MR. PEIRCE: Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen of the conference, I find myself here in a position somewhat different from that of any of the previous speakers. I was an employer before I left my home. I ceased being an employer when I came here, summoned by the Chief Executive, to represent the public to the best of my capacity.

I cannot, help, however, for a moment reverting to the habits of a lifetime, and to consider the resolution before the Conference as an employer; and, as such, I give my unequivocal support to the resolution. It seems to me that the time has long passed when we can quibble about small things when great principles are at stake, and I appeal to those on my left as well as to those on my right to forget for a moment that they have come here either as representatives of labor or as representatives of employers. They have come here just as we, in the center have come, as representatives of the American people.

It seems to me, Mr. Chairman, that we must not forget that, above all things. I do not care if, in the writing of this resolution there is a shade greater balance of favor to one side as compared to another. The important thing is that we recognize that if democracy means anything in industry or in any other element of life, it means the right of a personal determination of those things which it is right that we should determine for ourselves. The obedience to law is liberty and that means not only the law of the land, but the law of morality and the principles of ethics. I could not conscientiously face my associates in business---and by that I mean the men who run the works, who toil at the machines, and the women who work with their hands---any more than I could have faced my fellow citizens if I denied them a right which I myself xxxx possess. And I maintain, Mr. Chairman, that it is not in that spirit that the employers must be voting "No" on this resolution. It cannot be that. I can not imagine that such a motive is behind it. What can it be, then? It must be some queer divergency of understanding which has beclouded the issue, and I am sure that if they will realize, as I believe some of us do, that there has not been a conference of such great importance called, perhaps with the exception of the Peace Conference at Paris, in the last fifty years---if they will realize the possibilities, the potentialities of this meeting are so great that they may influence the entire social fabric of the world; if they will realize that in the outcome of our deliberations and conclusions hang matters in the balance which can save us not only from interminable turmoil, but save us from destruction, I am sure that they will go to each other in a spirit that must bring harmony.

Digital Image, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

Following more directly that resolution itself, I not only support it in its present form, but would have gone still further and urged every employer to assist in organizing his men so that they might have a coherent and collective voice in the determinations of conditions of employment in which they must always be interested. (Applause) With the modifying phrase which has been added, to the first clause, the right of the individual to organize or not to organize, to choose his method of organizing, whether through labor unions, or shop unions, employees organizations or any other, it seems to me it is safe-guarded. I do not know what has been in the minds of the labor union representatives, whether they have made a great sacrifice in making this concession or not. I do not know what is in the mind of the employers in opposing it, but it seems to me that we have the basis of an understanding, and as good citizens, and all of us representing the public, let us get together and accomplish this end by supporting this resolution unanimously. (Applause)

- - - - -

Digital Image, 2009. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library