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

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0104

SPEECH OF
FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
AT A HOME-COMING CELEBRATION
UTICA, N.Y.

SEPTEMBER 15, 1919.

[From the Utica (N.Y.) Herald-Dispatch, September 16, 1919]

BIG CELEBRATION IS FEATURED
BY STRONG SPEECHES

The Hon. Franklin D. Roosevelt.

...The Hon. Franklin D. Roosevelt, assistant secretary of the navy, spoke as follows:

"Fellow New Yorkers: This is an occasion that is a good deal bigger than Utica or Onondaga County or the State of New York. It is national. (Applause). For all over the United States during the past few months and for months to come there are going to be meetings like this. These meetings are significant of the interest in the government the American takes, and we need not fear for the future of our country. (Applause).

Working in An Emergency.

"I want to talk to you briefly and simply about the word 'Emergency.' I remember in January, 1917, about the time the arrogant German Ambassador was handed his passports, when I dropped into a meeting at Washington, where two prominent men were present. One was an important member of the Democratic administration and the other was a leading Senator, a Republican. We were talking about raising an army in case of war. I said we would get into it and would have to raise more than a million of men. They laughed at me. I said we must resort to universal service and both of them said the very minute we used that awful word 'conscription' then they believed American institutions would prove a failure. It was less than three months that the draft was put into effect. We as simple Americans accepted the principle that every one of us was bound in duty and bound in privilege to serve the Nation in time of emergency.

"I wonder what is the difference between the emergency of war, the emergency caused by people taking up arms to defend their rights, and the emergency that confronts us to-day--forces working against the independence of the country and though not armed, as much a menace to our free institutions as was the war? That is the greatest lesson we have learned from the war, the privilege to serve the Nation in time of peace as well as in time of war.

"At Washington one hears about the waste and extravagance of war. I believe that because we got rid of purely partisan matters, that because Republicans and Democrats worked together, we obtained success with greater efficiency and credit than were ever shown before in the history of the country. (Applause). At Hudson I stated that I never yet voted a straight ticket. More people are discriminating in their votes than they were ever before.

"You people who have been in the service know something about getting together and making one common cause. One thing was shown in this war, that was that we could all get together. The army and the navy had problems and the first was to get over on the other side, and they faced them together. It was not an army job or a navy job, but an army-navy job, and that was where the hyphen was justified. The navy doesn't take the credit and the army doesn't take the credit. Although we were told it would be impossible to get more than 300,000 men across the ocean in a year, and that the losses in crossing would be as great as they would be in the fighting, yet we know that not one man lost his life while the American troops were crossing under convoy of American ships. (Applause.)

"What is the united service going to do? A good many people are worried about the boys in uniform. They think you are going to sit down and talk over the war until you are 90 years old; that you are going to talk about the good old days. But the boys will agree with me that there is no such thing as the good old days; that the best days are to come and that the United States is going on to better things; that we are not going to stop progressing, and you will be in the vanguard of that progress. You can help us in the government to make that Government more efficient, and you can help us to build up in your families the spirit of service you have shown. There has been organized the American Legion and I am glad to say that the Government has nothing to do with it, but it is a service organization of the men who served. I hope the American Legion will succeed and that through organization you will go to the front and, without reference to party or partisan politics, you will make yourselves felt for good.

"People have talked about dangerous times. We are all let down and want to take a rest, and not do our part just yet. Therein lies the danger--the idea of letting George do it. It seems that we have opportunity now as citizens to carry on the struggle for efficiency we made in the last three years, so we will not slip back to the bad old days. If we do that, no one need worry about the kind of country we are going to pass on to the next generation. When we come to leave the world; if we can say that this is a better country than when I came upon it, that the next generation will have a better opportunity and a squarer deal than I had, and can say I did my bit, not only in war, but in the great emergencies that came after the war, then I think we can say we played our part in promoting the best interests of the oldest Nation under a republican form of Government, a Nation that will go on improving from generation to generation, holding always before it the guiding star that has led us through ages past and that is going to lead us through the years to come." (Applause.)

From: Utica Herald-Dispatch, Tuesday Evening,
September 16, 1919.

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[From the Utica (N.Y.) Observer, September 16, 1919, p.4]

SPEAKERS AT PARKWAY PRAISED SERVICE MEN

Greeting From the Navy.

Hon. Franklin D. Roosevelt, assistant secretary of the navy, conveyed a hearty greeting from the Navy, which was so well represented in the parade. He talked about the word "emergency" and showed how the lesson learned from the war could be applied to the present day unrest.

"In January, 1917," said Secretary Roosevelt, "when the German ambassador was handed his passports, a prominent Democrat and a prominent Republican at Washington laughed when Secretary Roosevelt said this country would get into the war and that we would have to raise an army of a million men." Continuing Mr. Roosevelt said:

"I wonder what is the difference between the emergency of war, the emergency caused by people taking up arms to defend their rights, and the emergency that confronts us to-day---forces working against the independence of the country and, though not armed, as much a menace to our free institutions as was the war? That is the greatest lesson we have learned from the war, the privilege to serve the Nation in time of peace as well as in the time of war.

"At Washington one hears about the waste and extravagance of war, I believe that because we got rid of purely partisan matters, that because Republicans and Democrats worked together, we obtained success with greater efficiency and credit than were ever shown before in the history of the country. At Hudson I stated that I never yet voted a straight ticket. More people are discriminating in their votes than they ever were before.

"You people who have been in the service know something about getting together and making one common cause. One thing was shown in this war that was that we could all get together. The army and the navy had problems and the first was to get over on the other side, and they faced them together. It was not an army job, or a navy job, but an army-navy job, and that was where the hyphen was justified. The navy doesn't take the credit and the army doesn't take the credit. We of the united service take the credit. Although we were told it would be impossible to get more than 300,000 men across the ocean in a year, and that the losses in crossing would be as great as they would be in the fighting, yet we know that not one man lost his life while the American troops were crossing under convoy of American ships.

Tells of American Legion.

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The Utica Observer
Tuesday, September 16, 1919
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