

Liberty

SEPT. 26, 1942

He Won't Be Home for Dinner Tonight



AND you in Washington are wondering whether We, the People, know that we are in the midst of a war.

Day before yesterday he shook hands with the elevator man.

The elevator man said, "When are you goin'?"

And he said, "Day after tomorrow."

And that was his complete formality, his total gesture, as he walked out of a somewhere in a life that was known, and into a nowhere of a life that was unknown and a future that is blind.

Upstairs in the office there is an empty desk. Downstairs in the shipping room a ball of twine has been tossed into a box for the last time. Over in the factory a hat has been hung against the wall.

Last night he cracked a lot of jokes at the table. He tried to make it easier for the rest of us.

Today he went away, with nobody making a fuss over him. No bands on the street. No kissing at the train. He just sort of disappeared.

And he won't be home for dinner tonight.

He is going by the hundreds of thousands, from every city and town and village in America. He is our brother, our son, and, quite frequently, our dad.

And still a lot of you people at our nation's headquarters are wondering whether We, the People, fully realize that we are in the midst of a war.

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You sit there wondering what our reactions will be to a sugar ration, whether you dare cut down on our coffee, when you have cut out our kid, and whether you hadn't better wait until after election before cutting down on our gas.

In one column of our paper we read that there are terrible shortages in innumerable lines, and that drastic curtailment must be made if we are to win this war.

And in another column we read that probably nothing "drastic" will be done until after the elections.

And how do you think we feel about that?

As this is being written, in one column of our paper we read that the next forty days will tell the story of the war. If Russia can last, we have a chance; if Russia fails, God knows what will happen to the world. Plea after plea comes for a second front to aid our allies. But right in the next column we read that our military authorities are becoming "irritated" at all this talk about a second front.

We, the People, don't know the first solitary thing about whether there should or should not be—or can or cannot be—a second front. We are not trying to sit in judgment on the men who are running this war. But we do know that somebody should shut up or speak up. Somebody in authority should speak with authority and clear our minds.



DON'T think We, the People, can't take anything you have to hand out. And don't for a minute get it into your minds that we don't know there is a war going on. Our skies are clear—yes; and maybe your technique has kept them clear. Our land is free; and maybe your farsightedness has kept it free. Even in this gravest moment in the history of our civilization, when our sons and brothers and husbands and fathers are walking into an unknown so grave that we do not dare to think, even now in our blackest hour, we do not presume to question your knowledge as to what is best to do, or how to do it.

But we do most seriously question the eternal committees and councils that are permitted to dawdle on. We question your fixed idea that you are the ones to determine whether or not We, the People, realize that we are in the midst of a war. And, above all, we question your grimly determined idea that you are the ones to decide how much We, the People, should know or should not know, how much we can take or cannot take.

He won't be home for dinner tonight. And your worry about our rationing cards would begin to be funny if it weren't pitiful.

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