

Constitution Day, September Seventeenth

The constitutional convention which assembled in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787 completed its arduous and anxious labors on the seventeenth of September. For it was on that day that the delegates affixed their signatures to the completed instrument, the Constitution of the United States. It is true that it did not come into actual operation until it had been accepted by the requisite number of states. But the ratification of a treaty relates back to the date of its signing. Besides, in the period that followed, nothing was added to the Constitution nor subtracted from it; it was simply submitted to the people. In the words of Washington, the convention had "raised a standard to which the wise and good might repair," and had left "the event in the hands of God." In a very real sense, therefore, the seventeenth of September is the birthday of our nation. Upon the work accomplished on that day has been reared the entire structure of American government. To the beneficent influence of the document then signed we are to ascribe all the prosperity, happiness, and grandeur of the American People.

The suggestion that there should be a general and patriotic observance of this anniversary as "Constitution Day" proceeded from the Sons of the American Revolution. And far outside the ranks of that eminent order, the proposal was received with enthusiastic applause. The sentiment in its favor became organized and co-ordinated, and received a most powerful impetus, through the efforts of the National Se-

curity League, which adopted the plan for the celebration of Constitution Day as a part of its campaign for the education of the people in true Americanism and sound and intelligent patriotism, as the best and only effective antidote against bolshevism and the other alien cults which are attacking the foundations of our institutions. Associated with it in this effort are the leading patriotic organizations of the country, including, besides those already named, the National Association for Constitutional Government, the Sons of the Revolution, the American Rights League, the American Defense Society, and the Boy Scouts of America.

The associated bodies have planned not only the celebration of the Constitution, but also a preliminary campaign of popular instruction, to bring to the mass of our people a vital realization of what the Constitution really is, how it came to be, and what it has done for us. All this work is proceeding under the direction of a notable organization committee, of which the chairman is the Hon. David Jayne Hill, President of the National Association for Constitutional Government, whose untiring efforts to stem the rising tide of radicalism and to save for our descendants the rich heritage bequeathed to us by the forefathers of the Republic are well known to all our readers. The membership of the committee includes men and women of prominence in all parts of the country, among them the governors of 18 states, the mayors of 99 important cities, leading

educators, lawyers, judges, business men, authors, and publicists. In addition, an honorary committee, representative of the entire country has been formed by the Security League and associated bodies, through whose assistance the organization committee hopes to promote meetings during the summer culminating in simultaneous constitutional celebrations held next September in every city, town, and hamlet in every state of the Union.

The movement is receiving much encouragement and support. In accordance with a resolution adopted by the executive committee of the American Bar Association at a recent meeting, the president of that body has appointed a committee to formulate plans for the participation of the Association in the celebration. The Missouri State Bar Association has assumed full charge of the celebration in that state, as well as of the distribution of the preliminary literature and the organization of meetings. The Bar Association of Virginia, at its recent convention, adopted a resolution which we cannot forbear quoting in full. "Whereas the bar of Virginia has an abiding faith in the Constitution of the United States as the sure anchor of our ordered freedom in this time of transition and stress; and whereas this Association believes that indifference to constitutional restraints may become a menace to that liberty under law that we have enjoyed to our prosperity as a people; and whereas the bar should teach all our people to understand and appreciate the vital importance to their welfare of respect for the Constitution; be it resolved that the

president of the Virginia Bar Association do appoint a committee, to be composed of one member from each senatorial district, to arrange throughout the state a conspicuous, appropriate, and educational celebration of the birthday of the Constitution, on September seventeenth." An example of the co-operation of the great commercial bodies of the country in the movement is given in a resolution lately passed by the executive committee of the Southern Supply Association, one of the largest and most influential business organizations of the south, which reads in part as follows: "It is the desire and purpose of this association to bring our large membership into line to encourage in every way the study of those great historical documents which all Americans should understand, and understanding will reverence. The association agrees to co-operate and give active assistance in the national celebration of the birthday of the federal Constitution."

It is especially encouraging to learn that the Boy Scouts have been particularly responsive and enthusiastic in this matter. This fine organization deserves the highest praise and has an immensely important part to play in the future of our land. The mature men of today owe a duty to their country in defending it against insidious foes from within no less than enemies from without. But after all, the future is in the hands of the rising generation. After only a few years, it is these lads of today who will constitute the intelligent, the influential, the capable, and the responsible citizenry of the United States. It is of the utmost

importance, then, that they should be thoroughly grounded in the fundamental principles of constitutional government, in respect for law, and in due appreciation of the fact that it is the Constitution of the United States, alone among all the systems of the world and of history, that has adequately effected the reconciliation of the inalienable rights of the individual with the effective organization and administration of society for the public welfare.

These are times of grave unrest. Elsewhere and more than once, we have emphasized the seriousness of the attack upon our most cherished institutions. In planning and working for a nation-wide celebration of Constitution Day, the National Security League and the great patriotic organizations which have joined hands with it are thinking of the effort as a most important means of combatting bolshevism, anarchy, and extreme socialism, by getting to the very root of the evil. In all of its many activities against this growing menace in our country, which are occupying the principal attention of the League at this time, it is working on the basic idea that the best means of counteracting the propaganda of the "reds" is Americanism and that Americanism is purely a question of education. Believing that a thorough knowledge and appreciation of the real meanings of American institutions and ideals by all the people will effectually overcome all un-American doctrine, the League has launched this campaign as the best means to this end.

Its ultimate purpose and meaning are thus described by Dr. Robert M. McElroy, secretary of the organization committee: "All thoughtful men recognize the fact that republican government, to be successful, must be responsive to public demands. It must be truly progressive in character, ready to adapt itself to changing conditions, but tenacious of those fundamental principles which give stability. The reactionary movements falsely labeled 'progressive,' which are now challenging the attention of the world, are menacing in exact proportion to the ignorance of the people. The task of making Americans understand what America is and what representative government means is as vast as it is vital. It furnishes a field for service, immediately and obviously important to every society and to every citizen with an intelligent love for America and with a sense of the obligations pressing upon her. We wish to call to this task all who believe in America; all who see the vision of her world mission; all who wish to preserve her whole for the service of mankind; the Americans born, who are her sons by right of birth; the alien-born who are her sons by virtue of faith in her ideals, her children of the spirit. Both have borne arms in her defense; both are eager to prepare themselves for the no less difficult tasks of civil life. In calling the leaders, we are calling also those whom they have been chosen to lead. We have sent invitations for co-operation to the national patriotic associations, to bar associations, national and local, to the governors of all the states, to the mayors of two

hundred cities, to the state boards of education, to six hundred chambers of commerce; and we invite the assistance of all other societies which believe in the fundamental principles upon which our nation rests. To aid such local speaking campaigns as may be organized, we will furnish speakers of prominence and literature prepared for the purpose of this campaign, a campaign solemnly dedicated to the principles of right, justice, equality, law, and liberty, which have here made a nation out of many races. We must make America's present safe, her future certain."

We call upon all the members of the National Association for Constitutional Government to lend every assistance in their power to the carrying forward of this great patriotic effort, to the end that the coming seventeenth of September may prove to the world that, however demagogues may rant or anarchists howl, however the forces of dissolution may batter themselves against the firm foundation of our freedom, the great mass of the American people, men and women, still put their faith in the great charter of our liberties, still devote their thought, their reverence, and their courageous determination to the preservation of the Constitution of the United States.