
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”

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Facing Modern Conditions with Modern Remedies

P. 730

I know of no variety of Democratic Social Club more deserving of the hearty support and deep interest of all Democrats than a Young Men's Democratic Club, for the progressive and forward-looking principles for which we who would keep Democracy true to its ideals must constantly fight, are those which appeal most of all to our young and forward-looking citizens.

Progress is the keynote of youth. To hold back, to be afraid to venture, to let well enough alone, becomes an increasing temptation as the years go by. To the younger Democrats of the country we must look for that stimulation, for that constant injection of real enthusiasm, of real beliefs and of real progress into our party councils which are necessary if we are going to win the confidence of the people of this country. We must be wisely bold if we are going to solve the complex problems of today, so different from those of yesterday. New conditions, new complications, new and better understanding of the functions of government require new methods, new ideas for their solving; and above all, the undaunted courage of youth to put them into actual effect.

I am proud of the Democracy of this State because we have dared to face modern conditions with modern remedies, and by so doing have won in this State the confidence of a majority of the electorate. Under our great former Governor, Alfred E. Smith, our State has constantly moved forward until now in many ways we may claim to be the most really progressive State in the Union.

Take, for example, the way we have reorganized and modernized the whole machinery of our State government. In many other places and even in Washington, the clogged and creaking, cumbersome wheels of governmental machinery are geared to the pace of fifty years ago. Timorous councils have permitted no more than a constant patching; a new rivet here, an extra bolt there; interminable struts and props, and additional parts without co-relation to each other which have been added until the whole structure hesitates at every attempt to speed up in keeping with modern life.

In this State it is the proud achievement of the Democratic Party that we have dared tear the whole fabric apart and not only throw away the work and useless portions, but to redesign what is practically a new high-powered machine of State, vastly simpler, vastly more economical, vastly more in keeping with that modern business efficiency of which we as a Nation boast so proudly. Useless departments, needless employees, antiquated methods,—all have been thrown on the junk heap and when the day comes that our local governments are as efficient as our State government, we shall be indeed a model for all our sister commonwealths.

Look also on that other great achievement of the Democratic Party in this State. The realization of the greatly changed relationship between government and the people; the understanding of the real duties of the government

to be the servant and not the master of its citizens; to pension its aged; to provide compensation for its injured toilers; to construct great hospitals for its sick; to modernize its unspeakable prisons; to adopt the modern penal theory of parole and probation whenever possible; to develop its vast water power as a State resource for the primary benefit of the citizens of the State. To achieve all of these things the Democratic Party has labored tirelessly and, backed by the approval of our people, successfully as well.

In many of these matters our Republican friends for years have gestured without conviction and without enthusiasm during each political campaign,—mere gestures never followed by action. It was not until we Democrats were put in control of the Executive Department of the State that gestures became actions; that platforms become programs to be accomplished instead of honeyed words for voters.

We have not reached the ultimate goal in all these lines, but I feel that the people of this State realize how greatly we have progressed towards that goal, and that by continuing us in power, by adding to our power, by giving us legislative control as well, they will see these great reforms accomplished. And as in this State, so is it in this Nation—from the conservative and reactionary party now in power at Washington, from the timid councils of the aged, from the selfish grasping of the powerful few who control actions from behind the scenes, the people all over these United States are looking to our party to lead them into the broad road that leads to the real Democracy of which our forefathers dreamt, to the real government of the people, by the people and for the people, which Lincoln pled for, but which his party have since filed in the archives of their past, only to be dragged out and quoted for campaign speeches and Memorial Day addresses.

If we will meet and deserve this growing confidence we must look primarily to the young men of our country, to the young men of our party, and there is no more hopeful sign to those who have their party's belief firmly in their hearts, and not only their party's but their country's welfare ever on their minds, than to see as I see before me now, this gathering of young Democrats prepared seriously to discuss the great issues of the day.
