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THE FIGHTING FORCESTHE JOB OF THE FIGHTING MAN AT THE FRONT

The mortal realities of war must be impressed vividly on every citizen. This does not mean dwelling at length on pain, anguish and bloodshed. Nor does it mean sugar-coating the truth. There is a lighter side to the war picture, particularly among Americans, who are irrepressibly cheerful and optimistic. But war means death. It means suffering and sorrow. The men in the service are given no illusions as to the grimness of the business in which they are engaged. We owe it to them to rid ourselves of any false notions we may have about the nature of war.

Our sons and brothers, our husbands and fathers, may today be the target of an enemy sniper, may be aboard a ship toward which an enemy torpedo is speeding, may fall in flames from the sky over enemy territory. We at home cannot fight the battles, but, knowing the dangers our men face, we will redouble our efforts to keep them supplied with the machines and weapons they need. We will help cut down the odds against them, and will prove, by this most effective means, that the nation stands united behind them in their fight for liberty and decency.

Thousands of soldiers and sailors on leave are attending local moving picture theatres. They constitute, as they should, the most critical audience of pictures dealing with the war. It is up to

us to give them a realistic picture of army life, for they will accept nothing else. It is up to us to reflect the finest aspects of our democratic army - its constant concern for the health, welfare and morale of the individual fighting man. It is up to us, also, to tell them again and again what they are fighting for and to let them know that the people are with them heart and soul, grateful for every sacrifice they are making.

Here are a few specific suggestions which might be dramatized effectively:

- A) The heroic sacrifices of individual soldiers and sailors must be exalted in dignified terms:

Mere flag-waving is not enough, for back of the sacrifices is the ideal -- the heritage of a nation built upon the devotion of men who have always been, and are today, willing to die for their country. Yes, glorify the heroes -- we are proud of them. But let us not forget what they are fighting and dying for -- and our consequent burden of responsibility to them.

Our soldiers and sailors are members of well-disciplined units. But they are still and forever individuals -- free individuals. They are farmers and workers, businessmen, professional men, artists, clerks. They are the United States of America. That is why they fight.

--President Roosevelt, Radio Address,
April 28, 1942.

- B) The broad strategy of war implies a unified command on a world-wide scale.

It should be shown that just as American commanders have Allied troops and naval units under them in certain theatres of war, so it is necessary for American army and naval units to be under Allied commanders in other war areas. The unity, the singleness of purpose of the United Nations must be presented as a sign of strength and mutual trust.

- C) The less spectacular branches of the fighting forces should be dramatized.

It is relatively easy to glorify the Air Corps, the Parachute Corps or the Tank Corps. More difficult, but just as necessary, is the dramatization of the humble Infantryman, the mud-slogger whose lot is the grim combination of danger and discomfort. Or the man in the Supply Service, the truck driver who keeps the goods rolling to the front, come sleet, sandstorm or air bombardment.

- D) The men of the Merchant Marine are the unsung heroes of the war.

The newspapers record that three merchant vessels were sunk today by U-boats. Thirty-five men lost. Today, yesterday and tomorrow. But the ships continue to sail, and the men are there to sail them -- frequently men who have just been rescued from a torpedoed ship. They are nameless men, ordinary sailors without uniform, average Americans with homes and families. They keep the guns, planes, tanks and food flowing to America's fighting men and America's allies. They are doing their job and asking no praise. But they deserve praise -- all we can give them.

- E) There is now a Woman's Army.

It is not a lipstick, hairpin affair. It is performing an essential task in a businesslike manner, replacing Army men in non-combatant duties.

- F) The Medical Corps is a direct adjunct of the fighting forces.

American doctors, nurses and ambulance drivers have proved their dauntless courage under fire -- in the Philippines, Hawaii,