

The Changing World

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FAITH AND COURAGE WANTED!

THE MOST TRAGIC development of the first postwar year has been the growing defeatism of the American public mind in regard to both world peace and continued prosperity and well-being at home. We talk war with Russia and predict the time of the next depression. This defeatism is tragic not only because of its consequences at home and abroad, but all the more because it is unnecessary and based on fallacious assumptions with regard to the state of both world and domestic affairs. Neither wars nor severe economic depressions are inevitable. Democracy was strong and effective in war. It can be strong and effective in peace. It is our failure to live our philosophy—not the philosophy itself—that is our weakness and it is this failure and not Russia that today threatens world peace and makes depressions likely.

Since September 1945, America has been gradually losing her moral leadership of the world. Where America has lost, Russia has gained. This is not because the Russian philosophy is superior to our own; it is rather because America has been so uncertain, confused, and belated in action that the masses of people the world over feel that they have more to gain in association with Moscow than with Washington. Similarly, in the domestic scene the first postwar year has been faltering and unproductive. Here again we have been confused and uncertain. Both in the domestic and international scenes we have often betrayed our friends and played into the hands of our enemies, confusing men of good will the world over and disillusioning them with regard to the potentialities of America's world leadership.

The source of America's weakness is not difficult to find. It lies in the simple fact that we will not face the problems of the postwar world with full implications of our

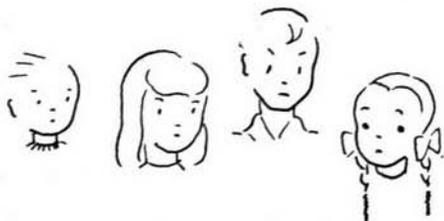
democratic tradition in mind. That tradition guarantees civil liberties and all human rights to all of our citizens regardless of color, creed, or economic status. Concerning this guarantee there can be no question as far as theory is concerned. But in practice we lack the courage and imagination to carry through to the logical implications of our basic philosophy. In providing housing for veterans the same thing has happened. We know what we ought to do if we are to keep faith with the veterans and with our tradition of a humane democracy. But we hesitate because of a fear of socialism and the opposition of private enterprise. In the field of industrial relations we are in a similar vacillation, lacking a policy of labor relations which will protect the public, the employer, and the employee alike. In the international scene we are so fearful of communism that we have perpetuated fascists in office in the conquered countries. We have turned our friends out and put our enemies in—all to the confusion of liberty-loving individuals in these countries. All indications point to the fact that we are repeating the error of prewar days and building up the fascists to protect ourselves against communism. Fear has so taken possession of our hearts that we have become faltering and uncertain, both at home and abroad.

Our fears of Russia and communism are both ridiculous and tragic in consequence. We are the richest and most powerful nation on earth. We have the longest tradition of human freedom and the richest experience with democratic processes. If we would only follow through both in the international and domestic scenes to the logical implications of our basic tradition of freedom we would inspire the people the world over with the quality of our leader-

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and this is really *fun*. Here comes that ball again."

Joan, as flushed and breathless as any of



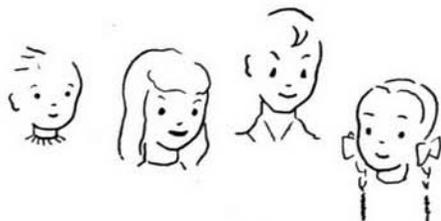
Deep concern

the youngsters, was called from the room just as the group came in from recess. No sooner had the door closed behind her, than conversation began to pop in the room.

"Gee kids," said Jack. "It really worked, didn't it?"

"Sure," agreed Martha. "She laughed right out and seemed to have fun."

"And," chimed in Sally Lou, "she never



... to broad grins

guessed how hard we worked to get the idea over."

"Nope." Tom's face was very serious as he spoke. "It sure took an awful lot of planning, but it was worth it. Now she really belongs."

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ship and the promise of our institutions. But we are so selfish and greedy in the economic scene that we are unwilling to live up to the full meaning of our democracy, and in failing to live up to our dynamic concept of life we are giving the proponents of conflicting ideologies a worldwide heyday with the masses of people.

It is still time for America to reassert her leadership. It is still time for us to take a firm position in defense of human rights everywhere in the international scene. It is still time for us to apply our democratic principles of human relations in the domestic scene, keeping faith with employees, employers, and the public. It is still time to do something for our veterans in the way of housing, job opportunities, and a stable economic order. But if we are to assert ourselves in the international scene and be successful with our democracy at home we must overcome our silly fears, stop blaming Russia, and stop talking about war. We must make a careful analysis of the problems which confront us both at home and abroad. We must plan and carry

out a constructive program for their solution. From an educational standpoint we need a better interpretation of American free institutions. We need something more than a mere theoretical interpretation of democracy. We need to make clear what democracy means in the various areas of human relations. We need the courage and the unselfishness to follow this philosophy even though it may force us in spots to break with some of our traditional patterns. Those of us who are teachers are particularly in need of renewed vision and courage in these directions. We shall not lead America out of the present doldrums of defeatism and confusion without a clear sense of direction and a determined faith in our concepts of freedom. We should be constantly reminded of the fact that we have a strong, vital, and creative tradition of freedom and human values. We need only to give it free play and full application to make it a success, and through this success to commend it to the world. Only in this way can we overcome our defeatism and regain what we have lost in the way of world moral leadership since VJ Day.

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