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

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Radio Speech - Further Progress Report

RADIO SPEECH BY THE GOVERNOR WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 1929.

I am tremendously encouraged by the expressions of interest that have come to me from all over the state as a result of my informal talk last week in regard to what has been happening in the State Capitol during the past three months. Everybody who has written or telegraphed to me has commented especially and with complete understanding on the very definite statement which I made that these talks are in no way intended to further a political campaign on behalf of the election of a Democratic Assembly next fall.

In spite of this, there seems to be a misunderstanding on the part of a few of my friends of the press. They think it inconceivable that a Democratic Governor should not be trying to play politics on behalf of a Democratic legislature.

Again, I want to repeat in perfectly clear English that my fight is not because the Legislature happened this year to be composed of a majority of Republicans under Republican leadership, but is based on the method in which this Legislature carried on its work. In other words, what I hope to accomplish is a definite opinion which will influence next year's Legislature, no matter what its political complexion, so that it will act, first, in a more businesslike way in regard to legislation and, secondly, that it will eliminate partisan considerations from subjects which ought not to be considered in a partisan way.

I hope that from now on there will be no further open or veiled suggestions that I am seeking any party advantage in giving these brief talks on definite facts to the people of the state. Whether you are a Democrat, whether your legislative majority is Democratic or Republican, is not half so important as whether they spend their time at Albany sincerely trying to make our state the most forward-looking and progressive state in the Union.

Last week, after the Legislature had ended its session, I tried to help the voters up-State, particularly in those districts where they have no daily newspapers to keep them constantly informed, to understand just what had been done and what had not been done this year, so that the people could judge whether the men they sent to the Legislature had been good legislators or bad legislators, and whether they deserve to return to Albany as representing their people when their present terms of office expired, or not.

Because the Republican party has a majority in both houses at Albany and by so holding had the power to keep any promises that their party had made as to legislation, I took up last week, first of all, what the Republicans had done and failed to do, and because the least which the public has a right to expect of a legislative majority is that it will keep the pledges made in its platform as to what kind of laws it will pass, I took the Republican platform as a sort of text as the fairest standard to judge how well they had served the people.

This week I want to talk a little about the Democratic platform and what the legislative members of the Democratic party and your Governor have done or tried to do towards keeping the promises they made last fall. Anything promised by the majority party in its platform and not sent to the Governor as a bill to be signed is a broken promise.

The good faith of the minority party, however, cannot be judged by this standard. They have no power themselves to carry out their pledges by legislative action.

If the minority party proposes legislation which the people of the State feel is for the good of the state and if I, as Governor and a member of that party, have brought repeatedly, earnestly and sincerely to the attention of the legislature the wisdom or necessity of passing bills which embodied these ideas, then I think you will all agree with me that the minority party has done all that it was possible for it to do, and if the majority party refuses to forget partisanship and pass such recommendations as the people of the state think are good recommendations, the blame lies not with the Governor, nor with the minority party, but with the majority.

As I used the Republican platform for a guide, it is only fair that I should use the Democratic platform in a similar way as a standard by which to judge what the Democrats have done. It makes, I am sorry to say, a rather long list

of persistent efforts to secure the passage of legislation which we had promised and a rather discouraging unwillingness on the part of the majority to go with us and forget politics.

But there is one exception which will form a milestone of progress in years to come and by which this legislature will be best remembered. It is always pleasanter to talk about what has been achieved than about what has been neglected; I want to tell about this legislation first of all:

Both parties promised to do something for the farming sections of our state this year. During the campaign, I want somewhat further than the platform in pledging that if I was elected Governor I would immediately appoint a commission, entirely non-partisan in character and composed of experts and practical farmers, to prepare, so there could be passed at this session the legislation which in their judgment was most needed to help our agricultural communities.

As soon as it was known that I had been selected as your Governor, I called together in November, long before the Legislature met, the commission I had promised to appoint. They were recognized as men peculiarly fitted for this task and I certainly cannot be accused of making it a Democratic commission as it was composed of nineteen Republicans and only four Democrats.

I have noticed that in the Republican press they are claiming exclusive credit for the relief which the farmer has received by law this year. This exaggerated claim comes with particularly bad grace for the reason that I personally have made no claim for the credit myself. The question of where the credit belongs is relatively unimportant. But. I cannot refrain from expressing my opinion that the real credit for this progressive program of farm relief rightfully belongs to the Advisory Commission which I called together on November 24, 1928 in the City of New York. You are, of course, perfectly familiar with the fact that for years, although the Republican party has been in complete control of the Legislature, nothing substantial was even suggested by it, or by the Republican leaders from the rural districts, for the benefit of the farmer until this commission pointed the way. I cannot refrain also from calling your attention to the fact that it was not until I had called this commission together and not until the commission had met and consulted and not until the commission had made definite proposals for legislation in substantial conformity with the legislation which I have just approved, that the first intimation came from the Republican leaders that they were also going to propose the same kind of legislation. It must be obvious to you that their sole purpose was not to follow the scientific lead of this commission but to endeavor merely to obtain the credit for

the results of their labor. I am sure that none of you really believe that anything would have been done for the farmer this year if this commission had not led the way. I again repeat that if the credit for these results must be discussed in the public press, the credit should be given to that body of non-partisan experts called from all parts of the state not because of their political affiliations but because of their agricultural knowledge; not because they belong to the Republican or the Democratic party but because they belong to such farm organizations as the Dairymen's League, the Farm Bureau, the Home Bureau, the New York State Grange, the New York State Horticultural Society, the State College of Agriculture. These men and women were interested not in politics but in results and this commission which I called together should receive the credit rather than any political party.

At the time of signing these bills I made a general statement as to what they did and I am going to repeat them to you tonight in a very sketchy form. I regard this legislation as the most important which has come from Albany this year.

First: The taxpayers of the counties have been relieved from paying thirty-five per cent of the cost of highway construction. This means that the taxpayers of the rural counties have been saved

the sum of over five million dollars a year.

Second: The residents and taxpayers of towns and villages in our rural communities have been saved from contributing to the state for the current year about five hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the maintenance of state and county highways. To carry this part of the program to its logical conclusion we have even returned to your towns and villages the amount which you have already paid for the current year, thus giving you immediate relief.

Third: The secondary road system of our state by which I mean the dirt roads which run from the main highway arteries of the state back into the farmers homes, will receive from the State of New York this year nearly five million dollars, and an increasing amount each succeeding year. I consider this part of the legislation as of extreme importance. To enable the farmer to get his products to his market it is absolutely essential that he be given decent roads connecting his farm with the main state highway arteries. As time goes on the farmer of this state is bound to realize the tremendous benefits conferred upon him economically by this measure.

Where is all this money coming from? The money is coming from one of the most logical and scientific taxes which man has been able to devise, namely, the gasoline tax. For some reason or other New York State remained the only state in the Union without a gasoline tax. I was particularly gratified when the Agricultural Advisory Commission included the imposition of such a tax in their recommendations of November 27th, 1928, long before the Legislature met.

Also, let us see the results of the legislation recommended by this Agricultural Advisory Commission in the field of rural education:

- (1) Two million and fifty thousand dollars is being contributed this coming year by the State of New York for the aid of the little red schoolhouse with its one room and one teacher. There are over seven thousand five hundred of such schools in this state. They form the backbone of the education of the farmers' children. In any decent education program they should receive prime consideration.
- (2) The sum of one million dollars was added as a contribution this year by the State of New York to the two, three and four room school houses of the State, of which there are 825. This will be an annual contribution which

places the two, three and four-room schoolhouses on a parity of state aid with the larger schools. The benefit to rural education from this source must be apparent to all of you.

One other thing that was done to relieve the rural dounties from taxation. Under the existing law the counties must contribute ten per cent of the cost of all grade crossing elimination work. We have reduced that to one per cent, thus saving the rural taxpayer nine per cent. This will run into millions of dollars over the period of grade crossing elimination work now in progress.

In order to meet emergency agricultural needs, appropriations recommended by the Agricultural Advisory Commission, which recommendations were transmitted by me to the Legislature, were made to permit the New York State College of Agriculture and the New York State College of Home Economics to study plant diseases, pathological soil conditions, truck crops, potato diseases and many other important agricultural problems requiring immediate attention and research.

I am in hopes that the public approbation of this placing of the good of the State above mere political advantage in regard to these bills by the Majority Party will encourage them next year in even more important matters to abandon the unfortunate attitude, taken so many times at this session, that nothing which was recommended by the Governor should be allowed to pass.

Having thanked the Republican leaders for their cooperation with me in my program and helping me achieve more for agriculture than has been done in the past ten years, I am afraid I will have to lay on their door-step the blame for the utter failure to do anything about the water power of our state, which has been one of the most important subjects demanding the attention of the Legislature for years past. not go into the details of my vain attempt to get something done at this session as I will speak about it many times in the future. Not only was the plan which I proposed after many conferences with those best qualified to judge of what was a practical way to utilize our water power resources and still retain the ownership and the control in the State and secure electricity at the lowest possible cost for our people, strangled in Committee by the Republican leaders, but

no attempt of any kind was made on their part to introduce any legislation on the subject whatever, and this in spite of their own Platform.

I trust before the Legislature meets again the people of the State will have made their opinion of this cynical indifference to their demands for a constructive water power development program so clear as to assure action in 1930.

The Democratic Platform pledged the support of the party for added funds for the completion of the state-wide park and parkway system and in my message I drew the attention of the Legislature to the importance of continuing the splendid work which has been done during recent years along these lines. This promise has been kept on my part by including in the budget I presented to the Legislature appropriations as large as was wise to make, considering the general financial condition of the state; and, here again I am pleased to record that the Majority Party cooperated with the Governor to the extent of allowing the retention of these sums in the budget as finally passed, without any real crippling reductions.

The maintenance and extension of our public playgrounds, which mean so much to our people, has become at last, I think, a policy which has been taken

out of politics.

The next pledge of the Democratic Platform was to provide for the four-year term for Governor and for his election in the year when no presidential candidate was on the ticket, and in my message to the legislature, the leaders of the Republican Party having made it plain they would never pass such legislation, I urged them at least in fairness to the people of the state to submit this plan as a direct question by referendum to the voters next November.

This was introduced in both houses, was referred to the Judiciary Committee and there buried beyond hope of resurrection this year. Motions were made to discharge the Senate and Assembly committees from the custody of these bills in order that they might be fairly debated on the floor but this even was denied by the Republican leaders. I will not fail to renew it at the next session.

Cur Platform pledged the Democrats to take up the matter of more efficient county government and in my message to the Legislature I said: "It would be a fine thing if you and I, laying politics and partisanship aside, would take definite steps at this session of the Legislature towards this reform which everybody knows is so vitally necessary."

Republican leaders ignored this very important matter entirely and Democratic bills which merely sought to take the first step by appointing a commission of experts to study the problem were laid side by side with the Four-Year term and the water power measures in that densely populated grave-yard which forms so important an annex to a Republican committee room.

I am worried about that grave-yard by the way. It must be terribly overcrowded after this session and there are so many worthy meritorious measures interred therein that I am almost disposed to recommend in next year's budget some sort of a marble shaft with "gone but not forgotten" or some such motto chiseled upon it to be erected over the lamented remains.

However, an idea or ideal which is for the good of mankind or which will help to make life easier or happier for the people has, after all, some of the undying qualities in it of the human soul, and because I thoroughly believe this I prophesy that many of these buried measures will see eventually a glorious resurrection.

The Democratic Platform promises to carry out the splendid program of Governor Smith in regard to labor and social legislation and in my own message

amplifying this promise, I recommended eight specific things: All of the bills but one carrying out these recommendations were introduced by Democratic members and in some cases by Republican members also, and on all of these eight except one the leaders of the majority party with cynical indifference issued orders that they must not even be reported for honest and frank discussion on the floor. It is the blackest spot on the history of this year's legislature, but of all things which should be lifted above partisanship, legislation to help those who toil should come first and foremost.

The Democratic pledge for legislation in removing unjust discriminations against women was supported by the Democratic members in passing the bill relating to domiciles of married women and by your Governor in promptly signing the measure. Here too I desire to give the Republicans equal credit in this matter. Indeed in addition to these party pledges I, as Governor, made several recommendations in line with my party's principles if not specifically embodied in my party's Platform.

The Platform pledge favoring the referendum of constitutional amendments to the people

was urged in my own annual message and bills to that effect were introduced by Democratic members of the Assembly. They were not allowed to be reported, however, and the commission to discharge was defeated by a strict party vote.

My recommendation that the useless and wasteful state census be abolished was embodied in a bill by the Democratic leaders but was also buried in committee.

The Republicans suggested doing it next year, not this.

Various bills approving our election laws suffered a similar fate.

My recommendations for an expert commission to study the future developments of Saratoga Springs, after being altered so as to give the Legislature the right to appoint a majority of its members, was duly passed and I am glad to report that after consultation with the legislative leaders we have reached an agreement as to the necessity of appointing real experts on this commission. It is my intention to sign this bill at an early date.

My bill for a commission composed of both lawyers and laymen to study judicial reform, particularly with a view to cheapening and expediting justice for the

poor man, was mangled beyond recognition by making it exclusively a commission of lawyers, which was so far from what is needed as to compel me to exercise my right of veto.

One of the noteworthy acts of this legislature is the passing of the bills modernizing the inheritance laws so as to give women the rights that they have been so long denied. These laws represent progressive legislation of which our state may well be proud and the state commission, composed of experienced surrogates, legislators and lawyers, deserves the thanks of the entire community for their work.

My recommendation for a study of old age pensions has been met by a bill creating a temporary commission for that purpose.

This covers in as much detail as I can give tonight the important features of the activities of the minority in this year's Legislature. I feel they have much to which they could point with pride but I am prouder yet of those instances such as the agricultural measures, where the Republicans and Democrats have united to work for the good of the State. I am not in the least discouraged that so much legislation became entangled in partisan disputes or because the

Republican Majority seemed to adopt as its general policy the rume that every recommendation a Democratic Governor made should be opposed or altered.

I can only hope that next year public opinion will compel the Republican leaders to get together with the Governor on matters involving some immediate need of the State. In the early part of the recent session one of my Republican friends went to a prominent member of the Legislature and asked him if he was going to support one of my recommendations which involved a wholly non-partisan matter of great importance. The Legislator replied, - "I am with the Governor one hundred per cent. He is dead right. But, of course, we cannot go along with him on this because it would give him altogether too much political credit."

Now my friends I want to make it perfectly clear that this question of political credit is to me entirely immaterial. I can only say that I rejoice in what the majority members of the Legislature have given me of my program and regret their failure to adopt the rest.

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Radio Address, Albany, N. Y., April 10, 1929

The Governor Speaks Further of Party Promises and Failure of Majority Party in Legislature to Keep Faith with Platform Discusses Action On Bills

I am tremendously encouraged by the expressions of interest that have come to me from all over the State as a result of my informal talk last week in regard to what has been happening in the State Capitol during the past three months. Everybody who has written or telegraphed to me has commented especially and with complete understanding on the very definite statement which I made that these talks are in no way intended to further a political campaign on behalf of the election of a Democratic Assembly

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This week I want to talk a little about the Democratic platform and what legislative members of the Democratic party and your Governor have done or tried to do towards keeping the promises they made last fall. Any-

thing promised by the majority party in its platform and not sent to the Governor as a bill to be signed is a broken promise.

The good faith of the minority party, however, cannot be judged by this standard. They have no power themselves to carry out their pledges by

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At the time of signing these bills I made a general statement as to what they did and I am going to repeat them to you tonight in a very sketchy form. I regard this legislation as the most important which has come from Albany

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First.—The taxpayers of the counties have been relieved from paying 35 per cent of the cost of highway construction. This means that the taxpayers of the rural counties have been saved the sum of over five million dollars

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conveyer, an ions or iceal which is for the good of markind or which will help to make life easier or happier for the people has, after all, some of the undying qualities in it of the human soul, and because I thoroughly believe this, I prophezy that many of these buried measures will see eventually a glorious resurrection.

The Democratic platform promises to carry out the splendid program of Governor Smith in regard to labor and social legislation and in my own

Governor Smith in regard to labor and social legislation and in my own message amplifying this promise, I recommended eight specific things. All of the bills but one carrying out these recommendations were intro-dued by Democratic members and in some cases by Republican members also, dued on all of these eight except one of the leaders of the majority party with and on all of these eight except one of the reactes of the majority party with cypical indifference issued orders that they must not even be reported for honest and frank discussion on the floor. It is the blackest spot on the history of this year's Legislature, but of all things which should be lifted above partisanship, legislation to help those who toil should come first and foremost.

The Democratic pledge for legislation in removing unjust discriminations The Democratic piedge for legislation in removing unjust discriminations against women was supported by the Democratic members in passing the bill relating to domiciles of married women and by your Governor in promptly signing the measure. Here too I desire to give the Republicane equal credit in this matter. Indeed, in addition to these party pledges, I, as Governor, made several recommendations in line with my party's principles if not specifically embodied in my party's platform processing the party platform piedge favoring over anomal measure and hills to the effect

to the people was urged in my own annual message and bills to that effect were introduced by Democratic members of the Assembly. They were not allowed to be reported, however, and the motion to discharge was defeated by a strict party vote.

My recommendation that the useless and wasteful State census be abolished was embodied in a bill by the Democratic leaders but was also buried in committee. The Republicans suggested doing it next year, not this. Various bills approving our election laws suffered a similar fate.

My recommendations for an expert commission to study the future develop my recommendations for an expert commission to study the future develop-ments of Saratoga Springs, after being altered so as to give the Legislature the right to appoint a majority of its members, was duly passed, and I am glad to report that after consultation with the legislative leaders we have reached an agreement as to the necessity of appointing real experts on this commission. It is my intention to sign this bill at an early date.

My bill for a commission composed of both lawyers and laymen to study judicial reform, particularly with a view to cheapening and expediting judicial reform, particularly with a view to cheapening and expediting justice for the poor man, was mangled beyond recognition by making it exclusively a commission of lawyers, which was so far from what is needed as to compel me to exercise my right to veto.

One of the notworthy acts of this Explaiture is the passing of the bills modernizing the inheritance laws so as to give women the right that they have been so long denied. These laws represent progressive legislation of which our State may well be proud and the State commission, composed of experienced surrogates, legislators and lawyers, deserves the thanks of the entire community for their work.

entire community for their work.

My recommendation for a study of old age pensions has been met by a bill creating a temporary commission for that purpose.

This covers in as much detail as I can give tonight the important features of the activities of the minority in this year's Legislature. I feel they have much to which they could point with pride, but I am prouder yet of those instances such as the agricultural measures, where the Republicans and Democrats have united to work for the good of the State. I am not in the least discouraged that so much legislation became entangled in partian discouraged that so much legislation became entangled in partian discouraged. putes or because the Republican majority seemed to adopt as its general

policy the rule that every recommendation a Democratic Governor made should be opposed or altered.

I can only hope that next year public opinion will compel the Republican 1 can only hope that next year public opinion will compel the Republican that the Governor on matters involving some immediate search of the Legislature and fresh when to a prominent member of the Legislature and fixed him the was going to support one of my recommendations when wholly non-partican matter of great importance. The legislatur endies wholly non-partican matter of great importance. The legislatur endies we cannot go along with him on this, because it would give him altogether too much political credit.

Now my friends I want to make it perfectly clear that this question of political credit is to me entirely immaterial. I can only say that I rejoice in what the majority members of the Legislature have given me of my program and regret their failure to adopt the rest.



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I have noticed that in the public press the Republican Party in this State is claiming exclusive credit for the relief which the farmer has received by law this year. exaggerated claim comes with particularly bad grace for the reason that I personally have made no claim for the credit myself. The question of where the credit belongs is relatively unimportant. But, I cannot refrain from expressing my opinion that the real credit for this progressive program of farm relief rightfully helongs to the Advisory Commission which I called together on November 27th, 1928 in the City of New York. course, perfectly familiar with the fact that for years. although the Republican Party has been in complete control of the Legislature, nothing substantial was even suggested by it, or by the Republican leaders from the rural districts, for the benefit of the farmer until this commission pointed the way. I cannot refrain also from calling your attention to the fact that it was not until I had called this commission together and not until the commission had met and consulted and not until the commission had made definite proposals for legislation in substantial conformity with the legislation which I have just approved, that the first intimetion came from the Republican leaders that they were also going to propose the same kind of legislation . It must be obvious to you that their sole purpose was not to follow the scientific lead of this commission but to endeavor merely to obtain the credit for the results of their labor. that none of you really believes that anything would have been done for the farmer this year if this commission had not led the wa I again repeat that if the credit for these results must be discussed in the public press that the credit should be given to that body of non-partison experts called from all parts of the State not because of their political affiliations but because of

their agricultural knowledge; not because they belong to the Republican or the Democratic Party but because they belong to such farm organizations as the Dairymen's League the Farm Bureau the Home Bureau; the New York State Grange, the New York State Horticultural Society, the State College of Agriculture. These men were interested not in politics but in results and this commission which I called together should receive the credit rather than any political party.

At the time of signing these bills I made a general statement as to what they did and I on going to repeat them to you tonight in a very sketchy form.

I regard this legislation as the most important which has come from Albany this year.

First: The texpayors of the counties have been relieved from paying 35% of the cost of highway construction which they have been compelled to pay until this year. In dollars and cents this means that the texpayors of the rural counties of our state have been saved the sum of over five million dollars every year.

Second: The residents and taxpayers of towns and villages in our rural communities have been saved from contributing to the State of New York for the current year about five hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the maintenance of state and county highways which they would have had to contribute this year without this legislation. And that is more important, this amount of saving to the towns and villages will be increased each year by the passing of these measures. To carry this part of the program to its legical conclusion we have even returned to your towns and villages the amount which you have already paid for the current year, thus giving you immediate relief along these lines to the amount of five hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

Third: The secondary road system of our state by which I mean the dirt roads which run from the main highway arteries of the State back into the farmers homes, will receive from the State of New York this year nearly Five Million Bollars, end an increasing amount each succeeding year. I consider this part of the legislation as of extreme importance. To enable the farmer to get his products to his market it is absolutely essential that he be given decent roads connecting his Barn with the main state highway arteries. The dirt farmer receives more direct benefit from satisfactory secondary roads than he does from the main concrete highways , and I consider this State Aid for the construction and improvement of such dirt roads as of extreme importance. goes on the farmers of this state with are bound to realize the tremendous benefits conferred upon him economically by this measure.

where is all this money coming from? The money is coming from one of the most logical and scientific taxes which man has been able to devise, namely, the gasoline tax.

For some reason or other New York State remained the only state in the union without a gasoline tax. When I first conceived of a program of farm relief and realized that it would require a tremendous expenditure of money I immediately saw a good and sufficient reason for the imposition of this tax. I was particularly gratified when the Agricultural Advisory Commission included the imposition of such a tax in their recommendations of November 27th 1928, long before the legislature met.

Also, let us see the results of the legislation recommended by this agricultural advisory commission in the field of rural education:

(1) Two Million and Fifty Thousand Dollars is be being contributed this year by the State of New York for the aid of the little red school house with its one room and one teacher. There are over seven thousand five hundred of such schools in this State. They form the backbone of the education to the farmers children. In any decent education program they should receive prime consideration. This contribution will be increased next year to about two Million Six Hundred Thousand Dollars and the succeeding year to about Three Million Two Hundred Thousand Dollars. This is not all that has been done for rural education. The sum of One Million Dollars was contributed this year by the State of New York to the two, three and four room school houses of the State of which there are This will be an annual contribution. which places the 2-3 and 4-room school houses on a parity of State Aid with the larger schools. The benefit of to rural education from this source must be apparent to all of you.

One other thing that was done to relieve the rural counties from taxation. Under the existing law the counties must contribute 10% the cost of all grade crossing elimination work. We have reduced that to 15, thus saving the rural tax payer 9%. This will run int millions of dollars over the period of grade crossing elimination work now in progress.

In order to meet emergency agricultural needs, appropriations recommended by the Agricultural Advisory Commission which recommendations were transmitted by me to the Legislature,

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were made to permit the New York State College of Agriculture and the New York State College of Home Roomenies to study plant diseases, pathological soil conditions, truck crops, potate diseases and many other important agricultural problems requiring immediate attention and research.