



1917

Untitled Essay, 1917

Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/fmhw_firstworldwar_documents



Part of the [Diplomatic History Commons](#), [Latin American History Commons](#), and the [Political History Commons](#)

[Click here to let us know how access to this document benefits you.](#)

Recommended Citation

Huntington-Wilson, Francis Mairs, "Untitled Essay, 1917" (1917). *World War I Era Documents, 1914-1918*. 12.

https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/fmhw_firstworldwar_documents/12

This Essay is brought to you for free and open access by the World War I Era (1914-1918) at Digital Commons @ Ursinus College. It has been accepted for inclusion in World War I Era Documents, 1914-1918 by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Ursinus College. For more information, please contact aprock@ursinus.edu.

Feb 1917?

The few remaining days before the President addresses Congress are, I think, in a way of more supreme importance to the American people than the days to follow that event. We are told that the President is now engaged in writing his address to Congress. We have a right to suppose that the President will recommend an official declaration of a state of war that will have long existed between us and Germany, and that he will recommend various measures for instant war-like action and for ultimate preparedness. That we can even expect this is due to no leadership or forethought by the Executive or by either of the political parties in or out of Congress, which, as parties, are machines for winning or losing elections, but seem to have broken down when called upon to provide for national security. That we may expect any action at all is due to the awakened spirit of the citizens and to those patriotic organizations which have so nobly worked for preparedness.

It is upon those organizations, which should be firmly knitted into one great organization of nation-wide scope, that falls by default the responsibility of being the nation's voice in inducing the President and the Congress to act now with energy, forethought and courage.

The loyalty pledge lately circulated says we must support the President in doing certain things for America. Our frantic concentration of feeling ⁱⁿ ~~any~~ expressions about standing behind the President grows pathetic. Is it not time to circulate another paper, - a demand that the President forthwith do those certain things for America, that the President stand behind America?

Of course the Congress bears equal responsibility, but President Wilson's unprecedented ascendancy over that body and his well-known independence of advice cause people naturally to hold him to the fullest responsibility. The country has the right and duty not only to give assured loyalty but to demand instant action. The Nation's loyalty to America itself far transcends any obli-

gation to further any particular administration by assurances of blind approval.

Party government has entirely failed to give us preparedness for national security. Now American citizens themselves, acting through organizations for preparedness, must induce the elected servants of America, both executive and legislative, to meet those needs, vigorously, promptly, and boldly.

The two worst things that could happen to the United States would be, first, to be crushed by the victor ^{after} in the ^{war} world, or, second, to be found at the end of the war hated and despised by all the world.

We must make war with all our power and in close conjunction with the Entente Allies. Any other course leaves us open to one or the other of the dismal alternatives referred to. It takes very little imagination to conceive of the great political, diplomatic, and economic advantages open to us after the war if we heartily join the Entente. Those advantages will be subserved also if our mode of financial contribution is a huge loan by our Government without interest, and leaving the debt to be made up to us in connection with other later diplomatic adjustments. We must remember too that if we gave the Entente unlimited credit it would do them little good if the submarine had, for instance, reduced Britain to a plight where food could not be had at any price.

Our newspapers tell of short crops in nearly all countries. We know how many shiploads of foodstuffs have been destroyed, how many granaries blown up, how many acres laid waste. We read that the President has asked for \$400,000,000 to investigate the food situation. Would it not be better for our Government to make a great appropriation to stimulate the supply of foodstuffs through planting new fields, and by accumulation, ^{an} agricultural army could be enlisted for the purpose. Instead of this we hear of no official action, and we read the cheerful suggestion from Illinois that the farmers destroyed part of their produce in order to keep up prices.

No, without assuring great supplies of food and munitions, and great numbers of vessels to convey them, any loan to the Entente may become rather

ironical.

The record of our Government, both executive and legislative, during the duration of the war is such a sad and sterile exhibition of party government at its worst that it would be patriotic and useful, and hardly impertinent if our preparedness organizations should now unite in a more detailed petition to the President. It is important that public opinion be crystallized and expressed in much more detail and this is urgent because we know not how far the President may commit himself in his forthcoming message and we know that once committed to a course he is not easy to induce to change it.

If an American President, unlike a British king, need listen to neither ministers nor parliaments, he will at least listen to the citizens, ^{So} the citizens really have the responsibility. It is for them to speak, and the logical channel seems to be through the organizations for preparedness, to which the American people owe so much.