Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”  
The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945  
Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension

File No. 102

c. 1911 - 1913, 1919

Notes on a speech on Good Citizenship (lgh.)
Notes for Speeches 1911-13
in T. D. P.'s handwriting

These may be the notes for a speech given by F.D.R. at Dayton, Ohio, Sept. 13, 1919, at an Americanization Day Pageant. His address then was entitled "Good Citizenship."
Citizenship

Yesterday I met two men in New York. Both were men of standing in the business world. One of them said to me, "Politics are in a dis-

peaceful situation. Our gov-

erment is going to the dogs. I
can see only dark days ahead.

I chanced a question. "Don't

you vote last fall?" "Well,

he hesitated. "I must confess

I was feeling tired and will
didn't vote."

The other man said: "You

know it's too bad. But the

church seems to be losing its

hold on people - it isn't

the power it was once."

Then I chanced another

question: "What church do

you go to?"

"Well, you see," he hesitated.
I don't really belong in any church —

Out of these men was a milestone around the neck of our government — the other was drag in religious progress. Both men were unworthy citizens.

What is citizenship? A great politician has called it citizenship, the human instinct for the preservation of the race — and a great divine has called citizenship love of one's neighbor as oneself. It matters little, though what definition you take — you will always come back to the proposition that a people or a race or a nation or a State has never endured without citizenship.

Take the cases of my two friends — If every man in
This country righted about
the Churches - never and
never lift his finger in an
effort to help them - the
United States would become
a Tyre and Sidon in Solomon
a Sodom in 24 hours -
and if every man had stayed
away from the polls we should
go straightway back to the
days when the man with
strongest right arm ruled the
people. - This of course
sounds like a horrible over-
statement of the fact - it
seems like a silly, an un-
necessary thing to talk about,
because of course the answer
is obvious that it can never
happen - But the trouble
is that it has happened -
history does not lie - Churches
have disappeared - governments
by the people have been
lost, not in a day, perhaps, but in a generation—and we today can grasp what a truly short time that means. History, again, tells the unvarnished truth when we read that with every change from the disappearance of citizenship has travelled hard in hand—has been the same—more primary, the most effective cause.

How often we hear our friends say today, "Oh well, we have passed through troubles and dangers and crises in this country before and we have always survived and probably will again." Is that American? Is that the way our fathers fought through the Revolution? Is that the way the early struggles of the young Republic were conducted? Why not?
Is that the way a great moral question was decided in the dark days of the sixties?
Is that the way a mighty nation was united into a prosperous and happy people?
Is it true that because we have succeeded before we must again? No—this is false logic. It may be a fact that previous success is an aid to the solving of future problems. The fact that a ball team has won gives it confidence in another game. The fact that a clergyman has built up a church helps him to build up another. But you and I know that if the ball team says, "We have won one game"—therefore...
shall win the next. The odds are that the score will be one large zero on its side of the score-board, and if the successful Church builder goes to another parish and expects his reputation to build it up without an effort on his part, he will preach to the sexton only on Sunday.
A statesman once said that a government is only as good as the people want it to be. It is another way of saying that if the majority of the people do their civic duty, the worst they will not have to complain of the faults of government. There has been a tendency in this country to consider a man by his success as an individual, not by his success as a citizen. To judge him by his ability to lay in a stock of the world's goods, rather than by his efforts to help his community, his neighbors...
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