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## Light on the Great Discussion

THE UNITED STATES SENATE has been the scene of some of the most momentous events in American history. It was there that such men as Clay, Webster, Calhoun and Jefferson Davis debated the issues which resulted in the "great compromise" on the extension of slavery to the western territories. There the bitter conflict between North and South approached the climax that led to secession. The question of this country's joining the League of Nations was threshed out in the Senate, and the Upper Chamber was the focal point of the clash between isolation and intervention in 1939-'41.

But with the opening of the Eighty-second Congress last month came the formal beginning of what has aptly been called the Great Debate. Perhaps it should be called the Greatest Debate. Surely no more fateful alternatives have confronted the Senate in this century than those presented by the administration and by the Republican opposition led officially by Senator Taft and unofficially by former President Hoover, with a dissenting assist from Governor Dewey.

There is no precedent for the issues of this debate. Compared with it, the League of Nations controversy, however heated, was essentially simple. The war was over and won. Should the United States maintain its wartime alliance with Britain, France and Italy? Should

it join the rest of the world in an alliance to keep the peace? Or should it retire again behind the still-impregnable protection of its oceans?

Even in the debate over neutrality and aid to Britain that preceded Pearl Harbor, the fundamental problem was clear. Should we abandon the United Kingdom and gamble on the Axis governments letting us alone, or should we take a chance on war by helping the last great, free, democratic power that remained in Europe?

In the present case there is only one general goal: to avert a world war without appeasement or surrender. Beyond that there is no broad agreement. Where are we going from Korea, and how far are we going? What is the definition of victory in a war which is not a total war, and against an enemy who has killed thousands of our men without putting one of his own soldiers in the field? What is the limit of our strength? How much of that strength shall we have to employ? Where best can we use it?

Those are imponderable questions. Yet they must be met with definite opinions if the country is not to wallow long and dangerously in a mire of indecision. And the definite and conflicting opinions put forth so far have distressed a great many people. Friends of each Senate camp see fatal error if the opposition's policies prevail. These citizens seem to feel that the views of one side or another must be adopted intact,

and quickly, if the country is to be saved. But all-or-nothing partisanship is not the point of the debate, and surely it will not be the result. This magazine has faith in the integrity of the men who lead the discussion, and it has a conviction that in these life-and-death decisions, at least, they realize that the necessity of statesmanship overrides any considerations of political advantage.

The country has no time to waste, it is true. But it must take time to weigh the tremendous consequences of the government's next moves. It must take time to arrive at a point of compromise on the course which the nation is to follow. That is the point of the debate. And it is only after such a debate that the country may emerge on the road which it must travel, and exert its united strength for the journey ahead.

Collier's sees no cause for distress in the Great Debate. It is far better to have an acrimonious airing of differences than to make decisions that ignore the differences. There was no debate before Cairo or Tehran or Yalta or Potsdam. There was no debate before General Marshall was dispatched to China with a memorandum demanding that Chiang Kai-shek form a coalition government that included Communists. If there had been debate, the world situation today might be less ominous.

A free exchange of ideas and a free voice for all loyal but opposing views is fundamental to the survival of our system of free government. It is a privilege and a duty which is a great source of our strength. The Great Debate could not be postponed. Fortunately we did not wait until the crisis was past to re-examine the government's unsure policy of recent months. If we had there might now be nothing to re-examine.

### Give the Man a Break

FEW OF US TODAY would covet the job of President, even for those 50,000 tax-free dollars that Mr. Truman gets on top of a nice salary and expense account. The work is hard and the hours are long. And all the hours aren't taken up with world-shaking affairs of state, though there probably are enough of same to fill the Presidential day. For the President has certain social obligations which he feels he must meet. Among them, for instance, are six Saturday affairs which Washington correspondents hold annually.

They are the fall and spring Gridiron dinners, and the dinners of the Women's National Press Club, the White House Correspondents Association, the White House News Photographers, and the Radio Correspondents Association. The President accepts these invitations in the interest of good press relations and, we hope, some fun as well. Presumably he was prepared to show up for all of them again this year, until all of the groups canceled their affairs.

We believe they acted wisely, and we should like to congratulate them on their wisdom. These are scarcely propitious times for the usual horse-play at the President's expense. And while a part of only six week ends out of 52 may not seem much, it would add just that much more to Mr. Truman's already taxing schedule.

It is not a minor matter to contribute a few restful hours to the President's busy day. And as an incidental dividend, they might pay off in an improvement of what has lately been a rather tart relationship between President and press.

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