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THE HOME FRONT

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These are days of great upheaval in our American way of life. The world-wide war in which we are engaged is a struggle for our very existence as a nation. We have seen vast numbers of our young men called to the colors; thousands of fathers migrating with their families to distant defense areas; hosts of citizens enrolling in one or other form of volunteer defense effort; children deprived of the natural securities of the home.

Out of all this upheaval many problems have arisen growing out of the impact of the war upon the basic unit of society—the family. The family is the backbone of civilization. Whatever sacrifice we are called upon to make, whatever effort we are forced to expend, we must bend all our energies to insure that in this war, and in the victory that follows, the solidarity of the home shall be preserved.

I should like to speak today of one possible threat to family life—the employment of mothers in war industries. I know that we must be realistic in seeing that in some sections our present crisis may well require employment of mothers of young children as a

patriotic necessity. If mothers of young children must work to serve our war effort then we must move to meet the situation. But until that last resort is reached we will do everything possible to keep the mother in the home.

I think it pertinent to quote right here a recent statement made by the Secretary of Labor: "In these times of crisis, it is important to remember that mothers of young children can make no finer contribution to the strength of the nation and its vitality and effectiveness in the future than to assure their children the security of home, individual care and affection. Except as a last resort, the nation should not recruit for industrial production the services of women with such home responsibilities."

This statement is thoroughly in accord with our Catholic teaching. We believe that the mother's place is in the home and that only as a last resort should she leave that home for employment. Yet, today we find that uncounted numbers of American mothers are working on the assembly lines, and we are told that we can expect to see millions more of our women going into employment for war production. The problem of the working mother is, therefore, one that demands our serious consideration. Certainly in our upstate cities such as Buf-

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falo, it is already a matter of prime importance.

Because of certain developments in the setting up of child care-centers for the children of working mothers, this whole problem represents a matter of vital concern to parents. It is being urged that there is need for additional facilities in various communities in the United States for care of children of employed mothers. It is thought by some groups that the approach should be to set up in these communities day care-centers as an educational project. Other proposals are to set up day care-centers within industrial plants. There is also a trend to put these services under public control and direction on a communal basis.

In view of these developments, there is greater need than ever, it seems to me, to emphasize the fact that war pressures must not make us lose sight of the importance of the home as the natural place for the child, and the right of the parent to direct and determine the type of care and where the child shall receive it.

There are certain principles, it seems to me, which we cannot afford to lose sight of:

I—Mothers should not be regarded as a new source of labor until all other sources of labor supply in a community have been exhausted. In many places in the United States we still have large numbers of men unemployed. We should first use this manpower before we think of employing women.

Then, I believe, we should enlist single women in employment, and only after all this, should we take employees from among our American mothers, giving first preference to those with grown children. Where mothers are employed, they should be put on daytime shifts wherever possible. It would seem that when their children are cared for, parents should meet some of the cost of this care. They have, after all, a God-given responsibility for providing for their children.

II—I believe it is only good economical planning that we use whatever existing resources we have to care for the children of working mothers before we set up any new resources. There are parish schools, there are private nurseries, settlements and neighborhood houses that can be pressed into service. These facilities can be extended. We can ask the mother next door to care for her neighbor's child. There are many ways of providing this care for children without setting up new public agencies unless there is a clear-cut evidence of need.

III—I think it is up to each community—for example, as you have done so well here in Buffalo—to make a thorough study of the problem in that community, to determine whether there is a need and its extent, and to use all the means at its disposal to provide the best possible care for these children.

The nation is facing a real problem today in an alarming in-

crease in juvenile delinquency. Many factors contribute to this: the removal of fathers or older brothers for military service or war production, the very atmosphere of the times glorifying death and destruction; interrupted schooling; abnormally high wages paid to young people; inadequacy of recreational facilities—in brief, the whole disruption of our normal way of life. If added to all this we have a wholesale exodus of mothers from the homes into factories or civilian occupations, we will be weakening to a dangerous degree the inner strength of home life in America.

In the face of these conditions, it is imperative that we all be concerned with the fostering of the child's religious faith in and out of the home. Only through proper discipline and the engendering of a sense of spiritual and moral values can we engrain sound character in our children. This duty rests first with the parents. Given this awareness of responsibility by parents, the Church, the school and all other community resources, we will have a sound foundation upon which to build effective programs.

Private groups and private agencies must be recognized in any community planning. Traditionally in the State of New York, there has existed in the care of children a real partnership between the state and private agencies. While the public au-

thorities are doing a great deal directly for children in many areas of the state, the care of children away from their own homes is delegated largely to private institutions and agencies. So, too, in many communities, we find private hospitals bearing a large share of the burden of care of the sick. Our Catholic charities have written an illustrious page in the history of health and welfare in the State of New York.

And so when it comes to planning to preserve our home front in this worldwide struggle, when it comes to insuring that mother and child will be kept together in that relationship which the Creator intended, we must be in the vanguard. We cannot leave it entirely to public agencies, to educational groups or to industry to plan this care for children. We believe that in these new emergencies that are growing out of this war, we will, in keeping with our precious traditions, come forward to provide for our own children who are in need of care.

With an unshakable faith in God's providence, with a fervent love of country and with the inspiration of those who are making the supreme sacrifice on far-flung battlefields, we, for our part, will courageously and unselfishly meet our problems at home. We will keep faith with the men who defend us. We will keep for them the America and the American ideals for which they are ready to lay down their lives.