Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”  
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RLJ
In the general problem of a plan for national defense, the Navy is not faced with a task of anything like the magnitude of that of the Army. We have our problem, nevertheless, and it ought to be worked out as far as possible along the same lines as the Army.

Regularly, before the war, I tried in every way possible to call attention to the need of a Naval Reserve. I said we would need at least 150,000 men additional, and I was absolutely right. Not only did the civilians see that by calling up regular naval officers, the actual strength of the Navy could be more than doubled, but every man, even men who were well grown when the war ended, could see that it was necessary.

Today, with hostilities over, we cannot afford to drift back either in Navy or Navy, or even back of a trained Reserve. It is true that for perhaps 10 years to come we can expect on a large proportion of those who have been honorably discharged.
But practical steps should be taken now to build up a system of training for the future. We still need in the Navy a well-organized reserve of 150,000 officers and men, just as much as we did three years ago.

Of course it is well known that I have always favored universal training for the young men of the nation. There arise from its military and naval values it is found to serve for the very simple reason that it produces better citizens. It matters little whether you stress its value because it gives better physical bodies, or because it does away with illiteracy, or because it Americanizes the foreigners, or because it eliminates sectionalism and narrow partisanship. These and a hundred other reasons all point in the same direction.

I go so far as to say that any system of universal training should concern the Navy as well as the Army. The two services
should march hand in hand. More than that, the two services must in the future become far more intimately connected with the general life of the nation than they have been in the past. Two tragedies have faced us heretofore: one the tragedy of militarism, of a military caste or class; the other the tragedy of the untrained, undisciplined citizens army which "springs to arms in a night." The war has taught us that both of these are dangerous in themselves, but that they may be turned out of the elements of each can be trained into a system of proper national defense which will at the same time be an asset in time of peace.

I hope that the American Legion will incarnate clearly the principles of such an organization. Details of a definite first measure are more the concern of the Congress than of two or three million American men who feel themselves an
record, men who base their opinions on personal experience, believe the great principle will prevail.

If the Legion will traverse politics alone, and also questions which are not in any way connected with the Legion itself, and confine itself to the really great national questions of defense, of better citizenship, of Americanism, then and then only will it as an organization become a powerful factor for the good of the United States.

The field of usefulness is a broad one, transcended only by selfishness and partisanship and petty jealousies. Let us try remaining in that broad field and never overlooking the tins show in the present and in the year to come that we care first of all and above all for the continued well being of the nation in time of peace as well as in time of war.