

Message From President Shaw

THESE FEW WORDS are written on the day that commemorates our nation's independence. It is the 573d day on which we have been actively engaged in the Second World War. It seems a particularly appropriate day to reflect upon our obligations both toward freedom and toward the coming peace.

If the past decade has offered to this imperfect world convincing evidence of the wisdom of the old adage, it is perhaps equally important that we accept as a corollary its reverse and devote ourselves now to the proposition that in time of war we should prepare for peace.

Libraries, which have splendidly demonstrated their particular uses in war, are primarily instruments for the preservation and widening of the ways of peace. In the war effort our collections have contributed to the military authorities their useful maps of remote Armageddons-to-be; their technical and research journals which lead to the production of deadlier explosives, a more lethal gas, or a more protective armor; and the scores of other resources which have a proved combatant value. But these are not their chief contributions to the upward climb of civilization. Libraries have, for the immediate time, failed in their higher purpose when war grips a nation; in the very throes of the cataclysm must come a heightened resolve, a freshened preparation to work toward a new and more enduring peace.

The academic libraries of the country are a vital potentiality in the struggle against future wars. To these libraries, for their information and their inspiration, come both many of the intellectual

leaders of the republic and, in their formative years, the bulk of the more responsible rank and file who are the components of our democracy. It is not completely unrealistic or arrogant to think that, in Maine-like political tradition, as our libraries go, so goes the country. If librarians provide and disseminate the factual knowledge and expressions of the spirit on which nonviolent settlement of differences may be based, we have fertilized and nourished, to the extent of our professional abilities, the ever living and almost universal human hope that wars may cease.

To prescribe an agency for maintaining peace—federal union, world federation, or what you choose—would be presumptuous, both beyond the scope of these remarks and the capacity or authority of your elected official; but librarians will agree that there is much in the way of educative preparation that we can do which is both pertinent and effective. We can, for example, provide printed materials that will give our clientele understanding rather than hate or contempt of those alien peoples who are now either our allies or our enemies; we can issue the books and documents that will provide our democratic constituencies with a powerful knowledge of the facts on which the structure of peace must be built and of the errors and pitfalls that must be avoided; we can marshal the findings that reveal the essential steps to be taken in building the justices and tolerances and generousities that will make for a humane rather than a violent domestic social order. Any librarian worthy of his post of re-

sponsibility in his community will implement such opportunities as these—and the many more that will occur to him—with whatever endowment or acquirement of skill and intelligence and energy and materials he may be blessed. To do less is to court disaster—personal, professional, national—in the postwar welter of suspicions and hates, of fears and greeds, that inevitably is an aftermath of armistice.

That each of us shall contribute his individual mite to the solving of the problems of the peace and the healing of the sores of the world seems now the imperative and honorable action for those of us who, in even some slightest measure, guide the thinking and the learning of our democratic world.

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