

Response to the Writers' War Board asking for a statement on "The Meaning of Democracy."

Surely the Board knows what democracy is. It is the line that forms on the right. It is the don't in don't shove. It is the hole in the stuffed shirt through which the sawdust trickles; it is the dent in the high hat. Democracy is the recurrent suspicion that more than half of the people are right more than half of the time. It is the feeling of privacy in voting booths, the feeling of communion in libraries, the feeling of vitality everywhere. Democracy is a letter to the editor. Democracy is the score at the beginning of the ninth. It is an idea which hasn't been disproved yet, a song the words of which have not gone bad. It's the mustard on the hot dog and the cream in the rationed coffee. Democracy is a request from the War Board, in the middle of a morning in the middle of a war, wanting to know what democracy is. (E. B. White, "DEMOCRACY," 1943)