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Some Letters of Paul O. Husting concerning the Present Crisis

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DOCUMENTS

SOME LETTERS OF PAUL O. HUSTING CONCERNING THE PRESENT CRISIS

The advent of the world struggle which still rages between the forces of autocracy and democracy found our nation as a whole, and many of us as individuals, unprepared to meet the new conditions and to withstand the test of the new issues with which we were confronted. But it did not find the mind of Paul Husting wanting in the needful qualities of intellect, or his soul in those of courage.

In the brief period of service as senator from Wisconsin he revealed himself as one of Wisconsin's greatest sons, and his untimely death in October, 1917, was a genuine calamity both to state and to nation in their hour of trial and danger. Not often does the opportunity occur to a historical journal to publish documents fraught at the same time with a high degree of historical value and of interest for their bearing on issues still current. Such an opportunity, we think, is afforded the WISCONSIN MAGAZINE OF HISTORY in connection with the documents which follow. The letters speak for themselves and aside from certain minor typographical corrections we present them unedited. However, we cannot refrain, in concluding this introductory note, from calling the reader's attention to the significance of the dates of the several letters: the first, following the sinking of the *Lusitania*; the second, at the time the embargo-on-munitions discussion was rife; the third, following our entrance into the world war.

Mayville, Wis., May 14, 1915.

_____,
_____, Wis.

Dear Sir:

Your letter of May 10th, enclosing clipping from a Chilton newspaper, was duly received and read. The clipping

which you have enclosed entitled "The United States, an Ally of England against Germany and Austria-Hungary" is a very coarse and vituperative and un-American attack on President Wilson and his administration. In this article, the President in substance and effect is portrayed as a weakling, a tool of England, a hypocrite, who pretends to be what he is not, and with sanctimonious phrase is trying to mislead the people. The administration is charged with being in a secret pact with England against Germany and winds up with asking the people of this country how long they are going to stand the disgrace of having such a government.

I do not believe that I have the honor of your acquaintance but, nevertheless, I feel that the article sent me and your letter should be replied to because there are other papers and other men engaged in carrying out this sort of propaganda.

There are, I know, a number of good and patriotic citizens of this country, who, because of lack of information, and because of their intense sympathy for relatives and friends now fighting in the old country, have permitted themselves to be misled in the belief that this country has unjustly, and, contrary to the laws of nations, permitted the shipment of munitions of war to European countries. There are, however, also, a number of men and newspapers who are merely repeating and spreading a propaganda originating in the old country with a design and purpose to weaken their own government and aid and strengthen one of the belligerent nations. I hope that I am addressing you as one who may be put in the first class mentioned.

Your criticism of President Wilson must be the result either of blind partisanship, of a lack of familiarity with the facts relating to our present foreign relations, of a failure to fully comprehend the exact meaning and difficulties of neutrality, or of a desire to plunge this country into [the] European embroglio without considering whether we have any cause or excuse for entering that awful conflict. Considerations of partisanship are so loathsome in times of great national crises that I believe you incapable of entertaining such and I freely acquit you of such base motives. The high-minded attitude of former President Taft ought to be sufficient to deter everyone from seeking to make political or

partisan capital out of the present delicate situation. I cannot conceive that you feel yourself in closer allegiance to Germany than you do to this nation, for then your words would not be those of an American citizen but of one who is an alien, at least in thought, and not entitled to the protection or blessings of our free government. I assume that you are laboring under a misconception of the facts and upon the assumption that you have been misguided, I am writing you fully in reply to your letter.

I find no fault with American citizens or American newspapers (in this, of course, I include those printed in the German language) that sympathize with Germany as against England nor do I find any fault with the criticism directed against England's war policy or methods. Our government has repeatedly remonstrated and protested to England against the interference with our commerce with neutral countries, in the shipment of non-contraband of war to belligerent countries, in the unlawful seizure of our vessels, and in the general interference with our rights as a neutral nation. I wish to add my objections and express my resentment against England for her studied and persistent violations of many provisions of the international law. We have protested and have done everything that we lawfully and justly could do to support and maintain our rights, short of going to war. Withal, however, no American ships or lives have been lost as a result of England's operations upon the sea and no passenger boat carrying citizens of the United States has been sunk.

In the obstruction of our commerce and our dealings with foreign nations, Germany has gone as far as its ability permitted and is certainly subject, in this respect, to the same criticism and resentment that we have directed against England. It seems that England and Germany in the operation of the war in retaliation and in reprisal have set aside the international code and are justifying anything and everything upon the ground or plea of necessity. So long as this mode of warfare is directed against one another of the belligerent countries or their citizens, while we stand horrified and appalled, we may still have no just cause for interference. We have suffered these inconveniences and losses to

our business because not only our government, but our people desire peace, and, furthermore, because we have no desire to interfere between the belligerent countries. Now, while at most, Germany can only claim that, in respect to the hindrance to our commerce, she has done no worse than England, yet, in addition to this, ships flying the American flag have been assailed and sunk by her and American lives taken without justification and now the world is appalled by the destruction of over 1,200 lives ruthlessly taken and men, women, and children have gone down to their death defenseless and undefended.

It is no defense or justification of this act as against our country that some other nation by its unlawful acts compelled the country at fault also to commit unlawful acts by way of reprisal.

It is no defense to say that American citizens who lost their lives were warned and that they lost their lives through their own contributory negligence. No warning to commit an unlawful act is a defense or justification of such unlawful act. Such warning, in fact, negatives the idea of accident and evidences premeditation and design to commit the unlawful act.

We know that the *Lusitania* was sunk, that more than 100 American lives were lost, and we must hold the country directly responsible for a deed which has shocked the civilized world and which appears to have been in violation of the law governing, and practices obtaining in, civilized warfare. Notwithstanding the horror and resentment aroused in the public mind, our President is still striving to avert war!

What would you now say if a German liner with Americans aboard had been sunk by an English torpedo under like circumstances and our President would not have counseled war against the offending country but would still have stood for peace? Would you not have said then that this country was favoring England and would you not have reiterated and repeated your slander that this country is an ally of England's?

In the slanderous clipping sent me, it is charged that this country is pretending neutrality when in fact, by not forbidding the shipment of arms and munitions of war, we are violating the law of nations governing neutrals.

This slander against our country has been repeated over and over again by thoughtless men and by partisan newspapers. It originated across the sea with those who well know the falsity and hypocrisy of the charge and who have passed it on to a well-meaning and sympathetic, but over-zealous and mistaken, people and press for the purpose of accomplishing a selfish end. This slander has been fostered and given currency also by some designing men and by some designing newspapers who appear to have forgotten their duty to their country and who appear to be concerned more with the effect that the present war has upon some foreign country than with its effect upon our own country.

The laws of nations are the rules which determine the conduct of the general body of civilized states in their dealings with one another. Its doctrines are founded on legal, not simply on ethical ideas; since they purport to be rules of justice, not counsels of perfection, the foreign policies of a country are not founded upon feelings of moral rightness but upon precedents, treaties, and opinions of those recognized as authority.

International law is a part of the law of the land and, since the interest of the United States with foreign nations and the policies in regard to them are placed by the Constitution in the hands of the federal government, its decisions upon these subjects are *obligatory upon every citizen*.

The above are some of the elementary principles of international law. These nations which are protected by these provisions also are subject to corresponding duties and obligations. Those which invoke the law must obey the law. International law, being the joint product of civilized nations, adopted and made by the common and joint consent of nations, of course, can not be repealed or amended by any one nation but only by the mutual consent of all countries. If it were otherwise, each country would make its own international law to be amended or repealed at the will of such country and thus would have no effect either upon itself or any other nation.

Now we have an international law and its provisions are well defined and recognized. Now is there any provision in this law which forbids or makes unlawful the shipment of

arms by citizens of a neutral country to a belligerent country or which gives a neutral country the privilege to forbid such shipment? No. Then why not? Because it has been the law since civilization began for citizens of neutral countries to engage in commerce as they chose and at their risk, subject only to the right of belligerents to intercept and seize contraband of war in transit to a belligerent enemy. In all the wars in which this country has been engaged, the citizens of the countries now warring in Europe have recognized and countenanced this practice of selling arms to *our* enemy while we were at war and we have neither protested nor complained against it, fully recognizing that the citizens of such countries were entirely within their rights, that we had no just cause for complaint. We recognized that it would have been a violation of international law if at that time the said countries had prohibited the shipment of munitions of war with a purpose clearly manifested to aid or benefit either ourselves or our enemy.

For scores of years those countries now engaged in the European war have been arming themselves and fortifying their country with the positive knowledge that sooner or later a conflict of the kind now raging would occur. England, France, and Russia did and so did Germany and Austria. They also well knew that, under the provisions of international law, the shipment of arms and munitions of war was permissible subject to the interception and seizure of them by belligerent enemies. Long before this war, which they knew was inevitable, started Germany and Austria had the opportunity and the influence to have changed the international law and there is no doubt that the United States would have joined them in this amendment. Far-seeing as its statesmen are and having well in mind the provisions of international law, yet, notwithstanding, Germany entered this war with the law as it now stands.

If international law had, at the beginning of the present war, prohibited the shipment of munitions of war from this country and the United States nevertheless had violated the rule and permitted the shipment of munitions of war, *then* it could be charged and convicted of a violation of the law and a breach of neutrality by the country adversely affected

by such violation. Why? Because we would then have been guilty of an affirmative act unlawfully changing the established law to the injury and prejudice of a country with whom we are at peace without its consent. Such act would have been a breach of neutrality because, international law having been established by mutual consent, we would have no right to repeal and amend that law without the consent of those adversely affected by the change.

Now to prohibit and prevent the shipment of munitions of war by an affirmative act on our part, at the behest and for the exclusive benefit of one of the countries now at war, without the consent of the nations adversely affected thereby, would be a violation of international law and would constitute a breach of neutrality on our part which would be indefensible from the standpoint of good faith and good friendship to all on our part. Now it must be remembered that the United States government is not engaged in the shipment of munitions of war to other countries. A good many misguided and uninformed people have been led to believe that this country as a nation is thus engaged. It is true, that citizens of this country as a matter of business are engaged in manufacturing and selling to individuals, from whatever country they may come, munitions of war, as citizens of Germany, Austria, and other belligerent countries have done since time immemorial. President Wilson has not approved such shipments. It is entirely probable that, from a moral standpoint, he abhors the manufacture and sale of instruments and commodities to be used in the slaughter of human beings. He is a man of peace, and, if he had his way, wars in the future would be an impossibility.

But, as President of the United States,—a country which is in no sense responsible for this war—a country whose sole and passionate desire is to keep out of this conflict—Woodrow Wilson must execute the laws as he finds them and must maintain the neutrality of this country in accordance with the law of nations. This he has done patiently, persistently, and consistently, notwithstanding that blind and bitter partisanship, now on one side, now on the other, has done its best to shove him off his balance.

Permit me to say that you, and men like you, and newspapers publishing like articles commit a base and cruel slander on the President and on your country when you state otherwise. This country, of all the countries of the world, has kept its obligations and its poise.

In war-maddened Europe both England and Germany have attempted to annul the law to suit the exigencies of the moment. Our country, however, has contended, and, clearly within its rights, has demanded the observance of the law of nations and has refused to recognize the right of the warring nations to annul or to amend the same to our damage or in derogation of our rights.

How, then, in view of these facts, could we hold belligerents to their lawful duties if we were at the same time to violate the law and put ourselves in the same class with them. But this is what you and other critics ask this country to do. It is clear that you do not want this country to be neutral; you want it to take an affirmative and active part by governmental action to help one country and hurt another. Your and my government is endeavoring to maintain the status quo of a real neutrality. Those who are responsible for this movement which you approve of are endeavoring to shake and disturb it. Those who complain of our want of neutrality are complaining only because we have not become an ally of the country they favor.

If we listened to the insidious demands made by these countries that would have us violate our lawful obligation to respect the law of nations by affirmatively aiding and assisting their side, would we not be stopped from demanding reparation for the misconduct of the other countries who have been prejudiced by our unlawful and unneutral act? And would not such a flagrant breach of international obligation on our part justify reprisals against us, or worse than that, probably eventuate in a war with those countries who would thus be unlawfully and unfairly prejudiced by our act?

These countries who would have us place an embargo on arms and munitions with an eye solely to their advantage might well favor an act on our part which would plunge us into war with their enemies and thus make us their own ally. From the standpoint of *their* own material advantage, and

owing this country no duty whatever, it is easy to understand the motive back of their wishes.

But what motive, I ask, prompts you or any other American citizen who, owing a duty only to this country, should have in mind at all times primarily the welfare of his own country, to aid and promote a foreign propaganda, which has for its object and end the plunging of this country into war with one side or the other.

I say I acquit you of any base motive and can only believe that your utterances and your actions are the result of a want of information and understanding and not a willful desire on your part to injure the country which you are bound to support.

You could not be either misguided or mistaken, however, if you had not blindly accepted as true the statement of facts and the statement of international law as promulgated by a foreign government and its emissaries rather than the statements of fact and the statements of law promulgated by your own government. What right have you to doubt the utterances of our President, who is serving this country with that singleness of purpose which has always distinguished the acts of our presidents?

What right have you to believe the utterances of emissaries, who have been sent from abroad with a singleness of purpose to serve their own government at whatever cost to ours by sowing discord and falsehood among our people and who are trespassing upon our forbearance and are violating obligations which we believe a visitor to our shores owes to our people?

To put it in another way, may I not ask you, as a citizen, what reason or right you have to believe or expect that a foreign country and its emissaries are safe advisers for the citizens of the United States to consult or follow? And may I not also ask you, what there is in the life of President Wilson as a man and his record as a president that warrants you or any American citizen or newspaper in believing or asserting that he is not a man to believe or a safe president and counselor to follow? These questions answer themselves.

This country is now confronted with a crisis. Notwithstanding the wave of popular indignation that has been

aroused in this country, the President is straining every nerve to preserve peace and still maintain the honor and dignity of this country. You, and others that have been uttering the same charges that you have, have made the task more difficult than it otherwise would be. There appears to be a feeling in some foreign countries that our country is divided.

A short while ago, a prominent citizen of a foreign country, whose utterances are recognized as semi-official, stated in substance that, while his country was a unit, that that was more than could be said of the United States in all cases.

In the Milwaukee *Journal* of Wednesday, May 12th, a translated article from the Frankfurter *Zeitung* was quoted as stating "that because of the fact that we have naturalized German citizens and a number of natural-born Americans of German descent that a war between this country and Germany would be impossible because of the necessity of placing these citizens in the detention camp and that it would require our entire army to watch over them."

These statements can only mean that the belief is entertained in that country that, in case of certain eventualities, this country would be divided and that certain of our citizens would side with Germany against our government. Such a belief if indeed prevalent in that country is a serious obstacle to a peaceful termination of our negotiations in the present crisis.

But to those of us who have read the history of the Revolutionary War, of the rebellion, and of every other war in which we have been engaged as a nation—those of us who love and admire our German friends and neighbors, who are familiar with their spirit of American citizenship and patriotism, who have lived amongst them and have felt and feel one with them, know that these statements are unfounded and we resent them as a base calumny upon some of our most respected citizens. It is an insult to American citizenship. It in effect amounts to a charge of disloyalty and treason against some of our best citizens. Such a statement should be publicly resented, however, first of all by those against whom this slander is directed, not because their loyalty and patriotism is doubted here, but because it is doubted elsewhere. It is necessary for the world to understand and know

that America is united as one man. This will do more to keep us out of war than all the clamor and all the pressure that can be brought to bear upon our President to abandon our neutrality and to violate our international obligations.

Permit me to say that in a time like this it is your duty and the duty of every citizen of the United States to stand loyally and patriotically back of our government. Not only as a matter of law is it your duty but from a natural sense of obligation as a citizen of a great nation, whose benefits and blessings you enjoy, and whose existence you are at all hazards bound to preserve. We are fortunate indeed that we have a president like Woodrow Wilson at the head of our affairs at this time. A man less capable, less patriotic, less intelligent, less courageous might have precipitated us in the war before this. He is now standing four square to all the winds that blow, in an endeavor to preserve peace with honor, dignity, and safety to ourselves. Let all of us unite to do all we can to keep firm and [word illegible] any extreme and ill-considered speech.

In times like these, permit me to say that we should not only feel but act together. This is no time for petty partisanship or petty politics. This is a time for deliberation and moderation in thought, word, and deed. It is a time for the submersion of all our differences, sympathies, and feelings in a unity of purpose and desire for our country's good.

In conclusion, permit me to say that all of us who may trace our ancestry across the sea no matter to what particular country, should be the first to speak out loudly and clearly that our undivided loyalty and allegiance is with America, always, no matter what may be our tie.

Yours very truly,

PAUL O. HUSTING.

Washington, D. C., Apr. 1, 1916.

Rev. _____,
_____, Wis.

Dear Sir:

Your letter of some time ago, expressing the disapproval of the pastors of the Lutheran Conference of the Iowa Synod held in Beaver Dam, in January, of my attitude on the embargo on munitions question was duly received. The letter

appeared in the Milwaukee papers on the Saturday before and therefore its contents were familiar to me before receiving the same by mail. The reason that this letter was not answered was because it seemed to me that it called for no reply but that it was merely intended to give public expression to your disapproval by your Conference of my attitude and vote on these questions.

Now in reply to yours of the 20th inst. and also to that above referred to let me first say that I regret very much that any act or attitude of mine as Senator from Wisconsin should meet with the disapproval of any number of my fellow citizens. I am not insensible of the support that I received from many citizens of German extraction in the last campaign nor do I think that there is anybody representing the state of Wisconsin who is more anxious to please and to retain the confidence, respect, and good will of his fellow citizens of German extraction or ancestry, for that matter, than I am, provided that I can do so without acting inconsistently with my oath of office or my sense of duty.

In justification of my attitude let me say then that my vote and my attitude on our foreign relations are the result of deep-seated convictions based upon study and a great deal of thought upon this subject and I am maintaining such attitude and convictions upon the subject (notwithstanding that some of my fellow citizens disagree with me) because I am convinced that if I did otherwise I would be committing my country to a wrong and dangerous policy—a policy which not only might, but which probably would, force us into war and this is a result which I understand neither you nor any other citizen desires, if it can honorably be avoided. Holding such convictions (at least honestly formed) I feel that I would be violating my oath of office and my duty as a Senator if I voted contrary to my convictions in order to please you or others. This I manifestly cannot and of course will not do. I consider it my first duty as a Senator and as a citizen to support and sustain my government in a crisis like this.

The criticism expressed in your letter is confined to two matters only, namely: First—My attitude on the embargo question. Second—My vote on the Gore Resolution. And you tell me that my attitude on the one and my vote on the

other is not in accordance with the wishes or sentiments of the people of Wisconsin.

The substance of your criticism is contained in the sentence which I quote from your letter: "We therefore have a perfect right to expect that those men, whom we sent to represent *our* interests, whom we sent to represent us before the President we have elected, should vote as we would vote, if we had an opportunity to cast our vote. We know full well that you are not an instructed delegate, this being impossible, and yet you ought to vote as you know that your constituents *require* you to vote."

Now let me ask you upon what you base your assertion that I am not voting the way the majority of my constituents "require" me to vote? The people of the state of Wisconsin have never yet recorded or had an opportunity to record their sentiment or opinions on these questions, and consequently I have no means at my command that will enable me to inform myself as to how my constituents would "require" me to vote. I believe that you will admit that you have no means of ascertaining or knowing how the people of Wisconsin would "require" me to vote and that you are merely assuming that all the people of Wisconsin feel as you and your associates do upon these matters. I believe furthermore that you will admit that sympathizing with Germany as you do that you are not an impartial and unbiased judge of the facts involved in the issue. I am sure that there are thousands of others in this state who believe and claim that the people of Wisconsin are overwhelmingly supporting President Wilson's attitude on both of these questions. Of course these expressions of opinion come from many who also are not impartial and unprejudiced or unbiased in the premises although I may add that I have received scores and scores of letters from men of German ancestry who hold a like opinion to mine. With such conflicting opinions as is perfectly natural to be the case in a state of mixed population like Wisconsin even you must admit that the sentiment of the people of our state is by no means unanimous on the subject matter. At the beginning of and so long as our country was not in danger of being drawn into this terrible war, I also indulged myself in sympathizing with a certain side in this world's struggle. But for

over a year this country has stood and now stands on the very verge of a volcano and no one could, nor now can, know when we will be drawn into its crater. Consequently, ever since this danger has arisen, I have tried to dismiss from mind all interest in connection with the war except in so far as it affects or might affect the interests or rights of our people and our country and I harbor no motive in my consciousness in connection with my office other than to protect and promote our own country's rights and interests. With such motive and such thought, I feel that I ought to be able to vote upon this European situation fairly and impartially as between the belligerents. I am at least conscious of this: That whatever attitude I take and whatever vote I cast is cast with reference solely to its effect on this country and regardless of its effect upon the welfare of any other country in the world.

Now under such circumstances do you think that I should allow your sympathies or the sympathies of your associates or my sympathies to outweigh and overcome my settled convictions, and that I should violate my oath of office as United States Senator and act and vote in direct contradiction to what I conceive to be my duty as a Senator and as a citizen of the United States? I cannot think that you would have me do so. I cannot in a letter repeat my reasons, which I have so often stated in public speeches and interviews, why I am opposed to our government placing an embargo on munitions of war and, consequently, I must refer you to such speeches and interviews for such information. I can only state that such action on the part of our country would in my judgment be a gross breach of neutrality which not only might, but probably would, involve us in a war with those foreign countries adversely affected by such action on our part. I voted against the Gore Resolution because I am opposed, *by governmental action*, to curtailing or abandoning the rights of our citizens upon the high seas or wherever they have a right to be, as an act unworthy of a great nation and of a great people, and, furthermore, because I am sure that with the passage of such a resolution our troubles in that respect would not have been ended but would have only just begun. With the abandonment of one right, we would soon

have been called upon to abandon another and still another, and, having said "A," we would not only have had to say "B" but we would have had to continue clear down the alphabet to "Z," and we would finally find ourselves bereft of all rights cravenly and uselessly abandoned by us to wrong-doing countries. Personally, I would not now travel on the high seas unless I was obliged thus to travel and I would not ask or in fact advise any friend of mine to travel upon the high seas under present conditions, but what I am opposed to is that our government by affirmative action should warn our citizens not to travel upon the high seas and in effect then to license the world to kill and slaughter our citizens in the act of exercising their God-given and lawful rights so to do. Such authoritative action would be a puerile abandonment of the rights of our citizens and of our country and a cowardly withdrawal of the protection which our flag owes to our people and would not only invite the contempt and aggression of the belligerent nations but would bring us into contempt in the eyes of our own citizens themselves.

Now, in the sentence quoted, you characterized me as one of those "* * * whom we sent to represent *our* interests * * * ." Now let me ask you whether you or your associates have any interest which I am representing other or different in any degree from that of any other citizen of Wisconsin? You surely can have no interest, which I represent, in the success of any foreign nation in this war. You may have *wishes* or *hopes* in regard to the outcome of the war in Europe but as an *American* citizen you certainly have no *interest* in the result. The interests of our country, your interests, my interests, are identical and are limited to this: That we keep our hands off and let the warring nations fight it out according to the rules of international law and, if we can, protect the lives of our people and maintain their rights and the rights of our country and preserve our national honor. While it is not my *duty* to *represent* your *wishes* (which may stand in direct contravention to the dictates of our own national welfare), it is my duty to represent (and it is my conviction that I am performing that duty and am properly representing) the interests of the country, *your* interests, *my* interests, and the interests of all the people of the United

States, when I take the attitude I am taking and vote as I have voted.

Now while I have grown up among people of German ancestry and have grown to love and respect my German-American neighbors, among whom I count you and many others of your cloth, I cannot and will not forget that as Senator I represent all of the people of Wisconsin regardless of ancestry or accident of birth and as such Senator I represent not only the people of Wisconsin but the people of the United States as a whole, and I want to say further that as long as I remain in the Senate I shall count the interests of my country first, wholly without regard to its effect upon my political fortunes or upon the fortunes of any foreign country.

While I have no authority to talk for anyone but myself, I believe that President Wilson is actuated by the same motives as I am. Can any man doubt that the President of the United States is doing what he does and acting as he acts with any thought in his mind other than the welfare of his country and of our people? Now you say in your letter, "I admit that we have not the insight into the inner affairs and for that reason leave it to the discretion of our representatives to cast their vote to the best welfare of the State"; and further you say in substance that you have taken a vital interest in this matter and that the consensus of opinion of your associates, the majority of whom are university men, is that an embargo should be placed upon munitions of war. Now you admit that your opinion is based upon imperfect, incomplete, unreliable, and (what at times must be) false information. You also inferentially admit, as you must admit (indeed as everybody knows is the fact) that the President and his Cabinet are in possession of the most perfect, the most complete, most reliable and most trustworthy information obtainable. Moreover, the President is also a university man (if that has anything to do with it) and is he not also a citizen of the United States who loves his country? Is he not a man of intellect, of integrity, of patriotism, of ability, of courage, a man possessing all those attributes that go to make up our idea of a good American citizen? As President, in the handling of domestic affairs, has he not shown him-

self mindful of the welfare of the masses of the people? In this world's crisis has he not kept us out of war during the most trying times—under the gravest difficulties—when there was not a Congress in session and when there were no warning resolutions; when newspapers, politicians, partisans, and sympathizers were trying to provoke him into the most drastic action against one or the other side of this controversy? And this at a time when scores of incidents have occurred, each one alone of sufficient importance to have provoked us into war against one side or the other side of the belligerents, had the President been so minded. When you and I and all of us during the summer of 1915 were pursuing our peaceful occupations in Wisconsin, the President was left alone to carry a load that would have staggered and borne down any ordinary man! During all this time, in waking or in sleeping, has he had anything in his mind but the peaceful solution of his monumental task without dishonor to our country?

And now let me ask whether you ought not to admit that it is a little presumptuous on your part to think or claim that you are more patriotic, more desirous of doing, and better able to do justice between the belligerents of Europe—more desirous and better able to safeguard and protect the national honor and the welfare and rights of our people than our president, Woodrow Wilson? In other words, are you not willing to concede that, under all the facts and circumstances surrounding this vital matter, Woodrow Wilson ought to be better qualified in all respects to properly pass upon these questions and to protect our rights than anyone else who neither has the responsibility or the opportunity nor has devoted the thought and time to this matter, that he has?

Now would you and your associates, with all due respect to your learning and information, which at best (as you admit is, and which necessarily can be, based only on imperfect and uncertain premises) have me accept your judgment in this matter in preference to that of the President of the United States? Not only that, but would you have me under *such circumstances* disregard the judgment of the President and his Cabinet who are lawfully invested with the authority and business of determining these questions

which as a matter of law is and as a matter of common sense ought to be final and binding upon the people of the United States and with this also abandon my own judgment and accept yours in lieu thereof? If each citizen of the United States would set *his* judgment and opinion above that of the President of the United States in our foreign affairs and refuse to abide by his conclusions in time of acute crises such as these, could anything but national chaos be the result? In domestic affairs that do not concern the life of the country we all have a right to insist upon our opinions and, even then, we must bow when overruled by the majority. Then how much more in foreign affairs must we lodge somewhere authority for determining matters affecting our national life itself. And where else shall we lodge them than in the hands of our President and Secretary of State, at least until all diplomatic means shall have been exhausted? Now I do not say that citizens have no right to express their opinions even on foreign affairs; but what I do say is that they ought not to so exercise that right and so conduct themselves as to embarrass and hinder our government in its diplomatic negotiations with foreign countries *at times like these*, and thus imperil, if not absolutely prevent, a peaceful solution of our difficulties, great enough in themselves, but made still greater by the utterances of some papers and persons which give color and basis for the claim and impression abroad that we are a disunited and demoralized people, a people who have lost their faith and confidence in their own government, and who will not give it their loyal and undivided support in all eventualities. We can maintain peace best by presenting a solid front to all nations to the end that they may know and understand that we are one and indivisible no matter what may come!

Now you further say: "As to the notion that under all circumstances the opinions of the President must be upheld, in order to be loyal Americans, that is pure and simple 'rot.'" Let me say to you that supporting the President under present circumstances is not "rot" unless loyalty to one's country is also "rot"! Upholding the President under present circumstances does not mean the upholding of an individual in his opinion or judgment. For a Senator or a citizen of

the United States to back the President and to accept his conclusions based upon known facts in foreign matters of gravest importance at a time of the nation's peril like this is not a servile following of an individual and is not "rot." On the contrary such backing and such acceptance is only supporting and maintaining one's government. It is evidence of loyalty to one's country. Such action and such acceptance is not merely supporting President Wilson as a man, it is supporting the United States—our government—our country, which the President for the time being represents and for which he is authorized to act and must act.

I quote further from your letter: "Our slogan is 'America first, last, and all the time, regardless of party lines, President, or representatives.'" Our President for the time being within certain limitations is America and he acts for America. And in my judgment it is the first duty not only of Senators but of citizens who are for *America* first, last, and all the time, to be for our *government* first, last, and all the time that for the time being is our government. *No citizen can be against* our government and still at the same time justly claim that he is *for America*. One cannot be for and against the same thing at the same time.

Now there is another matter in relation to the Beaver Dam letter of Jan. 27 which was a communication entitled from the "pastors of the German Lutheran Church in Conference at Beaver Dam, Wis., Assembled." It appears from this letter that you have assumed to put your church on record as opposed to the foreign policy of this government at a time when it was essential that the government should have the united support of its citizens and to make public your disapproval in your pastoral capacity, evidently for the purpose of bringing the President and the representative of your state into political disfavor with your church.

Now what I have to say in this connection is said in all friendliness to the members of the Conference, many of whom I personally know and respect. I acknowledge the right of any man, no matter what his profession or calling may be, to speak his mind freely on political matters and to vote as he pleases at elections and consequently every pastor has a right to express his own personal opinions on any subject that he

may desire to speak upon and, furthermore, he has a right to express his own opinion without in any way injecting religion into politics so long as he merely expresses his own personal opinion and does not attempt to talk for his church or for the purpose, as pastor, of influencing the people of his church. I wish, however, to express my opinion that no matter what the merit or excellence of their motives or principles that may underlie such organizations or their actions, it will be an unhappy and unfortunate thing for the country and for the church when churches will be used as political organizations or utilities and when its pastors will become the heads of such organizations.

This country is and has been the refuge and the shield of all men who desire to worship God as they please. This is a country of freedom of religion as well as freedom of thought. We have been endeavoring for more than a century to keep our government and our politics divorced from religion. We have been endeavoring to permit these to run along parallel lines but at the same time to keep them separated and prevent them from impinging one upon the other. The separation of Church and State has been one of the keynotes in our arch and has thus far done much to strengthen and sustain our national structure. But in the last few years there has been a growing tendency to inject religion into politics. I have always steadfastly and consistently discouraged and criticized such tendency wherever I could. I consider it a most dangerous tendency—a tendency which bodes no good either to the nation or to the church. It is bad indeed to inject the *Church into Politics*. It is as bad or worse to inject *Politics into the Church*. If you inject the *Church into Politics* you will brush aside the traditions of our country since its existence and you will be laying the axe to the very roots of our government. And if you inject *Politics into the Church* you will also be laying the axe to the very roots of your religion. You cannot have politics in your church without having *factions* in your church and when you have *factions* in your church you will *divide* your church, which history shows has ever been the case when governments and churches mixed. Our Revolutionary fathers wisely profited by the experience of other nations and

by the teachings of history when they provided that the State and Church should be forever kept separate. All good citizens will deplore anything that endangers our country; and all good people, regardless of religion, will deplore anything that will injure the Church—an institution [which] when properly separated from the government exercises an infinite influence for good in this country. For these reasons I hereby respectfully record my deep regret at the action of the Beaver Dam Conference because I fear that you may be setting an unwise precedent fraught with consequences of a dangerous character both to the Church and to the State in thus, as pastors, using the influence of your church in the manner attempted.

One thing to me seems certain; if we desire to continue the freedom of religion in our country, it can only be done by keeping it free from politics and if we are going to have freedom of politics it can only be done by keeping it free from religious interference. The one proposition is interdependent upon the other and the rule cannot be violated without lasting injury and damage to both Church and State. I trust that the great Lutheran Church and all of the other great churches of the country will never put themselves into the attitude of attempting to control the politics of the country. I most fervently hope that religious and racial influence and prejudices may never be permitted by any church or body of men to promote or prevent the election of any man to public office or to dictate to or to influence our government in its relations or negotiations with foreign nations.

Let me conclude by saying that in all of these troublous times we should remember that we are at peace—that we have been kept out of this war thus far by a president and an administration which have dedicated their efforts to promote the public welfare—that they are doing the very best they can to continue to keep us out of war if this can be done without loss of national honor or without surrendering or abandoning our national rights or the rights of our citizens. In this effort, the government should be sustained by all good citizens, regardless of race or religion. It is the duty of every citizen to sustain it! This is *the* country in which all our interests are centered—the only country to which we

owe any loyalty or allegiance—the country which safeguards and protects us—the country which we in return are bound to protect and defend always. It is easy, of course, to be a good citizen in fair weather but it is in foul weather that the best citizenship is needed. It is in the storm and stress of national peril that loyalty and devotion to the public welfare is put to the acid test. Let us lay aside all of our differences, all of our sympathies, all of our prejudices, so far as they relate to other countries, and let us think and speak and act solely with regard to the good of our own country.

Very respectfully,

PAUL O. HUSTING.

May 19, 1917.

Mr. _____,
_____, Wisconsin.

My dear Sir:

Yours of May 16th was duly received and contents noted. In reply I want to say that your letter bears evidence of conscientious thought and your conclusions are, no doubt, honest. I assume you have written me not only for the purpose of giving your own views but also are inviting mine in return. And inasmuch as you have volunteered a doubt as to whether or not your German ancestry has colored or biased your judgment in the premises, I take the liberty of giving you my judgment on that point as I gather it from the context of this and your previous letter.

I believe your reasonings and your conclusions are from the German, not the American, standpoint. In other words, you are holding a brief for Germany and not for the United States. "How important a part" your "German ancestry plays" in this, it may be difficult for you to apprehend but your bias will readily be apparent to anyone who reads your letter. Now, you are an American-born citizen, I take it. You are an attorney-at-law and a member of the bar of Wisconsin. You owe a duty to your country which sympathy for Germany, no matter how genuine it may be, cannot diminish, much less nullify. Now the premises from which you as an American must reason are these: This country is at war with Germany. Your President, my President, our President, backed by a declaration of your Congress, my

Congress, our Congress, has proclaimed that war exists. This was done for reasons which appeared sufficient to the President and the Congress to make this declaration imperative. The loyalty and the fidelity of the President and of Congress to the people of the nation has never been questioned or challenged and I do not understand you to challenge or question them now. You are merely attempting in your letter to set your judgment against theirs. Germany is now an enemy of the United States which means that she is your enemy, my enemy, our enemy. Now, it is plain, as the Vice President remarked in a speech some time ago, that we cannot have a hundred million presidents or secretaries of state, meaning, of course, that we can only have one of each at a time and that when these officers, to whom this power has been delegated, have, with the aid of Congress, committed this government to a war, that question to all intents and purposes of the war is settled for all men who are citizens of the United States. And when the status of our relations with a foreign country is once fixed as that of war, then the time for argument has ceased and there is no longer any room for controversy between citizens upon that question. The question then, for the time being, that is to say, during the pendency of the war, is a closed and not an open one. And for the sake of your peace of mind as well as in justice to yourself as an American citizen who does not desire his loyalty questioned or to have his honorable reputation permanently impaired, you should respect, obey, and support the mandate of your country in the spirit of true and devoted American citizenship.

Now, I assume you love this country and that you love it because it is a free country and that you are here practicing your profession because of your desire to live in and to practice law in a country where fullest and freest opportunity is afforded you to work out your own destiny in your own way. In short, I assume that you favor a republican form of government and that you are devoted to America and its free institutions. I am sure that you would not have anyone believe otherwise of you because that would impute to you disloyalty and moreover it would impute to you a lack of intelligent enterprise by your remaining in a country that according to

your ideas is improperly governed instead of removing yourself to the jurisdiction of another country which more nearly squares with your ideas of good government. So, I repeat that I assume that you are here because you like to be here under a government that suits you and which you love better than any other government on earth. Now, it is evident in your letter that you love and sympathize with Germany but the question arises in my mind whether your love is for the German people or for the German government. You can easily put yourself to the test. If you love the German people then you must desire them to have as good a government as you enjoy here and it ought to make you happy that your country, if it prevails in this war, will make the German people as free and as happy as you are. If, on the other hand, you are mostly concerned in the success of the German government, that is to say, if you are mostly concerned in having the present Hohenzollern dynasty remain in power, then it would seem to be quite clear that your love is not for the German people but for the Hohenzollern dynasty and the German autocracy. In other words, your love would then be of the form and not of the substance. You cannot love this country and its institutions and at the same time love the German autocracy. These are incompatible and repugnant one to the other. They cannot both exist in the same heart at the same time. Your love for the German people, as is your love of mankind generally, is entirely compatible with your love of this country but it must be clear to you, as it must be perfectly clear to every American, that you cannot love your country and the German people and mankind generally and at the same time love the fearful German autocracy which is trying to impose or impress its system, its frightfulness, and its wish and will upon the world and which in its mad lust for power silences the promptings of conscience, scoffs at the weakness of love for human-kind, deafens its ears to the dictates of humanity, and which in pursuit of its fell purpose sets at naught all law human and divine. Now let me ask you to search your heart and see whether your love for the German fatherland is a love compatible with your duties as an American citizen—whether it is compatible with your love of liberty and humanity—whether it is compatible

with the principles enunciated in the Declaration of Independence that all men are entitled to the right of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness"! If such love is compatible with all these then your love for the German fatherland is a virtue and not a vice. But, if searching deeply into your heart you find that your love of the fatherland means that you love the relentless, ruthless, and despotic Hohenzollern dynasty and its system, pluck it out as you would a cancer, for it is a thing of evil and you cannot love it and be a good and true American.

You write "The President's statement to the effect that the War is not directed against the German people never appealed to me." For the reasons I have just given it should appeal to you as an American and as a lover of liberty and it should appeal to the German people themselves and their sympathizers in this country. It should appeal to lovers of liberty the world over—this statement that we are warring on a Power and not a People. We are warring on the Power because it has set its hand and might against the world and setting aside all laws of God and man it has outlawed itself and has no right to live. But in destroying this Power there is no intent, or disposition, or wish to destroy the People. The President's statement means, as I interpret it, that the one thing that stands between peace and war with Germany is the Hohenzollern dynasty. Once let that obstacle be removed either by the German people themselves or by the arbitrament of arms and our troubles and differences with Germany are over. Now can an American citizen of German extraction who puts the welfare and happiness of the people of Germany ahead of that of the Kaiser or, in other words, ahead of the Hohenzollern dynasty and the autocratic system which that dynasty embodies and typifies, enlist himself, his sympathies, his resources, his life, in a higher and holier cause than to join in emancipating the German people from the thrall of the Hohenzollern dynasty and to save the German people whom he professes to love from a doom which an outraged world has pronounced and sealed against the ruthless and frightful Hohenzollern system? Now and here is the opportunity for all who love the German people to give proof of it. Let them all get back of the President and of

their government and to the extent of their influence, ability, might, and power help to bring to their brothers in blood across the sea that priceless boon of liberty and independence which they or their ancestors sailed the perilous seas to find here in America. Let them make sacrifice and help and fight to give to their friends and kinsmen across the ocean that which was given to most of them here without cost or sacrifice on their part.

It is quite apparent to almost everyone that there can be no peace—no permanent peace—in the world so long as one power seeks to impose its autocratic straight jacket upon the world. Since the birth of the American Republic, the world has been marching away from autocracy and toward universal democracy, gathering irresistible momentum with the advance of time. All rulers, all statesmen, all men recognize this fact.

Even in countries autocratically ruled greater liberties and rights have been accorded the common people and it is only a question of time when the doctrine of the divinity of kings will become a tradition and the world will become one vast democracy. I repeat that the world is turning with irresistible momentum to a world democracy and the rulers of the world recognize that the logic of events is bound to substitute governments “of, by and for the people” in place of “of, by and for” kaisers, czars, and kings. There is practically one autocracy in the world which still has the power and efficiency to make that power felt in its attempt, its will and purpose upon the world; but one power on earth that today constitutes a menace and obstruction to the onward tread of democracy and that power is Germany! It is the Hohenzollern dynasty which is illogically, in indifference and contempt of the world’s sentiment, ignoring the teachings of history, unheeding the warnings of history with that fatuousness which always blinds the eyes of those who look only for their self-aggrandizement, that is trying to turn the world backward. It is the Hohenzollern dynasty that has thrown itself in the path of the onward march of liberty and progress, trying not only to stem the irresistible physical and spiritual forces of the world but actually trying to rout and drive them back into the dark ages of despo-

tism. It must be obvious to every thinking man that this attempt will fail. No man or set of men in this day or age will be permitted to rule the world. Every ruler, every dynasty which unyieldingly places itself in the pathway of liberty and progress will be overthrown; every people, no matter how powerful or great, which blindly and absolutely places itself behind, follows, and clings to such ruler and dynasty, will inevitably sooner or later be crushed and utterly destroyed with it. And so the German autocracy which today menaces the world and obstructs its progress will be overthrown and the German people if they continue blindly and absolutely to cling to their dynasty will inevitably share the same fate. Whether Germany prevails in this war or not, there will be and can be no lasting peace until the inevitable end is reached. So that in the end, be it sooner or later, democracy will be established and autocracy will perish. The destruction of the autocratic Hohenzollern dynasty would be a blessing to the world. The destruction of the German people would be a calamity to the world. I do not believe that the German people are going to commit national suicide. I do not believe that they are long going to continue to sacrifice the substance for the form. I do not believe that they will deem it wise to suffer a national death in order to uphold the life of a government that is based on error, not on truth, which the world tried and found wanting, and which is responsible for the catastrophe which has befallen themselves and the world at large. It is unthinkable—it is unbelievable—that the German people are unaffected by the onward movement of democracy and that they alone will continue to hug the despotism and the system that is unsuited to the requirements and unworthy of a modern civilization. Wherefore, it would seem clear to me that all citizens of German extraction would be quick to realize and appreciate the force of the President's declaration that we are not warring against the German people but against the German autocracy and would enthusiastically support their own government in a purpose which means freedom to the German people, and in thus giving their whole hearted support to their own government they would be discharging their duty, they would be true to their allegiance as American citizens,

and at the same time they would be furthering the best interests of the German people and aiding them in the only way in which they properly can.

I have received a number of letters of the same purport as yours and I am going to publish my letter to you so that it may serve as an answer likewise to others who are minded as you are. I know that there are in our midst a number of serious, well-meaning men who hold the ideas and sentiments which you have expressed—sentiments which, it is perfectly clear, are incompatible with the duties and responsibilities of American citizenship in a crisis like this as well as incompatible with the intelligence and the character of the men entertaining them. In the various public speeches I have made and communications I have published during this crisis, I have sought to speak only in the furtherance of what I understand and conceive to be the truth of the matter and the welfare of our country. I have been animated solely by a purpose to dispel error and to promote the interests of our country and not by the slightest ill-feeling or malice toward any man. I have sought to express myself frankly and without reserve but, at the same time, I hope fairly, courteously, and without malice or feeling. Having lived amongst Americans of German extraction all my life and counting amongst them many of my best and dearest friends, I believe that I know their processes of thought, their sentiments, their prejudices, and their intelligence. I know that they would not prefer to remain in error if once convinced that they are in error. They do not want to be deceived. They do not want to be flattered into silence or apparent conviction. They like to hear straight, plain, blunt talk. Loving law and order and respecting authority, as I know they do, I have always believed that the great mass of our citizens of German extraction would never permit themselves to be placed in an attitude of hostility to the orderly and just administration of the law or permit their loyalty or fidelity to be suspected or challenged. I know that when once convinced they are quick to abandon a position once they see that it is untenable.

And so I have written this letter in the hope that I might be instrumental in showing you that your position is un-

tenable and in the hope that you will abandon it for one which will reflect credit on your patriotism, your judgment, and your citizenship and which at the same time will afford you the best opportunity for advancing the interests and welfare of your kinsmen across the sea.

Very truly yours,

PAUL O. HUSTING.