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People Should Provide Leadership

OUR country is looking for a great man to lead us out of the mess that we are in. Our country is having trouble finding great men.

Joseph Alsop, veteran Washington columnist, wrote a few weeks ago that "Washington is knee deep in pygmies," and if anybody challenged that statement he didn't attract much attention.

Where are the great men that we need for these times? They are all around us, but we don't recognize them. They are the people, the ordinary honest people with common sense. They aren't noticed because they don't go around hollering and bragging on themselves like other kinds are doing.

This is not a new discovery, but it may be a nearly forgotten truth. Our forefathers realized that ordinary folks knew more about how plain people ought to be governed than the great politicians of their times did.

Russell Conwell is remembered for his famous speech, "Acres of Diamonds." He inspired countless young people to succeed with their lives by using what they had where they were. He preached self-reliance and good sense.

Conwell had something to say about politics and political leaders, too. He was born in 1843, served in the Civil war and died in 1925, but the wisdom of his observations is still timely.

Conwell said "Great men get into office sometimes, but what this country needs is men that will do what we tell them to."

Right there, in that one sentence,

Conwell may have diagnosed our main trouble. We are looking for great men to tell us what to do, to lead us, to do our thinking, when we ought to be doing our own thinking, carrying our own responsibilities, and depending upon our own resources and initiative.

We are looking for great leaders, when we ought to be looking for ways that we can be a great people.

"This nation, where the people rule, is governed by the people, for the people, and so long as it is, then the officeholder is but the servant of the people," Conwell wrote, "and the Bible says the servant cannot be greater than the master."

Then he drove home the clincher, a thought for today, when he said: "The people rule, or should rule, and if they do, we do not need greater men in office. If the great men in

America took our offices, we would change to an empire in the next 10 years."

Many great leaders have held public offices in this country, and there is no intent to belittle them. They were personalities who had qualities of greatness about them and who made notable contributions to civilization and society, regardless of their titles. They made their offices great, rather than otherwise.

Many public officials seem to have the notion that they have been transformed by virtue of their titles and their offices. But we still have little men in big chairs and pygmies in Washington.

Conwell said it right; "Remember that if you are not great before you get the office, you won't be great when you secure it!"