. I want to assure you that this Government will do everything in its power to see that the provisions for the attainment of these social and labour objectives shall be included.

The people of the occupied countries are in deep suffering. Their representatives have agreed upon the social objectives and economic policies you have set forth. I trust that this marks the beginning of a new and better day, a period of hope for material comfort, for security and for spiritual and personal development, for all those groups now suffering so sorely under the heel of the oppressor. The United Nations will be determined that all the oppressed of the earth shall be included in these social objectives.

I want to offer my congratulations to those of you who have participated in this Conference. You have my gratitude for the programme of mutual helpfulness which you have laid out—a programme which, I am sure, will inspire all of those in our generation who want to build and maintain a just peace.

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