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

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State Park Program

(1)

I have just returned from a two-weeks automobile campaign trip through the counties up-state. We passed through the beauties of our Finger Lakes Park region, Our Allegany Park Region, our Central New York Park Region, and many other park areas. We stopped to look at some of our park improvements. We saw the facilities provided for shelter, for picnicking, for camping. We could see all the wonderful possibilities for recreation and health-building in these vast spaces, where the citizens of our state ^{can} ~~could~~ enjoy the fresh air, invigorating climate and sparkling lakes ~~with all the pleasure and satisfaction which they give human beings who have been starved for lack of the out-doors.~~

And as I drove into the City today, with its mass of brick and stone and mortar and steel, as I watched its millions crowded into tenements, office buildings and factories, as I watched the throngs milling into the subways, the elevated, the trolleys, the taxis, as I saw the nervous, never-ceasing, hustle and bustle of city life, ~~with all that the keen struggle for existence within ~~its~~ means~~ I said to myself "Thank God for Al Smith and his park program."

(2)

Now what was the fight all about. Governor Smith went into all the facts very carefully. The small group of men opposed to the park program on Long Island tried to make it appear that the Long Island Park Commission was driving people out of their homes with fixed bayonets. They appealed, in expensive propaganda, for protection to their constitutional rights. That was all hokum. On the Taylor Estate, no one had lived for seventeen years, except a caretaker and a lot of wild ducks and ~~some~~ pheasants. The real reason was that these people didn't want the City-dweller to come out and share in the enjoyment of this natural beauty spot, because they said these city people were socially undesirable. This very same Kingsland Macy, now Republican boss, complained to Governor Smith "Where can a poor millionaire go, Governor, to be alone and not be bothered with these people". And the Governor replied "why not try the Harlem Valley Hospital."

But it even went a little deeper than that. In addition to being just bigotted and narrow-minded, there was a little matter of dollars and cents involved too. This same Kingsland Macy was interested in the Timber Point Golf Club immediately adjoining the Taylor Estate on the East. He was also financially interested in a large tract of undeveloped land to the north of the Taylor Estate. If ^{his associates} ~~he~~ could buy up the Taylor Estate, ^{he} could break it up into smaller pieces for sale to the Golf Club Members or ^{he} could use it to enhance the value of ^{his} ~~the~~ other tract by reason of the three-mile shore front of the Taylor Estate. So that when it was all said and done, this opposition to this park was rooted in a selfish sordid desire to make money, at the expense of the people of the State who already had an oral option on this property. This opposition of a few

large contribution²¹⁴ ~~was~~ to the campaign chest of the Republican Party was enough to block the entire state program for over a year - not only on Long Island but throughout the entire State --- a program for which the people had already overwhelmingly approved a bond issue of \$15,000,00. And remember that these opponents were all Republican, were all influential members of their party, and were led by the Republican boss, W. Kingsland Macy. And now my Republican opponent has the audacity to ~~try to~~ ^{try to} fool the people into ~~believing~~ ^{believing} ~~that his party is a~~ ^{friend} ~~enemy~~ of the State Parks System.

(3)

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Show me the city dweller who has spent fifty-weeks a year in city ~~toil~~, transplanted for two weeks in a camp in the Forest Preserve, with the camp site and all necessary facilities provided by the State for practically nothing. Show ~~me~~ the factory laborer who after a week of stifling heat in the City is able to take his children for a day's picnic to the cool recesses of a shaded State Park near-by, where he can enjoy a refreshing swim and a peaceful holiday. I will say that when the State spends money for such things, it is spending wisely. For it is investing in a better manhood and womanhood for the future. No false principles of dollar-saving should interfere with this program.

(4)

The people of Queens should be particularly interested in State Parks and Parkways for two reasons. In the first place the great parks of Nassau and Suffolk County lie at their very doorstep for their use and pleasure. In the second place, these vast arteries of traffic which you are now constructing in your county must be connected up with an equal system of parkways in Nassau County, or automobile traffic will be choked at your county line. You can't dump the traffic of a sixty foot boulevard into an eighteen foot road. The plan of the Long Island Park Commission is now taking care of that situation in a very satisfactory manner, as you know.