

“This program is between Americans...we hope you like it, but you don't have to; at any rate, nobody is gonna make you stick around and listen to it. That's one of the advantages of being an American.” That is how Orson Wells began *Between Americans*, an evening radio program on The Gulf Screen Guild Theater heard the 7th of December, 1941. It was not a happy time for Great Britain and her allies, nor during the weeks that followed; America was included in this misery.



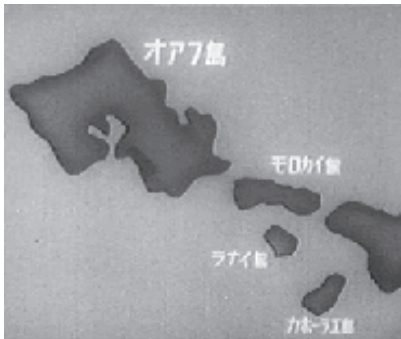
Not long after Pearl Harbor was bombed.

Orson Wells that December night reminded people that they do not have to wear a red, white and blue button in their lapels to prove they are Americans.

America was a sizable country of 131 million diverse people. Mr. Wells narrated a program that was a stirring example of patriotism, but it was a time that needed something more than mere patriotism. People needed to think about their country. Patriotism began to sweep the country after Pearl Harbor, but what stood out was his opening repertoire about America. Radio listeners, he said, should know that it does not really matter where you come from or what your last name is. “What counts is that we are all Americans,” he said. Listeners heard some of the places in the United States of America—“London, Minnesota. I'm in from Dublin, New Hampshire. Flew in this morning from Cairo, Illinois. I'm from Canton, Connecticut. I'm from Paris, Texas. I came all the way in from Shanghai, West Virginia. Warsaw, Georgia. I'm a delegate representing Moscow, Kentucky. My town Toronto, Kansas. As for me, Lisbon, Maine. Delegate from Madrid, Alabama, reporting. I'm from Stockholm, South Dakota. Drove down this afternoon from Bombay, New York. Hitchhiked here from Baghdad, Florida.”

1941 was a big year in radio history, incidentally. About 13,800,000 radio sets were sold; with some \$180,000,000 in net time sales.

But, the beginning of 1942 saw the Axis outclassing



the United States and her Allies. Danger threatened the American people. And, they rose up and became united, including the media. Radio during all this time played an important part in WW II. On December 15, 1941, the beginning of this radio program was heard: "This is a program coming to you over the combined radio networks of the United States. Bringing you the voices of Americans. Bringing you the voice of the President of the United States. This is a program for listeners in all zones of continental time. For listeners on ships away from home. For listeners in uniform. For listeners on the American islands in the two great oceans. This is a program about the guarantee made to the people of America 150 years ago. A guarantee that has been kept through peace and war, peace and war."

Heard by over 60 million Americans, it began, "We hold these truths,"—which was the name of the program. "This is a program about the making of a promise, the keeping of a promise. This is a program about the rights of people." It was written by Norman Corwin, emanating in play form, with Leopold Stokowski's orchestra, narrated in part by Orson Wells and Lionel Barrymore. A guarantee, Mr. Barrymore said, "...in praise of a document that men have fought for. That men are fighting for..." and keep on fighting for, a freedom that must be guarded to be kept. One hundred fifty years of the past in radio drama, heard by more people than any other U.S. radio show in history.

The centerpiece: Jimmy Stewart describing a visit to Washington DC. He reads several inscriptions on the monuments, including the words of a giant-sized seated Abraham Lincoln: "With firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right. Let us strive on to finish the work we are in. To do all which may achieve and cherish, a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

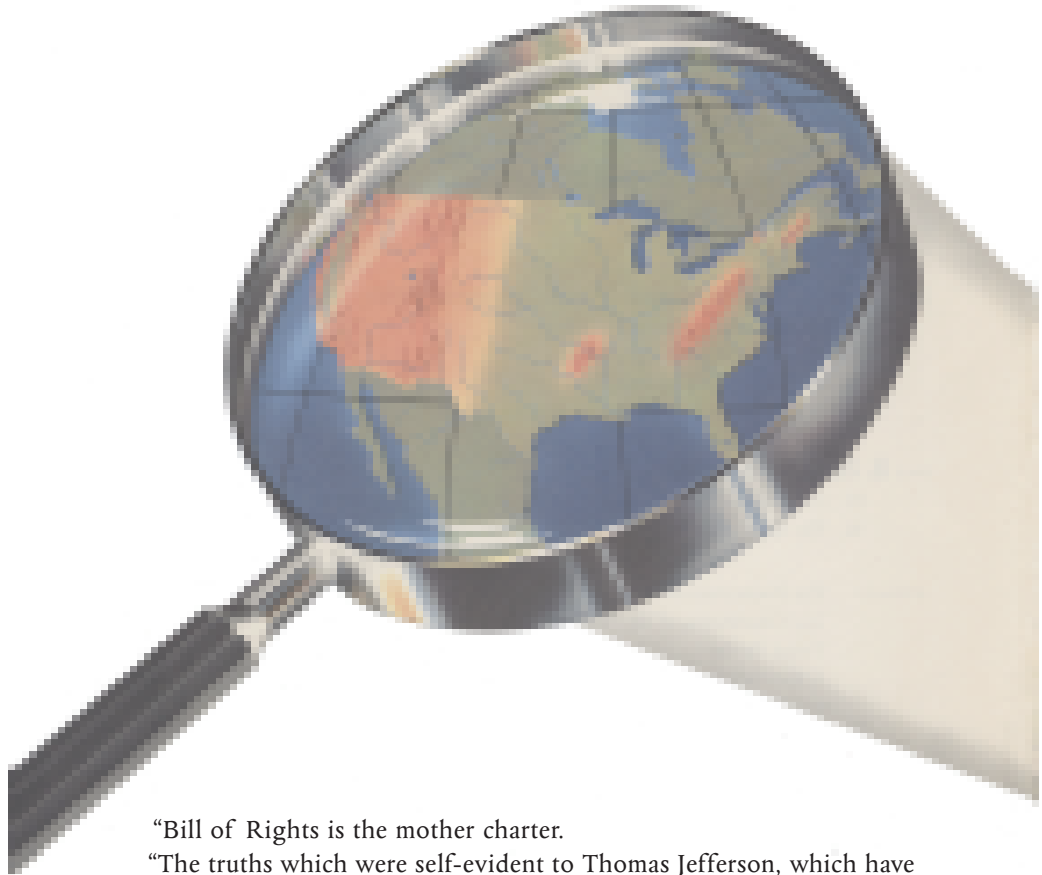
President Roosevelt was on the air live, and read the following:

"Free Americans know faith in the long history of freedom, means more to liberty-loving men, in all liberty-loving countries, than the 15th day of December, 1791.

"On that day 150 years ago, a new nation, through an elected Congress, adopted a declaration of human rights which has influenced the thinking of all mankind, from one end of the world to the other. There is not a single republic of this hemisphere which has not adopted in its fundamental law, the basic principles of freedom of man, and freedom of mind enacted in the American Bill of Rights.

"There is not a country, large or small, on this continent, and in this world, which has not felt the influence of that document, directly or indirectly. Indeed, prior to the year 1933, the essential validity of the American Bill of Rights was accepted everywhere, at least in principle. Even today, with the exception of Germany, Italy, and Japan, the peoples of the whole world, in all probability through bits of them, support its principles, its teachings, and its glorious results.

"But in the year 1933, there came to power in Germany, a political clique which did not accept the declarations of the American Bill of human rights as valid. A small clique of ambitious and unscrupulous politicians announced that an admitted platform was precisely the destruction of the rights that instrument declared. Indeed, the entire program and goal of these political and moral tigers was nothing more than the overthrow, throughout the earth, of the great revolution of human liberty, of which our American



“Bill of Rights is the mother charter.

“The truths which were self-evident to Thomas Jefferson, which have been self-evident to the six generations of Americans who followed him, were to these men, hateful. The rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, which seemed to the founders of the Republic, and which seemed to us, inalienable, were to Hitler and his fellows, empty words which they proposed to cancel, forever. The propositions they advanced to take the place of Jefferson’s inalienable rights were these:

“That the individual human being has no rights, whatever, in himself, and by virtue of his humanity.

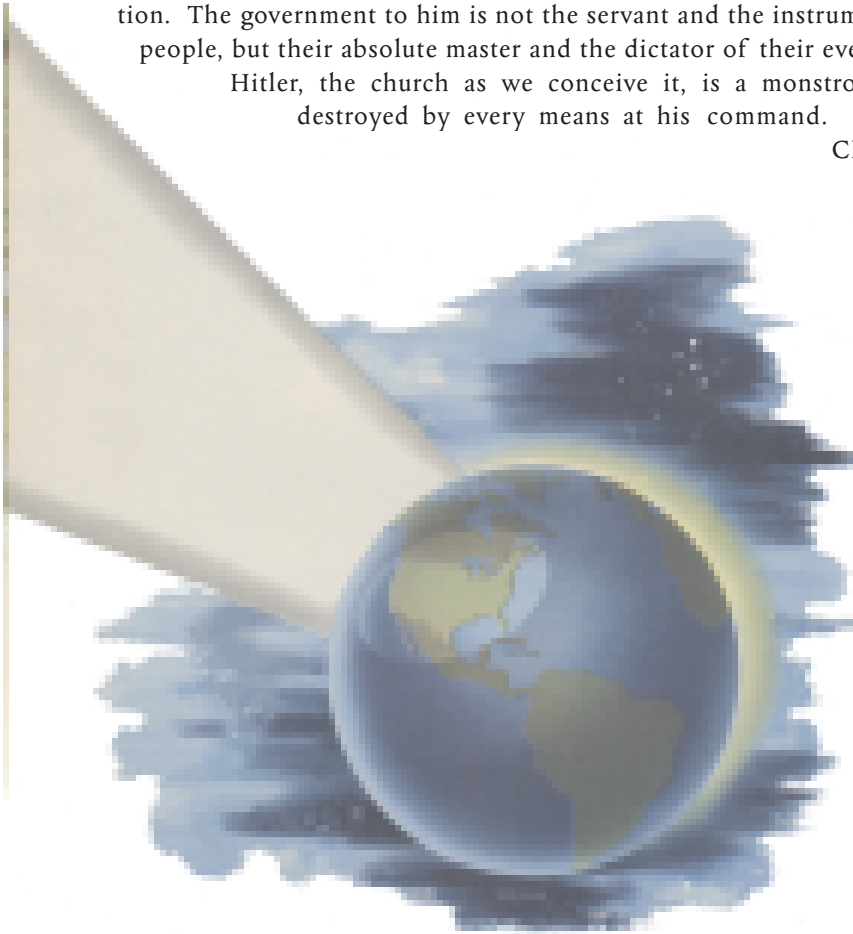
“That the individual human being has no right to a soul of his own, or a mind of his own, or a tongue of his own, or a trade of his own; or even to live where he pleases or to marry the woman he loves. That his only duty is the beauty of obedience, not to his God, not to his conscience, but to Adolf Hitler. And, that his only value is his value not as a man, but as a unit of the Nazi state.

“To Hitler, the idea of the people as we conceive it, the free self-governing and responsible people, is incomprehensible. The people, to Hitler, are the masses, and the highest human idealism, is, in his own words, that a man should wish to become a dust particle of the order of force which is to shape his universe.

“To Hitler, the government, as we conceive it, is an impossible conception. The government to him is not the servant and the instrument of the people, but their absolute master and the dictator of their every act. To

Hitler, the church as we conceive it, is a monstrosity to be destroyed by every means at his command. The Nazi

Church is to be the national



tional church, a pagan church, absolutely and exclusively in the service of one doctrine, one race, one nation. To Hitler, the freedom of men to think as they please, and speak as they please, and worship as they please, is of all things imaginable, most hateful and most desperately to be feared.

“The issue of our time, the issue of the war in which we are engaged, is the issue forced upon the decent, self-respecting peoples of the earth, by the aggressive dogmas of this attempted revival of barbarism.

“This would pose a return to tyranny. This effort to impose a gain upon the peoples of the world, doctrines of absolute obedience, of dictatorial rule, of the suppression of truth, of the oppression of conscience, which the free nations of the earth have long ago rejected. What we face is nothing more nor less, than an attempt to overthrow and to cancel out the great upsurge of human liberty of which the American Bill of Rights is the fundamental document to force the peoples of the earth, and among them the peoples of this continent and this nation, to accept again the absolute authority and despotic rule from which the courage and the resolution, and the sacrifices of their ancestors, liberated them many, many years ago.

“It is an attempt, an attempt which could succeed, only if those who have inherited the gift of liberty, had lost the manhood to preserve it. But, we Americans know that the determination of this generation of our people, our generation to preserve liberty, is as fixed and certain as the determination of that earlier generation of Americans was to win it. We will not, under any threat, or in the face of any danger, surrender the guarantees of liberty our fore-fathers framed for us in our Bill of Rights.

“We hold with all the passion of our hearts, and minds, to those commitments of the human spirit. We are solemnly determined, that no power or combination of powers of this earth, shall shape our hold upon them.

“We covenant with each other, before all the world, that having taken up arms in the defense of liberty, we will not lay them down before liberty is once again secure in the world we live in.

“For that security we pray.

“For that security we act, now and ever more.”

