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

Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension

File No. 421

1931 March 17

**New York City, NY -
National Probation Association**

FOR RELEASE WHEN DELIVERED

GUERNSEY T. CROSS,
Secretary to the Governor.

STATE OF NEW YORK
EXECUTIVE CHAMBER
ALBANY

13 Letter Pl
of Mr. Marbury.

ADDRESS OF GOVERNOR ROOSEVELT AT LUNCHEON OF
THE NATIONAL PROBATION ASSOCIATION,
HOTEL PENNSYLVANIA, NEW YORK CITY
TUESDAY, MARCH 17, 1931.

To no other institutions of learning in the world do so many postgraduates return for advanced instruction as to those "Colleges of crime" which a still unenlightened civilization has erected for a quite different purpose - our penal institutions, state and national. Prison statistics show that from 50% to 60% of those once sent to jail become habitual offenders and

eventually return to jail again. When we consider that this 50% represents only those persons who have been caught in the act and have been successfully prosecuted, and that we must add those who have escaped detection or have slipped through the many loopholes in our creaking and antiquated machinery of justice and prosecution, we are forced to admit that, as a protection to society, the whole prison system has been miserably inadequate and ineffective. We are only beginning to realize that the overwhelming majority of our convicted criminals return to society in a short time and become again our neighbors and active members of our community.

We have assumed that the horrors of prison life, that the stigma which society brands upon every prisoner, were forcing him through sheer terror into the path of virtue on his release. That is not true. We must always have prisons. There are always those who are criminal by instinct, who must be kept from

society and from injuring others because their minds are incapable of reformation, their wills too weak to keep them from lives of crime. These must be rearrested and rearrested and rearrested and rearrested. Our police records are full of criminal biographies of those who have spent, since they reached adolescence, far more time in jail than out of it. For such our prisons must be maintained. But we are finding from practical experience that the permanent reformation of the first offender is possible in far more instances than we realize. In the State of Massachusetts 80% of those who have been placed on probation instead of being sent to jail have made good. In our own State we have placed 250,000 offenders on probation in the last 24 years. We are now placing more than 25,000 yearly, as our courts and our judges have become convinced of the value of the probation system in reducing crime. We have, unfortunately, no figures showing how many of these were permanently reformed, but they have contributed in that time over twenty-three million

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dollars in fines, restitutions and support of dependents; and I have no doubt that the percentage of permanent reformatations closely approximates that of our sister state.

There are three ways of dealing with the first offender: We can send him to jail and keep him there until the expiration of his sentence; we can parole him before that sentence expires, or we can put him on probation after he is sentenced without his going to jail at all. 28

For the information of my radio audience let me make clear the difference between Probation and Parole which is often confused in the public mind. When a convicted prisoner, at the time of his sentence is released from custody but kept under the observation of a court officer without going to prison to serve any part of his sentence, he is said to be placed on Probation.

If he is actually sent to prison, however, but later found worthy of being released, again under the observation and

technically in the custody of a special officer, he is said to be placed on Parole.

In both cases his past record is looked into before action is taken and a failure to report to the proper officer, or a new offense against the law, sends him to prison to serve out his sentence with added penalties.

If the criminal's past history gives good reason to believe that he is not of the naturally criminal type, that he is capable of real reform and of becoming a useful citizen, there is no doubt that that probation, viewed from the selfish standpoint of protection to society alone, is the most efficient method that we have. And yet it is the least understood, the least developed, the least appreciated of all our efforts to rid society of the criminal; I am very glad not only to express my appreciation of the work which your association has done in the education of

the public, but, in addressing many thousands of people over the radio at the same time, to do what I can to awaken a greater public interest in probation throughout our country generally.

By segregation, by removing the first offender from the demoralizing society of the habitual criminal, by a study of the criminal himself, treating him as an individual rather than in the mass, we can do much to reduce that staggering percentage of second offenders. I am proud that this state, largely through the splendid recommendations of our legislative prison commission, has now embarked upon a ten year program aimed to make our prisons, so far as they can be made, no longer what I have called "Colleges of crime", but true institutions of reform.

By shortening the terms of those who show after their incarceration hopeful symptoms of a real repentance, we can add a still greater number of good citizens to our communities. And here I am again proud to report that our State last year has taken the lead in the development of a powerful, efficient and properly financed Commission of Parole.

By investigation of the past history of first offenders or of those who, in the opinion of the judge who tries the case, have been the victims, somewhat, of circumstances and who are not hopelessly criminal in their tendencies, and by the placing of such as are found worthy upon probation, I believe we shall empty our prisons still further, and while for some years we have had in this state a certain state supervision and support, it is my feeling that this State can go much further than it has and I am recommending to our Legislature this year that this be made a subject of expert study and that next year we inaugurate a real system of state probation as advanced and effective as our new parole system is already showing itself to be. 7

Economically, probation is to the financial advantage of the state. Statistics show that it costs, roughly, - \$18.00 a year to supervise each person released on probation. Under more watchful scrutiny and closer observation it may perhaps

eventually cost as much as \$25.00 for each person. Against that set the \$350.00 to \$500.00 a year it costs the state to keep a man in jail. It is my hope that in New York at least, and eventually in all our states, we shall be continually decreasing the number of our prison guards and wardens and increasing the number of our parole and probation officers. Probation officers, however, must be properly trained and competent persons. In this we have been lamentably weak. I am confident if the Legislature agrees to the investigation I have requested, that we shall find a practical way to secure really qualified probation officers, just as we are now insisting on really qualified parole officers. It is the State's affair and this whole matter of probation should be made the State's business and put under wide State control.

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I urge those interested in this problem of increasing crime, in this universal crowding of our jails and continual necessity of building more and more prisons, to support not only in this State, but in all states, the efforts of this association which has already without attracting anywhere near as much attention as it should, done so much to secure the establishment of probation in one form or another in 21 of our 48 states.

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At Dinner of National Probation Association, Hotel Pennsylvania,
New York City, March 17, 1931

Probation and Parole

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