

Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

July 8, 1941

Fellow Parents and Neighbors:

We stand together tonight on a common basis and with a common purpose. The common basis is that we are each of us the parent of a son who is in the defense forces of our country. I am proud, as you are, that my son, like yours, is serving his country in this important field. Like you I would to God that none of our boys should have to go into war training, for I hate war. At the same time, you could never have forgiven yourself, nor could I with my son, had I put a straw in the way of his going, or done anything other than back him to the limit as he volunteered for service.

The common purpose which unites us is to see to it, that there are made available to these sons of ours in the time they spend outside of the training areas, opportunities that will satisfy their normal desire for wholesome companionship and recreation, and will protect them from those forces that seek their undoing, and influences that will develop that splendid something called morale, without which the finest military training can not make a good soldier.

In the service these sons of ours are only "Private Jones" or "Seaman Smith" – to us they are our pride and joy. They have often meant heartache and sleepless nights. But what worthwhile boy does not have his problems, his temptations and his defeats as well as his victories? For a quarter of a century we have watched them grow and develop as we have dreamed of their future.

And now they have gone out from our homes into a new and strange life to become the proud defenders of their country, but they have not gone out from our hearts; they are more than ever in our thoughts. We do not propose to see what we have been doing for them all these years go for naught. We do not propose to have them cut off after training hours, from activities that are normal and wholesome. It is to provide these activities that we so gladly turn to the United Service Organizations, which are fitted, each one of them, not only by long years of successful experience in their respective fields, but also by similar work in the last war, to do for our sons what we covet for them and they eagerly seek, after the day's work is done.

To that end we have banded ourselves together into the Selective Service Parents' and Neighbors' Committee of the United Service Organizations, because we know that thus united we will be a more effective force, multiplied many times, as we succeed in associating with ourselves the other parents of New York's 100,000 boys in the Army and Navy and the friends

and neighbors of those parents, representing in all some two million families in this city. It is because I believe so profoundly in what these six organizations can do for our sons who are in the defense service, that I have not only accepted membership on their managing board and executive committee, but am proud to act as the Honorary Chairman of this committee, in which capacity I speak to you tonight.

Some people say, "But too much is being done for the trainees; what they need is to be made hard and tough and not to be babied and pampered. We are not sympathetic with the work of the U.S.O".

Those who say that the man who is tough makes the best soldier, know little of human nature. He who carries on when physical forces are exhausted is the man who is buoyed up by the spiritual force called morale, who is fighting, not for the lust of killing, but for a principle, a great cause, dearer than life itself. I certainly do not want my son made tough by his military training, nor do you. I do not want my son just because he is a soldier, to be abandoned by those influences that make for character. I want him to come back home, whatever his military experiences may be, still a man with ideals, holding duty and honor above life. That you share fully with me these views I am confident. It is for that reason that we, the parents and neighbors of these boys, want to see provided for them when outside of the training areas, a wholesome atmosphere, the companionship of fine women and girls, recreations that are normal and influences that will keep them clean, and worthy.

But, unfortunately, there are far too few such places available as yet for soldiers and sailors when off duty. Many of the boys, as they flock into the nearby towns and cities, are today having that enervating and wholly discouraging feeling forced upon them "that nobody cares." There is nothing that more quickly leads to demoralization. That is why the campaign for the U.S.O. must be pressed, not only to success, but to an overwhelming success. Nothing could prove more conclusively to our defense forces that the people of this country are solidly behind them and that "everybody cares" about their well being, than to have the fund largely oversubscribed. Moreover, every dollar, every penny that can be secured is needed, and more too, to provide the facilities which we as parents have promised our sons, and we as citizens have promised our defense forces.

Not long since I sought to formulate in my own mind the things that make life most worth living, without which it would have little meaning. Some of these things have been relegated to bygone days; some are regarded as long since outgrown. Nevertheless I believe they are every one of them fundamental and eternal. They are the principles on which my wife and I have tried to bring up our family; they are the principles in which my father believed and by

which he governed his life. They are the principles, many of them, which I learned at my mother's knee. They point the way to usefulness and happiness in life, to courage and peace in death. If they mean to you what they mean to me they may perhaps be helpful also to our sons for their guidance and inspiration. Let me state them:

I believe in the supreme worth of the individual and in his right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

I believe that every right implies a responsibility; every opportunity, an obligation; every possession, a duty.

I believe that the law was made for man and not man for the law; that government is the servant of the people and not their master.

I believe in the dignity of labor, whether with head or hand; that the world owes no man a living but that it owes every man an opportunity to make a living.

I believe that thrift is essential to well ordered living and that economy is a prime requisite of a sound financial structure, whether in government, business or personal affairs.

I believe that truth and justice are fundamental to an enduring social order.

I believe in the sacredness of a promise, that a man's word should be as good as his bond; that character – not wealth or power or position – is of supreme worth.

I believe that the rendering of useful service is the common duty of mankind and that only in the purifying fire of sacrifice is the dross of selfishness consumed and the greatness of the human soul set free.

I believe in an all-wise and all-loving God, named by whatever name, and that the individual's highest fulfillment, greatest happiness and widest usefulness are to be found in living in harmony with His will.

I believe that love is the greatest thing in the world; that it alone can overcome hate; that right can and will triumph over might.

These are the principles, however formulated, for which all good men and women throughout the world, irrespective of race or creed, education, social position or occupation are standing, and for which many of them are suffering and dying. These are the principles upon which alone a new world recognizing the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God can be established. It is to help usher in this new day that our sons have dedicated themselves to the service of their country. And it is that they may be kept worthy of this high service that we call upon all parents and neighbors in this city and throughout the length and breadth of this fair land to stand with us in supporting the United Service Organizations and their campaign.