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**Capitol Report  
November 15th, 2018**

**Remembering the Great War**

Nearly 40 million total dead. Over 10 million battle deaths, and 117,000 Americans dead. As for Missouri, 156,000 served (among them a future president), and 10,000 died or were wounded. These are the totals for the Great War, later to be known as World War I.

This past Sunday marked the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the “11<sup>th</sup> hour, of the 11<sup>th</sup> day, of the 11<sup>th</sup> month,” referred to for years as Armistice Day. The Great War ended, the war to end all wars, and a sense of hope settled on the Western world. Sadly, the hope would prove to be hollow, and just two decades later the stage would be set for another war, World War II. This week I wanted to reflect just a minute and look at the affects of World War I. The conflict gave momentum to full-scale total war where civilian and military targets are indistinguishable. Battles were fought on land, on sea, under the sea, and even in the air. Machine guns, tanks, weapons of mass destruction (poisonous gasses), and heavy bombardment took away any vestiges of medieval romance and war giving way to which side could inflict the largest slaughter. War entered a new stage with World War I.

To backup a bit and put all this in perspective, the story of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is really a story of a struggle within Western Civilization: beginning with the Great War, we see the world divided, first into two, then three, then back to two camps: liberal, communist, and fascist. Now by liberal, I am not using the political terminology of today, I mean democracy, capitalism, and free exchange. The rise of totalitarian states, fascist and communist, became an aggressive rival to the liberal system, and a serious threat indeed. None of this would be settled in 1918.

On April 6, 1917, the U.S. had entered World War I on the side of the Allies, our most politically aligned countries in Europe. Although we disagreed on some issues with the British and the French, we agreed more than we had our differences. Sure, Britain and France had empires, which we did not like, but they had also had democracy, capitalism, and an inclination to free trade with the U.S. So, we had much more in common with the Brits than we did with the Germans or Russians. Sure, the Russians were allies when we declared war, but the communist revolution would soon take care of those ties. Other power alignments would also change.

With the onset of World War I, the liberal leader, Britain, began to wane in power. They certainly controlled a lot of territory (the sun never set on the British Empire), but they were having their problems financing the war. As a result, we provided much of their money. The same goes for France. At end of the hostilities, America would be the new financial powerhouse in the international society.

The challenges of total war brought much soul searching to the military establishment as well as civil society. This hope for change, however, did not flourish: at least not in the manner as some intellectuals had hoped would develop. This disillusionment would further change the world.

The old monarchies of Europe seemed impotent in the new industrial age of weaponry. All their bravery meant little when pitted against the fury of the cold, steel mass killing machines. Bodies were needed to fight a war, and the “bodies” wanted some input into government. Monarchies are not made for democracy: some can adapt (Britain is the historical example), but if they don’t, they collapse (Russia is the prime example of this period). Sometimes monarchies collapse, and no clear order appears; this would be the case in Germany. Germany would also struggle as a result of not having clear terms of surrender on 11/11/1918.

Part of the problem for Germany resulted from a sense of betrayal. Early in 1918, the average German probably believed in at least a decent chance of victory. By the end of the year, with German troops on foreign soil, the German empire ended. Also, France sought revenge and payment of their war debts. The British hoped onboard with this provision of the peace terms.

The Germans would struggle with this monetary revenge (known as reparations) throughout the 1920s, and this contributed to the rise of Hitler and National Socialism.

Finally, back to Missouri. A young Missouri National Guard artillery captain fought on European soil, in his first, but not last taste of international affairs. Harry Truman proved his leadership ability in France, certainly an attribute that would serve him well as the 33<sup>rd</sup> president. In the biography, *Man of the People: A Life of Harry Truman*, Alonzo Hamby wrote that when the fighting ended, French soldiers had a small parade and cheered, "Vive President Wilson! Vive le capitaine d'artillerie americaine!" (p.78) Less than three decades later French soldiers would be celebrating American assistance once again.

### Happy Thanksgiving!

Next week is Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is a holiday with a longstanding tradition in our lives as well as American history. However, despite the fact that the holiday goes back to the beginning of colonial times, it took almost two and a half centuries to become a national holiday.

The Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock in September, 1620. Obviously, at such a late point in the year they struggled to survive throughout the next year because of a lack of food. Fortunately for the new settlers, the Abnaki Indians of the area helped them understand how to grow and harvest food in the New World. Although the Pilgrims continued to struggle, those who survived decided to celebrate the fall harvest of 1621 and invited their neighbors. Harvest festivals go back to ancient times and were common throughout Europe in the Pilgrims' time. It is hard for us to imagine today, but famine was on the doorstep of most people until very recent times.

Various thanksgiving-type celebrations were held throughout the colonies and in the early states. The Continental Congress called for a day of thanksgiving for the patriot victory at the Battle of Saratoga in 1777. Subsequently, George Washington called for a day of thanksgiving in 1789 for the ratification of the Constitution. In 1817, New York proclaimed an annual Thanksgiving Day, and other states followed suit. In 1863, and in an effort to boost the morale of the Union troops, Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national Thanksgiving day. After the Civil War, Congress made this a yearly celebration in November. Franklin Roosevelt moved the date up one week to appease retailers as Christmas shopping traditionally goes into high gear the Friday after Thanksgiving (Black Friday).

NOTE: With the holiday next week, the Capitol Report will take a break. Look for another edition on November 29.

## HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

It is an honor to serve the 51<sup>st</sup> District in the Missouri House of Representatives. Each week I will issue a capitol report to keep you informed of activities in Jefferson City. Any concerns or issues you might have are of great interest to me. I look forward to your input and thoughts, so please feel free to contact me at any time if you have questions, concerns, or ideas to improve our state government and the quality of life for all Missourians. My telephone number is 573-751-2204 or you may contact me by email at [dean.dohrman@house.mo.gov](mailto:dean.dohrman@house.mo.gov). Thank you for working with me to make Missouri a great place to live.

Serving the Constituents of the 51<sup>st</sup> District,



State Representative

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