

Neutrality And Public Opinion.

Address by Hon. CHARLES NADEL, former Secretary of Commerce and Labor under the Administration of Pres. Taft.

Delivered under the Auspices of the Deutsche Gesellschaft of St. Louis.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

First, I want to express my appreciation to the Deutsche Gesellschaft, which has invited me to address you tonight. I am sure that the members of this society are well acquainted with the work of the United States Department of Commerce and Labor, and with the policy of neutrality which has been followed by our Government since the outbreak of the European war.

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When, for illustration, we ask who does the farming, it will not be denied that foremost among the real tillers of the soil are the German, the Bohemian, the Swede, the Norwegian, the Pole and the Italian. If we ask about the composition of our people, we will find that the English, the Scotch and the Irish stock do not represent substantially more than fifty per cent of the population of this country.

These are facts, and we ought to congratulate ourselves that they have not been made more prominent in the consideration of our questions than has been the case. Every contribution has been made to the common amalgamation, which, in my judgment, is so complete that there should be no room for the terms that we hear bandied about, which are perhaps not intended to mean as much as they seem, but which, in my opinion, are to be avoided.

Our sympathy we cannot deny. For many it must be difficult to restrain it within the confines of patriotism. But we who glory in an independent citizenship must be careful that no word or no conduct may tend to commit our country to a false position. We must keep in mind a distinction between sympathy for a particular belligerent, or even an opinion about the right and wrong of the war, and the position which we ask our Government to take as a neutral country. In my opinion there should be in our citizenship no German-Americans, no Irish-Americans, no Italian-Americans, and no English-Americans. The use of the hyphen as I see it really defeats the very idea for which we stand. And I say this fully appreciating that there are English sympathizers who might well employ the hyphen to identify themselves as Americans. There is just one platform upon which all the principles and traditions of all the races here represented must be assembled, and from which must be announced every rule for our guidance. That is the platform of the United States. But, standing upon it, every citizen has the right to ask questions of himself and of others; and he may even be under the obligation to express his convictions as they come to him, upon every problem of moment to this nation.

I know that it has been said that the foreign war does not concern us. Eminent authority in our nation has made that statement. How monstrous a proposition! The foreign war concerns us, not only now in the most material sense; but the consequences of that war, no matter what the result may be, will be of vast significance to this nation for years to come. The mere cutting of communication between Germany and Austria and this country has brought anguish and sorrow to homes here and there, has deprived people here of the privilege of communication, and of the right to give support oftentimes to those dearest and nearest to them. So profoundly are we interested in this means of communication, that its destruction may well present the question of our right to protest, and how the situation is to be remedied. Civilized peoples are so closely related today that the consequence of such a war cannot be escaped by us, privately or officially.

Some of the questions forced upon us are of public moment, and concern the Government. As to them we have a right to ask how they are dealt with, and how they are answered; and whether they are considered with that degree of impartiality, judgment and firmness, which the united citizenship of this country has the right to expect.

For illustration: It is urged that the United States should not permit the sale of arms and ammunition to belligerents, and that contention has

been presented from several points of view. It is said that we are not a belligerent, and that we are not a party to the war. It is said that we are not a party to the war, and that we are not a party to the war. It is said that we are not a party to the war, and that we are not a party to the war.

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