
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”

The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension

File No. 309

1929 March 1

**Metropolitan Club, New York City, NY -
Boy Scout Federation**

F.D.R. Longhand

~~1929~~ [March, 1929]

Remarks at the Metropolitan Club
Dinner, in recognition of 12 years
as president of the Boy-Scout
Foundation of Greater N.Y.

1929

[March 1, 1929]

REMARKS BY THE HONORABLE FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

At Metropolitan Club Tribute Dinner In Recognition of Twelve Years Service
As President Of The Boy Scout Foundation Of Greater New York.

Hyde Park

I have been listening, gentlemen, to these brief reports, with more than ordinary interest. They are the reminders of years of happy association. During the years from 1922 to 1929 that association meant close contact in Scouting with many of you.

I know, too, that those reports mean sacrifice, great loyalty to a worthy cause and convictions based upon unselfish motives.

I recall, at our annual meeting last April -- when I promised again to join you in analyzing our problems -- Judge Kernochan said that he had had the best time of his life, working for Scouting. He meant it. I know -- we all know -- the extent of his sacrifice. I don't have to remind you of what Barron Collier has done -- is doing continually -- for this cause. Those of us in Scouting know the countless hours that Hermann Merkel and his associates have given to the building of the Ten Mile River camps. I have recently wondered if it was not the reputation which Clyde R. Place established at the Boy Scout Foundation camps that inspires his selection by Mr. Rockefeller as the consulting engineer for Radio City. We know that no small part of each week in the life of Justice Cropsey is devoted to Scouting, and that applies to all the Borough Council Presidents.

*Arthur
Packer*

I realize it is that sort of thing which has inspired five thousand men in New York City as Scoutmasters, Troop Committeemen, Councilmen, Merit Badge Examiners, to give in the true sense of patriotic volunteers their time to Scouting.

So the first picture that passed through my mind as I sat here was that of a wonderful group of men, tackling a hard and important job, for the sheer joy that was in it.

Many of you recall the circumstances surrounding our first Greater New York camps -- at Kanohwahke Lake, near Bear Mountain. We began with about 600 Scouts in one summer. That increased to a daily attendance of 3,500 -- until we outgrew the portion of the Interstate Parks which the State could properly allot to us.

I am particularly glad that Mr. Merkel has given us a pictorial report of the Ten Mile River development. We all know that Scouting is a lot more than camping. That it is an all-year program, related to the home, the church and the school. But we know that the outdoor features of that program -- its camps -- furnish it with its all-year impetus and vitality.

And so I want to give this recognition to what I regard as the highest type of devotion to and sacrifice for this great institution of social service.

Let me pass on to a second picture I see. It comes to me out of the past. It recalls to me a dinner meeting similar to this one, four years ago. At that time we were conveying our appreciation to the men who were making it possible for Hermann Merkel and his group to go forward.

We paid particular tribute, because of their generosity, to two men -- one of whom was Mortimer L. Schiff and the other was Payne Whitney. Both of those men have gone on.

I wish it were possible for them to know the pleasure I have tonight, in saying that their places are not vacant among us now. They are with us -- in the persons of their sons, John Schiff and Jock Whitney -- keeping up and carrying on to the fulfillment of their hopes for our boyhood.

I have noted the other friends who were with us that night -- and it gives me a warmth of feeling I cannot fully express -- toward all of you, my friends in Scouting.

The third picture which flashes through my mind has to do with those benefited by the job. It is the picture of Youth -- attempting to scale the ladder of life, to happiness and success. I am told that our work -- your work -- in these ten years has reached 300,000 boys.

The achievement is stupendous. I cannot think of it, without wondering what has made necessary so gigantic a service and, at the same time, called forth a response from the very highest type of citizens, to perform that service. I have tried to analyze it.

Never before in all history has our social life expanded so swiftly as now. It seems like a kaleidoscope that is ever changing. That, I think, is why the problems of social service to youth are greater than ever before; that is why their maze of complications has demanded the consecration of great minds and hearts to their solution; that is why we cannot falter, but must meet the demands of each new day with vigilance and courage and action.

Never before have boys and girls been released from the wholesome influences of home at such a tender age. Not that parents send their children forth upon the highways of life. Life -- our twentieth-century life -- particularly, the bright lights of city life -- lures them away from the fireside and out upon the highway.

We know that this is inevitable. We are aware that we cannot keep our eager, impressionable youth out of the parade of progress. We are aware of the aeroplane, the automobile, the radio, the motion picture and innovations too numerous for mention, entering into a natural competition with the home, the church and the school for the allegiance of our boys and girls.

We recognize the advantages all of these hold forth to youth, as a part of the broad education it needs today -- but we are conscious of the fact that modern life is weighted with dangers to youth. We view this unequal contest between youth and progress -- and we determine to throw our strength and our resources into such movements as the Boy Scouts -- in a sense of good sportsmanship and fair play for the new generation.

I say it is all a part of progress. You cannot stop it. You don't want to stop it. To isolate children within the home circle and the dooryard until they were grown up physically would leave them pitifully unequipped in other respects for the modern life. We want them to march in the ranks of progress, even with its complications. We want them to play, for that is natural and right.

Hence, we devote ourselves to our new responsibility -- through an institution which tactfully seasons play with purpose, combats temptation with inspiration, opens the eyes of youth to see through the illusions and to choose the gifts of life by the standards of honor and usefulness. Why, the very first words in the whole liturgy of Scouting are: "On my honor, I will do my best."

Happily, the American community, itself, has taken a great stride in the direction of group responsibility to youth. Through its social institutions like ours, the community has assumed a volunteer partnership with the parent that is most welcome; it has endeavored to provide good influences to offset the harmful ones; it offers its helping hand to guard and guide at every crossing. It encourages the fundamental training of the home, the church and the school.

Social service, like ours, has studied and measured modern progress. It has beheld clearly the responsibility of the community of today to supply safeguards and leadership -- and it is today receiving

the recognition of the community in its splendid cooperation, in a moderate measure.

I do not believe that the American community has yet gone far enough in meeting its responsibilities to youth, through social service.

I believe the time has come when every adult citizen of these United States must be awakened to the full responsibility to boyhood and girlhood -- as an inherent part of citizenship. I believe that the new life has created a new trust -- a new challenge -- not only on behalf of our own children -- but on behalf of each of the Nation's children. And I believe that, from this point forward, we should consecrate ourselves to youth, as a common trust -- a united obligation.

If we would all do that -- if we would focus our thought and our efforts and a relatively small proportion of our means -- upon that sacred trust -- think, what it might one day mean to the future of this Nation! Think, what it would mean if -- through periodic disturbances in industry and finance -- through periods of international complications and the whole drama of political and social life -- American manhood and American womanhood were united in one sublime, unswerving, unconquerable purpose -- LOYALTY TO YOUTH.

Let us -- this little gathering of Scout leaders -- accept this trust tonight. Let us do it as a mark of our reverence for Divine Law -- and for the future of the American Nation. Let us express it in this simple motto and cherish it as our ideal:

"LET THE AMERICAN PEOPLE BE LOYAL TO YOUTH".

There is just one more picture to leave with you, my friends.
I am going to call it "the unfinished picture".

This meeting was arranged as a very informal get-together, as a means of enabling me to see what has been taking place very recently and for all of us to review again the activities of a ten-year period and the problems which have grown out of it.

Frankly, I am delighted with what has been planned, begun and completed during the ten years of our association together in Scouting.

But as our association is about to be interrupted in one sense, I cannot ignore the fact that there is still a last lap to go. That last lap, as you know, will decide the race.

Scouting in New York, where the people have been responding so generously in all directions, has been curtailed; our ability, even to carry on, is being tested. Besides, there is one other dark spot on the horizon -- in the form of a small indebtedness. I call it small -- it is small, in comparison with what has been achieved.

As my duties will call me from New York and make it impossible for me to stand with you in person while we see this through -- and I go with a sense of deep regret that I cannot be here with you -- I do so with a feeling of assurance that you, who have made it possible for us to start it, will stand shoulder to shoulder with Judge Kernochan and Mr. Collier, as they continue their efforts to a speedy conclusion. I want the first news of that happy event -- by telegram, Judge Kernochan, if you please.

I ask each of you -- that you assume a personal responsibility in this matter. Scouting must go forward. You are its leaders.

"LET THE AMERICAN PEOPLE BE LOYAL TO YOUTH".