

"LEST WE FORGET."

[David Starr Jordan in a speech before the graduating class of Leland Stanford Jr. University on May 25, 1898.]

Our government must be changed for our changing needs. We must give up the checks and balances in our constitution. It is said that our great battleship Oregon can turn about end for end within her own length. The dominant nation must have the same power. She must be capable of reversing her action in a minute, of turning around within her own length. This "our prate of statute and of state" makes impossible. We shall receive many hard knocks before we reach this condition, but we must reach it if we are to "work mightily" in the affairs of the world. If we are to deal with crises in foreign affairs we must hold them with a steadier grasp than that with which we have held the Cuban question. We cannot move accurately and quickly under the joint leadership of a conservative and steady-headed president, a hysterical or venal senate and a house intent upon its own re-election. That kind of checks and balances we must lay aside forever. As matters are now, president, senate and house check each other's movements and the state falls over its own feet.

The government of the United States is the expression of the transient will of the people, so hemmed in by checks and balances that positive action is difficult whatever the will of the majority for the moment may be. This is the government for peace and self-defense, but not for aggression. The government of England expresses the permanent will of the intelligent people with such checks as shut out ignorance and control incompetence. The nation and not the individual man is the unit in its actions.

Towards the English system we must approach more and more closely if we are to deal with foreign affairs in large fashion. The town-meeting idea must give way to centralization of power. We must look away from our own affairs, neglect them, if you please, until the pressure of growing expenditure forces us to attend to them again, and to attend to them more carefully than we ever yet have done. Good government at home must precede good government of dependencies. One reason England is governed well is that misgovernment anywhere on any large scale would be fatal to her credit and fatal to her power. She must call her best men to her political service, because without them she would perish.

It may be that the choice of imperialism is already made. If so, we shall learn the lesson of dominion in the hardest school of experience. That we shall ultimately learn it I have no doubt, for ours is a nation of apt scholars. We shall hold our own in war and diplomacy, we shall tie the hands of turbu-

lent nations and seize the assets of bankrupt ones, and we shall teach the art of money-making to the dependent nations who shall be our wards and slaves.

Some great changes in our system are inevitable, and belong to the course of natural progress. Against them I have nothing to say. Whatever our part in the affairs of the world we should play it manfully. But with all this I believe that the movement towards broad dominion so eloquently outlined by Mr. Olney, would be a step downward. It would be to turn from our highest purposes to drift with the current of manifest destiny. It would be not to do the work of America, but to follow the ways of the rest of the world. I make no plea for indifference or self-sufficiency or isolation for isolation's sake. To shirk from world-movements or to drift with the current is alike unworthy of our origin and destiny. Only this I urge: let our choice be made with open eyes, not at the dictates of chance disguised as "manifest destiny." Unforgetting, open-eyed, counting all the cost, let us make our decision. Let ours be sober, fearless, prayerful choice. The federal republic—the imperial republic—which shall it be?

There are three main reasons for opposing every step toward imperialism. First, dominion is brute force; second, dependent nations are slave nations; third, the making of men is greater than the building of empires.

As to the first of these: the extension of dominion rests on the strength of arms. Men who cannot hold town meetings must obey through brute force. In Alaska, for example, our occupation is a farce and scandal. Only force can make it otherwise. Only by force can the masses of Hawaii or Cuba be held to industry and order. To furnish such power, we shall need a colonial bureau, with its force of extra-national police. A large army and navy must justify itself by doing something. Army and navy we must maintain for our own defence, but beyond that they can do little that does not hurt, and they must be used if they would be kept alive. Even warfare for humanity falls to the level of other wars, and all wars, according to Benjamin Franklin, are bad, some worse than others. The rescue of the oppressed is only accomplished by the use of force against the oppressor. The lofty purposes of humanity are forgotten in the joy of struggle and the pride of conquest.

The other reasons concern the integrity of the republic itself. This was the lesson of slavery, that no republic can "endure, half slave and half free." The republics of antiquity fell because they were republics of the few only, for each citizen rested on the backs of nine slaves. A republic cannot be an oligarchy as well. The slaves destroy the republic. Whenever we have inferior and dependent races within our borders

today, we have a political problem—"the Negro problem," "the Chinese problem," "the Indian problem." These problems we slowly solve. Industrial training and industrial pride make a man of the negro. Industrial interest may even make a man of the Chinaman, and the Indian disappears as our civilization touches him.

But in the tropics such problems are perennial and insoluble. Cuba, Manila, Nicaragua will be slave territories for centuries to come. These people in such a climate can never have self government in the Anglo-Saxon sense. Whatever form of control we adopt, we shall be in fact slave-drivers, and the business of slave-driving will react upon us. Slavery itself was a disease which came to us from the British West Indies. It breeds in the tropics like yellow fever and leprosy. Can even an imperial republic last, part slave, part free?

But England endures, and her control of slave territories is her "doom and pride." What then of British imperialism? From the standpoint of imperialism England is an oligarchy, not a republic. Her government is not self-rule, but the direction of commerce. It is admiralty rather than democracy. Americans govern themselves. Englishmen are ruled by the government of their own choosing. Englishmen govern themselves in municipal affairs, and in ways from which we have much to learn. In foreign affairs their huge governmental machine, backed by the momentum of tradition, is all-powerful. This rules Ireland, India, Gibraltar, Egypt, all England's dependencies and wards. The other colonies are republics in fact. Canada, New Zealand, the states of Australia—these are republics bound to keep the peace with the mother country, but in no other way controlled by her. Only ties of sentiment bind Canada to England. In all practical matters, she is one of the United States.

The stronger the governmental machine, and the more adjustable its powers, the better the government. But government is not the main business of a republic. If good government were all, democracy would not deserve half the effort that is spent upon it. For the function of democracy is not to make government good. It is to make men strong. Better government than any republic has yet enjoyed could be had in simpler and cheaper ways. The automatic scheme of competitive examination would give us better service at half the present cost. Even an ordinary intelligence office, or statesman's employment bureau would serve us better than conventions and elections. Government too good as well as too bad may have a baneful influence on men. The purpose of self-government is to intensify individual responsibility, to promote attempts at wisdom, through which true wisdom may come at last.