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Speech Delivered to Foreign Students at the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, February 23, 1928

Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson

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Address of the Hon. F. M. Huntington Wilson,
Director of the Philadelphia Commercial Museum.
(Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce dinner to
Foreign Students, Feb. 23, 1928)

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It is a great pleasure to me to be again among Philadelphians. I formerly lived here and I am glad that the honor of being made director of the Philadelphia Commercial Museum now brings me back.

It is a special pleasure to me also to be present at this gathering of so many foreigners. I do not feel a stranger to them because in the years of my diplomatic work I daresay I had friendly acquaintance with men of most of the nationalities here represented.

It is cause for pride that the scientific, educational, artistic, and industrial eminence of this city have brought so many of you here; but I am particularly glad that so many of you have chosen Philadelphia because I think that here, as in New England, and in parts of the South, are cherished the essential spirit and tradition of America in purer form, perhaps, than in many other parts of our country. And not excepting all the books and all the wonders of modern science and industry, this essential spirit of America, - sympathy, fair-play, good sense, hopefulness, courage, kindness - is the best thing we have to keep ourselves and the best thing we have to offer to you.

The foreigner coming here is a missionary bringing his culture to mitigate the rigors of our own. Those of the old Oriental and Mediterranean races can bring sophistication to our Northern naivete, mother^{of}/ optimism. They can remind us to enjoy

life: that the goal is more important than the pace: that work is for life and that life should not be a mere by-product of work: that often, as in art and manners, form is of the essence of things.

And you, ladies and gentlemen, who are students here among us will, I hope, return home as missionaries of the truth about America. If we here can see eye to eye and understand each other in sympathy, we shall have made a little step on the only road that leads surely to world peace.

The influence of you foreigners upon us and ours upon you is the gist of what is called the American "melting pot". Apropos of it, a Jewish friend of mine told me the following story: An American of Jewish race who had come here as an immigrant and had prospered greatly, was anxious to have his son made into a typical American of no other noticeable characteristics. He took him to Harvard. The President of the University kindly offered to let the boy live in his family, as the one way to be sure of the desired assimilation,- but on condition the father should not see his son during his college course. Two years passed. The father felt he must at least have direct news. So he went to Cambridge and called on the President of Harvard. When the President came into the parlor the father asked how his son was getting on. The President replied, "Oh, please ^{'dunt esk'"}~~don't ask~~". So, we see the "melting pot" works both ways.

You will carry home with you impressions of American character and aims and of American government; and impressions of American foreign policy, the resultant of these. And it is important that these be correct.

Foreigners' impressions are sometimes curious. There was the English bishop who was being lionized at a tea party over here and who, after seeing much of the country, summarized his impressions in saying: "Your American plumbing is marvelous! " Then I have a friend who met an English visitor at the steamer. It was raining. Seeing one red umbrella, she exclaimed: "Oh! do all you Americans use red umbrellas?" Arriving at her hotel room, before the window could be opened, she said: "Oh! do all you Americans live in this temperature?" Taking a drive later, when her host's chauffeur stopped to help a man whose automobile had caught fire, she inquired: "Oh! do all your American cars catch fire?" Judging from one instance is to be avoided. When two things are different, it is an open question which is funny.

Before speaking of foreign policy, I may recall that our distinguished toast-master and I worked in very different laboratories of diplomacy, but always, I am sure, with identical motives, -- peace, goodwill, progress and security. His political party condemned, and then imitated and surpassed, certain of our Republican policies. My party was pretty hard on certain Democratic plans. I daresay he and I now agree that foreign policy should usually be continuous and non-partisan and should never be made an issue in domestic politics unless a real question of principle is at stake.

You cannot have lived among us without knowing that Americans are not imperialistic nor covetous of more territory. And as Americans are, so must their governments and their foreign policies be, under our system of democratic government. If any

people between here and the Equator think America imperialistic, let them ask that fine congenial people across our unfortified Canadian border. And if they sometimes have vexatious questions with us, let them even ask themselves whether they could not emulate a little more the politics and the peace that bring prosperity and good neighborliness so serenely and permanently to our northern friend, Canada.

We are keen for world peace; and a large share of the practical work in that direction has been initiated at Washington, - arbitration treaties, armament limitation, League of Nations, etc. It is well to remember that we could not join the League of Nations because no American administration can, under the constitution of our government, promise that we shall go to war at some future time upon certain conditions. For the same reason we cannot make alliances involving such promises. As you also know, that is why the Senate had to reject President Wilson's treaty to join England in guaranteeing the security of France.

The proposal was made at the Pan-American Congress at Havana that aggressive war be outlawed in the Western Hemisphere. And a world-wide arrangement of the same kind has been suggested. By broadening the scope of conventions for the judicial settlement of international disputes, this ideal is steadily approached. Whether the United States could, by a treaty, promise never to go to war any more than it could promise to go to war, seems, to say the least, very doubtful under our Constitution as it is.

I allude to this bit of history because I wish to recall to you what I consider the finest piece of constructive thought

in statesmanship that came out of the World War. It was the work of that great Pennsylvanian, the late Philander C. Knox, distinguished as jurist, attorney general, secretary of State and senator.

Confronted with the inability of the United States honestly to assume the obligations of either the League of Nations or the treaty to safeguard France, Senator Knox proposed a resolution of the Senate and House, to be signed by the President, making this solemn declaration, --"If at any time the peace and security of Europe shall be threatened by any aggressive menace, the United States will regard such situation as a menace to its own peace and security and will consult with the other Powers affected with a view to the necessary measures". This is as far as the government of the United States, as limited by its Constitution, can go in the direction of promising to go to war in certain contingencies. And it is far enough. The portent of such a declaration is clear to the foreign offices of the world. Monsieur Tardieu, the right-hand man of Clemenceau, stated, when he was in this country, that such a declaration would have been entirely satisfactory to France. It is a pity the Senate failed to appreciate it.

Another master stroke of that great Secretary of State from Pennsylvania was the continuance of the American-Japanese "Gentlemen's Agreement" that so satisfactorily controlled immigration between the two countries. He did this by a treaty that provided for the continuance of existing arrangements, but made no direct mention of this economic problem, which becomes a thorny one only when handled without tact. That this solution should have been disturbed by action of our Congress was a crime against good sense, good taste and international comity.

"Dollar Diplomacy" was an effort to substitute dollars for bullets. It sought, through American capital, to bring prosperity, well-paid industry and comfortable life into certain turbulent countries where revolution had been the popular diversion; and where "liberty" was too often loved as the opportunity of the few to exploit the many. In China it was the effort to concatenate the interests of the predatory Powers of that day and of the Powers that were at that time seeking China's preservation. This was to be done by creating a community of financial and economic interest, beneficial to all and salutary to China.

The Monroe Doctrine and the absolute security of the Panama Canal are, of course, cardinal principles of American foreign policy, and both policies must consequently operate with special vigor in the regions of the Carribean. Whether the Monroe Doctrine is of any use to the United States or of any but sentimental and historical interest to us, as applied to the countries south of the equator, I rather question, - especially if it is no longer needed or appreciated by some of the powerful countries in the south of South America.

To speak of more recent events, we have just witnessed at the Pan-American Conference at Havana the position taken by the United States that a Pan-American Union cannot become a customs tariff union in any sense. Quite naturally, for such arrangements must rest on mutual economic convenience.

We have also seen asserted at Havana the highly artificial dogma of no intervention in one country by another under any

circumstances whatsoever. In all civilized communities, decent behavior and respect for the rights of others are the conditions of individual liberty. So each sovereignty in the community of nations enjoys its inviolability on the same conditions of decent behavior and respect for the rights of other sovereignties. Such is the view held by the United States at Havana, and it seems to me any other view would be absurd and would be to remove the incentive to fair and right international conduct and good government, and so to retard civilization at large.

I think under the brilliant leadership of Mr. Hughes our Government's delegation at the Pan-American Congress just closed, most admirably reflected the policy of this country. Sincerity and practical good sense prevailed. And more than the signing of documents, it is the meeting and knowing of one another, in candor, sympathy and good-will,- as we all do tonight through the hospitality of the Chamber of Commerce of Philadelphia,- that makes for individual and international friendship and peace.