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Philadelphia Bar Association

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ARE WE EQUAL TO IT?

(From "THE SHINGLE," *Philadelphia Bar Association*, October, 1938)

THE most casual observer cannot but be impressed with a growing sense of world-wide instability and slipping of standards. The thoughtful, reflective person recognizes that civilization, as representing the accumulation of generations of experiences, faces a breakdown, in great part at least. Forces are rampant which, unless checked, intelligently subdued and then wisely directed, will bring about a collapse and destruction of a form of government which has given man the greatest sense of freedom and security in the history of any civilized society.

For the most part, restlessness and dissatisfaction have arisen from a sense of economic insecurity. Admittedly, there have been many injustices—the inevitable outgrowth of a rapidly changing world. But imperfections have and always will exist in any form of society.

Leaders are an essential factor in any organized body, but proper limitation of them is a vital necessity if society is to enjoy the freedom and liberties for which so many generations of mankind have struggled, fought and died.

The constant attacks on the judiciary by those elected to important posts cannot help but be viewed with concern and alarm by those who are or should be the zealous guardians of a constitutional form of government. Measured in terms of years and numbers, the indiscretions or digressions from the path of sworn duty have been immeasurably insignificant amongst those elevated to the bench. Is it not time that bar associations take positive and forceful steps to set forth clearly the self-evident fact that this increasing cry of persons clothed with executive power, in denunciation of the judiciary, will end only with the destruction of those privileges which make a free people! The present crisis has caused a situation far beyond the division of political beliefs and party struggles. The question is whether the counsel of disinterested and wise persons will prevail and so help ride out a storm that portends grave peril to the real and ultimate welfare of a democratic society. Will the lawyers, as citizens, arise not so much to an opportunity as to a duty and responsibility, which, by virtue of their training and oath of office, peculiarly rests upon and with them?

As a thoughtful author has recently said: "What we need today is a militant humanism, conscious of its own virility and inspired by the knowledge that the principles of freedom, tolerance and skepticism must not be exploited by shameless and unscrupulous fanatics."

The Editor.