ADDRESS of
A. C. TOWNLEY
President of the Na-
tional Non-Partisan
League

At the FARMERS and
WORKERS CONFERENCE held at ST. PAUL,
SEPT. 18, 19 and 20, 1917
ADDRESS OF

A. C. TOWNLEY

OF THE

FARMERS AND WORKERS CONFERENCE

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:
I most heartily appreciate all the complimentary things said about me by the governor of the State of North Dakota, and I am advised that the temporary chairman this morning said most complimentary things. I was not here to hear them, but I am undecided for just what purpose they said those things. I suppose they said them to lead you to expect more than you are going to get and put me in a hole. (Laughter.)

And I was a little bit alarmed a minute ago when a brother back here, half way back in the audience, got up and asked the governor to talk louder. If you cannot hear him you had better come up here on the platform because that is the only way you can hear me.

I am not used to the business of addressing public meetings. I have only had a very little experience and practice and am
neither trained in mind or voice to do this work, and it is very difficult. But it is just as necessary as it is difficult, so we have got to do the best we can. (Applause.)

Some of the very able—some of the most able speakers of the United States—in the State of North Dakota and the State of Minnesota have left some of the best things unsaid and we will try to make up in as much as we can for our lack of oratorical ability by some of the things we SAY. (Applause.)

Now—I have got a cold. I made a talk to some North Dakota farmers in Fargo yesterday and this is the way I always sound after I talk to North Dakota farmers. (Laughter.) In just a few minutes we will get going and we will get along all right.

We live in a democracy or a republic. In a democracy the rule of the land—the law of the land—is the will of the majority of the citizens of the country. (Applause.)

In an autocracy the law of the land is the will of ONE citizen of that country; and we are opposed to that kind of government. (Applause.)

Democracy comes from the Greek word meaning the rule of the people. Republic is taken from the Latin word meaning rule of the people. In a democracy where the will of the majority is recognized as the law of the land it is the duty of every citizen to abide by the will of the majority. (Applause.)

After the majority have spoken, after
the majority have made a law, or when the men placed in a position of authority by the majority have made a law, whether in my mind that law is right or wrong, as an American citizen my first duty is to obey that law. (Applause.) That is what I understand to be the duty of an American citizen; and I want to say to you for myself and I think I can say it for pretty nearly all the people of this nation that I will go just as far as the majority of my fellow citizens want me to go. (Applause.) Conditions sometimes may be very unsatisfactory and we may live in misery and want because the majority have agreed to conditions or laws that are not working right; and we may suffer because of that. But there is only one thing that is worse than that, that can happen to an American citizen and it is this, that he be so low down in the scale of life that he will refuse to abide by the will of a majority of his fellow citizens.

So I say I am going with the majority of the American people, wherever they want to go—I AM GOING TO TALK TO THEM ON THE WAY. (Applause.)

Just as it is my duty to abide by the will of the majority, just as it is my duty to abide by the decision of the majority, it is just so far also MY DUTY TO HELP MOLD THE DECISION OF THE MAJORITY SO THAT IT WILL BE RIGHT! (Applause.)

But while it is the duty of every American citizen to abide by the law of the land, which is the will of the majority, it is by the same rule just as much the duty
of those in authority to seek out the will of the majority and abide by THAT. (Applause.)

In this national crisis, and in all times, it is my duty and it is YOUR duty to stand by the head of this nation. (Applause.)

And it is the duty of the head of the nation to seek out and stand by the will of the majority of the citizens of this nation. (Applause.)

Now this, gentlemen, is what I understand a democracy to BE notwithstanding some of the press reports that have led some very good people to believe otherwise. Men placed in power, no matter how well qualified they may be, how thoroughly unswerving in their purpose to serve the will of the majority, are not able to serve the will of the majority UNLESS the majority keep themselves in touch with those in power.

Today the halls of congress swarm with men who go there to represent—the will of the majority? Not altogether. Today the halls of congress swarm with men who go there to represent SPECIAL PRIVILEGE. (Applause.)

I refer to the paid lobbyists of those who are making a tremendous profit out of war.

Today in the halls of congress, are not very many men lobbying to represent 10 million farmers in the United States. In ordinary times that might not be so bad, but today in this world crisis you are criminally negligent of your duty if you fail to keep yourself in touch with those you have sent to serve. You make it im-
possible for them to serve you if you leave them alone with those who are there to see that they do not serve you.

And the purpose of this convention so far from being called to protest against the program of the government is called to SUPPORT the program of the government, in its purpose to serve the majority of the citizens of these United States.

I want to talk a little while as I sometimes talk to North Dakota farmers—for here in this audience are farmers from North Dakota, Montana, Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, Idaho, Wisconsin, Colorado, and several other states. This is a DELEGATE convention representing some two or three million voters in this nation. And you are going back home to tell them what you saw and heard. And I want to give you a little story to take back home.

Some of you are wondering why, when the workers on the farm and in the factory make up about 9-10ths of the population of this nation, some of you are wondering why we don’t have things as they want them. I am going to show you why. I am not going to TELL you why. I am going to SHOW you. You know that is the way you get a Non-Partisan League member. You have to SHOW him.

Once in a while you can find a man that will give you $16.00 because you tell him to. But they are not very numerous (laughter), and our business has been to SHOW you.

I want to say that the only reason that I can see why farmers and workers in the
city don't run the world for the producers, is because they have not discovered that they have got initiative and backbone enough to do it. They don't know what that strong right arm of theirs can do in the way of government. Here's hoping they learn.

We have a phrase in North Dakota, and I have been told that they use the same phrase in other states, where men speak of "Farmers and Business Men."

Now, we have discontinued the use of that phrase in North Dakota. We don't like it.

If I call up my friend up here on the platform, and I say, here is Bill Jones; he is SOBER today. That means that Bill Jones might have been drunk yesterday. (Laughter.)

And when I speak of "Farmers and Business Men," that would indicate that farmers are not business men. I want to correct that (as I did yesterday)—with the farmers from other states. Because it is my purpose to put backbone—or to show you that you have GOT a backbone. I want to show you what kind of people you are. I want to give you a picture of yourselves. Let us examine the way the farmer makes his living and the way the business men make their living.

The average business man or merchant—and I am not criticizing the merchant; I am simply talking about farmers and the merchant. The merchant is living by buying his goods at wholesale and selling them at retail. He buys a sack of sugar for so much, adds a profit and sells the
sack of sugar at a profit that enables him to pay the cost of running a store and feed his family. He buys a broom for 25 cents, adds a profit and sells the broom, and upon the profit he receives pays his expenses.

Now, anybody can live if they can buy enough goods at wholesale and sell them at retail at a price high enough, if they use their lead pencil a little bit. It doesn’t require the highest degree of business ability to pay 25 cents for a broom and sell it for half a dollar. I say it doesn’t require the highest degree of business ability. It does not require the highest degree of ability to buy at wholesale and sell at retail and live upon the profit.

But let us see how the wage worker in the city and the farmer in the country, do business. If you will look carefully at the way they do business, you will notice that they all buy at retail and sell at wholesale.

And they still stay in business!

Now, there is not a merchant in the State of Minnesota that can buy at retail and sell at wholesale and stay in business, unless he has a rich father-in-law to keep him in business, and it would be but a short time before he would break the old man at that.

No man can buy at retail and sell at wholesale and stay in business without a reserve from which to draw—some father-in-law somewhere to furnish him the difference.

And the farmers of the Northwest could not stay in business, buying at retail and
selling at wholesale, if they did not have some reservoir to draw from to make up the difference. I am going to point out to you that reservoir. First: It is in the fertility of the soil. The farmers of the Northwest, especially those that raise wheat, are mining the fertility of the soil. It costs this year an average of $24.00 to raise an acre of wheat in the Northwest. Farmers are getting an average of less than $17.00 or $18.00. They take it out of the soil, if the soil will stand it. In some places where the deep, black loam goes eight or ten feet down in the ground, the farmers are pretty well to do, pretty fairly prosperous. That reservoir in the soil enables them to build good barns and houses; and once in a while one can send his boy to college; but a little farther west where the black soil is not so deep, they cannot get enough out of the soil to make up the difference. Then they start in on another reservoir. All over the Northwest, insofar as the farmers cannot get enough out of the ground to make up the difference, they begin and take the rest out of their own hides.

Now, if you could stand where I am standing and look at the hides of these farmers present, you would know that that was so. Did you ever notice the difference between a farmer's hide and the hide of a profiteer, for instance? Do you know I could put three or four of these farmers inside of some profiteers that I know—you have taken so much out of your hides that that is about all that you have got left, and that is not very thick
any more. When you cannot get enough out of the soil and your hides, then you begin upon the lives of the women you married and promised to take care of, but don't. You work the mothers of your boys and girls too long hours in both the country and the city.

And when that won't make up the difference, then you begin on the lives of the boys and girls; you keep them out of school and work them to death, too. I see that you KNOW that this is so.

Then there is another item upon which he draws, that is as fast as the value of the land increases he increases the size of the mortgage, then after a while the price of the land quits going up, and the mortgage gets in its work and we have another tenant instead of home owner. The farm is gone along with the life and health and work of the farmer and his family.

We are going to correct these conditions, and we are going to do it by having a little more to say about the RULES of the farming game.

Do you know what is the most important part of any business? The farmers of the Northwest have learned that the most important part of the farming business is the business of fixing the price of wheat, and the rules that govern the grading of wheat. The most important part of the business of banking is the part that fixes the law which fixes the rate of interest and how much it costs to foreclose on the farmers.

The most important part of the railroad business is the fixing of railroad rates—
passenger rates. The most important part of the labor organization's business is the business of fixing the number of hours and the number of dollars they shall get for those hours.

Now we are going to have something more to say, we hope, about fixing the rules of the farming game than we have had. I want to show just how important that is, and what part you farmers play in this matter of fixing rules.

If there is any farmer here that has anything to say about the price of what he sells or the price of what he buys, I would like to have him stand up here and tell the audience what he has to say about it.

Mr. Chairman, isn't there anybody here who has anything to say about those prices?

What a ridiculous proposition—but—I will tell you the rest later, when I get the ground better laid.

I had a man one time stand up in the audience and say, "I had something to say one time about the price of a steer I sold."

I said, brother, you are the first man I ever heard of who did. What did you say? Well, he said, I would not dare to repeat it here in this audience. (Laughter.)

At this point a man in the audience made a remark and was requested by others in the audience to speak louder.

Mr. Townley: Well, I will tell you what he said. He says that he was offered $1.75 for shelled corn raised about 100 miles from here, and that the price here
was $2.20. That makes 25c and 20c for hauling it up here. The freight is pretty high! (Laughter and applause.)

To show you what part my friend back here, who has corn to sell, plays in fixing the price of corn, I am going to play a little game of poker. I play this game every day. (Laughter.)

I have not made a dollar yet. I am going to play with my friend here. I am going to assume my friend here, who is a newspaper man, is a farmer, and he is one of those farmers who do not believe in organizing, who do not believe in having anything to say about the rules of the farming game.

He agrees to play poker with me and let me fix the rules of the game.

We start to play. Everything goes all right for a while.

I keep talking to him about the money he is making all the time, but I discover that he is making more than I am making, so I say to him: There is a new law going into effect next month. I have got it here. A ruling from the attorney general which says that after the first of next month you get five cards and I get seven. And I go on playing. I continue to get his money. But not fast enough to suit me. And so I decide that another change is necessary; and I say to him: Brother, after 7 o'clock tomorrow night there is going to be another change in the rules. After 7 tomorrow night I am going to look at all of your cards.

Now, if he is a good, substantial citizen and a contented sort of fellow like some
of the boys that we have not been able to organize, he will agree to that. He will say, if the attorney general says it is necessary and the supreme court is back of the attorney general, why it must be all right; especially if all the lawyers and politicians say the same thing. And so we go on playing poker.

Now, that is not overdrawn at all. I see his hand. He don't see mine. When you go to town to buy that broom next time, after you get home, take a good look at it. Look for some marks upon the broom. You will find some marks running about like this. I don't know what brooms sell for now, but we will say 40 cents, and then above that there will be some Chinese language you can't understand. Now, that mark below, that 40 cent mark, is YOUR hand. The other mark is the other fellow's hand.

It runs the same way through pretty nearly everything else you buy. You don't know what it costs to deliver coal at your door; what it costs to make a pair of shoes; what it actually costs to transport freight. No, you don't! You don't even know, most of you, what it costs for raising wheat. You have been working so hard, that when we asked you to figure up the cost of raising wheat, you forgot to put in there the interest on the mortgage.

Well, my friend and I continue to play poker. We keep going, and if I figure that he will stand for it, why I begin changing the rules again, pretty soon. If he is sufficiently contented and there are not any League Organizers around, I will
change the rules again. Pretty soon I will say to him, "The legislature has passed a new ruling upon this poker game. From now on whenever you take a trick you get 25 cents, and when I take a trick I get $25.00."

Oh, that is not so bad. It is not overdrawn. In the year 1912, when I was farming at Beach, the farmer sold his wheat at 65 cents a bushel.

A voice from the audience: Sixty-three cents.

Another voice: Sixty-four cents.

Mr. Townley: Sixty-three cents and 64 cents they say—because that year North Dakota produced the biggest crop it had ever had in its history. And the farmers got less for the big crops in 1912 than they got for the small crop in 1911!

That is, they THOUGHT they were taking a trick, but they didn't take it. When they came to buy seed last spring, the other fellow took a trick and they paid $3.50 a bushel.

Some poker game! Now, if I wanted to make myself absolutely sure, I could fix it like this: That if by any chance he should get all my money he could be compelled to give it back! I probably would not go that far, because he might not stand for it.

Well, now, supposing while we were playing, somebody comes along and says to him, say Mr. Smith. We will say an organizer comes along now and he says to him, "Aren't you rather foolish? Don't you know that fellow is going to skin you alive? Don't you know he is getting
everything you have got?" Smith would say, "Well, I don't know. I am getting along pretty well. I have been here 40 years playing poker. They have not driven me away yet. I guess I don't need to be organized."

Or he might listen a little bit to the organizer; and if he did, you know what I would do. I would go to Smith and say, "Smith, I understand there was a suspicious character around to see you the other day."

I would say, "Smith, you don't know him at all. He is a stranger to you. But Smith, you know me, don't you? Haven't you known me all my life? Haven't I been your friend all your life? Didn't I loan you 25 cents to ante when you didn't have anything at all? And when you didn't have anything to eat, didn't I tell you where you could chase jack rabbits and catch them to eat?"

And I would say, "Smith, you be careful of that fellow. You be careful of him. He is a dangerous citizen. I have made it my particular business to find out who this fellow was, who was talking to you, and Smith, I have learned that he is one of the chief spirits among the I. W. W.'s." Or, I might say, "Smith, he is a freelover. He does not take any interest in you at all. He is after your wife." Or, if I were one of those gentlemen who are making some billions of dollars of war profits out of this world crisis, and did not want this organizer to talk to Smith about the price I was charging him for shoes and farm machinery, do you know what I would say
to Smith? I would say, “Smith”—with the flag waving above me, I would say, “Smith, look out for that fellow. He is pro-German.” (Great applause, whistling and laughter.) And if I could make Smith believe it, I could go on playing poker with Smith till he died.

And I could continue to pile billions and billion and billions, wrung from the misery and the sweat and the toil of these American people, into my pockets—if I could make Smith believe it.

You may think that is theory. It is not. In today’s paper (after holding the paper up before the audience, Mr. Townley read therefrom as follows):

“OFFICIAL EYE OF THE UNITED STATES ON THE MEETING OF THE NATIONAL NON-PARTISANS’ OPENING TODAY.

“Although officials of the league protest that nothing seditious would be tolerated, patriotic citizens of St. Paul, and representatives of the Department of Justice expected to watch the entire proceedings critically, prepared to act if necessary.”

Citizens of the Department of Justice are very, very welcome here today. We are not ashamed of our particular brand of patriotism. We would suggest to the gentlemen who are doing their duty representing the Department of Justice by being here today, that there is a great deal being said about the patriotism of the farmers of the Northwest, that may not be quite so.

You know we have been charged—the
farmers of the Northwest—with holding our wheat, refusing to put it on the market, because we were not satisfied with the prices, and the rules of dockage. Because we would not turn it over—because they SAID we would not turn it over, at the prices fixed and by the rules of grading—we have been charged with being pro-German.

I am not criticizing men who are paid by this government to represent the majority of the people of these United States for being here today to see whether that is so or not. That is their duty. BUT I read yesterday at Fargo, a little article which I clipped out of the Daily News two or three days ago, which stated that the storage warehouses containing leather rawhides in the East, were packed to the roof.

And yesterday in the city of Fargo, I met a friend of mine who had been for 15 years working among the farmers, buying hides, who had been discharged because they had no more use for the hides.

Meanwhile, the American people are paying anywhere from $1.00 to $4.00 a pair more for shoes. And while we welcome here today, most fully, representatives of the Department of Justice, whose duty it is to take a look at the hides we wear, and by a study of what we say, learn whether we are pro-German or not—I would suggest to them that it may also be their duty to go East where our hides are piled to the roof, and see whether there is any injustice there.
One man cannot play poker alone. This is a two-handed game.
We are here today to lay our cards flat on the table.

We have not got anything to hide. If you want to ask us any questions today, we will answer them gladly. But I hope that as soon as you get through with us you will go and see the fellows holding the other hand. We are not afraid of impartial inspection. We don't however, want to be inspected and have the decision rendered by fellows in the employ of those who have our hides stacked to the roof. We want to show our cards to a Department of Justice that represents the WILL of the MAJORITY of the PEOPLE.

Gentlemen, there is no use offering to show our cards to those representing the Leather Trust, the Steel Trust and the Grain Trust, because they see our cards EVERY DAY!

Now, gentlemen, and you representatives of the press—I don't want you to interpret anything that I say this afternoon as criticizing or condemning the good intentions of those in the government who are sincerely working to represent the will of the people.

Any injustice that we may suffer from, we suffer from because we have neglected to reinforce those who do serve us in the national congress.

We have made every effort to get the representatives of the administration; especially the HEAD of the Price Fixing Board—or the HEAD of the Food Board, here to meet these farmer delegates today.
We have been charged with being unpatriotic, and pro-German, not because WE said this meeting was going to be a protest against the price of wheat, but because our enemies said it was going to be a protest against the price of wheat. We have been charged with being unpatriotic, and disloyal, and PRO-GERMAN, because of the prospect that we are coming here to protest against the price of wheat. We are doing nothing of the kind.

The GRAIN GAMBLERS, grain dealers, or by whatever name you are most familiar with them, have been getting along up to this time with a commission of one cent a bushel. After they had paid their membership fees over here in Minneapolis, they got together here one day and arbitrarily raised it to two cents a bushel. I suppose to protect themselves against the government.

You see they are taking more chances this year when they buy wheat and turn it over to the government than when they buy without the price fixed; and so they arbitrarily fix the commission at one per cent, which is about two cents a bushel. We invited Mr. Hoover to be with us to meet this delegation of farmers. We invited Mr. Barnes to be with us to meet this delegation of farmers. WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO GET THEM TO COME.

But TODAY representatives of the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce, the Duluth Board of Trade, and Kansas City, and all the rest, are gathered in Chicago TO PROTEST AGAINST THE GOVERN-
MENT’S DEMAND THAT THEY CUT DOWN THAT COMMISSION, AND HOOVER’S REPRESENTATIVE IS THERE TO MEET THEM!

Mr. Hoover has so far been led to believe that it is not his duty to meet US, in OUR program, which is not to protest, BUT TO CONTINUE AND CARRY OUT THE PROGRAM OF PRICE FIXING THAT HE HAS STARTED. I do not charge Mr. Hoover, or anyone else, with willfully neglecting an opportunity here today to find out what IS the will of the majority—but I CHARGE YOU with having neglected to keep Mr. Hoover sufficiently posted upon what WAS THE WILL OF THE MAJORITY.

I want to say that when you have an organization as strong as the organization of grain buyers, who are able to keep men right at Hoover’s elbow all the time, he will see things as YOU see them and not as THEY see them, then you will have Mr. Hoover at your conference, too.

I believe that Hoover is trying to do his duty as he sees it. He has a tremendous responsibility. And I say you criminally neglect your duty, unless you aid him all the time to see things as the majority sees them. (Applause.)

I may talk a little long this afternoon; but to a man from the country, you know, who is used to speaking in school houses, this seems like a good opportunity. This is the biggest terminal elevator I ever saw. And it is about as close as the farmers of North Dakota have gotten to one, so far.
We are inclined to stick around awhile and take a look at the building.

I have given you some idea, comparatively, of the business ability of the farmers and merchants; and I think I have done the farmer credit. Before I get through, I am going to show you the difference between the patriotism of those profiteers who make four billion dollars a year, and the patriotism of those who sweat that they may MAKE the four billion dollars a year. If I can make that as clear to you as it is to me, and the representatives of the press here get it as clearly as we get it, and tell the rest of the people of these United States the truth about it, there won’t be any misunderstanding about the patriotism of the farmers of the Northwest from now on. I would warn you, however, not to expect too much of the newspaper boys here because this is their first lesson, maybe; and they may not get it all today—though they are a good, bright looking bunch of fellows.

The farmers and the workers of this nation have not been doing much of anything lately. All they have been doing is working at the business of producing corn, wheat, barley, oats, flax, rye, potatoes, mustard, custard, steel, coal, iron, shoes, clothing, guns, munitions, bullets, battleships.

All the workers these last several months, since this nation got into the war, have been doing on the farm and in the city, all they have been doing is to provide the necessaries of life and war, to feed the
people of the world and their armies of liberty.

While they have been doing that, certain other gentlemen, NOT so busy, leaving this less important work of providing beans and bread for everybody to eat—leaving this for the farmers—who know how—these other gentlemen who have not been so busy, have spent a good deal of time announcing their patriotism. They have gotten a little the start of us.

That is all the difference. Five or six billion dollars of war profits will pay for a pretty good sized announcement.

The corn is—how does that go? "The frost is on the pumpkin and the fodder's in the shock." The beans are taken care of. The ships are being built, the farmers have provided for the feeding of the world, and the armies of liberty. The farmers and workers in the city have provided amply for all those material things necessary to win the war, and have given up their sons to fight the war, and you, their delegates, are here today to make an announcement of YOUR patriotism.

You know when a man works 16 hours a day, raising the wheat for the government to commandeer to feed the soldiers and win the war—and when he works long hours in the steel mills or the coal mines, producing the things that the government of this nation needs to win the war—at the end of the day he has spent so much of his energy in the patriotic effort to actually DO something for his country, that he doesn't have much energy left to
wave the flag and talk about it. HE GOES TO SLEEP!

Others who leave the little business of producing all these necessities to us—whose hands are white and whose skins are soft—have more time to wave the flag. If we spent as much time waving the flag as they do, we would all starve to death—they and us alike.

I repeat, we are here today to make as much of an announcement of our patriotism as what practice we have had enables us to make, and I predict that if we continue to improve in the next two or three years as the farmers of North Dakota have in the last year, he, at the end of that time, will be able to make pretty nearly as much noise as they do.

Providing, however, that we get enough for our wheat and our leather so we don't starve to death during that time. We are not afraid of the comparison either of business ability or patriotism, with any of these gentlemen with coal and iron and steel.

We have invited them here today to compare theirs with ours, and they DIDN'T COME.

The kept press, the newspapers owned by those who make four or five BILLIONS of dollars a year, and the mouths of some gentlemen have been full of professions of patriotism; but many of those professions of patriotism come from men whose pockets bulge with gold stolen from us.

They are not patriots, because they possess billions and billions of war profits wrung from the agony and sweat and toil
of starving men and women, the possession, I say, of these billions of dollars of war profits in the pockets of the profiteers—their arms red to the elbow in the blood of this nation—is proof that they are not patriots.

For, in the language of the highest authority of the United States, "patriotism and profits do not go together," Then, in a time of the world's crisis, in a time of the nation's needs, if they are not patriotic, what are they? Get a German helmet, place it upon THEIR head, and YOU SEE THE KAISER himself.

It is absolutely the only conclusion that you can come to. Patriotism consists in doing something for the good of the NATION; patriotism consists in sacrificing something for the Nation's good.

A Voice: That's right.

Patriotism is based upon Justice—NOT UPON ROBBERY.

A Voice: Absolutely.

Well, I want to say to you that if these men and women, here today, will tell the truth about this thing as YOU see it, I won't ask them to tell it as I see it—as you representatives of some two or three million people, who have been toiling night and day, for their country. If they will tell the truth about this thing as YOU see it, THE PROFITEERS WILL HAVE TO GO OUT OF BUSINESS, for they cannot stand the light of truth. No criminal can stand the light of truth.

Ah! Let me show what we face. Let me make that also plain to you. Across the water, in the trenches over there,
where your sons are sacrificing all they have and all you have—because their life is dearer to you than anything else—over there where they are making that most tremendous gift, that Liberty and Democracy may live for all the world—AFTER the battle crawling among the bodies of the dead, are animals in human form, ghouls of the night, that rob the dead bodies of your dear boys.

Rob them of the little gold, the clothing, the jewelry, the gifts that you may have sent to remind them that you still are thinking of them, waiting their return—rob their bodies of these little things. No language I can command can do justice to the crime of the man who would rob the dead. BUT if you take my money when I am dead, and my clothing when I am dead, that is not so bad as it might be, for I do not need the clothing and I cannot spend the money. And, though those ghouls over there may do this, bad as it is, the clothing may do them some good and they may spend the money for liquor, BUT while the mothers and fathers of those boys killed upon the battlefield are struggling here in this nation—as YOU struggle—in an effort to keep the rest of those boys in clothing and in food; while you and I—their brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, are trying ourselves to pay the cost of war, a set of the worst criminals God ever permitted to roam this earth, HERE AMONG US, are robbing OUR starving children to death!!

At the time when this nation deeds
every ounce of its energy, when its very LIFE hangs in the balance, when liberty and democracy over all the world hangs by a thread, these vultures are sucking our life-blood, and they have so far succeeded in misleading these American people that we call them patriots! And a farmer out here, who thinks that he should not be docked 20 cents per bushel because a bushel of wheat has five pounds of barley in it, IS PRO-GERMAN.

I hope—I hope we are going to make a change. I believe we are, with your assistance, and with the aid of brothers and sisters of the boys who are going to the battle front, we may yet defeat those allies of autocracy here in our own midst.

You and the people at large have been led to believe that this is a protest against the price the Government has fixed upon wheat. It is not.

You have been led to believe that we want the price of wheat raised upon the same basis with the price they are charging for what THEY have to sell. We have not got the nerve to ask that.

If we should get as much for wheat according to what it cost to produce it, as they are getting for coal and steel, we would have so much money we could not carry it around. We are not used to handling so much money. More than that, we have got to spend our time plowing and seeding and feeding the cows.

So we are not here this afternoon to protest either against the price fixed by this government for wheat to the farmer
in the Northwest or against the law that authorizes the government to fix prices. We believe there is a better way, one that can more easily be explained—and men that work sixteen hours a day need their proposition put in plain language. One that can be more easily explained; and that is this. That we accept the government's proposition to fix the price of wheat as it has, and all on God's green earth we want, everything we ask, is this. The thing we pray for night and day is that the government may be able with YOUR help and my help and the help of a majority of the people of this nation—we pray the government may be able to fix the price of everything else on the same basis as it has fixed the price on wheat.

We are not at all selfish in this matter. We don't want the prices you are getting for what you have to sell. We want you to take the prices we are getting for what WE have to sell. Come on in, you gentlemen of coal, and iron and steel and flour. Come on in with us. THE WATER'S FINE!

For, according to this American democracy as I understand it—I may be mistaken—a rule that should apply to one group of citizens ought to apply to the others likewise.

I refuse to believe that America has been Prussianized. Until I am compelled to stop, I am going to continue to shout from the house tops, that it is our duty to support the Government in its program to fix prices.
And I am going to continue to believe, as I do now, that except for the influence of those over-patriotic gentlemen of coal and iron and steel, we would be GETTING a square deal today.

But the only method you can follow to get a square deal is to bring to bear upon your Government an influence that will beat theirs. You have got to out-do them at their own game.

Oh, No!! SOMEBODY is mistaken. This is not a protest at all. We are gathered here today to **support** the Government in its program to lower prices.

We are gathered here today to bid God-speed to the agents of the Department of Justice in THEIR WORK.

Urging them as soon as they are through with us, to GO ON DOWN THE LINE.

It is difficult to hold meetings these days. But the city of St. Paul seems to be very progressive and I believe if the representatives of the grain trust and the coal trust and the steel trust and the sugar trust and the leather trust and all the rest—want to get together and do as we are doing, I believe if there is not any other place in the United States where they can get together and do what we are doing here today, that ST. PAUL will let them come here and do it. And I want to say further that if they don’t want to take any chances at all and have not the money to do it, we will pay the rent. The Non-partisan League will do that.

Not because we have got so much money, but because we believe it would be a good investment. We will mortgage
our farms to pay the rent. I hope the Resolution Committee is present and will take note of some of the things I say, and embody some of these things in a communication to these gentlemen.

If they don’t want to meet here, bring their own hides here—we don’t ask them to eat and drink with us, but we will beat that a million miles, if they will come and do what we are doing here today.

They are in Chicago today. But not doing what WE are doing here today. Oh, no. They are making a mighty effort to convince the Administration that they need two cents a bushel commission when they always got along with one cent before. And I don’t know but what they MAY succeed.

I hope we have not come to that PASS where they will succeed. If they MUST have two cents a bushel, let us make a treaty with them and have them wait until the war is over, because we NEED that money TO PAY FOR THE WAR!

It is your duty to support the Government and see to it that these billions and billions that must be raised to finance this war for Liberty and Democracy—billions, I repeat, that will be wrung out of the sweat and toil of the mothers and fathers of the soldier boys—billions that must be paid back when the war is over, it is absolutely YOUR duty, to do all you can to see that not too many of these billions stick to the fingers of the gentlemen of coal, and iron and steel and bacon.

If you can do that—if you can see that these billions, instead of falling into the
pockets of the profiteers, shall go to pay the worker in the mine, the worker in the factory, the ship builder, the leather worker, the farmer, all those who produce the things that are needed—if you will see that these millions go to the worker in mine and mill and factory, THEY WILL HAVE ENOUGH SO THAT THEY CAN PAY ENOUGH FOR BREAD, SO THAT THE FARMERS’ WHEAT WON’T HAVE TO BE SOLD FOR LESS THAN IT COSTS TO PRODUCE IT.

We hear a great deal of noise made by these gentlemen, but if you can so support the Government that those gentlemen will be compelled to sell their coal and their iron and their steel on the same basis that the Government now buys the farmers’ wheat—I want to say to you that the howl that will go up from their camp will drown all the noise that these millions of farmers could make. For, if there is anything those gentlemen can do with more vigor than make profits, it is make a noise when they feel those profits getting away from them.

If you can do that—support the government in its purpose to fix prices so that all these gentlemen will have to sell their products on the same basis as the farmer now sells his wheat—it will only be a short time before they will come with the mines and the mills and the railroads and the rest, and say here, take these things over—I don’t want them any more, for these gentlemen of coal and iron and steel and leather won’t produce what their
country needs in time of war for ANY war for liberty and democracy. They don’t do it. Their patriotism doesn’t GO that far. Their patriotism won’t enable them to produce or make anything at a normal profit. THEIR PATRIOTISM IS THE KIND THAT REQUIRES WAR PROFITS TO MAKE IT WORK.

But the farmer will produce wheat at less than cost to feed the armies of Liberty. He is used to that. He has been at it all his life. That is why his farm is mortgaged. Why he keeps his children out of school to keep the mortgage from growing too fast.

You know the place where the children of the manufacturers of steel and iron is, at Harvard and Yale, where YOUR boys would LIKE to go. But about the only place your boy gets a chance to find out anything is at a League convention.

And I submit that those gentlemen would find out something, too, if they would come here today. Something that they don’t learn in Harvard and Yale.

Now, the patriotism of the farmer is of a different kind from theirs. I know it is a better kind. Because the farmers’ patriotism and the workers’ patriotism enables them to go on producing at less than cost, to feed the world in its time of need. And I want to say to you right here—in support of your patriotism, that even though we must pay five, or six, or eight billions of dollars of tribute every year to these pirates in order to get them to produce guns and munitions and things, we have got to have to win the war—
even though we must pay that tremendous tribute, there is STILL hope for Liberty and Democracy. Because the farmers of this nation and the workers of this nation have got enough patriotism in their hearts to make up for the patriotism and manhood that the profiteers lack. And if necessary, we will go on producing wheat to feed the world and its enemies of freedom—even with those profit vultures clutching at our throats. We will go on and make ALL the world safe for Liberty and Democracy. And then we will settle with those gentlemen after the war is over.

Now, I think if you can lower the prices that these gentlemen get for the coal and iron and steel that they have to sell—compel them—by supporting the Government in its program to LOWER prices; compel them to sell their products on the same basis—on the same basis as the farmer now is compelled to sell his wheat—WHEN YOU DO THAT, the patriotism of the coal trust and the gentlemen who sell iron and steel, the patriotism they have left will then be of very much better quality than what they have got now. It won’t be as good as the farmer now has, but it will be better than theirs is now. I think it would grade about No. 4. It won’t be rejected.

We can make something out of it, and if you can get some of that kind of patriotism into these gentlemen, by enabling the Government to continue its program to reduce prices, and put that patriotism together with the kind the farmers and workers have, this country, this nation
will be able to bring this war to a very successful conclusion, in a short time.

This war for Liberty and Democracy will be a TREMENDOUS success, because we shall not only have secured Liberty and Democracy to all the world, but we shall have INCREASED OUR HOME SUPPLY.

And I am foolish enough to believe that it is just as much our duty to make sure of Liberty and Democracy for ourselves as it is to carry Liberty and Democracy to foreign people.

It is only the patriotism of the profiteers that would have us give up OUR Liberty. For when we have given up our liberties they can get everything else we have got.

Organize; raise your voice; Lay OFF a day or two once in a while, as the farmer says, knock off hoeing corn; get together; announce your Patriotism oftener; support your Government in its program to lower prices, and this war will come to a very successful conclusion.

This nation will be able to bring this war to an end a good deal quicker than it will if you don’t do that. For two reasons: First, when you have manifested the will of the Majority, and brought to bear a greater influence upon this National Congress and the profiteers than they feel now, and you have so far supported those who WOULD represent you, if they could, that they have compelled the owners of steel, iron and coal and bread and butter and bacon to sell them on the same basis as the farmer sells his wheat, take as much profit out of their business as has
been taken out of the business of wheat raising in the Northwest, and you take nearly all the profits out of all business.

Now, as soon as you do that, nobody will want to continue war any longer than is necessary to secure Liberty and Democracy. We will all be so determined in our purpose to win this war for Liberty and Democracy and the German autocracy cannot stand against us.

The only place when you have done that where you will find any slackers will be among that bunch of plutocrats that is robbing you blind.

Why, ladies and gentlemen, THESE PEOPLE, OUR PEOPLE, are all for Liberty and Democracy. THAT IS WHAT WE PAY OUR SIXTEEN DOLLARS FOR!

Ninety-five per cent of the people of this country want to win for Liberty and Democracy, 95 per cent of all the people of all the allied countries, want to win for Liberty and Democracy, 95 per cent of the GERMAN people want to win for Liberty and Democracy.

We are all against autocracy WHEREVER we may find it!

And the only reason we are not able to bring this war to a successful conclusion and win Liberty and Democracy for all the world, and do it quickly is because you have neglected to make known your demands, and sufficiently impressed the will of the majority upon your national congress.

Oh, you American people, you hold the meaning of Liberty and Democracy for all
the world, and if the Liberty and Democracy for all the world does not come out of this world conflict, it will be your fault, you leaders of the world.

And if you fail it will be because you do not express, fully express, your will in this democracy that you have now, and give every man a square deal. For when you do that, when you support the President of the United States when he says that PROFITS AND PATRIOTISM DO NOT GO TOGETHER, when you back him up, and those with him, so that they can make that phrase a LIVE phrase, and a fact, so that instead of industrial despotism in this country, where we have POLITICAL liberty, we have also INDUSTRIAL LIBERTY—when you do that—the German government will not so easily be able to lead the German people to believe that the profiteers want to do with them what they are doing to us.

When you do that you will show the German people what can be done in a democracy; and they want that; and when you show the German people what can be done in democracy, where the people have the right to make their own government, THEY WILL TURN AGAINST THE GERMAN AUTOCRACY, and the German autocracy CANNOT STAND AGAINST THE AMERICAN PEOPLE!

So I repeat, our purpose here today is as far removed from being a PROTEST against the government's purpose to lower prices, as is the mid-day light of the sun from the darkest hell.

We have been grossly misrepresented.
If there are any patriots in this world, they are here today in this house.

So if we should fail to sufficiently make known to our Congress—if we should fail during the war to sufficiently make known that will of the majority of those who WANT TO FOLLOW the will of the majority, that will have to be done after the war is over, HOWEVER it shall end.

Let me try to make plainer still to you the reason for the injustice in our industrial life. This war will cost America maybe thirty, forty billions of dollars. It is very difficult to raise those many billions of dollars. It entails tremendous sacrifices upon us all. A sacrifice that WE SHALL NOT SHIRK. Those billions will be spent by this government to win the war for Liberty and Democracy. Part of it will be spent for guns, part for ships, part of it for coal, clothing, shoes, leather. A part of it will be paid to those who are making millions of profit out of the war today.

But a soldier boy cannot carry a gun unless there is bread in his stomach. A soldier boy cannot dig a trench unless he has a strong body made by BREAD.

And some of those billions of dollars have to be spent to pay the farmers for the wheat to make the bread. Now, we have been calling for government control of prices. And we got them all right. But in our clamor for government control we overlooked the better tool.

We forgot, or neglected to see, that the representatives of the profiteers were too LARGE a part of our government, and so
we got the government control too largely in behalf of the profiteers. They are to-day influencing this government in too large a measure. Else they would not fix a price on coal twice what it was BEFORE the war; else they would not be so long reducing the price of bread AFTER they have reduced the price of wheat.

They have too large an influence. An influence so large that they can say to themselves:

"We are going to have forty billion dollars spent here to prosecute this war.

"Now, how much have we to pay these farmers for wheat enough to get bread into the boys’ stomachs What we do not have to pay to the farmers for wheat for the soldier boys we can use to great profit for ourselves."

I think this is their analysis. Let me show you that it is. I am going to reverse the situation now. I am going to assume that instead of there being too much profiteer influence in Congress, we have enough men like John Baer, the farmers’ North Dakota Congressman, and Congressman Young, and a few others that represent THE WILL OF THE MAJORIT.

I am going to assume that we have enough true representatives of THE WILL OF THE MAJORITY in Congress, so that they could make their will felt. What would these gentlemen do?

Here is what they would do:

We are going to have forty billion dollars to fight the war. Now, we need coal.
Where is the coal? It is in the ground. Who put it there? God Almighty put it there. Did He put a price on it? No. All right. THEN WE'LL TAKE THE COAL FOR WAR.

And they would want lumber and want steel and say, Where is the steel? And somebody will say: these men; men like John Baer, representing the WILL OF THE MAJORITY, representing YOU, men who have given your sons for the war, they would say, IF IT IS RIGHT TO CONSCRIPT THE LIVES OF OUR BOYS, IT IS RIGHT TO CONSCRIPT THE STEEL!