

I CAN

An Oration

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The author, with this oration, won a first prize in the 1947 National "Voice of Democracy" contest. Permission granted by the author to the WETMORE DECLAMATION BUREAU, Sioux City, Iowa.

I am an American. As an American, I can do many things. Is it a coincidence that the word "American" ends in "I can?" That "I can" is the basis for Democracy? It expresses the free will and determination of a free people--people who govern themselves.

"I can" was the spirit of the pioneering Americans when they faced the hardships of an unknown, uncivilized land, and overcame them. Their spirit remained when they faced overwhelming odds and great dangers to gain their freedom from England.

"I can" was the spirit of the nation, when, looking at the political systems of the other countries of the world, and their results, the American statesmen formed our Constitution and the Bill of Rights. They vowed to insure, to themselves, and to us, their posterity, the rights of mankind--freedom of speech, of the press, of religion. Freedom from want and from fear. Freedom from the tyranny of government--the right to rule themselves. The voice of America, the Constitution, was born.

"I can" was the spirit of the people when our liberty was threatened in 1918 and again in 1941. We had to win to save an ideal. The voices of democracy spoke, and we did. The cost was great, but the willingness to pay was greater, for we know the worth of the prize that was threatened.

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