File No. 12

1911 December 23

Buffalo, NY
F. D. P. Longhand

1911 Dec. 23

Speech before The Saturn Club, Buffalo, N. Y.

Typed with notations in hand of F. D. P.

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363—WEDNESDAY, DEC. 29, 1943 —2

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Few legislatures have contained as many men without previous legislative experience, as last year's, ever existed. Few legislatures have contained so many men who did a certain amount of their own thinking. All the old-timers will tell you this, and it cannot exactly be called a compliment. But in spite of this independent thinking I can truthfully say that it has not been necessary to be in Albany more than a week before discovering that the Government of the State of New York was not what the history books said — a Democracy; that our laws were not made by representatives of voters. The form was there, the display \( \text{[Roses]} \).
and the decorations. All this was to be seen, but if you got very close and put your ear up to that form you could hear the clockwork ticking inside, and if you were very clever you could find out who had the key.

No one man had the keys, but a very small body of men did, and those men knew each other well and were pretty good friends, and those men could wind up the legislative figure to go through all the motions so cleverly that ninety-nine people out of a hundred thought it was alive. In reality it was made up almost entirely of wheels, cogs within cogs, each part dependent on every other, and the whole dependent on those jealously
guarded keys.

One thing must, however, must in fairness be said — that machine has not been running very well lately. There seems to be a lack of oil, and last winter it came very near going out of business entirely; so much so that the men who held the keys had to call in mechanics from far and near to tinker with it, and if there is one thing certain in this life it is that this dead form is worn out, and that from its ruins the people are going to have a living organization which will more nearly conform to what the history books call our "Democratic form of government."

Who is to blame for a legislature run by a handful
of outside men? Do you blame the senators and assemblymen who are cogs in the wheels? Well, a little perhaps, but not much.

Some of those men, most of them, have been brought up and educated, and trained, for just that work, by the few who hold the keys. They see how easy it is to let others do their thinking, and they know that if they are faithful they will get their reward.

It pays to take orders -- let me remind you of that; and also of the fact that we are all human. To do so means a livelihood; not much, pretty good pay all their lives, and the possibility that some day they may hold the keys themselves.
Others of these men want to think for themselves, but after one or two attempts they find that thinking is useless; that a stone wall blocks their object.

Can you wholly blame the man who has a local bill of great importance to his constituents, who is told he cannot have it passed unless he is good? And, being good means that he must be willing to become a cog in the wheel.

Can you wholly blame those men from Buffalo who last season were led to support measures they thought bad on the promise of support for the Buffalo Charter Bill? And, let me add, they did not get — they met with the usual fate,
the men who held the keys made the wheels go around and then calmly and quietly laid the Buffalo Charter on the shelf.

Can you wholly blame the men who protest and fight for long weary weeks, if they listen in the end to the honeyed words about "Party harmony" and "good fellowship", and the flattery and visions of reward that are held before their eyes?

No, we cannot wholly charge it up to them. We must go back to the masters -- back to the men who hold the keys, and I will say specifically that this applies not to one party only, but to the two great parties -- to Republicans and Democrats alike.

In Ancient Greece the rule of mighty men of war gave
place to a pure Democracy; the pure Democracy gave way, in its turn, to the rule of Oligarchs, and in the end a tyrant usurped the functions of the Oligarchs. To-day we have repeated the first part of the process; this State from a Democracy has come to be ruled by Oligarchs; men ruling for their own good and in their own way. Not long ago their names were Barnes and Sherman and Woodruff and Payne, and Platt, and Depew. To-day their names are Murphy, and Fitzpatrick, and McCabe, and McCoey, and Cassidy. No, not Cassidy -- poor fellow -- he died last week, and one does not like to speak ill of the dead.
It matters not, however, what their names are; for the mark of the beast is on them all.

Here is the point in a nutshell. A political party exists for the purpose of getting the majority of voters to endorse its views, and elect its candidates to carry on the government. Does anyone suppose that a majority of the voters of this state want to have a Platt Oligarchy, or a Barnes Oligarchy, or a Murphy Oligarchy, enunciate principles or carry on their government?

There is talk of unrest on every hand; disgust with old parties, a ready welcome for demagogues, and it is no wonder.
The voter has had but little to say, for if he is disgusted with Republican rule, and seeks a change, he has been equally displeased with Democratic methods, and yet he knows there is no use putting Republicans back in power again. Hence the Socialist Mayor of Schenectady, and other wonders of the day.

But we are seeking the blame; we know where the present blame lies; it is at the door of the Oligarchs of yesterday and to-day; it is at the door of Platt and of Barnes; of Murphy and Fitzpatrick; but the ultimate blame is on those who submit; on those who go seeking after strange gods. It is on you, the voters, because the remedy lies in your hands. You have the weapon beside you; if you have weeds in your garden which
are choking your flowers to death you do not plant new flowers
in the hope that they will grow; you pull out the weeds.

There is no question that the great majority of Democrats
in this state are disgusted with the so-called state leadership of
C.F. Murphy. There is only one remedy, and the Democrats have it
ready to hand. C.F. Murphy must, like the noxious weed, be
plucked out, root and branch. There is no question that the
great majority of Republicans in this state will not stand
contended with Old Guard leadership. They too have the remedy,
and the Old Guard must likewise be rooted out if the Republican
party is to endure.
The good work has begun, and it gathers momentum with each succeeding day. Cassidy in Queens County went out from the toe of a boot last week. McCooey is hanging on by the skin of his teeth. The Bronx has thrown off Murphy domination. Lou Payne and Odell on the Hudson River are losing their grip on the Republican Machine. McCabe in Albany will be succeeded in the spring by a young Democrat who can defeat the Republican machine of Boss Barnes. Cornelius Collins has lost his grip on Troy, and finally, the Democrats of this city have an excellent opportunity to rid themselves of that man who was referred to last year in Albany as "Murphy's tool."

Last October we passed a direct nominations law; it
was not perfect by any means, but it was a step in the right
direction. Next month we are going to try to improve it, and we
will succeed unless the Olg Guard Oligarchs of both parties
combine to defeat us; but even if we do not succeed, you have a
weapon more powerful than before. You have got rid of strong arm
caucuses and crooked primaries forever, and next spring if Buffalo
they can
Democrats want to get a man as leader who will lead in a manner
worthy of the fair name of this city. We have made it easier
for the young man who thinks politics is dirty business; for the
busy man of affairs, and for the lazy man, too, to take up his
duty as a citizen. (Story of nigger)
For those of you who are fond of hunting, I would say it is no longer necessary to go to the Canadian Rockies or the Jungles of Africa for sport; there is bigger game and better hunting right here in New York State; right here in Buffalo; right here in your own ward. The hunt is on, and the beasts of prey have begun to fall. The American citizen is again fighting for his freedom; he is confronted by Oligarchies and tyrannies on the one hand, and by Anarchy on the other, and those of us who have the old abiding faith believe that the American citizen will triumph again as he has done in the past.