

President Harding's Prospective



President Warren G. Harding's comments on morality and Prohibition enforcement, quoted in "The President's Appeal to Halt Law Breaking" *Literary Digest* April 15, 1922.

There is a good deal of loose talk nowadays about the cause of the spiritual demoralization of the community, which it has become popular to attribute to the abnormal conditions that were incident to the war. But in fact the war is not wholly to blame. Before the war started or was dreamed of we were already realizing the tendency toward a certain moral laxity, a shifting of standards, a weakening of the sterner fibers.

I think we should do well to recognize that intellectual and moral evolution of the community. It would be a grievous error to allow ourselves to feel too confident that this is only a temporary and passing aspect. . . .

Whatever breeds disrespect for the law of the land, in any particular department of our community relations, is a force tending to the general breakdown of the social organization. If people who are known as leaders, as directing influences, as thoroughly respected and respectable members of society shall in their respective communities become known for their defiance of some part of the code of law, then they need not be astonished if presently they find that their example is followed by others, with the result that presently the law in general comes to be looked upon as a set of irksome and unreasonable restraints upon the liberty of the individual Our only safety will be in inculcating an attitude of respect for the law as, on the whole, the best expression that has been given to the social aspiration and moral purpose of the community. . . .

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