

World Literacy

EXTENSION OF REMARKS

OF

HON. A. S. MIKE MONRONEY

OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 21, 1943

Mr. MONRONEY. Mr. Speaker, under leave to extend my remarks in the Record, I would like to call the attention of the House to the wonderful work for world literacy that is now going forward, largely through the use of comparatively new phonetic alphabets. So outstanding has been the progress in this field and so important is world literacy to the cause of international peace and understanding, that I want to insert in the Record a letter just received from the Honorable Robert L. Owen. Mr. Owen, in addition to having served with great distinction in the United States Senate as one of Oklahoma's first two Senators, has been a leader in this great new movement for world education. He has developed and perfected the global alphabet, which adopts a standard uniform phonetic alphabet in which all languages of the civilized world and even primitive tribes can be written.

In the accompanying letter Senator Owen explains the progress of the work in literacy that has been accomplished in Russia which, through phonetic alphabets has taught its people with over 200 different languages and dialects how to read and write. He also outlines the work of Dr. Frank C. Laubach who has been so successful in teaching even primitive tribes of Africa and elsewhere how to read and write:

WASHINGTON, D. C., December 18, 1943.

HON. A. S. MIKE MONRONEY,

House of Representatives.

MY DEAR MR. CONGRESSMAN: By use of phonetic alphabets, the Soviet Republics of Russia have abolished illiteracy in Russia and enabled the people of Russia with incredible speed to write, read, and print over 200 languages and dialects in Russia. These alphabets differ from each other but being phonetic and comprising only about 30 letters, the alphabets can be learned within 1 day. Within 2 decades, Russia not only abolished illiteracy, but by intensive training in modern arts and sciences, in modern technology, and modern engineering the Russian people have increased their production over 400 percent in spite of the greatest difficulties. Their achievements in mass production of the munitions of war and the patriotism and morale built up by this system is demonstrating its efficiency on the present battlefields of invaded western Russia.

Russia is not alone in this conquest of illiteracy and poverty, but 80 other nationalities speaking 80 other languages are in process and have gone a long way in the last 10 years of abolishing illiteracy in China, India, Philippines, Malaya, southwestern Asia, in Africa, in the Caribbean and in South America. The movement on the Western Hemisphere is comparatively recent and is moving successfully forward under the leadership of Dr. Frank C. Laubach, Ph. D., and the Committee on World Literacy and Christian Literature, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York.

This committee was organized by the representatives of over 120 foreign missionary societies now engaged, and for years have been engaged, in teaching the doctrine of funda-

mental righteousness and human brotherhood throughout the world. They fully deserve the support of the Government, and I appeal to you to call attention again to their invaluable services in the development of a new world of abundance, peace, and justice.

On Thursday, July 8, 1943, you put in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD my review of Dr. Laubach's book, "The Silent Billion Speak." Your remarks on that occasion were reprinted and the National Committee on Literacy ordered over 20,000 copies, which they sent throughout the world.

May I not now call your attention to a brief quotation from Dr. Laubach's concluding chapter of that book as follows:

"The experiences described in the preceding chapters have made me an optimist in the face of our present tragedy. I have seen how easy it is to win the friendship of people—people anywhere—if only we approach them in a spirit of unselfish sharing. The world is divided into an infinity of small groups, each expecting hostility from the other and therefore on the defensive. There is suspicion between white and colored races, between religions, between nationals and foreigners, between rich and poor, capital and labor, between educated and illiterate, between those speaking different languages, between families and often within families. When we seek to serve groups outside our own, we must prove our friendship and patiently wait for this initial suspicion to disappear, and this requires self-control, for one's instinct is to give like for like, snub for snub, dislike for dislike.

"But self-restraint and tact can replace this defense mechanism with mutual good will. It has been thrilling to discover how quickly such ventures as literacy campaigns, disease control, and agricultural missions melt away these dislikes and suspicions. The glad good news I want to shout from the housetops is that America can work a world miracle, if we care enough and serve selflessly enough—that it is far, far easier than we ever could have dreamed.

"It is not only easy but it is enormously important. For we now seem to be emerging into a new age, when, instead of many little antagonistic worlds, we hope to have world brotherhood and a world government. It is a glorious hope, but it will come only as people of different cultures and backgrounds learn kindly toleration and glory in united diversity. While statesmen feel their way to political world union, we must find great enterprises like the common struggle against illiteracy to bring about confidence and the will to cooperate without which political union will be impossible.

"Everything that is happening today is pushing America more irrevocably, whether she will or not, out into every corner of the world. When the smoke of this war clears away, we will not again draw back in our shell like a snail; not this time. Our youth will pour into 10,000 communities all over this planet to teach and to serve, just as our teachers have gone to the Philippines during these past 20 years and our missionaries have gone to foreign lands. America's influence will be felt to the corners of the earth.

"The Second World War, with its incredible development of air transportation, has shattered American isolationism. Planes that can cross the oceans and return without refueling have thrown every country into our backyard. Turn a radio dial and listen to Chungking, Cairo, Moscow, Sydney. Who is my neighbor? Every man, every race, and every country. No nation is any longer safe until the whole world is safe. We cannot have peace anywhere until there is peace everywhere. Isolation is out. \* \* \*

"We ought right now to be building up a fund for the cause of literacy—a million dollars for Africa, another million for South America, and two millions for Asia—so that

1943

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we can start helping these countries immediately the war is over.

"Christians across America, as I have told them about literacy have exclaimed hundreds of times, 'This is the most stupendous challenge in the whole world.' It is indeed one of the finest openings ever given the church through which she may bless the whole human race and pour the love of Christ into human society. It is God's awful call to Christians in this awful hour.

"America, you have the chance of 10,000 years to help the world. Our peace and world peace demand that we shall grow large enough and become Christlike soon enough to lavish our love in humble service for the whole world. If we use this rich opportunity to carry Christ to Asia and Africa, then peace-loving China, with a fourth of the world's population, peace-loving India, with one-fifth of all the people in the world, and the meek, song-loving Africans will join us in building 'a kingdom of heaven on earth.' Then at last 'the meek shall inherit the earth.'"

To this appeal of Dr. Laubach as the representative of the World Literacy Committee, I am in deep sympathy and I believe the body of the American people will approve the governmental support implied in the above quotations.

I enclose by separate mail a copy of Senate Document 133, offering the global alphabet as a mechanism by which more economically and, I hope, with usefulness to accomplish this task by substituting, to the extent desirable, a phonetic, stenographic alphabet by which all of these languages can be easily written, read, and printed in the local language. Through this global alphabet all of these nations, including Russia and China, can learn conversational English with high speed and render more effective thereby the principles of Government of the United States and the technological improvements in the arts and sciences developed in the American laboratories and in our agricultural department.

My contribution of the global alphabet I have offered to my Government in the conviction that it has incalculable potentialities in promoting the declaration of principles of the Moscow Conference.

With sentiments of the greatest respect, I am as ever, faithfully, your friend,

ROBERT L. OWEN.