

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CHARACTER – THE GREATEST ASSET OF AMERICA

LESSON 03 SESSION 03

3.5 Physical character

3.5.1 Great resources

Napoleon asked Talleyrand, "*What is America?*" To which reply was made, "It is a body without bones." An American adds: "*The bones have been developed, and they are bones of steel.*"

Possessed of a raw continent, millions of square miles in area, composed of boundless prairies, vast forests, mighty rivers, great plains, and rugged mountains, containing fertile soil, rich natural resources in minerals, timber, and water power, the American, lacking tools, supplies, and capital, was forced by the very nature of his task and environment to a life of hard labor, long hours of toil, frugal living, and self-dependence with attending hardships and dangers. Out of these combined conditions was developed a type of hardy pioneer unequalled in the history of mankind.

3.5.2 Developed by pioneers.

In her commercial life America has stepped boldly forth to the great task set before her. Slowly at first, groping her way along great rivers and through deep forests, she began the work of conquering the wilderness, which won as the fruit of her enterprise, first, the full possession of this great domain, and then, for her 300 years of toil, the greatest treasure house among the nations of the earth.

3.5.3 Visions become realities.

Forced to work by the very necessity of finding the means of existence, accepting danger and hardship, privation and suffering as a part of the task, America gave herself to creating material wealth.

Gaining strength and wisdom with succeeding years, America has built achievement upon achievement. No enterprise has been too great for her aggressive spirit. Her dreams and visions have become realities by the force of her will and the magic of her creative ability.

3.5.4 Spirit of improvement and invention.

Ever willing to adopt new ideas, to develop and improve, to tear down and rebuild, to scrap the machine of yesterday for the improved equipment of today, opportunity was never neglected to find a better way to do a larger business.

3.5.5 Success possible to every citizen.

Driven first by necessity, the joy of accomplishment became the spur to greater achievements. The way to comfort, to competency, to wealth was open and free to every citizen, limited alone by individual ability, courage, and determination. Out of great opportunity, with freedom to all, there has been bred a race of men and women of sterling character and outstanding independence.

3.6 Ethical character

3.6.1 Confidence.

American business is based upon the character of its people. J. Pierpoint Morgan used to say he banked more on a man's character than on his money. Character is the basis of confidence. Confidence is the basis of credit. Credit, above any other element, is the source of stability in commercial life. Our building industry, amounting to hundreds of millions annually, is dependent upon borrowed capital from the time of the first drafted plan to completion of each structure. The vast commercial enterprises of the United States are made possible by our system of credit based upon confidence in the integrity of the people.

The ethical character of our commercial relations is based upon respect for and confidence in the nobler things of life and the unfailing observance of business ethics.

3.6.2 High standards of commercial life.

America is a nation of corporations. Every enterprise of any consequence is incorporated. Founders or owners of a given business invite employee and public to share the risk and the profit. The workingman as a shareholder is rapidly becoming a capitalist; in number they have increased to several million and their investments are assuming astonishing proportions. By this means, adjustments of differences between capital and labor are becoming easier as differences arise. The employer in recognizing the employee as a fellow man and not as a commodity opens the door to mutual understanding and square dealing.

As a stockholder, the employee feels the interest and responsibility of a partner. Greater attention is paid to the work, quality is improved, waste eliminated, and profits increased to the mutual advantage of all.

The fact that labor is being less exploited and more fairly treated with each succeeding year is not only indicative of economic evolution but also a marked evidence of the high character common to our commercial life.

3.6.3 Spirit of cooperation and compromise.

One of the most encouraging signs of continued prosperity in America is the constantly growing tendency toward compromise and cooperation in the affairs of capital and labor, based upon mutual confidence. Such differences as are bound to arise are, as a rule, disposed of to the general good of all.

3.6.4 No class domination.

No class is permitted to dominate in America. Public opinion, which is always representative of public character, will not permit the assumption of power. Whether it is capital, labor, farmer, group, or section, public character in its dominant sense of fair dealing defeats the effort to acquire unfair advantage.

3.6.5 Spirit of benevolence.

Nothing is more characteristic of modern American life than the pouring out of private wealth for public service. Nowhere are so many philanthropic agencies at work.

There is that in American democracy which creates the spirit of public service through gifts to the public.

In respect to aid and contributions in world disasters America is one of the first in the field of distress and one of the last to leave.

3.6.6 Not materialistic.

The Old World, looking upon the intense activity of this New World, seeing us ever engrossed in material affairs, with little time for leisure, even making hard work of our play in our over-anxiety to win at any game, whether it be work or play, has scoffed at our lack of art, literature, and culture and called us a nation of dollar chasers.

Our justification for our so-called gross materiality lies in the fact that we were a new nation — new in a wilderness to be conquered; new in a land without homes, towns, or cities, without schools or churches, without transportation or communication. Under these circumstances there was neither occasion nor opportunity to write music, paint pictures, or sculpture in marble. Our music was in the sweet, sonorous song of the mighty forests and the rushing streams; our pictures were painted daily in the mists of the morning and the waving fields of grain.

Our monuments and memorials were carved from virgin forests, built in great cities, in rambling farmhouses set in emerald fields. We were kept too busy providing the necessities of life to find time for the finer accomplishments.

Now, lasting monuments depicting the strength, the majesty, and the beauty of our country are being erected; our large and well-kept parks are ornamented with beautiful sculptures; our colleges, universities, and institutions of music and art are comparable with those of any other part of the world; our public galleries and museums possess priceless works of art.

3.7 Political character

3.7.1 Diplomacy.

America is slowly but surely winning the confidence of the nations of the world. The desire to arbitrate rather than resort to armaments has distinguished America in her international policy, desiring to adjust all differences within the principles of justice and equity. Her commercial treaties are written in terms of square dealing. Backed by the guaranty of the American character, her obligations and her dollars are eagerly accepted wherever they may be offered.