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**Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”**

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**Before Schenectady County Democratic Organization,  
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*The Business of State Government*

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I am speaking here tonight, not only as a member of our party, but as the Governor of the State, and I want to talk a little about this big business enterprise in which we all have an interest, the State Government.

It is a pretty big business when you stop to think that the Legislature has just passed a budget which appropriates \$300,000,000 for the operations of the government for just one year. That's a lot of money for any business to handle in a year, and the taxpayers should be interested constantly in what it is being spent for and how it is being spent. The most successful business corporation is the one in which the stockholders take a direct interest by electing competent directors and unless we all take a similar interest we cannot expect this business to be a success.

This business of State Government is a growing one and nothing any of us can do will stop it from growing. This year it will cost us \$43,000,000 more to run it than it cost last year. Next year it will cost still more. That is because ours is a progressive State and we do not allow our State Activities to stand still. As the population of the State increases, as our industries expand and increase, our State departments must also expand and our governmental activities must increase. Likewise, as we grow in social consciousness, in our concern for the common welfare, certain other of our activities must increase. Each year we are spending more for education, we are extending our hospital facilities, the work of regulating public utility services in the interests of the consumers grows larger, we are making a beginning in the rehabilitation of the criminal, and many other similar activities call for the expenditure of additional State funds. No one has any quarrel with all this, because it is a natural development.

It is well, however, to stop occasionally and take a long look ahead to see where we are going. There must be a definite plan about this growth in State Government activities and we must have an objective.

If we consider government as something more than a necessary evil, if we think of it as an agency first to protect society and then to promote and guide all the people into better ways of living, then we must try to imagine what conditions will be a few years hence, and plan our government to meet those conditions. It will not do to try to look too far ahead, however, for none of us has the prophetic vision to foretell all the changes which will take place in fifteen, ten or even five years, so fast are modern conditions changing.

There are some things we can fairly predict, however. For instance, we know that the State must build many hospitals. You have heard considerable talk in the past year about the hospital program. Under my predecessor, the State began a hospital building program of very large dimensions, but we are finding out that we shall still be far short of hospital facilities five years from now, even though we continue to build at the present rate. The fact is that we are now trying to make up for a couple of generations of neglect. The State in the past has not kept up-to-date in the manner of caring for our mentally sick and defective. It was not so very many years ago when everywhere these unfortunates were put away in institutions we called asylums, just locked up away from society and left to die. It is not surprising that with that attitude few people bothered about the kind of buildings that were erected for them or cared very much about overcrowding.

Today we have an entirely different idea. We know that a fairly large percentage of the mentally ill can be cured and can be returned as useful members of society. Today we have hospitals instead of asylums and our hospitals are curing these people. But we cannot produce cures, except under satisfactory conditions. Patients must have the proper kind of living quarters and adequate food and tender care.

That means we must build more hospitals and keep on building them until we catch up. We are spending for this purpose this year \$18,800,000. That will provide six thousand new hospital beds and help to relieve the present inhuman overcrowding. We ought to be scrapping some of our old buildings—some of them should have been torn down many years ago—but we cannot do it until we have some place to put the patients.

While I am on this subject let me tell you how we have speeded up this work. You will remember that the leaders of the Legislature agreed with me last June to appropriate this money at this session. In order that the work might start at once it was agreed that the State Architect might employ the extra help necessary to prepare the plans. When the Legislature met, all the plans for these hospitals had been prepared and today bids were received for the first part of the work, totaling nearly \$9,000,000 for 26 hospital buildings at the new Pilgrim Hospital out on Long Island. The contract will be awarded within the next few days and work will start within fifteen days afterwards. For months lights have burned until all hours of the night in the State Architect's office, but that part of the job, big as it was, has been done on time. Bids are to be received on the rest of the work between now and the end of the month.

The unfortunate occurrences in our prisons during the past few months have focused public attention on our prison problem. My predecessor struggled for years with the Legislature to do away with the old unsanitary cell blocks and other out-worn prison buildings and for the construction of new, up-to-date prisons. Now that the public is awake to the seriousness of the problem I feel sure we will build these new prisons within the next few years. Already work has started on the new Wyoming Prison at Altuda.

Our splendid State park system must be further extended and our present parks improved and made more accessible to all the people. It is difficult to over-estimate the importance of these great natural parks. There was a time when no one thought it was the function of the State Government to provide parks, but then there were vast stretches of unsettled forest and mountain and meadow territory that served as parks. People lived in smaller communities and did not feel the need for park space that our congested populations have today.

With the increasing use of machines in industry our city workers have more leisure and can enjoy these park facilities more and more. We have seen the half-holiday become accepted everywhere. Now the five day week is here. The eight hour day is almost universal. It may soon be less than eight hours. What better investment can we make in the health and happiness of our people than in developing these splendid State parks for the people to enjoy when they are not compelled to remain in the cities?

I have suggested that we create a new park along the beautiful Mohawk valley, preserving the natural beauties and making something more of our Barge Canal than just a commercial waterway. I believe we should have a parkway extending from New York City through the Delaware water-shed along the Southern tier to the western end of the State. I think we can do a great deal to make our State highways really parkways by planting trees and landscaping suitable stretches along the way. Our highways should be something more than strips of concrete on which to get from place to place. We can make them beautiful as well as useful roadways.

There is another development which is going to contribute much to the comfort and well-being of the people of this State. I refer to the prospect for developing our water power resources on the St. Lawrence River. If we can make electricity cheaper we can extend its use and more people can enjoy its benefits. I refer particularly to the extension of electricity to the farms. I doubt if there is any other single factor which can contribute more to the contentment of those who live on our more remote farms than electricity. Where the use of electricity has made possible the installation of labor-saving devices on many of our farms, life on those farms has been made attractive and the young people are more willing to remain and work the farms. This is important to all of us, for, of course, we cannot all live in the cities and villages. Someone must grow the things we eat.

The leaders of the majority in the Legislature have, as you know, agreed to the creation of a water power body which will prepare a plan for State development of the St. Lawrence resources. Within a very few years the long-postponed benefits of this natural energy will be enjoyed by the people of the State.

These are all matters which will make New York State a better place in which to live and that is the goal for which we should be striving.

There is, of course, much to be done as yet along the lines of what we call welfare measures. The majority party in the Legislature has for many years been dominated by an ultra-conservative element, which has constantly opposed the social welfare program of the Democratic Party. Despite this opposition, however, we have been able to place a great many good laws on the statute books and we will keep on fighting until our whole program has been enacted into law.

This year they propose to give us what they call an Old Age Pension system. Well, I'm not satisfied with their measure, but if it's the best we can get we shall have to take it and try to improve the law next year. The proposed measure does little more than change the present method of administering poor relief. It makes the local welfare agent the one to determine

the amount of relief to be given and places the minimum age at seventy. The bill has "charity" written all over it and that's not my idea of an old age security plan.

I hope the Legislature will pass a real 48-hour law for women and children in industry this year. Last year the measure was defeated, but perhaps with an election coming on, the other party will decide it is wise to pass it. I also hope we can get a real occupational disease law, bringing all occupational diseases under the Workmen's Compensation Law.

The certainty of this expansion in the activities of the State Government necessarily brings to the front a question of business policy. If we can reasonably expect a larger budget every year for a few years, at least it is time to think of financing our permanent improvements so that the cost of the project shall be spread out over a part of the period of use. This is particularly pertinent to our hospital problem. Last year I asked the Legislature to authorize a \$50,000,000 bond issue to be voted on by the people last Fall. Now, there was nothing revolutionary in that. The people of the State have definitely gone on record in favor of this policy. The people would have approved the bond issue, I am sure. However, the majority leaders in the Legislature decreed otherwise, with the result that we are spending \$18,800,000 out of current revenues this year for hospitals, thus practically wiping out the State's surplus.

I have renewed my request for a bond issue this year, but now I am told they favor delay to see whether State revenues increase or not, and if not, then they will be willing to pass a bond issue in a special session of the Legislature. This position is more or less absurd, because by the end of this week when the federal income tax returns are in, we will know pretty well what our own income tax returns will be and we can gauge pretty definitely what our receipts will be next year. We can estimate our other taxes by the experience of the past two or three months. Generally speaking, the other State taxes have fallen off since the first of the year. And you must not forget it will cost about \$20,000 if we are compelled to have a special session of the Legislature.

When you compare the per capita increase in the State debt during the years from 1918 to 1928, years of rapid expansion, with the increase in the local bonded debts in the State, you can get an idea of the extent to which we have been paying for permanent improvements out of current taxes. The increase in the State debt was \$4.91 a person while the local debt, county, town, village and city increased \$69.57 per capita.

The trouble is that there has been too much of a tendency to play politics with the State business. The Executive Budget has helped much by eliminating the trading back and forth which was the method formerly used in making up the budget. It was a matter of you agreeing to raise the salary of my friend and I would vote for an increase for your friend, or you vote for an appropriation for my district and I'll vote for your pet project.

There is still some of it with regard to local expenditures, principally salaries of local officers which are still fixed by statute. I have been vetoing many increases in local expenditures which seemed to me unwarranted. The other day a Senator from upstate was quite talkative about one of my vetoes. You probably read about it in the papers. Well, we must eliminate politics in the business of government somewhere, and I am sorry, if my friend on the third floor felt I had stepped on his toes.