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Inaugural Address of the New President

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Indiana State Bar Association

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INAUGURAL ADDRESS
OF
THE NEW PRESIDENT

CARL WILDE*

I can imagine no honor which might come to me which I could value as highly as that of being chosen president of The Indiana State Bar Association. This is due largely to the respect and admiration I have for the members of our profession. I am somewhat impatient of the apologetic attitude which some lawyers occasionally assume when attacks are made upon the profession as a whole. It is quite true that occasionally individual lawyers fail to adhere to the high standards which this and other like organizations seek constantly to establish and maintain. Such individual shortcomings constitute no good reason, however, for that general condemnation of the legal profession which is sometimes pronounced even by some of its own members. I believe that when the magnitude of the responsibilities which fall upon lawyers in the practice of the law is taken into consideration, it will be found that the derelictions of duty of which the individual lawyer may, on occasion, be guilty, are no more numerous or reprehensible than those which occur in any other profession. I believe that we should strive constantly to raise the ethical standards of the bar, but that we should avoid and resent any imputation that our profession is less constant as a whole, in its adherence to the highest standards, than the members of other professions or of the business fraternity.

I feel keenly my own shortcomings when I contemplate the task which lies before me, but I hope the kindness you have shown me in electing me is an earnest of the indulgence which you will extend in respect to any inadequacy in my ability to fulfill the duties of my new position.

* Delivered at the Annual Meeting of The Indiana State Bar Association at Indianapolis, September 30, 1941.

I were unappreciative indeed if I did not voice my gratitude to Judge O'Byrne, the retiring president, for the constant consideration he has accorded me during my term as vice-president. I acknowledge, with appreciation, the receipt of countless courtesies and kindnesses at his hands. It has been a pleasure and an inspiration to me during the past year to work with Judge O'Byrne.

Two principal tasks confront the members of the Indiana State Bar Association at this time. The first is, of course, the performance of our utmost endeavor in aid of National Defense. In all crises which have arisen in the past the lawyers of Indiana have always done their full duty, and we can confidently predict that in this critical time and in the even more crucial days which lie just ahead, they will be found in the forefront of those who are engaged in the work of National Defense. Much has already been accomplished by the State Bar Association's Committee on National Defense, which was appointed by Judge O'Byrne and which will be continued under the new administration. Through the cooperation and as the result of suggestions made by representatives of the Indiana Selective Service Headquarters a splendid beginning has been made and already the services of a considerable number of our members have been enlisted in this work. It is, however, only a beginning. I believe that the work of this Committee will expand so greatly that eventually the effort and aid of a large percentage of the members of our Association will be involved. The officers and members of The Indiana State Bar Association pledge themselves wholeheartedly to this cause.

The second task which confronts us is the preservation, to the greatest extent possible, of the civil rights of our citizens during a time when such rights must necessarily suffer some curtailment due to the exigencies of the crisis. It is our duty to preserve the rights and liberties guaranteed our citizens by the federal and state constitutions, as much as may be consistent with all out preparation for National Defense, primarily because we lawyers are sworn to do so. Furthermore, an enlightened self-interest dictates the same course. The usefulness of the lawyer increases in direct ratio with the growth of civil liberties and decreases just as directly with their decline. There is no need for lawyers in totalitarian states. Assertion of and insistence upon the

rights of the individual are intolerable to a dictator. But in a free country like ours the efforts of the lawyers to preserve the rights and liberties of our citizens will not only be countenanced but acclaimed by those engaged in administering our laws and by the public generally.

I thank you again for having given me the opportunity to be of service to the bar of Indiana. Whatever imperfections may display themselves in the performance of my duties as your president, they will not be due to a lack of earnest and sincere effort. I count with confidence upon the cooperation of every member of the Association in the tasks that lie before it, and having that, I feel certain that the year ahead will be one of progress and accomplishment.

