

INTRODUCTION

At the root of America's worst problems is the fact that we have never been true to Jefferson's principle: "Equal rights for all; special privileges to none."

When you allow special privileges to some, the rest of the population is put at a disadvantage which is magnified with each succeeding generation. Our economy collapses periodically, wealth becomes more and more concentrated in the hands of a few, and our taxes become more burdensome. Increasing poverty and continuous unemployment result in a mixture of despair and rage that leads to drug use and violent crime. And when conditions get bad enough, the likelihood of a military or Fascist coup increases.

Few Americans are aware of how close we came to the establishment of an authoritarian state during the depths of the Great Depression. In 1934 a Fascist coup was actually planned in this country. It was abandoned when General Smedley Butler refused to act as "leader" and published his report of the plot. A congressional committee investigated the incident, confirmed the existence of such a plot, and then proceeded to 'whitewash' the whole affair! The press said very little about it. Some papers even tried to laugh it off. *But that was not something to laugh about either then or today.*

Our country has once again become ripe for such an ugly happening because of our failure to correct the root causes of our problems. We were very lucky in 1934. We may not be so lucky next time.

I urge you, therefore, to read what follows carefully and thoughtfully. What this troubled world needs more than anything else is the example of just one country that has actually made a living reality of the Jeffersonian principle: Equal rights for all; special privileges to none. Then—*but not until then*—will it be possible to make genuine progress toward a peaceful world.