
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
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Newsreel Talk - Duties of the Governor

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Movietone Talk by Governor, Albany, September 25, 1930

Daily Duties of the Governor

Very few people in the State have more than a hazy idea of what are the actual duties of the Governor.

I think the most practical way of explaining it to you is to take my calendar pad showing my engagements for today.

For instance, this morning right after breakfast at the Executive Mansion I skimmed through about eight newspapers published in different parts of the State. Then I dictated answers to twenty-five or thirty letters, most of them from personal friends who had addressed me at the Mansion.

On arrival at the Executive Chamber I found another forty or fifty letters which had to be either answered or referred to various department heads, after I had seen them. I spend perhaps more time on mail than some Governors, because I have a very definite feeling that people who write to me, expect that I will at least read through their letters in person.

Then at 11 o'clock there began the stream of people who had appointments to see me.

First came Dr. Frederick W. Parsons, Commissioner of Mental Hygiene with Chief Engineer Thomas Farrell of the Department of Public Works. They reported to me on the excellent progress which is being made in the construction of the new hospitals for the insane. One year ago on various public works 4,575 men were being employed and their pay-roll was \$1,390,000. This year for the same month 7,550 men were being employed and the payroll was \$2,311,000.

Then came Dr. Charles H. Johnson, the head of the Department of Social Welfare, accompanied by the State Architect Mr. William E. Haugaard and we went over the plans for the Hospital for Crippled Children at West Haverstraw.

Then several other department heads came in to discuss the progress of work on prisons, normal schools, and highways.

I heard a babel of voices in the big outside room and, while there was no appointment beforehand for them, I took ten minutes off to shake hands with about 100 school children who had come by bus to Albany for the day to visit the Capitol and other State buildings. I wish that more of our citizens throughout the State would follow this example for I think that a visit to the Capitol gives a very good picture of the activities of our Government.

With me I find that going out to lunch takes too much time from my regular work and, therefore, I have lunch brought to my desk and use this half hour to have a quiet talk with some person who wants to discuss some of the larger questions of Government. For instance, today I spent a very instructive half hour with Sam Lewisoohn discussing the problems of Prison Reform, of the functioning of the new Parole Board, and of the types of new buildings which we will erect next year.

Now, for this afternoon, I have on my pad conferences with the special committee working on the unemployment situation and which has already placed thousands of people in jobs during the past few months. Then I am to see some village officials who are protesting against high rates for electricities in their community. They will be followed by representatives of the Dairymen's League, and the Grange, to talk over agricultural plans and especially the milk situation.

Finally, the Highway Department is to report to me on the progress of the experimental types of dirt roads which are the fore-runners of a definite program for taking the farmer out of the mud.

All of this means that I shall be here at my desk until half past five or six o'clock, signing mail and clearing up details. Then I go home for supper with the family and I suppose that as usual four or five people who are visiting Albany will have supper with us.

I do not call this a very busy day because you must remember that the Legislature is not now in session, nor am I confronted with decisions on hundreds of bills or the dozens of applications for pardons which I take up at regular intervals.

Primarily, this task of being Governor is a businessman's job. I am directing a very large corporation, one which spends \$300,000,000 a year, in its various activities. I wish at times that the political angle could be kept wholly out of it, yet I realize that in one sense the voters of the State are stockholders in this business and have a very definite right to pass at the stockholders' meeting, in other words on Election Day, as to whom they want to have manage this big business concern. I am more and more impressed with the fact that the most successful Governors of the past have been those who had a real familiarity with the State as a whole and with the needs and desires of the different counties and different sections. Some of them obtained their knowledge through the Legislature, others who had an intimate personal knowledge through travel. I have had the privilege of both of these. The main point, as I see it, is that the Governor should be a good manager and at the same time be sufficiently human and sufficiently interested in the people of the State that he will be thinking constantly about ways in which their welfare can best be promoted.