
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
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Radio Address, Albany, October 16, 1930

What the State is Doing for the People in Education, Conservation and Public Works

I have received many letters, telephones and telegrams asking me to keep on speaking about the State Government in these radio talks. Therefore, and also because it is my last radio talk from the Executive Mansion before I start on the campaign on Saturday, I am going to tell you about two or three Departments of the Government that are costing the taxpayers large amounts and in which the taxpayers, therefore, have a very direct stake.

In the Budget hearings today I have taken up the requests for appropriations by the Department of Education. Frankly, I was not surprised when I saw the total of their request, especially when I remember that only ten or twelve years ago the total of expenditures by the State for education amounted to only \$10,000,000. As against that, the appropriation during the current year is \$109,000,000, and for the coming year the Education Department is requesting \$122,000,000. Most of the suggested increases will, I fear, have to be greatly reduced because the State's finances simply will not bear the increase; but nevertheless the total will, I am certain, at least equal the amount this year of \$109,000,000. You can be very certain that I will see to it that there will be no curtailment of any educational activity.

How is this vast sum spent? First and foremost, most of it is not spent by the State at all but is paid out by the Department of Education to the city school departments and to the rural school districts all over the State. The amount which the State thus contributes to the various localities has been increasing steadily under the so-called Friedman Law, passed several years ago, but we have nearly reached the maximum of this aid and from now on the amount will run about the same each succeeding year. However, there has been one addition, that of supplemental aid to the one, two, three and four room schools scattered through the country districts, schools which are so located geographically that consolidation with other school districts is not practicable. It is in these small and generally poor districts that the heaviest burden of school taxation has borne down in the past, and the new law which I recommended to the Legislature a year ago has greatly relieved the burden.

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Of the amount \$109,000,000, exactly \$95,300,000 is paid out by the Department to the various localities for the support of common schools. Of the balance, which is spent by the Education Department itself, about \$3,600,000 goes to the maintenance of the State College of Agriculture at Cornell University, the School of Home Economics, the Veterinary College, the Geneva Experiment Station and the six State Agricultural Schools which are scattered throughout the State, beginning with one on Long Island and reaching all the way out, nearly to Niagara. These schools train an enormous number of young men and young women each year, boys and girls who come from the cities as well as the farms, and one definite result is that the farmers of New York State are applying science and business to the conduct of their farms to a greater degree than in any other State in the Union.

Then we are spending \$2,500,000 in the maintenance of the nine Normal Schools of the State and the State Colleges for Teachers in Albany and Buffalo. In these schools there are a total of 7,258 young men and women being trained as teachers. Here again such excellent work is being done that I am very certain that the next generation will be infinitely better educated than we are.

Speaking of Normal Schools, I hear that some politicians down in Long Island and in Westchester are going around saying that I am opposed to a new Normal School in Nassau County and a new Normal School in Westchester. That is not true. The fact is, first, that the existing Normal Schools maintained by the State have turned out and are turning out so many teachers that a large number of these qualified teachers are today looking for some place to teach. It is estimated that several thousand are looking for jobs. Just as soon as we catch up with this supply we shall go ahead with the building of Normal Schools. The second point is that the Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Education, Dr. Graves, have not recommended the building of a new school either in Westchester or in Long Island, and obviously the recommendation must come from these officials who know all about the situation and have the responsibility. Finally, the Department of Education is also in charge of the State Museum and the splendid historical collections that belong to the Government. All in all, while the total we spend on this Department is very large—over one-third of the entire State budget—yet I am very certain that the people of this State want no curtailment of the educational work.

In this budget making I will shortly take up the requests from the Department of Conservation. Here again the total amount spent by the State is large, amounting to \$8,600,000 this year. Years ago when I was in the State Senate it was called the Forest, Fish & Game Commission, and its activities were very limited. Since that time the great Adirondack and Catskill Preserves have been greatly enlarged, so that the State today owns millions of magnificent acres famed for their beauty, their tree growth and the opportunities they afford for sport and recreation.

The State has by a tightening of the game laws and by the actual propagation of game, birds and fish vastly increased the opportunities for sportsmen; and in tree planting New York State leads all the rest of the country. We have grown in State Nurseries and planted out on vacant or abandoned land over one hundred million young trees since this work was started. In the days of our grandchildren we can rest assured that they will still be able to see a fine growth of living trees in every part of the State. Much the larger part of the Conservation Department's expenditures is, however, for the building and upkeep of the splendid system of parks throughout the State. To Governor Smith goes for all time the credit for the initiation of this glorious plan, and before he left office a large part had already been carried out. During these past two years we have continued the program at full speed.

I do not believe that there is any one State project which has given so much personal pleasure to such a large number of citizens as the building of these State Parks. You who live in the metropolitan district know the beaches, lakes and the parkways on both the south and north shores of Long Island which are used by hundreds of thousands of people every day during

the hot weather. You, who have been to Valley Stream or to Heckscher Park, or to Jones Beach this past summer, can realize what a Godsend these parks have been to the millions of city dwellers who have no other opportunity of getting a real holiday away from the hot pavements and tiny rooms. The same thing holds true of all that great Bear Mountain Park, only a short distance up the Hudson River.

But the parks are not confined to the metropolitan area for they are liberally scattered throughout the State. Up near the Connecticut line is the Taconic State Park, and as we go west we come to the many developments of the Central New York region, and a little further west are those magnificent glens and lakes of what is known as the Finger Lakes region.

Then, we come to what I shall always think of as one of the wonders of the world, the Letchworth Park and the gorge of the Genesee River. In the southwest corner of the State near the Pennsylvania line is the great Allegheny State Park with its thousands upon thousands of acres and opportunities for campers to have the whole world to themselves. Finally, in the northwest corner is Niagara Reservation, guaranteeing to all generations to come the preservation of the unique glory of the greatest falls in the world.

Next winter I hope that the Legislature will create two other park regions, one for the counties in the Mohawk Valley and the Catskill region, and the other for the counties lying along the Thousand Islands and the St. Lawrence and Lake Champlain.

It is interesting to note that every time we open a new park in up-State New York the attendance the first year is principally on the part of local people, those who live within a radius of 20 or 30 miles. The second year people come there from all over the State, including great numbers from New York City, and by the time the third year comes around the park is visited by tourists from every State in the Union. We are doing great things not only for our own State population, but also for the rest of the nation, and, incidentally, we are not losing anything by making New York State one of the greatest, if not the greatest, playground in existence.

It seems to me to have been well worth while for us to spend this money. Some people have thought that these parks are not essentials to our civilization, but personally I regard them not only as centers for recreation but as the best health expenditure which we could possibly make for ourselves and our children.

And while on the subject of conservation I wish to make the observation at this time that New York will always abound in game and that our forests will survive and grow as long as the sportsmen of the State have the matter as close to their hearts as they have at the present. They have not only unselfishly requested that the forests be closed because of the inflammable conditions existing in the woods, due to the drought, but have ungrudgingly, very temporarily I hope, laid away their guns because of this condition. I wish publicly, as Governor of the State, to commend them for this splendid spirit.

At this point I want to speak of some wonderful discoveries now being made by political campaigners who evidently have little knowledge of the State Government. It is being said that the State should have a full-fledged Department of Commerce, just like the Federal Government in Washington. Such a department if created at one fell swoop would not only cost the State large sums and be contrary to the whole purpose of the recent consolidation of departments, which only went into effect a very few years ago, but it would be a grave question as to whether it would justify the sudden expenditure of large amounts out of the taxpayers' pockets. It seems to me much better to proceed along businesslike lines and incidentally along the lines which were started by me last year.

It is perfectly true that we are beginning to recognize the value of bringing to the public notice of people throughout the United States the great resources offered, and opportunities enjoyed by those of us who live within the borders of the Empire State. It is not enough for us to assume that we are the Empire State by an act of Providence and that we shall progress upward and

onward without any further effort on our part. In other words, we must recognize that it pays to advertise. The work began last year, for in the Conservation Department a Bureau of State Publicity was created, its duty being to collect and compile information as to the agricultural, horticultural, industrial, economic, social, educational and recreational advantages of the State, the historical and scientific places of interest within the State, and the transportation and highway facilities of the State; to examine and pass upon such literature giving publicity to the material and economic advantages of the State, and such other information as to the advantages and facilities of the State as to render it a desirable place of residence, sojourn or travel.

I fear some people never heard of this State activity. This bureau is actively functioning under the direction of Irwin Thomas, a widely known newspaperman, and he has done a good job without very much expense to the State. He has obtained the cooperation of dozens of manufacturing firms, of travel and automobile associations, of hotel men, of economists, of agricultural societies, of chambers of commerce, and indeed of all the existing agencies which are today helping to keep our State very much on the map.

Perhaps some day we shall have a full-fledged department of commerce, but in the meantime we have made an excellent start toward the goal of pointing out adequately the great advantages of New York. What has been already started must and shall be continued and expanded. I am, of course, heartily in sympathy with the development of this program, and next year's Legislature will doubtless enlarge the work. This is an excellent example of trying to make political capital where the question of politics does not enter into it at all. The members of the Legislature and I have gone along together wholeheartedly and there is no room for difference of opinion. There is room, however, for a difference of opinion on whether we shall expand what we have started along businesslike lines or not. Personally, I prefer to follow the course that would be pursued by any great private business corporation with nation-wide activities.

I have gone somewhat at length into this subject because the Republican Platform pledges its party candidates to create such a bureau. There is no further need for them to worry about it. The work is being done and very well done, and I am prepared to enlarge on the activities of this bureau because it has already established its real worth.

Next to education the State spends more on public work than on any other objective.

For instance, on highways the total 1930 appropriation is \$51,500,000 and every penny of this will be actually obligated, in other words contracted for during the year.

Here again let me speak as a business man. I take it that some political candidates would like to see the whole of this \$51,000,000 obligated, in other words contracted for within two or three months of the actual time of appropriation. They have not the business experience to know that the result of this would be a Department of Highways three times as large as it is today, three times as many people working at top speed for three months, and then a complete shutdown with everybody laid off and nobody employed until the following year. Highways must be surveyed and specifications written in every part of the State, and the Highway Department is so well conducted today that it continues to function on a perfectly even keel throughout the year, thus maintaining a constant level of work being done. That is businesslike and the result is that each year sees the whole program carried out in an orderly way. Furthermore it enables us to get much lower prices and more competition from contractors than if we asked for all of the bids for all of the roads in the course of two or three months only.

In line with this same thought of conducting the Government in a businesslike and orderly way, I want to call your attention to my plea that it is time for us to do something definite about the dirt roads which are now mostly unimproved and are under the jurisdiction of the towns and not of the State. There has been, as we all know, a large amount of money wasted in the past in keeping dirt roads in repair. The first objective is to find out the actual

construction methods which can best be used to take these dirt roads out of the mud. We have known very little about it up to the present time.

Here obviously a scientific experiment had to be made. That was the reason why I asked the Legislature last winter to divert \$100,000 of highway funds toward the carrying out of ten separate experiments with dirt roads in each of the ten highway divisions of the State. These experiments are in progress at the present time so that by next year we shall be able to proceed with the actual building program.

Finally and on the same general subject of conducting the Government along businesslike lines, I want to say that I am frankly amused by the effort to make political capital out of the allegation that some \$20,000,000 of money appropriated last April by the Legislature for buildings has not yet been placed out at contract. Of course not! It would be exceedingly bad business to do it. Here is a piece of information for those who do not understand the application of business principles to the running of the State Government: The appropriations for the office of the State Architect for preparing plans are made for a period of one full year. To put all of this work out within a period of a few months would require instead of the above permanent force a large temporary force many times greater, and this temporary force would be running at full speed for a few months and then the State Architect's Bureau would go out of business altogether, everybody would be discharged and a new force would be re-assembled the following year. It should be apparent to any reasonable person that it would be impracticable and almost impossible to place under contract the total amount of construction appropriations within two or three months after the money becomes available. It would not only be uneconomical but it would not be for the best interests of the State. The actual bidding by contractors would be much higher than it is today and the competition would not be so keen.

Now as a matter of fact, here are the actual figures for this calendar year, and they are worth thinking about. The total amount of money available during this calendar year of 1920 for building construction amounts to fifty-five million dollars. Between January 1st and October 16th, there has been placed under contract \$33,000,000 worth of work. Practically the full balance of \$22,000,000 is either ready or nearly ready for letting according to the following definite program:

This month, October.....	\$9,000,000
November	\$7,300,000
December	\$6,000,000

Nobody who is unemployed or worried about the unemployment situation will be fooled by proposals such as have been made in this State in the past few days. For instance, during the past fiscal year the State spent 48 per cent. more actual cash, most of which went into wages, than it did the previous year. Today 65 per cent. more men are being employed than in the same month of 1929.

As I have remarked before the Department of Public Works is making a splendid record, and one which has the hearty approval of every business man of the State who has looked into its operations.

I am inclined to think that the time has come for the people of this State to be enthusiastic about their State Government instead of listening to suggestions which are unbusinesslike and criticisms of methods which stand up under the severest tests of good business practice. A proof of the pudding is in the eating. Today the State of New York is getting more for its money and in a much shorter length of time than ever before in its history. We are spending vast sums economically and efficiently. Personally I take pride in the splendid work which is being carried out by the hard working, able and intelligent Civil Service employees of our State Government. They are being paid lower salaries and wages than 99 per cent. of them could get on the outside, and they are working longer hours and turning out more work than if they were in private employ. Personally, I prefer to stand by that famous old slogan:

"Look upward and not down; look outward and not in; look forward and not back, and lend a hand."