

AMERICAN LEGION ANNUAL CONVENTION BANQUET
DEPARTMENT OF MARYLAND - August 27, 1942.
Cumberland

It is only fitting in coming before a group of fighting men who, 25 years ago, wrote the final chapter to another great war story, to say: "The Legion was right. If America had listened to it these past 20 years; if our Country had heeded the warnings, and the appeals, which year in and year out, Legion National officers sounded, Japan would never have dared to perpetrate the treachery of Pearl Harbor, America would never have been so easy a victim of militarist ambitions".

For two decades and more, since the American Legion was born in that first A.E.F. Caucas in France in 1919, its membership, now at an all-time peak has preached the doctrine of National preparedness. Ever since that First World War, when the American fighting men waited and suffered, until this great Nation shook off its lethargy and eventually got down in earnest to the serious business of saving Democracy, they have warned the people that never again ought America allow itself to be a victim for any nation's greedy aspirations.

Today, thanks in great measure to the Legion's far-sightedness and persistence America has made giant strides in this war, has achieved "the impossible" in production, despite the admitted shortcomings of democracies in war. The Legion's insistent advocacy of Universal Draft had prepared the public mind for the acceptance of Selective Service, even in peace-time, something that few officials ever really expected to see.

Too, though America had little actually 'in hand' for fighting a war, the basis of a great United States Navy had been prepared, the American aircraft industry was infinitely farther advanced than in 1917, and, as a Nation, the United States was at least thinking in terms of possible war expansion. This National state of mind was to prove of the utmost help when finally, and suddenly, the American people were called upon not only to ready the Nation for the grim business of all-out war, but also to take on the stupendous job of helping to arm, supply and feed any and all the nations ranged on the side of the democracies in this greatest of all world struggles.

Once again the free peoples of the world had to pay the price of their privileges. The things Democracies cherish most make them slow starters in war. They are blind people to essential war facts and decisions, because they keep them ever mindful of human values. But, nevertheless, it is impossible now, despite the delays and the indecisions that inevitably have occurred, to come before this State Department Convention, less than nine months after the start of hostilities, and to say, with true optimism, and with complete faith in the future—