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# Things We Care About

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## Free Speech

*From an address by Congressman Wm. E. Mason of Illinois to the Convention of the People's Council, Chicago, Sept. 2, 1917*



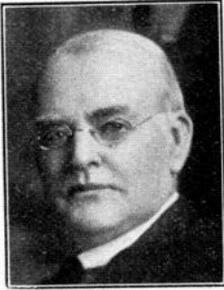
*Photo by Paul Thompson*

Our President in his negotiations is demanding that the German people shall speak; and for the love of God and Justice I am demanding that the American people can speak too. I am more interested in free speech in America than I am as to how much one king shall pay another in Europe as indemnity in this war. I believe in obedience to the law, and one of the Laws of this Government is that when the people are tired of a law they can change that law. I do not propose to be governed by a few gentlemen who are on the payroll of the Government or who run newspapers that have a fixed policy to conceal the truth and to state everything to please themselves. I do not believe that any groups of politicians or newspapers have a monopoly of patriotism.

There is far more misery in the United States to-day than there has ever been since the battle of Bunker Hill. There are enough tears being shed by the unhappy mothers of conscript sons to float a battleship. But the most sickening and disheartening thing that has occurred since this nation was founded is occurring now, when men and women who have no ambition but the good of their country, who desire to exercise their right to help their government—who pay out of their own blood and out of the blood of their sons and out of their heavy taxes the burden of this war—when these American citizens cannot have free speech. The question of the war is a small question compared with the greater issue of free speech in America.

# Freedom of Assembly

*From an address by Ex-United States Senator John D. Works  
of California to the Convention of the People's  
Council, Chicago, September 2, 1917*



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Paul Thompson.

I have been a citizen of this great country of ours all my life, but until now I have never known the time when a governor of a state has issued an order against a peaceable assembly of American citizens, called together to discuss grave questions that involve the lives and liberties of the American people. That seems to be our condition now. It is said that armed troops have orders to

disperse our meetings.

They do not claim that we assemble for the purpose of disturbing the peace, but they insist that if we hold our peaceful meetings somebody will come and raise trouble with us and bring about bloodshed. If that be so, why are not the troops sent to protect us in our rights? Every one of these governors by whose orders our meetings are forbidden has taken a solemn oath to support the Constitution of the United States, and that Constitution guarantees to us just the very thing these governors are trying to prevent.

I wonder if democracy in this free republic is dead. We are not attacking the government under which we live; we are defending it. We are not assailing the Constitution that guarantees us our liberties; we are upholding it. We are not advising or promoting any resistance to the laws of our country. We are defending those laws so long as they are constitutional and so long as the people of the United States are not able to bring about their repeal. But this is a government of the people, and we are all a part of that government; we have therefore a right to be heard about what it shall do. And if the Congress of the United States has passed a law that is not satisfactory to the people who constitute this government, they have the right to demand of Congress that it shall be repealed.

# Maintenance of Labor Standards

*An address by James H. Maurer, President of the Pennsylvania State Federation of Labor, to the Convention of the People's Council, Chicago, September 2, 1917*



We are told that our entrance into the War is to make the world safe for democracy. But there are certain interests in this country who seem to think that the only way to democratize Europe is to Prussianize the United States. Immediately after our Government's declaration of war, these interests, using the war as a pretext, demanded that all labor standards be repealed; that our constitutional rights of free speech and free assembly be suspended; that the press not owned or controlled by those favorable to the war be suppressed; and that anyone holding different views be branded as Pro-German, and their views as treasonable.

The very same interests which in the past corrupted our courts, denuded our forests, polluted our streams, robbed us of our lands and mineral deposits, exploited, oppressed, deported, imprisoned, starved, and in industrial disputes unhesitatingly murdered the toilers—these are the people who are opposing the People's and Workmen's Councils, democracy and our constitutional rights.

What I fear, is this: that by the time the war is over, unless all lovers of real democracy stay everlastingly on the job, we shall find ourselves tied hands and feet by a powerful military machine. That is the danger that confronts us. If they succeed it means that all that we have struggled for and secured during the past century, aiming toward a higher standard of living and safeguarding the health and lives of the workers, will be swept aside, the forward march toward a higher civilization stopped, and labor will find itself where it was centuries ago. I hope the people of America will never stand for any such arrangement, but I fear that if they stand for what is being put over on them now when there is still a fighting-chance, they will stand for anything when that fighting-chance is gone.

*"We have seen a good many singular things happen recently. We have been told that it is unpatriotic to criticize public action. Well, if it is, then there is a deep disgrace resting upon the origin of this nation. This nation originated in the sharpest sort of criticism of public policy. We originated in a kick, and if it be unpatriotic to kick, why, then, the grown man is unlike the child. We have forgotten the very principles of our origin if we have forgotten how to object, how to resist, how to agitate, how to pull down and build up, even to the extent of revolutionary practises if it be necessary to re-adjust matters."*

Woodrow Wilson in "The School Review," Vol. VII, page 602.

## **This is the Program of the People's Council of America**

To strive for a speedy, democratic and general peace based upon the principles of

No forcible annexations.

No punitive indemnities.

Free Development of all nationalities and an international organization for the maintenance of world peace, including disarmament.

To defend our constitutional rights of free speech, free press, peaceful assemblage, and the right to petition the government; and to secure democratic control of foreign policies, and a popular referendum on all questions of war and peace, and to work for the repeal of the conscription laws.

To uphold the civil and political rights of the workers, to prevent deterioration of their economic standards and the suspension or abrogation of labor laws.

To demand that none of the revenue required for the prosecution of the war shall come from the taxation of the necessities of life.

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