

TO HAVE DEMOCRACY

I HAVE BEEN connected with politics for 40 years, and I know that a certain flexibility of principles is not a novelty in politics. It existed long before the dictatorships. But lately we have been playing fast and loose with principles to such an extent that the time has come to call a halt.

Freedom of discussion, of scientific thinking, of religious tolerance—all these are being attacked by a powerful group to whom the individual means nothing, and who forbid everything they do not enforce. And I must confess that this is my most serious fear and preoccupation. If we realize the spiritual, ethical values that are being destroyed in Europe every day, we should realize that none of us is definitely out of danger. The physical, military, and community success of the totalitarian states is being paid for by values which democrats cannot spare.

The greatest service to democracy which America in general and educators in particular can do is to make youth realize the overwhelming advantages of democracy over every other system of government. Democracy has its shortcomings, but these are our fault. It is within our reach to make democracy every bit as attractive to our young as the other system has been made by its proponents. But let us do it by intellectual independence instead of regimentation; by baseball instead of continuous marching; by training for dignified peace instead of preparation for horrible slaughter; by religious liberty instead of making a God out of either an individual or the state; by love instead of hate; by truth instead of lies.

—*Jan Masaryk, from The Education Digest.*