
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
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SPEECH OF FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT AT A Y.M.C.A. MEETING,
HARTFORD, CONN., DECEMBER 3, 1916.

"The Privilege of National Service"
[from Hartford Courant, Dec. 4, 1916]

"I know from personal experience in Washington that noone can guarantee that we will not have war with any other nation," said Franklin D. Roosevelt, assistant secretary of the navy, at the Princess Theatre yesterday afternoon, when he spoke at the first of the Y.M.C.A. men's Sunday afternoon meetings of the season. Mr. Roosevelt's address was on "The Privilege of National Service."

Secretary Josephus Daniel's understudy said that he was due here a month ago, but on a different errand - to make a political speech - and, while he was unable to come to Hartford, he was glad that he did not have to make the speech.

Mr. Roosevelt said that service appeals to our particular environments. "But," he added, "there is something which goes with those two words. It is only recently that people have used 'privilege of service' rather than 'duty of service'. Years ago we thought of education as compulsory, but today we are glad to take the facilities given us by the city, state and country to give our children an education. We have given up the use of the word 'compulsory' in this respect, and think of it more as a privilege.

"People are beginning, also, to look on national problems as 'national' problems, instead of 'local' problems. This is shown every year by an increased number of split ballots. We started to split the ballots in our own locality, then branched to the state elections, and finally to the national elections.

"My own particular occupation at the present time is getting ready for war, rather than for peace. We have been hearing a great deal of the increase of the army and navy in order to better protect the nation in case of emergency. Either the country needs no army or navy, or it needs an adequate army and navy. What is the verdict of the country on this question? Why, there is no question! While 99 out of 100 people are for peace, still we are willing, also, to defend the nation in time of emergency. The question, however, is "What would I do?,"

The speaker then told of the need of the entire nation to be ready to do its share. He said that there are between 15,000,000 and 20,000,000 able-bodied men and about the same number of women in this country, and that both sexes would have a part in the adequate protection in case of emergency. "In the great war across the water, the women are doing their share, the same as the men. Mobilization does not mean today

what it meant heretofore. It is not merely the calling out of the infantry, the cavalry, and the artillery; it is bigger - it is the mobilization of every man, woman and child who can help."

Speaking of fitness in case of emergency, Mr. Roosevelt told of a meeting where three women spoke of their adaptability. One could drive an automobile, another had had nursing experience, and the third had a large family. The last could stay at home and care for the children, and the other two could do their share in their own particular field of endeavor.

"The efforts to increase the army met with failure because of Congress; the congressmen did not hear 'from home'. Distinct progress had been made, however, in the regular army and navy. The 'policing' duty which sometimes falls to the lot of a nation should be done by the regular army and navy. In case a crisis comes, you and I should know where to fit in."

"Every great war in which this country had taken part began on the volunteer plan, but ended in a compulsory training, or, in other words, drafting. This country needs universal training which has been put in effect in some other countries - Switzerland, and Australia for instance. We need a system which will not take the young men away from their families and their work for a long period; that is the only kind of national service that will insure to this country adequate defense against a possible enemy. Who is this enemy? When are we to be attacked? I don't know. I hope we will not be attacked.

"The privilege of national service is what we have got to talk about. Think and talk about the privilege of national service. Try to make your representatives, your freely chosen delegates, carry out your desires in the matter, and I have no doubt about the safety of the country in the time to come."

The meeting was in charge of Alderman Walter S. Shutz, a member of the Y.M.C.A. religious meetings committee. Preceding the speeches, there was singing by a quartet, and by the audience led by L. M. Robotham. The quartet was composed of Mr. Robotham, E. F. Taylor, Charles E. Prior, Jr., and J. L. Robins. Parayer was offered by Bishop Robert L. Paddock of Eastern Oregon, who was graduated from Trinity College in 1894, in the class of Mr. Schutz.

George C. Hubert, General Secretary of the Y.M.C.A. spoke, calling attention to the fact that seven months have elapsed since the meetings were held, and asking those who liked yesterday's program to return next Sunday. Mr. Shutz said that it was a privilege and an inspiration to introduce Mr. Roosevelt, whom he first met when the latter was elected senator in the New York Assembly. At that time, Mr. Roosevelt was the "baby member" of the assembly. Before the assistant secretary began his address, three cheers were given him. (Finis.)

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Marjorie F. Waterman
Chief of Reading Room