

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE

LESSON 06 SESSION 03

6.6 Constitutional guaranties

The American citizen knows that he and his children may attain any goal to which intelligence, courage, and ability may lead. No overlord will ever bother or hinder their advancement. No succession to power or property is vested in titles of nobility to be transmitted through succeeding generations to favored families. The rich of today may be the wage earners of to-morrow, while the story of the rise of the exceedingly poor to affluence and power is as common as it is true.

The young American's future depends upon himself. He may inherit a fortune; his sense and ability alone will enable him to keep it. He may be born in the cabin of the miner or the shack of the mountaineer, yet if within him there burns the unquenchable fires of ambition, courage, and indomitable will there are none who may stop him on the road to success.

No person shall * * * be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation. — *Constitution of the United States.*

6.7 Aristocracy of brains

The only aristocracy that America will ever recognize is that of "brains" — "the tools to him who can handle them." The tribute in honor and the reward in wealth accorded to brains in this land of opportunity are not equaled in any other country. Brains ask for no "equality of condition," want only "equality of opportunity."

6.8 The four "I's."

Socially, economically, politically, the world is rapidly changing and in its evolution, it requires for its leadership men of individuality, independence, initiative and intelligence.

6.8.1 Individuality.

Under the guaranties given by the Constitution there has been developed in the American character a striking individuality, which stamps him an American wherever he may be found. It is that quality which inspired him to the conquest of the great American wilderness and the development of her resources. The urge of individuality has driven him in every undertaking not only for pecuniary reward but for the equal reward of stamping his achievement with his own personality. This distinctive bearing of the American commands attention and wins the confidence of all.

Conscious of his own strength, he asks no other favor than equal opportunity. When he marries he seeks no dower with his bride. He accepts his place in life with dignity born in the consciousness of his own power to better it. Be it ever so humble, his home is marked with his personality. His children bear the impress of his character, giving assurance that life can contain no difficulties too great for them to master. His is the consciousness of the free born, whether born in the crowded tenement of a congested city, the lonely prairie home of a western farmer, or within the sumptuous palace of a millionaire. Imbued with the spirit of the Nation, he stands upon his own feet and gladly enlists as a soldier in the battle of life.

6.8.2 Independence.

The American is the personification of independence. He asks no favors of government or men. He demands his rights and is always ready to uphold them. He has cultivated the habit of self-reliance and is ready to undertake any legitimate enterprise which, in his judgment, has a reasonable chance of success. Resourceful and unafraid, he has ventured into every field of endeavor, cheerfully paying the cost of his failure and as cheerfully sharing with others the rewards of his success. In the spirit of independence America has won her way to leadership in times of peace, and in times of war to a place of honor and respect among the nations.

6.8.3 Initiative.

Out of independence has grown a force of individual initiative which has made our great achievements possible. Initiative might well be termed the generator from which has come the power for all our accomplishments.

Tradition looks always to that which is old in habits, customs, culture, government, institutions, families, and structures. Initiative is forever putting off the old and putting on the new. It is the mother of creative genius, expressed in science and invention.

Without initiative, civilization would first stagnate, then fall rapidly into dissolution.

In no community in the world is freedom of initiative enjoyed as fully as in America. Government, laws, customs, traditions operate to enhance that freedom.

6.8.4 Intelligence.

So far our minds have grasped each successive problem and found so far the means of meeting each added complexity of modern civilization. With multiplied wants and ever-expanding fields of endeavor, the demand for intelligence increases. Machines are taking the place of hands, increasing production, shortening hours of labor, eliminating the exhaustion of toil, giving more time to self-betterment, recuperation, and recreation.

Markets become world-wide, competition grows keener, international affairs demand care and diplomacy; nations are awakening; the magic of science in transportation and communication has made us largely a family of nations with divergent aspirations, varied needs, and growing demands for self-expression.

6.9 The price of success

The price of success, whether of individual or nation, is found in work, education, and ideals.

6.9.1 Work.

The world grows busier with each passing year. Its machinery is never idle. Its burdens are too great to be encumbered with dead weight. Backward individuals and backward nations will surely be crushed beneath the Juggernaut we call civilization, unless they take a more active and intelligent part in its affairs.

There is more and greater work to be done with each succeeding generation. The achievements of individuals in the past are a challenge to the youth of today. There are still further fields of exploration, adventure, and accomplishment, and a multitude of past achievements to be perfected. Every man possessed of the will to work finds his opportunity awaiting him.

6.9.2 Education.

Education he must have. The time is past when hope of success can be offered to the ignorant. With each succeeding year the necessity for special accomplishments and particular fitness is more pronounced. Science has so far advanced as to become broken into many divisions, each requiring special training. Applied to every branch of government, industry, and even society, the demand is for education, that intelligence may be developed and applied to its full capacity; for in no other way may progress be assured, and progress is the purpose of life.

6.9.3 Ideals.

Work and education are not sufficient to equip either the individual or nation for the accomplishment of the purposes of life. There must also be the inspiration and governing force of ideals. Without ideals there can be no lasting achievements. Without ideals there can be neither understanding, tolerance, justice, nor brotherhood between individuals or nations. Without high ideals there can be no worthwhile aspirations, no true nobility of character, no spirit of unselfish service, all of which are essential to real progress.

6.10 The citizen's privilege

Emerson said, "Hitch your wagon to a star." The citizen should demand of himself and for himself the best that life affords and devote his energies in an ever-growing measure to public service, for the real joy of life is service to our fellow men.

This is the land of "equality of opportunity." The citizen alone can determine the measure of his participation in freedom's field. What he does and how he does it will be dependent upon his will to work, the thoroughness of his education, and the quality of his ideals.

We are a country of 118,000,000 people, speaking one language, having an enormous consuming power and an adequate transportation system for prompt distribution. We are not restricted within our wide limits by artificial barriers. We produce where it is most advantageous and distribute to the consumer where he may live. Here in the East we may eat the apples and use the timber from the Northwest, and the Pacific slope may buy cotton cloth from the Carolinas and motors from Detroit. Nowhere in the world does there exist so large, so varied, and so unrestricted a market as the United States.

There is a force underlying these factors and one which to me is all important. I mean the initiative and energy of the American people. We are willing to work.

We have that divine restlessness which will not permit us to accept things as they are but drives us to find something better. We are constantly improving our machinery, our methods, ourselves. Here no man accepts the level into which he has been born as fixing his status for life. Ability is quickly recognized; to rise is easy. * * * There is movement, not fixation, in our life in America. — *Andrew W. Mellon, Secretary of the Treasury.*