The American people, Mr. President, have clung to the hope through all these months that the dread alternative might be avoided. Like the Savior of man in the garden of Gethsemane, they have prayed that the bitter cup of sacrifice might pass from them. They have prayed that it might not be necessary to make the sacrifice for the protection of humanity and the vindication of national honor. All has been in vain. All patience, all moderation, and all long-suffering have apparently been in vain – not entirely in vain, though, Mr. President, because we have avoided the horrors of war for two years or more, but the time has now come when further delay is impossible.

Mr. President, I have opposed war; I have been bitterly opposed to it. What influence I have had in my State and in this body has been exerted against it. As long as there was any hope to avoid it I used my legitimate influence for that purpose. I supported armed neutrality here with the fervor that I did because I thought it offered an escape from war with honor and I even hoped to avoid war up to the eleventh hour. Yes, Mr. President, when I knew that the people of the United States were calling for war, when I knew that a majority of the Congress of the United States was overwhelmingly for war, and upon the proper occasion would vote for war – even when I knew that, Mr. President, I sought out the President of the United States and begged him if possible to cling yet longer to armed neutrality as an expedient to avoid war; but it was vain. The President was in possession of such information as made it impossible for him to listen longer to the arguments of those who sought to avoid war. He has spoken to the Congress. The country is ready, and the Congress is ready. While the vote has not yet been recorded, the decision has, as we all know, been reached. It is war.