

# Full Text of President's Armistice Day Speech

KANSAS CITY, Nov. 11.—Following is the text of President Coolidge's speech delivered today at the dedication of the Liberty Memorial for World War heroes:

**Fellow Countrymen:**  
It is with a mingling of sentiments that we come to dedicate this memorial. Erected in memory of those who defended their homes and their freedom in the World War, it stands for service and all that service implies. Reverence for our dead, respect for our living, loyalty to our country, devotion to humanity, consecration to religion, all of these and much more is represented in this towering monument and its massive supports. It has not been raised to commemorate war and victory, but rather the results of war and victory which are embodied in peace and liberty. In its impressive symbolism it pictures the story of that one increasing purpose declared by the poet to mark all the forces of the past which finally converge in the spirit of America in order that our country as

the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time  
may forever hold aloft the glowing hope of progress and peace to all humanity.

Five years ago it was my fortune to take part in a public service held on this very site, when General Pershing, Admiral Beatty, Marshal Foch, General Diaz and General Jacques, representing several of the allied countries in the war, in the presence of the American Legion convention, assisted in a formal beginning of this work which is now reaching its completion.

Today I return at the special request of the distinguished Senators from Missouri and Kansas, and on the invitation of your committee on arrangements, in order that I may place the official sanction of the National Government upon one of the most elaborate and impressive memorials that adorn our country. It comes as a fitting observance of this eighth anniversary of the signing of the armistice on Nov. 11, 1918. In each recurring year this day will be set aside to revive memories and renew ideals. While it did not mark the end of the war, for the end is not yet, it marked a general subsidence of the armed conflict which for more than four years shook the very foundations of Western civilization.

**Missouri and Kansas in the War.**

We have little need to inquire how that war began. Its day of carnage is done. Nothing is to be gained from criminations and recriminations. We are attempting to restore the world to a state of better understanding and amity. We can even leave to others the discussion of who won the war. It is enough for us to know that the side on which we fought was victorious. But we should never forget that we were asserting our rights and maintaining our ideals. That, at least, we shall demand as our place in history.

The energy and success with which our country conducted its military operations after it had once entered the war has now become a closed record of fame. The experience of this thriving city and these two adjoining States was representative of that of the country. Soon came the marshaling of the National Guard. From its existing units in Missouri and Kansas the foundation of the Thirty-fifth Division was laid. The Eighty-ninth Division was raised almost entirely in these two States. A portion of the Forty-second, known as the Rainbow Division, came from this city. The whole martial spirit of this neighborhood, which within a radius of 200 miles had furnished the famous regiment of Missouri Volunteers, commanded by Col. John W. Doniphan when he made one of the most celebrated of marches to the conquest of Chihuahua in the Mexican War, reasserted itself as it had done in '61 and '68.

While these divisions were serving with so much distinction on the battlefields of France their fellow-citizens were supporting them with scarcely less distinction in patriotic efforts at home. They were furnishing money for Liberty loans, subscribing to the relief associations headed by the Red Cross, turning out munitions from the factories and rations from the fields. The whole community was inspired with devotion to the cause of liberty. Returning at the end of the war, these divisions have increased their distinction by being represented in high places in civil life. From the Eighty-ninth came the great administrator and Colonial Governor, Major Gen. Leonard Wood, and from the Thirty-fifth Division came a distinguished son of Missouri, the present Secretary of War, Col. Dwight F. Davis.

**Expenditures for Veterans.**

Under no other flag are those who have served their country held in such high appreciation. It is, of course, impossible for the eyes of the Government to detect all individual cases of veterans requiring relief in every part of our land. But the Veterans' Bureau is organized into departments and subdivisions, so that if any worthy person escapes their observation it is because the utmost care and attention could do no more. In the last eight years about \$3,500,000,000 have been expended by the National Government for restoration, education and relief. Nearly \$3,200,000,000 have been pledged to accrue in future benefits to all veterans.

Whenever they may be suffering from illness, whatever may be the cause, the doors of our hospitals are open to them without charge until they are restored to health. This is an indication of praise and reward which our country bestows upon its veterans. Our admiration is boundless. It is no mere idle form; it is no shadow without reality, but a solid and substantial effort rising into the dignity of a sacrifice made by all the people that they might in some degree recognize and recompense those who have served in time of national peril. All veterans should know this and be proud of it, and they are.

Considering the inspiring record of your soldiers in the field and the

general attitude of appreciation which has been constantly reiterated by the whole nation, it would be natural to suppose that this mid-western country would give appropriate expression to the honor and devotion in which it holds those who served their country and the ideals for which they were contending. But the magnitude of this memorial, and the broad base of popular support on which it rests, can scarcely fail to excite national wonder and admiration.

More than one person out of four in the entire population of this city responded to an appeal for funds, which gave pledges in excess of \$2,000,000. It represents the high aspirations of this locality for ideals expressed in forms of beauty. We cannot look upon it without seeing a reflection of all the freshness and vigor that marks the life of the broad expanse of the open country and the love of the sciences and the arts and the graces as expressed in the life of her growing towns. These results are not achieved without real sacrifice. They supply their own overpowering answer to those who charge our countrymen with a lack of appreciation for the finer things of life. Those who have observed such criticism cannot fail to discover that it results in large part from misunderstanding.

**No Apology for Prosperity.**

But assuming it to be correct, I am of the firm conviction that there is more hope for the progress of true ideals in the modern world even from a nation newly rich than there is from a nation of chronically poor. Honest poverty is one thing, but lack of industry and character is quite another. While we do not need to boast of our prosperity or vaunt our ability to accumulate wealth, I see no occasion to apologize for it. It is the expression of a commendable American spirit to live a life not merely devoted to luxurious ease, but to practical accomplishment. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in our great midcontinental basin. It is the spirit which dares, which has faith and which succeeds. It is not confined to materialism, but lays hold on a higher life.

No one can doubt that our country was exalted and inspired by its war experience. It attained a conscious national unity which it never before possessed. That unity ought always to be cherished as one of our choicest possessions. In this broad land of ours there is enough for everybody. We ought not to regret our diversification, but rather rejoice in it. The seashore should not be distressed because it is not the inlands, and the fertile plains ought not to be distracted because they are not the mountain tops. These differences which seem to separate us are not real. The products of the shore, the inlands, the plain and the mountain reach into every home. This is all one country. It all belongs to us. It is all our America.

We had revealed to us in our time of peril not only the geographical unity of our country, but, what was of even more importance, the unity of the spirit of our people. They might speak with different tongues, come from most divergent quarters of the globe, but in the essentials of the hour they were moved by a common purpose, devoted to a common cause and loyal to a common country. We should not permit that spirit which was such a source of strength in our time of trial to be dissipated in the more easy days of peace. We needed it then and we need it now. But we ought to maintain it, not so much because it is to our advantage as because it is just and human and right.

Our population is a composite of many different racial strains. All of them have their points of weakness; all of them have their points of strength. We shall not make the most progress by undertaking to rely upon the sufficiency of any one of them, but rather by using the combination of the power which can be derived from all of them. The policy which was adopted during the war of selective service through the compulsory Government intervention is the same policy which we should carry out in peace through voluntary personal action. Our armies could not be said to partake of any distinct racial characteristics. Many of our soldiers were foreigners by birth, but they were all Americans in the defense of our common interests. There was ample opportunity for every nationality and every talent.

**War a Lesson in Democracy.**

The same condition should prevail in our peacetime social and economic organization. We recognize no artificial distinctions, no hereditary titles, but leave each individual free to assume and enjoy the rank to which his own services to society entitle him. This great lesson in democracy, this great example of equality which came to us as the experience of the war, ought never to be forgotten. It was a resurgence of the true American spirit which combined our people through a common purpose into one harmonious whole. When Armistice Day came in 1918, America had reached a higher and truer national spirit than it ever before possessed. We at last realized in a new vision that we were all one people.

Our country has never sought to be a military power. It cherishes no imperialistic designs, it is not infatuated with any vision of empire. It is content within its own territory, to prosper through the development of its own resources. But we realize thoroughly that no one will protect us unless we protect ourselves. Domestic peace and international security are among the first objects to be sought by any government. Without order under the protection of law there could be no liberty. To insure these necessary conditions we maintain a very moderate military establishment in proportion to our numbers and extent of territory. It is a menace to no one except the evildoer. It is a notice to everybody that the authority of our Government will be maintained and

that we recognize that it is the first duty of Americans to look after America and maintain the supremacy of American rights. To adopt any other policy would be to invite disorder and aggression which must either be borne with humiliating submission or result in a declaration of war.

While, of course, our Government is thoroughly committed to a policy of permanent international peace and has made and will continue to make every reasonable effort in that direction, it is therefore also committed to a policy of adequate national defense. Like everything that has any value, the army and navy cost something. In the last half dozen years we have appropriated for their support about \$4,000,000,000. Taken as a whole, there is no better navy than our own in the world. If our army is not as large as that of some other countries, it is not outmatched by any other like number of troops. Our entire military and naval forces represent a strength of about 550,000 men, altogether the largest which we have ever maintained in time of peace. We have recently laid out a five-year program for improving our aviation service. It is a mistake to suppose that our country is lagging behind in this modern art. Both in the excellence and speed of its planes it holds high records, while in number of miles covered in commercial and postal aviation it exceeds that of any other countries.

**Reasonable Protection, Not Competition.**

Although I have spoken of our national defenses somewhat in relation to other countries, I have done so entirely for the purpose of measurement, and not for comparison, for our Government stands also thoroughly committed to the policy of avoiding competition in armaments. We expect to provide ourselves with reasonable protection, but we do not desire to enter into competition with any other country in the maintenance of land or sea forces. Such a course is always productive of suspicion and distrust, which usually results in inflicting upon the people an unnecessary burden of expense, and when carried to its logical conclusion ends in armed conflict. We have at last entered into treaties with the great powers eliminating to a large degree competition in naval armaments. We are engaged in negotiations to broaden and extend this humane and enlightened policy and are willing to make reasonable sacrifices to secure its further adoption.

It is doubtful if in the present circumstances of our country the subject of economy and the reduction of the war debt has ever been given sufficient prominence in considering the problem of national defense. For the conduct of military operations either by land or sea three elements are necessary. One is a question of personnel. We have a population which surpasses that of any of the great powers. Not only that, it is of a vigorous and prolific type, intelligent and courageous, capable of supplying many millions of men for active duty. Another relates to supplies. In our agriculture and our industry we could be not only well-nigh self-sustaining, but our production could be stimulated to reach an enormous amount. The last requirement, which is also of supreme importance, is a supply of money.

It is difficult to estimate in figures the entire resources of our country and impossible to comprehend them. It is estimated to be approaching in value \$400,000,000,000. No one could say in advance how large a sum could be secured from a system of war taxation, but every one knows it would be insufficient to meet the cost of war. It would be necessary for the Treasury to resort to the use of the national credit. Great as that might be, it is not limitless. To carry on the last conflict we borrowed in excess of \$26,000,000,000. This great debt has been reduced to about \$19,000,000,000. So long as that is unpaid it stands as a tremendous impediment against the ability of America to defend itself by military operations. Until this obligation is discharged it is the one insuperable obstacle to the possibility of developing our full national strength. Every time a Liberty bond is retired preparedness is advanced.

It is more and more becoming the conviction of students of adequate defense that in time of national peril the Government should be clothed with authority to call into its service all of its man power and all of its property under such terms and conditions that it may completely avoid making a sacrifice of one and a profiteer of another. To expose some men to the perils of the battlefield while others are left to reap large gains from the distress of their country is not in harmony with our ideal of equality. Any future policy of conscription should be all inclusive, applicable in its terms to the entire personnel and the entire wealth of the whole nation.

**Loss, Not Profit, in War.**

It is often said that we profited from the World War. We did not profit from it, but lost from it in common with all countries engaged in it. Some individuals made gains, but the nation suffered great losses. Merely in the matter of our national debt it will require heavy sacrifices extended over a period of about thirty years to recoup those losses. What we suffered indirectly in the diminution of our commerce and through the deflation which occurred when we had to terminate the expenditure of our capital and begin to live on our income is a vast sum which can never be estimated. The war left us with debts and mortgages, without counting our obligations to our veterans, which it will take a generation to discharge. High taxes, insolvent banks, ruined industry, distressed agriculture, all followed in its train.

While the period of liquidation appears to have been passed, long years of laborious toil on the part of the people will be necessary to repair our loss. It was not because our resources had not been impaired, but because they were so great that we

could meantime finance these losses while they are being restored, that we have been able so early to revive our prosperity. But the money which we are making today has to be used in part to replace that which we expended during the war.

In time this damage can be repaired, but there are irreparable losses which will go on forever. We see them in the vacant home, in the orphaned children, in the widowed women, in the bereaved parents. To the thousands of the youth who are gone forever must be added other thousands of maimed and disabled. It is these things that bring to us more emphatically than anything else the bitterness, the suffering and the devastation of armed conflict.

**Spiritual Power Found in Peace.**

It is not only because of these enormous losses suffered alike by ourselves and the rest of the world that we desire peace, but because we look to the arts of peace rather than war as the means by which mankind will finally develop its greatest spiritual power. We know that discipline comes only from effort and sacrifice. We know that character can result only from toil and suffering. We recognize the courage, the loyalty and the devotion that are displayed in war, and we realize that we must hold many things more precious than life itself.

It is man's perdition to be safe when for the truth he ought to die. But it cannot be that the final development of all these fine qualities is dependent upon slaughter and carnage and death. There must be a better, purer process within the realm of peace where humanity can discipline itself, develop its courage, replenish its faith and perfect its character. In the true service of that ideal, which is even more difficult to maintain than our present standards, it cannot be that there would be any lack of opportunity for the revelation of the highest form of spiritual life.

We shall not be able to cultivate the arts of peace by constant appeal to primal instincts. To the people of the jungle the stranger was always the enemy. As the race grew up through the family, the tribe, the clan and the nation, this sentiment always survived. The foreigner was subject to suspicion, without rights and without friends. This spirit prevailed even under the Roman Empire. It would not have been sufficient for St. Paul to claim protection because he was a human being, or even an inhabitant of a peaceful province. It was only when he asserted that he was a Roman citizen that he could claim any rights or the protection of any laws.

**Old World Distrust a Warning.**

We do not easily emancipate ourselves from these age-old traditions. When we come in contact with people differing from ourselves in dress and appearance, in speech and accent, the inherited habits of our physical being naturally react unfavorably. Nothing is easier than an appeal to suspicion and distrust. It is always certain that the unthinking will respond to such efforts. But such reaction is of the flesh, not of the spirit. It represents the opportunist, not the idealist. It serves the imperialistic cause of conquest, but it is not found in the lesson of the Sermon on the Mount. It may flourish as the impulse of the day, but it is not the standard which will finally prevail in the world. It is necessary that the statesmanship of peace should lead in some other direction.

If we are to have peace, therefore, we are to live in accordance with the dictates of a higher life. We shall avoid any national spirit of suspicion, distrust and hatred toward other nations. The Old World has for generations indulged itself in this form of luxury. The results have been ruinous. It is not for us who are more fortunately circumstanced to pass judgment upon those who are less favored. In their place we might have done worse. But it is our duty to be warned by their example and to take full advantage of our own position. We want understanding, good-will and friendly relations between ourselves and all other people. The first requisite for this purpose is a friendly attitude on our own part.

They tell us that we are not liked in Europe. Such reports are undoubtedly exaggerated and can be given altogether too much importance. We are a creditor nation. We are more prosperous than some others. This means that our interests have come within the European circle where distrust and suspicion, if nothing more, have been altogether too common. To turn such attention to us indicates at least that we are not ignored.

**Attitude Toward Other Nations.**

While we can assume no responsibility for the opinions of others, we are responsible for our own sentiments. We ought to be wise enough to know that in the sober and informed thought of other countries we probably hold the place of a favored nation. We ought not to fail to appreciate the trials and difficulties, the suffering and the sacrifices of the people of our sister nations, and to extend to them at all times our patience, our sympathy and such help as we believe will enable them to be restored to a sound and prosperous condition. I want to be sure that the attitude and acts of the American Government are right. I am willing to intrust to others the full responsibility for the results of their own behavior.

Our Government has steadily maintained the policy of the recognition and sanctity of international obligations and the performance of international covenants. It has not believed that the world, economically, financially or morally, could rest upon any other secure foundation. But such a policy does not include extortion or oppression. Moderation is a mutual international obligation,

We have therefore undertaken to deal with other countries in accordance with these principles, believing that their application is for the welfare of the world and the advancement of civilization.

In our prosperity and financial resources we have seen not only our own advantage but an increasing advantage to other people who have needed our assistance. The fact that our position is strong, our finances stable, our trade large, has steadied and supported the economic condition of the whole world. Those who need credit ought not to complain but rather rejoice that there is a bank able to serve their needs. We have maintained our detached and independent position in order that we might be better prepared in our own way to serve those who need our help. We have not desired or sought to intrude, but to give our counsel and assistance when it has been asked. Our influence is none the less valuable because we have insisted that it should not be used by one country against another, but for the fair and disinterested service of all. We have signified our willingness to cooperate with other countries to secure a method for the settlement of disputes according to the dictates of reason.

**Stands by Senate on World Court.**

Justice is an ideal, whether it be applied between man and man or between nation and nation. Ideals are not secured without corresponding sacrifice. Justice cannot be secured without the maintenance and support of institutions for its administration. We have provided courts through which it might be administered in the case of our individual citizens. A permanent court of international justice has been established to which nations may voluntarily resort for an adjudication of their differences. It has been subject to much misrepresentation, which has resulted in much misconception of its principles and objects among our people. I have advocated adherence to such a court by this nation on condition that the statute or treaty creating it be amended to meet our views. The Senate has adopted a resolution for that purpose.

While the nations involved cannot yet be said to have made a final determination, and from most of them no answer has been received, many of them have indicated that they are unwilling to concur in the conditions adopted by the resolution of the Senate. While no final decision can be made by our Government until final answers are received, the situation has been sufficiently developed so that I feel warranted in saying that I do not intend to ask the Senate to modify its position. I do not believe the Senate would take favorable action on any such proposal, and unless the requirements of the Senate resolution are met by the other interested nations I can see no prospect of this country adhering to the court.

While we recognize the obligations arising from the war and the common dictates of humanity which ever bind us to a friendly consideration for other people, our main responsibility is for America. In the present state of the world that responsibility is more grave than it ever was at any other time. We have to face the facts. The margin of safety in human affairs is never very broad, as we have seen from the experience of the last dozen years. If the American spirit fails, what hope has the world? In the hour of our triumph and power we cannot escape the need for sober thought and consecrated action. These dead whom we here commemorate have placed their trust in us. Their living comrades have made their sacrifice in the belief that we would not fail. In the consciousness of that trust and that belief this memorial stands as our pledge to their faith, a holy testament that our country will continue to do its duty under the guidance of a Divine Providence.