
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”

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Radio Address, Albany, October 13, 1930

Unemployment, Water Power, Milk Racketeering

Today we are celebrating the birth of our new world. Four hundred and thirty-eight years ago, on October 12, 1492, that great Italian navigator, Christopher Columbus, first saw that little island in the Bahamas. For days and weeks he had pursued his westward course over the protest, the doubts and the fears of those who were with him. His answer to the plea for turning back was "Sail on!" Those same words may well be the motto for America in this year of grace 1930.

To those who are today celebrating this great achievement of Columbus, I extend my hearty greetings and well wishes, and especially to those fellow Americans who themselves, or through their ancestors, have come from the sunny land of Italy. They follow in the footsteps of their great compatriot Christopher Columbus, and they are helping to make America what Columbus' vision hoped that America would mean to civilization and the progress of the world.

As I understand that this is a State-wide hook-up, I want to speak tonight of three subjects which are a good deal more than mere questions of politics, because they very deeply affect the personal lives of almost everybody in the State, and in every part of the State.

Two years ago Mr. Ottinger, the Republican candidate for Governor, made his campaign primarily on one national issue and tied himself to the coat tails of Mr. Hoover, the Republican candidate for President. This issue was prosperity and, boiled down to a few words, consisted of the hypothesis that the election of Governor Smith as President would mean hard times and empty dinner pails, whereas the election of Mr. Hoover and, incidentally, of Mr. Ottinger himself would be a bank certificate for four years of unbounded wealth, high wages and good jobs for everybody throughout the State and the Country.

How times have changed! With the freedom that a candidate who is not Governor can have, the present Republican candidate for the Governorship is speaking, last week and this week, all over the State; and up to this time not one word, not one whisper has come from him on the subject of national prosperity. Nor has he yet, so far as I know, even mentioned the name of the President of the United States. Is this disloyalty or just fear of the issue?

It seems a fair argument that if Republican prosperity could be used as an issue by the Republican candidate in 1928, it is equally an issue in 1930. Furthermore, in both campaigns, nominees of both parties are running for election to the Congress of the United States in every congressional district throughout the State.

You who know me can rest assured that I will not change my policy of trying to be fair; that I will not overstate the situation from mere partisanship. I have never claimed that either party, Republican or Democratic, has a monopoly on all the virtues, on all the business and industrial success or on prosperity itself. But properly, I think, do I call attention to the Republican campaign methods in 1928 and in previous elections, and I call specific attention also to what everybody knows was the financial policy of the Republican administration in Washington from March 4, 1929, up to the time of the panic last autumn. It is a matter of record that from day to day and from week to week and from month to month as the stock market rose by leaps and bounds, money grew tighter in an effort to add fuel to the orgy of speculation, and many industries expanded far beyond their conceivable needs for ten years to come. All through this period responsible officials of the Federal Government, including the Secretary of the Treasury, himself, fed encouragement to the so-called financiers and optimism to the press. Efforts of responsible bankers to call a halt in the orgy were met with frowns in Washington.

You and I know only too well what happened and we know also that Republican leadership both in Washington and in this State had a very definite responsibility for letting the situation get completely out of hand.

Then came the crash. The President was wholly right in calling on industry to do all that it possibly could to keep production going, to keep people employed. But again there was weakness and unwillingness to look the situation in the face. Month after month cabinet officers stated that the industrial depression was negligible; that employment was practically normal and that within almost no time at all the wheels of industry and of commerce would be running at full speed. Even the official statistics were made to draw an untrue picture. When the census-taking came along the reports were doctored to give an erroneous impression. For instance, in the cities of this State the only people put down as unemployed were those who had no job at all. Nothing was said of the thousands and thousands who were working one day or two days a week at the most. In Poughkeepsie, for instance, in my home county, the Federal census showed only about a thousand people out of work. The unbiased records of local investigators showed over 3,000 people who were either out of work or employed so irregularly that their pay envelopes would not even pay for their food.

Now this failure on the part of the Federal Government either to estimate the situation correctly or to tell the truth about it has thrown an enormous burden on the Governors of all the States. While the Legislature was still in session I obtained from them over \$20,000,000 more than we had the previous year, a total of about \$80,000,000 for the immediate start-

ing of public works of all kinds throughout the State. This I followed by obtaining from the Legislature a law requiring preference for the employment of New York State citizens on all of these public works, and an eight-hour day on all the railroad work for the elimination of grade crossings, thus providing work for more people.

All through the summer my Commission on Stabilization of Employment has been going through the State persuading literally hundreds of manufacturers to put their plans on a stabilized basis so that the peaks and valleys of employment will be greatly reduced in the future.

All through the summer too, I have cooperated with the local public officials in every part of the State looking to an increase in employment on local public works of various kinds. The free employment bureaus of the State Department of Labor have been multiplied and are hard at work. I am receiving the splendid cooperation of civic organizations of all kinds and you can rest assured that the State Government is doing its best to improve a vastly difficult situation thrown on our door-step by the Republican Administration.

I ask you simply and very frankly to compare this record of telling the truth, this record of definite action, this record of making provision for the future with the record of my distinguished opponent who, up to date, is conspicuous by his silence on it.

There is another subject on which that gentleman is also silent and apparently intends to remain so, even though last week he was speaking in the counties that adjoin the great water powers of the St. Lawrence river. I refer to that household necessity which is used by a great majority of people in the State, electricity in the home.

People who are rich, or moderately well off think of their monthly electric light bill as a comparatively small item against their total income. People who pay ten or fifteen or twenty dollars a month for their electric light, are not greatly concerned with the question of rates but, on the other hand, people who have to think about the pennies are very much concerned as to whether their electric light costs a dollar a month or five dollars a month, for the difference of four dollars a month amounts to \$48 a year. Let us not forget the fact that at least 90 per cent of the people in this State have to think about the pennies. Remember, it is less than 10 per cent of our people who do not have to bother about the size of milk, electricity and telephone bills. In which class do you belong?

Therein lies the great fundamental question as to whether in the matter of electricity the 90 per cent of users in this State are paying a reasonable rate.

It is notorious that during the past 20 years and especially during the past ten years many utility companies have doubled and quadrupled their capital and effected merger after merger, and that while this was done, supposedly in the interest of economy of operation, our telephone and electric light bills were not coming down. As against this, it is a definite fact, for example, that electric light bills have come down in many other places, both in the United States and in Canada.

Here for instance are some comparisons of the actual electric light bills in some cities of the State as compared with cities of the same size just across our own borders in Ontario. These are based on the householder who uses 50 kilowatt hours a month, an amount slightly above that used by the average householder in our State. These 50 kilowatts will provide, for example, merely lights and an iron and a toaster. In Albany the monthly bill is \$2.85, whereas in Ottawa with the same population it is 99 cents. In Auburn, New York, it is \$4, whereas in Windsor, Ontario, with the same population it is \$1.42. In Buffalo, it is \$2.03, but in Toronto, Ontario, it is 99 cents. In Binghamton, it is \$3.60, and in London, Ontario, with the same population it is \$1.20. In Rochester, it is \$3.25 as against the Toronto rate of 99 cents. In Utica, it is \$3.25 whereas in Hamilton, Ontario, it is \$1.20. In New York City the rate runs from \$3.50 to \$4, whereas the big city rate in Toronto is only 99 cents.

I could go on and give you the rates for every city in this State, but the general figures are absolutely on a par with the above, showing that the rates charged by the private utility companies in this State are double or three or four or five times as much as the citizens of Ontario pay. I wish to call your attention to the fact that the rates I have been speaking about are for the barest electrical necessities. It is my wish and ambition to see every housewife in New York State supplied with all the electrical appliances and devices which relieve the burdens of the household.

I would like to see her have for her use an electric icebox, an electric range, an electric vacuum cleaner, an electric radio, a dish-washer, clothes washer, fan, warming pan, waffle iron and chafing dish, all run by electricity. In this way the housewives of this State will be able to have more leisure and be relieved from household drudgery. It is scientifically estimated that such a household would require 285 kilowatt hours a month, and the Canadian housewife is able to purchase these 285 kilowatts for what our New York housewife has to pay for practically lights alone. In Canada the housewife pays about \$3.32 a month for a complete electrical kitchen and household. In New York City such a household would cost about \$19.95 a month. In New Rochelle or Mount Vernon, the cost of this would be \$25.63 per month; in Binghamton \$11.15 per month; in Plattsburgh \$18.15 per month; in Albany \$9.90 per month. What is the reason for this wide discrepancy in rates? It is very simple. There is nothing mysterious about it. In Ontario, the government itself develops electricity from its water power and delivers it to its citizens at practically cost. Here in New York we have not been so sensible. We have permitted private corporations to monopolize the electrical industry and sell it at the highest rates they could obtain. Of course, they have tried to make as much profit as they could and the result has been this wide difference in rates. My predecessor and I have tried to get the State of New York to follow the example of Ontario. We have for years tried to get the Legislature to agree to do this. Each year it was blocked by the Republican leaders at the insistence of the electrical companies. The Republican leaders not only were friendly to the electric corporations but it is a matter of common knowledge that some of the most influential Republican leaders in this State are tremendous stockholders and directors in electric utilities. Finally this year, I, with the assistance of public opinion, compelled the Republican Legislature to authorize the study by a commission appointed by me of a plan to get electrical rates down near the Canadian rates by the development of our water power resources. This commission is now at work. I personally have been to the St. Lawrence River with them and inspected those vast resources which I hope will ultimately permit the housewives of this State to have the benefit of cheap electricity in the homes.

Do not let the political tactics of any political candidates deceive you as to what the paramount issues of this campaign are. Do not forget that this year is the crucial year in the determination of whether our water power resources will be developed by a State agency for the benefit of the citizens of the State or by private corporations for their own benefit. The commission to bring in a definite plan is now at work. If the Republican candidate is elected, there can be no question in any sane person's mind as to what that determination by the Legislature will be. All the Republican leaders who nominated the Republican candidate are committed to development by private corporations. Cheaper electricity in the home must, of necessity, depend upon development by a public agency under the plan advocated by Governor Smith and myself.

And, finally, I want to say a few words about another necessity in the home, a pure milk supply, a supply not only absolutely safe from a health point of view but a supply which is constant and comes from sources, the inspection of which is guaranteed by the health authorities, a supply also which should be sold to the consuming public at a reasonable rate.

Let me record one single fact, which I state as a fact, because it is a matter of record and not of politics. In the nearly two years that I have

been in Albany, one effort and only one has been taken in regard to the milk supply by the only Republican elective official in the State Government. The Attorney-General has taken absolutely no interest in anything pertaining to agriculture with the exception of his sudden milk investigation in New York City this past summer. The facts are very simple. Early in August a very serious condition of drought faced the farmers of the New York milkshed, which milkshed is composed of the whole of this State and a small neighboring section of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Vermont and Canada. Because of this drought, the farmers were faced with the immediate necessity of feeding cows with grain on a winter basis, because the pastures were burned up. This, of course, involved a heavy loss to the farmer because it used up his winter supply of feed.

The dairy farmers in order to make both ends meet were given an increase of three-fourths of a cent for each quart of milk. If my city hearers think that this makes them rich, I can only ask them to visit any of the dairying sections of the State and see for themselves. It is literally true that this small increase of three-fourths of a cent a quart saved hundreds of dairy farmers from going out of business altogether, thereby decreasing the available inspected milk supply. At this moment the Attorney-General jumped in with his investigation in New York City and the public gained the impression at once that it was an attack on this three-fourths of a cent increase in the price paid to the farmers. They gained the impression too that the Attorney-General wanted to open up New York City to an influx of bootleg milk, uninspected milk, mind you, from the West, from Wisconsin, and Illinois and Minnesota and Iowa. The Attorney-General scared the public so well that the immediate result was a dropping of thousands of quarts of milk a day in the amount consumed. Of course, what the Attorney-General should have done was to investigate the big spread in price between what the farmer receives for his milk and what the householder, the mother and children, pay for their milk, in the big cities. We are told that he started to investigate that question, but for some reason this inquiry was dropped entirely.

If I am re-elected and a Democratic Attorney-General is also elected, I will ask him at once to probe to the very bottom any and all "racketeering" in milk delivered in New York City. It will also be his duty to try to find some way of reducing this huge percentage of spread between what the farmer receives and the consumer pays, so that the retail price would be substantially cut. Mr. Bennett would do this where the present Attorney-General has fallen down 100 per cent.

The purity at the source of the milk supply of our great cities has been so well secured by the recognition of the New York milkshed that during the past summer we have taken the next step of applying the principle of a definite inspected source of supply to cream as well as to milk.

All of the cities of the State are cooperating with the Health Department of the State in this. Uninspected cream from sources originating outside of the State will be eliminated and the general health of the public will be further safeguarded. That I take it is a matter of congratulation not only to the dairy farmer of the State, but also to the mothers and children in all of our great cities. It is, furthermore, an excellent example of what a farsighted, progressive administration can do in Albany.

Directly in line with the comprehensive and highly successful agriculture program of my administration during the past two years is the broadening and extension of that same program to cover other necessities of life, in addition to milk and cream. At the Barnum dinner in Syracuse last month, I pointed out, and I point out again, that it is high time to apply more businesslike methods to the shipping, the storage and the distributing to the consumers' homes of many other farm products which enter into the daily bill of fare of the average farmer. These include all of the vegetables and all of the fruits grown in our own State. Intelligent marketing has made some strides since the days nineteen years ago when I, as a member of the State Senate, put through the first law for the regulation and licensing of commission merchants. Nevertheless, the actual spread between what the

farmer receives and the consumer pays for vegetables and fruits is still altogether too high. I propose that the same splendidly efficient Governor's Agricultural Advisory Commission, which has done so well during the past two years, will tackle this other problem this winter. Now that we have made such excellent progress during the past two years, let us not turn our hand from the plow. The program must be continued and enlarged under the leadership of those who have already made good.

Before I close I want to make a brief statement about a matter of immediate moment.

I have received reports from various parts of the Adirondacks stating that the woods are in a very dangerously dry condition and that forest fires are possible at any time.

The hunting season opens on Wednesday and I hope that it will not be necessary for me to order the woods closed to sportsmen—even for a short time. Yet that possibility exists and in fairness to the hunters I want to warn them in advance of the present conditions.

I will receive in the morning a report and a recommendation from the Conservation Commissioner, Mr. Alexander Macdonald. His recommendation will be based on the latest information. I may have to close the Adirondack Preserve, but I hope that will not be necessary.

One good soaking rain would save the situation.

Let us hope it will come.
