
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”

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**Buffalo, NY -
Knights of Columbus Peace Convention**

August 6, 1919

[KofC Peace Convention, Buffalo, NY]

FDR Speech File

Aug 6 - 1919 file

Address of
Franklin D. Roosevelt, ~~Master~~

Acting Secretary of the Navy.

Dear Sir, ^{the K. of C. Council}
Genl. Ensign, ^{Van Hook}

It is a great privilege to me to attend this gathering, not only to enable me to give to the Knights of Columbus my greetings and heartfelt thanks for the truly wonderful service rendered by them to the nation in the war, but also because of the opportunity of meeting personally the men who were responsible for the conception and carrying out of the work.

~~Now~~ I could cite to you scores of instances in the Naval branch of the service alone where Commanding Officers have reported to the Department on the extraordinary value of the war work activities of the Knights of Columbus for the ships and stations under them. If we used the French method of "citations" there would be enough stars and palms to ~~hide~~ cover all the flowing banners of the Brotherhood. And, too,

I am certain that no foreign or American decoration is too exalted for bestowal on the individuals so well typified by Supreme knight James G. Flaherty, who have given their blood and unselfish efforts to assure success to this great cause.

But ^{there is something} far more than any mere thanks or appreciation or decoration by a Government or an official: When our true roll of honor history comes to be written, it will be based on the verdict of the more than 5,000,000 American men who went to make up the Army and Navy and Marine Corps of the United States in the greatest of wars. And in that history I know very well what will be said - You have but to talk to any man, soldier or sailor, who has come back from overseas and without asking him a question he will in the course of conversation begin speaking of the

work of the knights of Columbus. It is a voluntary tribute, a proof that he appreciates, down in his heart, what has been done for him. And when you multiply what he tells you ~~as~~ as an individual by what the millions of other individuals tell you, we have an accurate cross section of the opinion of the whole land. That ~~expressed~~ verdict is not only favorable, it is deeply enthusiastic, it is from the heart, it is lasting.

And through all the feeling of gratitude, runs the keynote that the war camp work of the Knights of Columbus owes its success to the fact that it was human, that it was run by men who had a deep human sympathy with their fellow men, that there were no fields and no moralizing, but that service on big broad lines counted

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first, service for men, based on good Americanism, clean living, straight thinking, and true Christianity.

Is this great work to end? I hope not. For though in a sense the war is over, yet it has left us with ~~hard~~ dozens of great war problems on our hands. Today it is undeniable that we face grave tasks, and that we cannot turn our backs to them. And in the solution of them the Knights of Columbus can be of the greatest assistance by bringing to bear the same spirit of service that they have shown in the past.

This is a time for men to keep their heads, ~~and~~ and to remember that they are Americans. In the working out of our problems, national problems like the high cost of living and the running of the railroads and dozens of others, let us think first of the

great fact that we are as individuals responsible not only to ourselves or our own organizations but to the hundred millions of other citizens. In other words we must put first the good of the whole country, not merely the good of ourselves.

We happen to have a form of government which has been more successful than any other in the world, and over a longer period of time. It is a form which is elastic enough to change the running of things to meet the changing conditions. It is above all an orderly form of government, it is based on law and the observance of law. It makes changes, sometimes slowly to be sure, but the fact remains that it does follow the demands of the people as a whole.

Today there is unrest in

the whole world - more in other countries than here. And in this current is the element of trying to get something for nothing, of trying to rush ~~things~~ law and order off its feet, of seeking to put into effect new doctrines without consultation, without thought, without consideration of the whole mass of the people.

Everyone of us would like to see a state of perfection on earth, we would like to ~~make~~ put the life of every man woman and child on the highest possible basis, and we are most of us working to that great end. But we know too that every great reform takes time and good judgment, and that too great haste often defeats its own ends.

Two things ~~are~~ stand out in my mind as vital to keep before us in these continuing days of

crisis; Two things which march hand in hand and which must of necessity remain together if our form of government is to endure.

First: we must continue to progress.
Second: Our progress must be by and through the channels of law and order.

It is clear that if a tree ceases to grow it will wither and die, first in the leaves and at last in the heart of the trunk. So too this nation must continue to grow, ~~at that~~ grow in social and economic ways, grow in better living for the average man, grow in justice and in broad humanity. To stand still or go backwards at this time spells ruin.

But at the same time this growth, these changes, must and

shall come about in an orderly way. The great bulk of the American people stand behind this demand. No person, no organization, no party, can put a gun at the head of the nation and say hands up. We have the machinery and the will to continue the progress of the country. It is being worked out and will be worked out by cool heads and clear minds.

The knights of Columbus can mightily help to keep these principles of Progress and Order before our eyes in the days to come. Education and high principles will win the fight in the long run.