
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”

The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension

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**New York City, NY -
Advertising Federation of America**

Before the Advertising Federation of America, Hotel Pennsylvania,
New York City, June 15, 1931

Advertising Government

If I were starting in life over again I am inclined to think that I would go into the advertising business in preference to almost any other. This is because advertising has come to cover the whole range of human needs and also because it combines real imagination with a deep study of human psychology.

Furthermore, because it brings to the greatest number of people actual knowledge concerning useful things, it is essentially a form of education; and the progress of civilization depends upon education. Like all other educational programs, it can be abused or it can be made really useful to our existence. It has risen with ever-growing rapidly to the dignity of an art. It is constantly hewing new paths. Without advertising most of our comforts and our luxuries, by luxuries I mean the things which make life pleasant without being necessary to our existence, would be beyond the reach of our citizens.

It is a generally recognized fact that the general raising of the standards of modern civilization among all groups of people during the past half century would have been impossible without the spreading of the very knowledge of higher standards by means of advertising.

Your calling presents above all things an opportunity for individual genius an individual endeavor. It cannot be standardized and made the product of any one or two machines. Its tools are human brains and human brains cannot be monopolized or robotized. For this reason I hope the existence of many individual companies, of many smaller firms, will be continued in the future. Cooperation should be encouraged, but huge consolidation must be regarded as a real danger which will stifle individual effort and ingenuity.

But there is one field of human effort which today is insufficiently touched by the benefits of advertising. In spreading the doctrine of the necessity of advertising, which your profession has so thoroughly sold the American public you can help also to establish in the minds of people the importance of advertising the functions and the operations of the various branches of government. If ever any one thing needed advertising publicity it is government—national, state, county and city. Our citizens are often in abysmal ignorance as to how government functions or how it is intended to function.

The public problems which after all effect the lives of every citizen and every family in a very direct way, need to be brought before the public in just the same way that the manufacturer includes as a part of his advertising program the dissemination of knowledge of the operations of his plant. You keep people interested in various articles of manufacture by telling them how and where they are made and by explaining how this thing or that thing is better than articles of a similar nature. Help us in our efforts to advertise government in the same way; to interest people in the machinery and the product of government, and to show them what is good and what is bad in the completed result.

We are proud of our genius for advertising. We are proud of the results it has achieved. May your society and all similar societies thrive and prosper in the future.

You are a very integral part, individually and collectively, of the social and economic life of our nation. You can do much to raise our standards and at the same time you can do much by telling the truth. Yours is a great responsibility, for during these past two years we have come to understand the dangers of over-production, the dangers of making people buy things which they neither want nor need and the necessity of planning on a national scale to avoid a recurrence of our present troubles. As a component part of modern life yours is a great opportunity and I am very certain that you realize this opportunity and will do your share in the working out of our problems.

SPEECH OF GOVERNOR FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
BEFORE THE
ADVERTISEMENTS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
HOTEL PENNSYLVANIA

JUNE 15, 1931.

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