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

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**Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension**

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**File No. 95**

**1919 June 25**

**Worcester, MA**

June 25, 1919

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FDR Speech File

Address by Franklin D. Roosevelt, Asst. Secretary of the Navy, at Worcester Polytechnic Institute Commencement, June 25, 1919.

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The National Emergency of Peace Times.

In the early days of January 1917 - that almost prehistoric time when there was still a German Ambassador in Washington - some of us even then were trying to lay the seeds of true national preparedness by advocating some form of universal training in time of peace and the principle of the draft in time of war. Most of us were perfectly peaceful civilians, and yet we soon found ourselves classified as militaristic jingoes. Indeed prominent men in both parties said openly that to resort to the draft in case of war would destroy the very foundation of our Republic. It is worthy of note that three months later these same men were advocating or voting for the draft law, the most truly American piece of legislation ever enacted. When the crisis of war came opposition to the principle of universal service was scarcely heard in the face of its obvious fairness and efficacy. And in a little over a year the United States not only had an Army and Navy of 5,000,000 men but had classified about 15,000,000 additional, either for military service or for the economic side of the national task.

In other words there was general and immediate recognition of the duty or obligation or privilege - and I like the last word best - of every individual citizen to take his part in the emergency of war in which his country found itself. Two years ago seems very far off already, and our tendency will be to forget quickly what our own feelings were in 1917 and 1918. Is it not true, though, that every one of us served in some way, and that the further away our service was from the actual zone of fighting the more we

chafed. I know many a splendid soul who was compelled to stay at home for one valid reason or another and yet is just as much a hero as if he had gone overseas. There is no question about the United States having been in this war with its heart and soul, that we were unanimous as far as 100,000,000 people ever can be or ever will be. That after all is but another word for national service in time of war.

It must not be forgotten though that this national service was of ourselves, of our bodies, of our lives - that the draft was a draft of men, not of property. To be sure, the government commandeered a few things here and there, and told us how much sugar we could eat or how little coal it could deliver to us, but broadly speaking the wealth of the country was not drafted, it was borrowed from voluntary lenders. I suppose it would give some of my conservative hearers a distinct shock if I were to tell them how seriously the conscription of wealth was discussed in Washington during last year among both Republicans and Democrats and how imminent such a measure was - yet such is the fact, and we must admit that if the war had continued for another year there would have been much justice on the side of those who demanded that the nation in its crisis should draft property as well as the bodies of the owners of that property.

But what, after all, is the good of talking about a war which is over; why not forget it all, and go back to business and pay off the national debt as fast as possible, and demand a reduction of the income tax, and criticize the government, and raise some very beautiful marble monuments to the heroes of this war, and return to that good old "normal

"life" of the good old days when we could do almost anything we chose; that old thought of "I want what I want when I want it!"

Why not? I suppose the answer is that the world moves forward, not back, that those old days will never come again, that we have learned a new lesson, one that has gone, I hope, very deeply into the souls of this generation at least, the lesson of national service.

It has taken the emergency of a thing called war to bring it about, but what then is war? Is it not merely a culmination in physical combat of forces of antagonism which are ever present - even in days of peace? Surely no war in history more than this great World War has represented the ever contending spirit of Right and Wrong in human kind. Even now, when we think of the war as ended, when we read of the great table of the Treaty of Peace at Versailles - even today there are more than a dozen of lesser wars being waged all over Europe, by leaders and peoples so accustomed to take up the sword that they are still using it to settle emergencies real or fancied.

In our own country we have in the past been too prone to think of a national emergency only as another name for war. In many laws the President and the Governors of States are authorized to do thus or so "in the event of national emergency," meaning an armed attack either from without or from within.

Yet, if we will well consider, the nation constantly is passing through national emergencies in the midst of piping times of peace - emergencies which mean the triumph of Right or Wrong, of Progress or Reaction. These crises have come throughout our history, they are in

fact with us in greater or less degree every day and often the smallest in the public eye is the one most fraught with good or ill for the people.

Many of us here can remember some of the more obvious of these - the emergency of Free Silver in 1896, when the country nearly embarked on what is now generally admitted to be an erroneous financial policy - the emergency of the great struggle during the administration of Theodore Roosevelt against those old forces of special privilege which had dominated the National and State governments - the emergency which found expression in the Federal Reserve Act, - the emergency which brought 4,000,000 voters to the call of the Progressive Party in 1912.

In a sense all great national problems are crises of peace time, and today we face as many as ever. Their solution will inevitably affect the future generations of Americans. Think for a moment of what you and I have to lay hold of and wrestle with and solve even today - the disposition of the railroads, of the telegraphs, in fact of all so-called public utilities; the extension of our commerce in American ships upon the seas; matters of combinations among great industries; relations of capital, labor and the national interests; the development of natural resources above and below the surface; the distribution of population so as to prevent unhealthy congestion; the control of wealth through taxation. Every one of these is very truly an emergency in the great and permanent well-being of our country as affecting itself and ourselves at home. In addition we have taken on for all time a new relationship, recognized by the fact of our entry into the war for civilization, the duty we owe to other peoples and nations and which they owe to us. Some of us are slow to grasp the

thought, yet it is clear as the sun that the United States would commit a grievous wrong to itself and to all mankind if it were even to attempt to go backwards towards an old Chinese wall policy of isolation. And even though we may consider the actual fighting as ended there will be many crises in international affairs for many years to come. In them the United States cannot escape an important, perhaps, even a controlling voice.

These are the larger and more self-evident problems before us. Bound up in every one of them is another emergency, the actual conduct of the Government itself. I think it is a fair statement to make that the management of the executive work of government in Washington and in most of the States and cities has improved in honesty and efficiency in the last few years. I often wish that Mr. Bryce could come back and visit us in order to write a supplemental volume called "The American Commonwealth Thirty Years Later" - I believe he would give us a report of improvement. The spirit in which the war work was conducted is an example. An honest effort was made to get the most competent men for the new tasks at hand. Dead politicians turned over in their graves, and some live ones fainted when they saw Republicans put into about 50% of the war positions by a Democratic Administration. Some of them were \$1-a-year men, very expensive to the nation in a few cases but worth millions to us in others, as for example, Herbert Hoover.

Mistakes were made of course and some money may have been needlessly spent as "hind-sight" will show, but on the whole the biggest war this

nation has ever entered is also the war that will prove the most free from scandal, the one conducted with the clearest and highest purpose.

Why, I wonder, should it be necessary to conduct a government in the way in war time and in another way in peace time? Is it necessary for us to go back to the old party narrowness and bickerings? It would seem so if we may judge from the antics of some of those who are running things in the Halls of Congress today. In other words the situation today is so pregnant of possibilities for good or bad that the conduct of our legislative and executive bodies constitutes a very real emergency in the well-being of the nation.

What then is the lesson of these two years? Clearly that national service is a success. Is there a continuing emergency? Yes, many of them, ever present, always of import to our success and our security. If that is so, why should we not demand the continuation of service to meet these emergencies? The answer is clear and definite: We do: from all those millions of citizens who have done their bit in this war, from the millions of young men and women who are taking their places in the world year by year, from them the country expects a continuation of service to the day of their death.

In a hundred ways it can be accomplished. Among those I would put first of all an active participation in the affairs of their government. It will be as good as they make it, no better. We need to get rid of the men who are too lazy to vote, too "important" to attend public meetings, too proud to associate with mere politicians, just as we got rid of the slackers last year. Force them out into the open, shame them into their duty if necessary. This country is too

inarticulate, things go wrong because men and women fear to express themselves, not because they want them wrong. A Congressman is influenced more by one spontaneous letter giving the honest personal opinion of a humble constituent than he is by a hundred telegrams inspired and paid for by some association doing propaganda work. It is just as much your duty and your privilege to take an active part in the public and political affairs of your locality and your state and your Nation as it was for you to lend a hand in the Great War.

And lastly I am very firmly convinced that the war has taught us the need of some form of universal training for the youth of the country. The results of a few months in camp to the benefit of health, of discipline, of broadening the point of view, of building character, are known now to us all. Quite aside from military needs the coming generation cannot be hurt and can be greatly helped and improved by such an experience in early life. National Training, if only for a few months in a life time, will give better citizens. I believe, too, that the great majority of our people want to see it established. It stands against anarchy and Bolshevism, against class hatred, against snobbery; it stands for discipline, good fellowship, order, and a broader Americanism.

When I rowed in an eight-oared shell in Cambridge we used to say of the slacker "he doesn't pull his own weight in the boat." For two years nearly every American has pulled his weight in the Ship of State. Let us by beginning at home with ourselves, and by watching our neighbor also, see to it that the progress of that Ship shall not slacken. So we can continue to be of service in the days of peace.

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July 11, 1919.

My dear Mr. Hollis:

Many thanks for sending me the copy  
of my address, which I am sending back to you in  
slightly corrected form.

May I tell you again how much I  
enjoyed every minute of my day with you. It was  
a great privilege, and I hope you will let me come  
again some time especially if you do not ask me  
to make a speech.

Always sincerely yours,

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Ira N. Hollis, Esq., President,  
Worcester Polytechnic Institute,  
Worcester, Mass.

Inclosure.

WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

Ira N. Hollis,  
President.

Worcester, Mass.  
July 1, 1919

Mr. Franklin D. Roosevelt,  
Asst. Secretary of the Navy,  
Washington, D. C.

My dear Roosevelt:

I enclose the pencil copy of your address, also a typewritten copy. If you want to change this at all and will then return it to me, we'll put it into print in our Journal. The meeting was a very fine one and I think your address was very fitting to the occasion. It contained just the kind of thing that those boys ought to hear at this time. Good luck to you.

Yours very truly,

Encl.

*Ira N. Hollis*

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to express themselves, not because they want them wrong. A Congressman is influenced more by our spontaneous letter giving the <sup>honest personal</sup> opinion of a humble constituent than he is by a hundred telegrams inspired and paid for by some association doing propaganda work. It is just as much your duty and your privilege to take an active part in the public and political affairs of your locality and your State and your Nation as it was for you to lend a hand in the Great War.

And lastly I am very firmly convinced that the war has taught us the need of some form of universal training for the youth of the country.

The results of a few months in camp to the benefit of health, of discipline, of broadening the point of view, of building character, are known now to us all. Quite aside from military needs the coming generation cannot be hurt and can be greatly helped and improved by such an experience in early life. National Training, if only for a few months will give better citizens.

I believe too that the great majority of our people want to see it established. It stands against Anarchy and Bolshevism, against class hatred, against snobbery; it stands for discipline, good

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fellowship, order and a broader  
Americanism.

When I rowed in an eight oared shell in Cambridge we used to say of the slacker "he doesn't pull his weight in the boat". For two years nearly every American has pulled his weight in the ship of State. Let us by beginning at home with ourselves, and by watching our neighbor also see to it that the progress of that ship shall not slacken. So we can continue to be of service in the days of peace.

# FREAK GOLF SHOT BY BOBBY JONES

# ROOSEVELT TALKS TO ROTARY CLUB

Holes Out of Shoe Left in  
Wheelbarrow by Workman

NEW ORLEANS, June 25.—Bobby Jones, Jr., of Atlanta, Ga., Southern golf champion, executed what was regarded as perhaps the most peculiar shot in golfing history after he teed off with J. C. Lyons of New Orleans, in the first round of match play in the Southern Golf Association tournament here today. Jones' ball landed in a shoe which had been left in a wheelbarrow by a workman, forcing the champion to use a niblick to hole out and halve the hole in four. Jones eliminated Lyons from the tournament, three up.

## WORCESTER FIRM TO CUT HOURS BUT KEEP WAGE RATE

Johnson and Bassett Co., manufacturers of wool spinning machinery at 114 Foster Street today announced that, beginning July 7, the factory will be operated 50 hours a week instead of 55 as at present. The help will receive the same pay for 50 hours as for 55. Products being made by the company are being shipped to Japan and South America.

## BROOKLINE POLICE HOLD H. J. CARSON

Chief of Police Corey of Brookline this afternoon notified Chief of Police George H. Hill that Howard J. Carson is under arrest in that town on suspicion of being implicated in the larceny of clothing in a Worcester tailor shop.

The Brookline police found two checks in the man's pockets which called for a trunk at the railroad station. The trunk was opened by the police and six suits of clothes were found in it. The police say the clothing was stolen from Jacob Aronoff, a tailor at 412 Park Avenue, the Liberty tailor shop, the Tennenbaum tailor shop at 745 Main Street, B. S. Oscar of 826 Main Street, Nathan Johnson of Edward Street and the Monaco tailor shop at 213 Pleasant Street. In all 11 suits of clothes were stolen within a few days. The detectives have been at work on the case for several days. Detective Sergeant Axel H. Anderson has gone to Brookline to bring Carson back to Worcester.

## CABLES ELECTION TO GERMANY

Kiwanians and Chamber  
Men Are Guests

Nearly 300 Rotarians and special guests including large delegations from the Worcester Kiwanis Club, and the Worcester Chamber of Commerce, crowded the Bancroft Hotel banquet room this noon to welcome Hon. Franklin D. Roosevelt, assistant secretary of the navy, to Worcester.

Upon entering the hall Mr. Roosevelt and the other special guests were given a rising ovation by the 200 men in the gathering.

Seated at the head tables with the hon. Mr. Roosevelt were ex-President John A. Denholm, Dr. Ira N. Hollis, James C. Fausnaught and Frank F. Butler, president and vice president respectively of the Worcester Kiwanis Club; R. Sanford Riley, president of the Worcester Chamber of Commerce; Robert Moore, secretary of the Worcester Y. M. C. A.; Wallace T. Morley and Dwight E. Babcock, secretary of the Chamber of Commerce.

In the absence of President Robert Shaw, who is in Salt Lake City at the Rotary convention, Past President John A. Denholm presided over the large gathering and extended cordial greeting to the Rotarians and their guests.

Dr. Ira N. Hollis, president of Worcester Polytechnic Institute was the toastmaster and he presented Mr. Roosevelt to his Worcester audience in his usual fitting manner.

On account of having to catch a train out of Worcester at 2:15, Mr. Roosevelt spoke but briefly on the two fundamental problems of the navy in the great war as well as previous to the entrance of the United States into the struggle.

He spoke of the submarine menace in European waters and the alarming development it showed in the first few months of the war and also of the problems of getting men safely overseas. He explained in detail how the morale of the German submarine crews was finally broken in the North Sea when 235 miles of mines were laid, shutting the Hun undersea boats up so that they had less than a 50-50 chance to get through the meshwork.

He told of the co-operative spirit shown to the navy in all dealing and said that the success of the naval department in the great struggle was due almost entirely to the foresight of picking experts in all lines of work required to put the navy in the lead in getting the men and supplies to France.

He was accorded a rising ovation at the conclusion of his able address.

## VIEW WATER PIPE LOCATIONS TODA

The joint standing committee on water will make an extended tour of the city today, leaving City Hall at 2 o'clock, and will view many locations where petitions for water pipe

# REPORT AGAINST EDUCATION BILL

House Committee Says Measure  
To Create New Department  
"Ought Not To Pass"

(Special Dispatch to The Gazette)

STATE HOUSE, Boston, June 25.—Reports submitted by the House ways and means committee to the House, which adjourned yesterday, are likely materially to shorten the session. The committee reported nothing ought to pass on the bill to create a new department of education, on the ground that the so-called department consolidation bill now pending will effect a reorganization of the existing education department. This bill has been violently opposed by Catholics, who fear that it would give the commissioners of education too great control over parochial schools.

The same committee recommended reference to the next General court on the bill to authorize the establishment of a police service commission in each city having a population of 100,000 or more. This bill was opposed by police associations from all the large cities of the state.

By a vote of 100 to 1, the Senate substituted for an adverse committee report a bill permitting large employers of labor to pay workers' compensation benefits to their employees directly, without the intervention of an insurance company. The bill of Senator Tarbell of Brookfield, providing for the establishment of a state fund for workers' compensation insurance was unanimously rejected, after Senator Cavanagh and Everett had declined to consent to withdraw it for unanimous consent to withdraw it.

The Senate also rejected a bill providing that unpaid water rates shall be a lien upon the real estate where the water was used.

## CURRAN HEADS POLICE RELIEF

Patrolman Augustus A. Curran.

## Come and See for Yourself

The demands during the gas strike were so heavy we may run the demonstration this week only—so come early.

# Worcester Electric Light Co.

Park 1600 II Foster Street

the Worcester Zionist district are Reuben Wolfe, Carl Osteroff and Mrs. Jean Fielding. Mr. Wolfe recently returned from overseas. He was identified with the Zionist movement in Worcester for several years. Atty. Joseph Talamo is a candidate for secretary; Abraham Iannelli, treasurer; and Mr. George G. Gough, auditor. Besides the officers an executive committee of 50 will be chosen from about 50 nominates.

**CONTRIBUTIONS COME IN**  
Contributions to the fund for relief in the Near East continue to come in. To Treasurer Charles A. Ladd, Worcester, were forwarded Arthur C. Comins \$25, John L. Magee, Grafton \$60, George Crompton \$50, Winslow H. Robinson \$25, Josephine D. B. Emerson \$25.

## TELLS HOW HUN SUBS WERE SUNK

Rotary Club Hears Interesting  
Address By Hon. Frank-

lin D. Roosevelt

Hon Franklin D. Roosevelt, assistant secretary to the Navy, told the members of the Rotary club the story of how the German submarine was reduced to impotence in the war, at the weekly luncheon of the Rotary club today in the Bancroft.

The speaker was introduced by Dr. Ira U. Hollis, president of Tech, to

whom he referred in the opening sentence of his speech as one of the most distinguished men the navy has produced.

Mr Roosevelt told of the string of mines which the Germans had stretched across the North Sea from Scotland to Norway, our first step in the offensive warfare against the submarine campaign with our entrance into the war.

Mr Roosevelt said that in the beginning the Germans submarines operated as in the neck of a bottle strait, where 90 per cent of the percentage of the ships which were under way for France and England. He described the methods which they then put into use, thus destroying their effectiveness and eventually the morale of their crews.

Mr Roosevelt left for New York directly after the meeting.

## Don't Poison Baby.

Worcester (Mass.) Evening Gazette,

June 25, 1919.