
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

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FDR Speech File

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May 12, 1917.

File Personal Answered

Perme B

Hon. Franklin D. Roosevelt,
Assistant Secretary of the Navy,
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. Secretary:-

I enclose herewith a stenographic report of your remarks at the Navy League Reception to the naval members of the British War Commission. I am publishing an account of that reception in the June issue of Sea Power and would very much like to give something of your remarks. Will you please go over this stenographic report, making such changes or corrections as you think necessary and letting me have something from you which I can use for this purpose?

Very truly yours,

Frederick Brown
Executive Officer.

SB/GWM
Enclosure.

MR. ROOSEVELT:

I have been asked to greet Admiral de Chair. We have all been doing our fair share of talking since our colleagues came over here.

I am sorry, in a way, to be spoken of as representing the "Navy Department." I hate to think of the Navy Department as anything that is separate from the Navy itself. May I say in this gathering of greetings, this gathering of fair words - this gathering of promises of what we are going to do - that we have got to do. What of the days that have gone by - the weeks that have gone by - and we are gradually getting to months that have gone by, with mighty little done.

Admiral de Chair, Admiral _____ and other members of the English and French Commission, have not said so outright, but I feel quite sure that if I were in their place I would feel like reporting home to my government that I had received fair words, and again fair words, and I would feel quite sure that my government - if it were the right kind of a government - would cable back to me and say "What about the number of ships that have sailed?" "What about the number of men that have left America for the other side, after a month's participation in the war?" England and France know that we have got the men. England and France know that we have got a fairly good-sized number - for the United States - in the Army. We have got a division, maybe

a couple of divisions of regular trained troops. We have got pretty nearly a division of Marines. I think as long as we are all connected more or less with the Navy here to-night - or connected with the Army - that we must take stock of the little bit we are doing.

It is all right to extend the greetings - a greeting that is just as hearty, I believe, in every city of this country, whether it be Washington, Philadelphia, New York or Boston - or cities like Chicago and St. Louis, - yes, and Milwaukee!

There is no question about our being in this war to stick- to see it through to that end that is bound to come, but there is a question still we must face, and that is the question of what we have done in the days that are passed and what we are going to do to-morrow - Thursday - a definite day. What is going to be accomplished between now and Sunday.

Let us say, not what we are going to do next September or next spring - and may I say to the Admiral as I have said quite openly to other members of both the British and French Commission, that it is their duty to put before the American people, - not once, not as a request, - a polite suggestion - but again and again, what they need, what we can give TODAY and not to-morrow.

It is time that the officers of the service - of both services - appreciate more fully the exigencies of the moment. It is time that the Administration, that members of the Senate and House of Representatives, - women and men -

appreciate more fully that our task is now and not to-morrow. It is time that they insist on action at once. Action that will give something definite - definite ships, definite men - on a definite day. And, my friends, we Americans, in whatever walk of life we happen to belong, should demand of our representatives that definite action be taken. The quicker this is done the quicker will it help the common Cause to come to some definite end.

May 9, 1917

gvc