

## Return to Normalcy

(1)

*During his presidential campaign, Warren Harding accurately sensed the mood of the American public and proposed a return to life as it was, leaving behind the war and all that went with it to go back to a time of “normal” life. Harding’s presidency, which saw unemployment in America reaching 12% in 1921, began one of the greatest periods of economic **prosperity** in U.S. history, with unemployment dropping to less than 3% by the time he died in 1923. He delivered the following speech on May 14, 1920.*

(2)

There isn’t anything the matter with world civilization, except that humanity is viewing it through a vision impaired in a horrible war. Poise has been disturbed, and nerves have been racked, and fever has rendered men irrational ... but the human procession still marches in the right direction.

(3)

America’s present need is not heroics, but healing ... not revolution, but restoration; not agitation, but adjustment; not surgery, but serenity; not the dramatic, but the dispassionate; not ... internationality, but ... triumphant nationality.

(4)

It is one thing to battle successfully against world domination by military dictators, because the infinite God never intended such a program, but it is quite another thing to revise human nature and suspend the fundamental laws of life and all of life’s acquirements ...

### What’s going on?

(5)

This republic has its ample tasks. If we put an end to false economics which lure humanity to utter chaos, ours will be the commanding example of world leadership today. If we can prove a representative popular government under which a citizenship seeks what it may do for the government rather than what the government may do for individuals, we shall do more to make democracy safe for the world than all armed conflict ever recorded.

(6)

The world needs to be reminded that all human ills are not curable by legislation, and that quantity of laws and excess of government offer no substitute for quality of citizenship.

(7)

The problems of maintained civilization are not to be solved by a transfer of responsibility from citizenship to government, and no important page in history was ever drafted by the standards of mediocrity. More, no government is worthy of the name which is directed by influence on the one hand, or moved by intimidation on the other...

**What’s going on?**

**How does this relate to what you have read already?**

(8)

My best judgment of America’s needs is to steady down, to get squarely on our feet, to make sure of the right path. Let’s get out of the fevered delirium of war, with the delusion that all the money in the world is to be made in the madness of war and the wildness of its aftermath. Let us stop to consider that peace at home is more precious than peace abroad, and that both our good fortune and our eminence are dependent on the normal forward stride of all the American people ...

Adapted from Schortemeier, F. E. (Ed.). (1920). *Rededicating America: Life and recent speeches of Warren G. Harding*. Indianapolis, IA: Bobbs-Merrill.

**What’s going on?**

**How does this relate to what you have read already?**

**What is the overall message of the passage?**

**What questions do you have?**