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# Stop!

**ARE YOU  
A GOOD  
CITIZEN?**



**A CHALLENGE TO  
EVERY AMERICAN**  
*by* JOHN A. O'BRIEN, PH.D.

*A QUEEN'S WORK  
PAMPHLET*



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*Stop!*

# Are You a Good Citizen?

A Challenge to  
Every American

*by*

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THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME



*“There is but one rule of conduct: Always do the right thing. The cost may be high in money, friends, sacrifice. The cost of doing wrong however is infinitely higher. For a temporal gain we barter the infinities.”*

*Nihil obstat:*

Rev. T. E. Dillon

*Censor Librorum*

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John Francis Noll

Bishop of Fort Wayne

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John A. O'Brien

**Deacidified**

# Stop!

## Are You a Good Citizen?

"An honest man's the noblest work of God."

—*Alexander Pope, "Essay on Man"*

**S**TOP! Are you a good citizen? Do you take an intelligent interest in your government—city, county, state, national—and strive to elect honest and capable officials? Do you make an effort to curb the graft which honeycombs so much of the politics of our country and disgraces many of our cities?

Or are you one of that vast number who say: "Politics is dirty; I wouldn't soil my hands by getting close to it; I leave that to the professional politicians"?

Suppose a judge were to address the above questions to you, what would you, dear reader, be obliged to say?

Such an examination of conscience should be made by every citizen. It has been too long delayed. With clamorous urgency it challenges the smug indifference of most of us. As long as we allow our Christianity to be a hothouse affair and make no serious effort to apply it in the blustery, storm-swept fields of civic and political life, we are only half-baked Christians, fissured ethical personalities desperately wanting in balance and integration.

Because there are so many who have this attitude of indifference, public funds are being squandered, rackets are mushrooming everywhere, gambling syndicates take their millions from poor and rich alike, night clubs and theaters stage vulgar exhibitions, and commercialized vice injects its malign infections into the souls and bodies of untold thousands. In many of the fields of commercialized vice doctors struggle frantically to stem the tide, while corrupt officials conveniently look the other way, refusing to close the spigot that is the source of this cesspool of social disease.

Millions of so-called good citizens, professing Christians, and churchgoers kneel before altars banked with Easter lilies, or sit before white-robed choirs singing long-drawn-out hallelujahs; but they would not soil their white-kid gloves by touching any of these rackets, even if the touch were only to strangle it. Those dirty matters are left to the politicians and the crooks. Thus there grows up in many of our cities the unholy alliance between crime and politics. Instead of being the government of the people, by the people, and for the people, democracy becomes all too often the government of the indifferent by the unscrupulous.

### **An Urgent Need**

There is then a widespread and urgent need to apply the ideals of uncompromising honesty that were laid down by the divine

founder of the Christian religion to the fields of civic and political life. Christ is not satisfied with mere lip service. He demands the keeping of the commandments, the putting of faith into practice. "Not every one," warns Christ, "that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."

What a caricature of the true Christian is the individual who goes to church on Sunday and on the other days of the week fattens on the fruits of political graft and corruption! What a stumbling block and a scandal to unbelievers who see this disparity between his professed faith and his actual practice!

There are those however who declare that graft is the unwritten law in politics, the "palm grease" that is taken for granted.

"They are all doing it," remarked a politician to me, "and why shouldn't I?"

"The fact that others steal," I pointed out, "is no justification for you to steal. If your line of reasoning were valid, every commandment of God would have been relegated to the scrap heap centuries ago. No matter how many thieves practice their trade, stealing will remain forever *stealing*."

*We call old notions "fudge"*

*And bend our conscience to our dealing.  
The Ten Commandments will not budge,  
And stealing will continue stealing.*

Writing to the ancient Romans, St. Paul formulated the law for all the followers of Christ when he said: "Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good."

America is still at heart a Christian nation. Its national life rotates on the axis of the altruistic idealism inspired by the teachings of Christ. It reaches out its hands with offerings of healings to the afflicted peoples of every land. It is therefore high time for the American people to harness their religious idealism to their civic and political life and clean with the acids of uncompromising honesty the Augean stables of corruption that are so prevalent throughout our land.

### **Courage to the Fore**

Courage is the virtue that is now so much in the public eye. The deeds of our men and women in the services have provoked the admiration of the world. We propose to show that such courage is as much needed on the home front as on the battle front.

We purpose to show that the citizen who battles for justice and decency on the home front is, not a goody-goody sissy poking his nose into other people's business, but a lionhearted soldier aflame with the highest courage.

True, the courage of the citizen at home is more of the moral than of the physical



kind—though the latter is by no means absent. But the highest form of courage is moral courage. It is the most difficult kind of courage. Moral courage implies the capacity to go against the social pressure of a group, to withstand the clamorous tyranny of the mob out of loyalty to one's convictions. This form of courage moves in the realm of ideas. It runs the gamut of the scorn, ridicule, and abuse of the crowd.

That which men crave most deeply is the applause and admiration of the public. Most people would face physical danger and even death before they would face the shame and scorn of public opinion. Warden Lawes, of long experience at Sing Sing, has said that this fear is true even of hardened criminals, who cringe and smart before the scorn of their fellow inmates.

The force of public opinion is therefore most powerful in the fashioning of social conduct. It will whip into line virtually every citizen of a nation. When aroused and articulate, it is immensely more powerful than any law on a statute book. In fact any law which is not anchored in public opinion will not long survive.

There are times however when an individual sincerely believes that public opinion is wrong. Here he must choose either to follow the verdict of the crowd or the dictate of his conscience. To follow the latter requires that he run the gamut of public condemnation and obloquy—a

form of punishment from which many a person who has abundant physical courage will shrink and flee. Because this punishment bites into the very marrow of the ego as it is reflected in the public eye, most people find it the most bitter and the most intolerable of all punishments.

How often have you heard a person say: "I would rather take a beating than do that"? Why? Because the doing of "that" would bring him, not a physical beating, but the scourging of social disapproval—and therefore greater pain than any physical pain.

### **Tunney's Bravest Fight**

The core of this booklet is the consideration of courage in politics. With a view to make the difference between physical and moral courage crystal-clear however, I should like to give an illustration from a nonpolitical field.

Gene Tunney has given many an exhibition of physical gameness. Twice he faced the murderous blows of the Manassa Mauler in the squared ring and lifted the heavyweight crown from one of the greatest fighters that the game has ever known. But one night in a midwestern city Tunney faced a still more formidable foe. He was the guest of honor at a stag banquet. The entertainment committee had arranged for a floor show after the dinner. To Tunney's surprise the show featured a couple of virtually nude female dancers.

Such an exhibition was offensive to Tunney's moral code. But what was he to do? To get up and leave would be to fly in the face of the social pressure. Here was a case calling, not for physical gameness, but for moral courage. Tunney proved equal to it. Arising from his seat at the speaker's table, he said, "Gentlemen, I don't care for this type of exhibition. I find it indecent and offensive. You'll have to excuse me."

And he walked quickly from the room. Others followed his example. Soon the room was almost empty.

In our opinion this was the bravest fight that Gene Tunney ever fought and won—a victory of moral courage over the tyranny of a crowd.

### **A Senate Scene**

Early in the spring of 1917, I listened to the debates which raged in the Senate over America's entrance or nonentrance into World War I. By that time the country had been inundated by tidal waves of propaganda for war. Throughout the country the press had worked up the war spirit to such a pitch that it had become fashionable and patriotic to shout for war and to assail all speakers who pleaded with the people to keep out of the raging volcanoes of European hatreds. The eastern newspapers had been particularly bellicose and extremely successful in that section of the country.

I remember listening one afternoon to a four-hour address by Senator Stone of Missouri. He pleaded for America to use her good offices to bring the warring leaders to the peace table and to abstain from throwing her young men into the fires of European enmities and never-dying hatreds. Whether you agree or disagree with the stand the senator took, we think that all of you must admit that it was a stand which at that time required a great moral courage. As chairman of the foreign-relations committee Senator Stone was under terrific pressure to reflect the policy of the Wilson administration, which was then pressing vigorously for war.

The great majority of the Senate had by that time been won over to the war policy. Contrary to all the rules the crowds in the galleries, inflamed with the passions of war, broke out repeatedly in hisses when the senator pleaded for abstinence from European quarrels and for some regard for the lives of our own young men. Newspapers called him a "Hun sympathizer" and applied to him other labels which were chiefly libels. The atrocity stories which had been manufactured in offices set up for that purpose had swept the country and instilled the war spirit in a people who normally wish only to live in peace and good will with all nations.

I have never been able to forget the picture of Senator Stone's facing the hostility of the galleries, the displeasure of the ma-

jority of his colleagues, and the wrath of the administration leaders in order to follow the voice of his conscience and plead for abstinence from the interminable squabbles of the Old World. With him stood La Follette, O'Gorman, Norris, Reed, and a few others, all whom President Wilson branded as the "twelve willful men" because they dared to defy his demand for war.

### **"Country Above Party"**

Some twenty years later I had occasion to confer upon Senator George Norris the Cardinal Newman Award for distinguished public service. Then we learned at first-hand what he had to face in the way of public criticism because of his vote. When he went back to Nebraska to give an account of his vote to his constituents, he found it impossible to get a single prominent citizen to preside at the meeting scheduled for that purpose. No one wished to be tarred with the stigma of association with a man who had voted to keep out of the blood baths of Europe.

Such a vote was regarded not only as unpatriotic but closely akin to treason. Nevertheless George Norris faced that crowd with a clear conscience, the true source of moral courage.

There is something infectious about courage. Before Norris left that crowded hall, he had won the crowd over from hostility to applause for his fearless obedience to the deepest convictions of his conscience.

We can think of few men in public life who have shown in season and out of season moral courage such as Senator Norris's. Realizing early in his public career that blind obedience to the behests of the bosses within a political party was inconsistent with the best interests of the country, Norris declared his intention to follow his own conscience.

"I was elected," he once said, "to serve my country, not the interests of any political party."

Though elected originally on the Republican ticket, Norris did not hesitate to support a measure introduced by a Democrat if he thought it was really a good measure. Neither did he hesitate to campaign for a Democratic candidate if he was convinced that the man would be a better public servant than the man brought out by his own party. He afforded the country the first spectacle of a United States senator elected originally on the Republican ticket and campaigning—not only in his own state but in other states as well—for the Democratic Presidential candidate.

He had come to look upon party labels as virtually meaningless. He demanded to know what was beneath these tags, to inspect the real goods. At Washington he had been disgusted with innumerable instances of alleged public servants' placing the interests of their party before the interests of their country.

## "Young Man, If . . ."

Early in Norris's career in the House of Representatives an incident had occurred which showed him the folly of traipsing along blindly with his party. A Democratic leader had introduced a resolution to adjourn Congress on the morrow out of respect for Washington's birthday. Whereupon a Republican leader had assailed him and his party as loafers and urged that the best way to pay tribute to the father of our country was to hold the usual session. Norris thought the resolution introduced by the Democratic leader entirely reasonable, and he voted for it.

That evening in the cloakroom a Republican leader took Norris to task because he didn't vote with his party.

"Young man," he said to Norris, "if you want to stay long in this House, you'll have to vote as your party leader tells you. The cemetery is full of political corpses who failed to obey orders."

A slow anger began to kindle in Norris's breast. Later that evening he found that exactly the reverse of the action in the House had taken place in the Senate. A Republican had moved to adjourn for the morrow, and a Democrat had opposed the motion. The vote had been along the usual party lines.

"If blind obedience to party orders leads to such contradiction in small matters," Norris reflected, "why will it not produce



the same glaring inconsistency and folly in important matters?" From then on for forty years of public service Norris followed through thick and thin the voice of his own conscience.

It was of no consequence to him whether the measure bore the Democratic label or that of the G.O.P. What alone concerned him were the merits of the measure. Was the measure for the best interests of the country as a whole? This became the touchstone by which he was able to recognize the difference between the chaff and the wheat.

His party leaders raged and stormed. They sought to knife him and throw his carcass to the political wolves. They even resorted to the dishonest trick of placing on the ballot the name of an obscure Nebraska groceryman whose name was also George W. Norris, thinking they would thereby confuse voters and by this form of subtle fraud have the senator counted out. But the citizens of Nebraska, like those of any other state, admire courage and place a high premium on unflinching honesty. For some forty years they returned Norris to Washington, honoring him with one of the longest tenures of high office in our nation's history.

Norris's example infected others. Consequently we have today a growing number of members of Congress who are not afraid to put the welfare of the nation above that of the party. In the continued



growth of this body lies the hope for the advancement of the well-being and prosperity of the American people. Along with the elder Robert La Follette, who pioneered in this field, stands George W. Norris, whose name has become a symbol of courage in the field of politics.

### **The Way of the Politician**

Moral courage is particularly needed in political life. Here the traditional policy has been to do the expedient, the opportune thing. Politicians are concerned chiefly with the immediate consequences of their actions—how the voters react—not with the long-term consequences of a measure. The gods of the politicians are Expediency and Opportunism. Before these idols they worship, and for them they are willing to sell their souls. The consequence is that politics has become the breeding ground of moral timidity, if not of cowardice.

The prevailing custom is to straddle issues, to agree with everyone and to differ with no one, even though constituents differ on the policies they want pursued. The past master in politics has learned the art of blowing hot and cold at the same time. The yardstick of all measures is "a count of noses." "It is *well* to know the truth and speak it," runs an Oriental proverb, "but it is better to know the truth and speak about the palm trees." While this might be a prudent policy to follow in a country ruled by a Turkish Sultan or a ruthless despot, it should have no place

in a democracy, whose essence is free discussion and the voicing of honest convictions.

Here the straddling propensity, the fawning spirit, the noncommittal attitude, the time-serving disposition render difficult—if not impossible—the development of honest and courageous leadership in public life. By lulling the voters into somnolence about public issues, unscrupulous leaders undermine good citizenship. Thus does democracy, so glorious in theory, tend to become in practice a government of the indifferent by the unscrupulous.

The tendency among typical politicians who seldom if ever want "to stand and be counted" is to shelve controversial questions as speedily as possible or to cloak them with shirking reticence. When a live issue comes to the fore, the dominant policy is to

*. . . shut the door  
With mystery before  
And reticence behind.*

### **"Addition, Division, Silence"**

Political diplomacy has become the art of using words to say as little as possible. One of the typical representatives of this kind of diplomacy, Talleyrand, went so far as to say that language was made to conceal thought. This attitude doesn't make for honesty. Nor does it make for courage. It makes for a postponement of the issue, a shying away from facts, an ostrich habit

of burying one's head in the sand and, as a wag has impishly added, inviting by one's posture the treatment one deserves.

A person of wide experience in city administration tells us that it is this conspiracy of silence, this hush-up policy, this let-matters-well-enough-alone procedure, which makes possible the widespread graft and corruption existing today. "There are hundreds and even thousands of towns and cities," he said, "where slot machines and other gambling devices are operating wide open. The rake-off runs each year into the millions. It is often split four ways, to each of the leading public officials—the mayor, the state's attorney, the sheriff, the chief of the police—who are charged with the enforcement of the laws against such gambling. Sometimes the newspaper publisher who is silent on the subject is also given a slice. These persons never collect in person. They have their agents pick up for them each month their share of the slush fund."

Hundreds of thousands of citizens know that this kind of corruption is going on. Yet rare indeed is the individual who so much as says, "boo!" about the great American game of "addition, division, and silence." A little bit of moral courage would sever with the promptness of a razor's stroke the widespread tie-up of politics with organized gambling and with that still more malignant enemy—commercialized vice. Legislators can legislate, aldermen

can pass ordinances, and clergymen can exhort till the cows come home. But the tie-up of politics with crime will continue until men who have moral courage will arise to blast the conspiracy of silence and to turn the light full on these corruptions by the fearless proclamation of the facts.

### **Fighting Al Capone**

We listened to the story told to our students by George E. Q. Johnson. When he was Federal district attorney of Chicago, he was seeking to secure the conviction of the notorious gangster Al Capone. Capone and his fellow thugs had gained the bootlegging ascendancy in Chicago, and the business had mushroomed into a fifty-million-dollar racket overnight. Capone had already "muscled" into the control of a number of labor unions. His syndicate was levying a tax upon merchants, a tax called "protection." Scarcely a week passed without someone's being murdered, frequently under particularly ghastly circumstances, as a result of the racketeer's widespread operations.

Persons who were shot but did not die were almost invariably too afraid to reveal the names of the would-be murderers. Witnesses were called in, only to experience sudden attacks of forgetfulness. Other witnesses disappeared before the cases came to court. When word got out that a witness intended to talk, he would be killed suddenly and mysteriously. Even hospitals

were invaded, and injured victims were finished off to keep them from talking.

The citizens seemed cowed. Vice, crime, and murder were rampant. Gangsters were becoming millionaires. They had winter homes in Florida. Oriental rugs graced their palaces. Gold knobs adorned their doors. Capone & Company appeared to have law and order by the throat and were laughing in unholy glee.

"The greatest difficulty," said Johnson, "that I experienced in prosecuting that case was in trying to get witnesses to testify. Time after time we would bring witnesses to my office, only to find them lacking the courage to testify or to give us the slightest help. We would promise them police protection. But even then we rarely found a man who had courage enough to put in his appearance on the witness stand. They wanted protection as citizens, but they were unwilling to give the testimony which would have removed the boss of the criminals from circulation and enabled us to smash his ring.

### **"We Needed . . ."**

"If ever there was a need for courage, it was in that lawless period when we were fighting an uphill fight against the most formidable organization of criminals and gangsters that ever spewed horror and death upon the citizens of Chicago. We needed men and women who had the courage to talk out in the court in order to

enable us to put this desperate criminal under lock and key.”

Johnson and his associates finally secured a conviction on grounds of income-tax-law violation (!) and had Capone sentenced to Alcatraz. Before achieving that however, they found it necessary to place prospective witnesses in a vessel out on Lake Michigan in order to keep them from fleeing on the wings of fear.

The simple fact is that the enormous toll—which each year runs into the billions and comes out of the pockets of taxpayers—through racketeering and crime is traceable chiefly to the lack of moral courage on the part of those who are charged with the enforcement of law. Sharing in that culpability is the vast legion of citizens who know of crookedness in high places and in low but who do not say a word or lift a finger to end the disgrace. This is the malady which is making the administration of our cities reel and stagger like a drunken man. It is the carcinoma of American democracy, a cancer which clamors for the wielding of the scalpel of moral courage.

Opportunism and expediency beget the politician. Courage begets the statesman. Between the two there is a world of difference. The former's avocation is to hold his ear to the ground. The latter holds his head erect, his eyes forward. He comes to grips with a problem and seeks a solution in the light of reason and ex-

perience. Public officials would do well to heed the truth which Lincoln made the guiding principle of his life. "I am not bound to win," he said, "but I am bound to be true. I am not bound to succeed, but I am bound to live up to the light I have. I must stand with anybody that stands right, stand with him while he is right, and part with him when he goes wrong."

### **Senator Johnson Replies**

Senator Hiram Johnson has won the admiration of friend and foe by the courage he has displayed in standing by his convictions. A delegation once called upon the senator and informed him that they represented seventy newspaper editors in California who would actively oppose his reelection unless he changed his views on a certain measure. In the face of such formidable and articulate opposition most candidates would have flopped over, or at least they would have sought to conciliate the opposition with honeyed words.

Not Hiram Johnson. "Go and tell those editors," replied the senator, "that if seventy times seventy editors oppose me I will stand by my convictions." The electorate perceived his courage, flocked to his standard, and reelected him by an overwhelming majority. He enjoys the unique distinction of having been nominated for the Senate by both the Republican and the Democratic parties. As in the case of Senator Norris, the electorate has shown



its admiration for courage and honesty by rewarding Senator Johnson with an unusually long tenure of high public office.

While it is true that courage may exist without practical wisdom, there is a strong presumption that courage and wisdom go together. "The possession of habitual courage," observes Coventry Patmore, "implies that a man understands what he is doing and whither he is going." Moreover the collapse of courage is not infrequently followed by the failure of insight and the breakdown of judgment. People lose the power to perceive the truth when they lose the habit of obeying it. Nature rebels against the dichotomy that results when the truth is seen but not obeyed. If this practice is long indulged, nature achieves a unity, even though a pathological one, by dulling the vision or desensitizing the inner ear of conscience. Here is the psychological genesis of the process of rationalization, wherein one uses one's reason to fabricate arguments to justify one's moral delinquency. Herein is perceived likewise the inner deformation which results from the habitual failure of moral courage—the taint of nature's punishment.

When John Stuart Mill was running for parliament, his opponent appeared on the platform and taunted him with a quotation from one of his books. Therein Mill had expressed his conviction that the judgment of the masses could not be trusted in complex and involved questions demanding



training in the weighing of evidence pro and con. Thinking that he had Mill in a tight spot, where an admission would incur the disfavor of the crowd, the opponent asked:

“Mr. Mill, did you or did you not make that statement reflecting on the judgment of the people?”

“I did,” replied Mr. Mill, “and I stand by it now.”

Whereupon the crowd broke out with thunderous applause. Even though the statement was not complimentary to them, they admired the fearless honesty of the man who had made it and now acknowledged it, and they were not slow to show their admiration.

### **Dewey Declares War**

During the twenty-two years when I was in charge of the Newman Foundation at the University of Illinois, I was privileged to bring to the university many eminent persons who were chosen to receive at a public convocation the Cardinal Newman Award for distinguished contributions to science, literature, art, or public service. I think that of all those illustrious personages the general student body showed perhaps the greatest enthusiasm for and gave the most rapturous acclaim to Thomas E. Dewey, then district attorney of New York. Perhaps his youthfulness had something to do with the students' reaction, for youth appeals to youth and captures their imagination most readily. But probably the fac-

tor which more than any other one accounted for the spontaneous and tumultuous acclaim accorded Dewey wherever he appeared on the campus was that in the eyes of the students he was a symbol of youthful courage.

Like a youthful Sir Galahad he had thrown himself into a life-and-death struggle with gangsters and gorillas who under "Lucky" Luciano and other such leaders had the nation's metropolis by the throat. Repeated attempts to place these gangsters, who were fattening on the enormous rake-off from organized gambling and commercialized vice, had fizzled out ignominiously. As in Chicago under "Scarface" Al Capone, witnesses were intimidated or killed. A few minor thugs took the rap, while the overlords grew more arrogant and insolent every day.

Throwing the gauntlet down to these murderous gorillas, the youthful district attorney asked no quarter and gave none. He brought a marvelous efficiency into the methods for the collecting of evidence and thereby not only gained the confidence of witnesses but succeeded in protecting them. Then he proceeded to bear down with merciless precision and strangling evidence upon the gangster overlords who had grown fat and sleek in the purchased immunity which they had so long enjoyed.

With the whole nation watching him, this youthful gladiator hurled the thunderbolts of public indignation into the inner

circles and threw the noose of long delayed justice around the necks of the vice moguls. Syndicates whose grasping fingers penetrated thousands of dens in order to collect the lion's share of the loot—dens of prostitutes, panderers, gamblers, and racketeers—began to crumble. The luck of "Lucky" Luciano began to wane. Shyster lawyers whose practice it was to split the spoils with the vice overlords found New York too hot for comfort. The Augean stables of the metropolis, reeking with the filth of corruption, graft, commercialized vice, and crime, a stench which had assailed the nostrils of the nation, got such a cleansing as they had never received in their history.

### **The Need Today**

The overlords were either executed or put behind bars. The syndicates were broken up, their captains jailed. The citizens breathed freely again. The city was able once more to call its soul its own—without the need to pay tribute to "Lucky" Luciano or his mobsters. So deep was the admiration of the people of the nation for the solution of this difficult problem, a job done with courage, ability, and honesty, that soon the name of Thomas E. Dewey, despite the man's exceeding youthfulness, began to lead in the Presidential straw votes throughout the country.

It was shortly after he had won his fight against the vice moguls of New York that Dewey came to the campus of Illinois

University. No dignitary of state or Church, however eminent he might be, could have evoked from the student body the spontaneous outpouring of admiration, enthusiasm, and affection that was showered upon this brave and modest young man. In the long history of the university no other visitor, I am certain, ever received an acclaim that came so close to idolatry as that which was accorded Thomas E. Dewey. He established a pattern of efficiency for every office of district attorney in the country. More than that: He endued that office with the spirit of uncompromising courage.

Why should not every incumbent in such an office, I have often wondered, follow the pattern and emulate the spirit which brought such shining victory in a locale where defeat had long been traditional? Such a spirit brings rich returns in the administration of justice, in the protection of the community from gangsters, and in the gratitude of the people. With crime growing by leaps and bounds, the crying need in America today is for officials who have the courage to carry the war to the gangsters, the grafters, the racketeers, and the criminals and to pursue them without ceasing till the last one is securely behind bars. To officials with such a spirit will be the victory of moral courage over slinking cowardice—the invariable mark of the criminal.

## A Task for All

This is not however the job of public officials alone. It is the task of all the people—the electorate and the officials working shoulder to shoulder. Public servants need the backing of public opinion. They need the wholehearted cooperation of every man, woman, and child to secure the observance of all the laws of a community. Too often in the past, citizens in sufficient numbers have failed to go to the polls to elect capable and conscientious candidates. Too often they have regarded their work as done when they cast their ballot. That attitude of *laissez-faire*, of crass indifference, must be replaced by one of ceaseless vigilance for the public good.

How many so-called good people regard politics as a dirty business with which they disdain to soil their white-kid gloves. They have time for auction bridge and other social pastimes. But for the important business of electing capable public servants they have no time. Theirs is a form of civic cowardice that approaches treason. Such careless and indifferent citizens are not only slackers; *they are criminals*. For to their apathy is traceable in the last analysis the election of unqualified officials and the consequent failures in the enforcement of law.

American boys have shed and are shedding their blood in foreign lands for the preservation of the ideals of democracy, for the safeguarding of the American way

of life. Have we on the home front kept faith with them? Have we fought with courage and determination to safeguard the right of the ballot for all? What about the ten million Negro citizens whom we ask to go abroad to fight for freedom in distant lands, while suffrage is denied to the majority of them in the southern states? "Go out and fight," we tell them, "for the freedom of people in Africa . . . in Europe . . . in the Philippines . . . in China." And all the while we keep millions of our own in political servitude at home. Such a contradiction is the breeding ground of hatred, injustices, and crime.

"Go out into foreign lands," we tell our soldier boys, "and fight for freedom from want for the Europeans . . . the Africans . . . the Asiatics. . . ." And here at home millions of our people are living in squalid poverty. No less an authority than the President of the United States has declared that a third of our people are living below the standard of American life. In 1929 the richest tenth of one per cent of American families had a total income equal to the total of forty-two per cent at the other end of the scales. This means that 36,000 wealthy families together received as much as 11,653,000 poor families did. And all the while we prate of "democracy . . . liberty . . . and equality." The stark facts make these words look like ghosts in the night.

Here on the home front the fight for social justice, for civic decency, and for the

realization of the ideals of democracy challenge the courage and the fortitude of all our citizens. Here is a battle that must be fought, not with bombing planes and submarines, but with intelligence, patience, and perseverance. For the winning of that battle to make the ideals of democracy living realities throughout the length and breadth of America, we shall need a courage that is unsurpassed by the fearless warriors in the bombing plane, the tank, and the submarine.

An individual proves that he is a good citizen by his willingness to fight—in season and out of season, whether the odds be great or small, at great personal inconvenience and, if need be, at danger to life and limb — for the realization of the noble Christian ideals of social justice and civic decency throughout the whole of American life. For him there is but one rule of conduct: Always do the right thing. The cost may be high in money, in friends, in sacrifice. The cost of doing wrong however is infinitely higher. For a temporal gain we barter the infinities.

Observe that rule of conduct. And when you are confronted with the challenge, "Stop! Are You a Good Citizen?" you can call upon your deeds to make answer for you. With an eloquence that surpasses the language of words they will thunder forth an answer that will be your safe-conduct among men and your passport into the kingdom of God.



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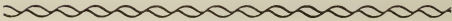
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*Are You a  
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