

FOR A BETTER AMERICA

# OUTLAW THE VIGILANTE!

The final dramatic article by the one man in the United States who knows most about our Fifth Column menace — and how to combat it

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**V**IGILANTE methods have no place in America today. The vigilante, who may have served a useful purpose in our frontier days, must be relegated to the past. He came into being in periods of emergency when the law-abiding element in sparsely settled communities had to unite for common defense against marauding bands. But that was before the advent of modern law enforcement.

In times like these, every citizen must guard against any semblance of mob spirit. Democracy provides an orderly, lawful method of procedure to handle any situation that may arise. Direct action outside the law is unlawful in itself.

The old-fashioned "drives" or dragnets never aided in preventing crime. If anything, they served to undermine public respect for lawful authority. Criminals scoff at such tactics, knowing that they constitute an admission of failure. The authorities order arrests on a wide scale only as a last resort with the hope that something of value might be developed. Similar campaigns against spies and saboteurs will serve only to amuse the very forces against which they are directed.

The important objective is to secure the facts that will establish the guilt of those who give their allegiance to a foreign power — and this should be done before invoking the authority of the law. This is the function of capable and well-trained investigative agencies, supported by patriotic citizens.

America's internal security must be preserved through the co-ordination of responsibility such as the President and the Attorney General requested in assigning to the Federal Bureau of Investigation the task of investigating espionage and sabotage. These new evils can be met and conquered just as the kidnaping menace was defeated. Over a period of years ninety-six of every one hundred persons charged by the FBI with violating federal laws and prosecuted in federal courts have been found guilty. This did not require vigilante methods. Thorough, well-trained investigators, aided by public-spirited citizens and co-operative local, county and state law-enforcing agencies, did the job. What has been accomplished in the past can be repeated in the future by the same formula.

In the present surge of nationalism there lurks a serious danger. The actions of overzealous groups of individuals, no matter how patriotic in aim, may become un-American in method.

**T**HERE is also the danger that designing promoters, who attach themselves to popular causes and thereby impede progress, will seek to commercialize upon the protection of America and to use it as the basis for furthering their own aims. The vigilante method presents still another danger, for it supplies a medium whereby busybodies may give vent to personal animosities. This has happened in the past and it can happen in the future. Campaigns of hysteria and hate are undermining and should not be tolerated. In every way the vigilante is repugnant in our present democracy.

Civic consciousness is offended by the posting of signs promising rewards for information leading to the arrest of spies and saboteurs. It is the *duty* of every loyal American to give such information to the proper authorities.

Unless suspicions, which are bound to arise, are handled by trained investigators, reputations of law-abiding citizens are likely to suffer. It is too easy for innocent actions to be misconstrued.

A foreign name is not enough to warrant pointing the finger of suspicion at an individual. The same applies to

foreign ancestry. Many of the greatest citizens and patriots of our age need trace their ancestry back only a few generations to find their forefathers leaving foreign lands in quest of the freedom and liberty that America guarantees its people. Our nation owes them a debt of gratitude. They have helped make America what it is today.

At the same time there are foreign foes within our midst who seek to inculcate alien aims and philosophies, who refuse to assume the patriotic duties of American citizens, who still pay homage to their homelands and who seek to undermine our ideals and institutions by spreading their alien aims and philosophies. They threaten America. These are the ones we must fear and guard against. Their cunning far outdistances the vigilante method of attack.

When world conditions brought on the present emergency I urged law enforcement to avoid hysteria and warned against unbridled trampling on the rights of innocent persons. It is as essential to preserve civil liberties as it is to track down those who engage in espionage and sabotage.

**Y**ET more than a thousand "honorary deputy sheriffs" were sworn in recently in an Eastern city for the announced purpose of hunting spies. This is no time for "roving Sherlock Holmeses" with legal authority. The organization of groups for the alleged purpose of coping with the present situation for a consideration — the levying of assessments on private industry — is unnecessary and repugnant. We cannot tolerate moneychangers infesting the temples of patriotism.

Industry will be better served and America will be more adequately protected through the efforts of modern law enforcement. The taxpayer is entitled to protection, and he can get it through the right kind of law enforcement, which will protect his property and his life. Americanism stands for just that; it does not give license to those whose acts would infringe upon the rightful welfare of the majority of our people.

In protecting civil liberties, identification becomes of increased importance. Every citizen should be able to identify himself at all times. Fingerprinting is the answer to this problem. Placed in the personal-identification files of the FBI, which are maintained separate and apart from the criminal files, your fingerprints are safety insurance that protects the liberties of the innocent.

No one objects to filling out a birth certificate, or marriage license, or an application for a driver's permit — and there can be no valid objection to fingerprints.

The Federal Civil Service regularly secures the fingerprints of applicants. The Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard have long fingerprinted those who seek enlistment, not only to safeguard the integrity of their services, but as an added protection to the men themselves. Identification tags and cards can easily be lost. Fingerprints survive life itself. Certainly, in times like these, public expediency urges the fingerprinting of those who have access to confidential plans and materials bearing upon our national defense.

To fulfill its responsibility, law enforcement in a crisis necessitates complete public support and co-operation. If existing facilities are inadequate, they should be strengthened. But they should not be impeded by vigilante methods which by their very adoption would confess that our lawful guarantees of public protection are hopelessly inadequate. There is certainly no reason to fear that constituted authority will not be provided with the essentials for guaranteeing public protection.