
**Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
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"Cost of State Government" Pt. 2**

Radio Address, Albany, June 16, 1932

THE COST OF STATE GOVERNMENT—DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE AND
MARKETS AND CIVIL SERVICE

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The cost of government, taxes, expenditures, and the balancing of budgets are widely discussed subjects today. The public official recognizes that the tax load is very heavy—heavier indeed than the country can safely carry under present economic conditions. He knows that the costs of Federal, state and local government have increased at a rapid rate during recent years. He also realizes that the cost of government has reached its present high level because the people have wanted, asked for, and demanded new services and the expansion of old ones.

Now that the payment of taxes causes real hardship, the people demand relief. They insist that budgets be reduced. What they fail to recognize is that, if we are to have lower taxes, we must either abandon some things which governments are doing or curtail services, or do both.

That the people of this State may know the facts I have analyzed department by department, and purpose by purpose, the cost of the State government. I want every one of you to know the purposes for which your State taxes are being levied, appropriated, and spent. These facts I propose to give to you through a series of radio addresses, the first of which was given one week ago. I have implicit confidence that when you know the facts you will decide correctly which services of government you wish abolished and which you desire to have reduced. Having formed opinions in these matters, you should tell your legislative representatives and your other officials what you wish to have them do. I shall welcome such advice.

Last week I presented the facts about the Executive Department. Tonight I shall discuss two departments, the first of which will be the

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS

Ten years ago, we bought from this department 20 specific services at a total cost of \$1,992,148. We are now buying 34 separate services at a cost of \$5,725,368.

Perhaps no branch of the State government works along as many lines intimately associated with the welfare of the people. Its services touch our lives at many points. Just look at some of the things it does. With relation to our food alone it supervises milk plants, enforces the Pure Food Law, guards against the adulteration of oysters, and sees to it that the eggs, grapes, apples and potatoes we buy are properly graded. In short, its responsibility is to safeguard the food supply of the State, beginning the process before the seeds of the future food crop are deposited in the ground, and continuing until the food is delivered on the doorstep of the consumer. To help the farmer in his work, it administers State funds for State, county and town fairs; it disseminates information concerning market conditions, inspects feeds for livestock, examines fertilizers, publishes statistics about food production, endeavors to obtain fair rates for the transportation of food products, supervises the licensing of dogs, registers stallions, looks after diseased bees, and works to control the corn-borer and the Japanese beetle, and to suppress bovine tuberculosis. The Department of Agriculture and Markets does not do these things just because it wants to. It does them because laws have been passed saying that it must do them.

If we start examining these many services and activities from the stand-

point of cost, whether the present cost or the increase in cost over the past 10 years, a few facts stand out quite clearly which will aid us in determining at just what point we could economize in this department, if we wish to economize. Of all the work done in this department, two items account for 86 per cent of its present cost and for exactly 100 per cent of the increase in today's cost over that of 10 years ago. Those two items are the expenditures for State, county and town fairs, and the cost of the work to eradicate bovine tuberculosis. Before looking at those two items more closely, we should grasp one fact which otherwise they might overshadow. It is that, with the exception of those two large items, the cost of this department today with 34 activities is almost precisely the same as it was 10 years ago with 20 things to do. To anyone familiar with ordinary trends in public finance, that is truly a remarkable showing. It has been accomplished by the constant shifting of emphasis from the less important projects to those of greater significance. If we were examining the affairs of a private business corporation, one of the first things for which we would search would be evidence of whether it was well or badly managed. If it had so arranged its affairs that it was now satisfying the demands of its customers for 32 products at the same cost that 10 years ago it satisfied their demands for 18 products, we would have a key to the character of its management.

Let me now consider two items which represent the bulk of its cost and the whole of this 10-year increase in cost.

It has been the policy of the State for many years to give State aid to county and town affairs. When the practice started, the theory was to encourage farmers to raise and produce fine animals and superior products by awarding premiums. For years prior to 1929, the law required the State to appropriate \$250,000 annually. In 1928 the law was amended to require after that year the appropriation of \$375,000 annually. The question to be considered in relation to this matter is: Shall we repeal the 1928 amendment and return to the amount of aid granted prior thereto? Or, going further, should we even continue to give the amount of aid formerly granted?

That brings up the question of whether such financial aid from the State is any longer necessary to aid county and town fair associations. The policy was adopted before the era of automobiles and good roads. Farmers then could travel only limited distances. If agricultural expositions were to reach most of the farmers in the State, there had to be quite a number of them, perhaps one or more in each county. Now the radius of travel is enlarged. Some believe that this form of State aid may now be abandoned. Without suggesting what the decision of the people and their representatives should be, I only point out that this is one item in the market basket which they well may consider.

Concerning the State Fair at Syracuse, it never has been the policy that it be self-sustaining. In addition to its own revenues, it has received about \$200,000 a year from the State. Whether the State should require the State Fair to be self-sustaining is a question worth considering.

The cost of the work to eradicate tuberculosis in cattle is by far the largest single item of the expense of this department. In 1931 it was \$4,395,000 as compared with \$796,000 10 years ago. It plainly is worth some attention. Do we want to continue buying this much tuberculosis eradication? What are the facts?

The real drive to eradicate bovine tuberculosis was started in 1918 when the state and Federal governments joined hands in a campaign of suppression. Over the past 13 years, all of western New York, the Finger Lakes region, the Champlain Valley, Long Island and the Hudson Valley, with the exception of Orange and Dutchess counties, have virtually been freed of tubercular cows. The problem of suppression which remains is now confined to about 15 counties. The expansion of this project is worth examining in even greater detail. Whereas 4,000 herds of cattle had been

placed under supervision in 1921, the number had increased to 109,000 in 1931. Supervision of a herd means that the animals therein are subjected from time to time to the tuberculin test. Those which are freed of infection are certified for the production of milk. Those infected are slaughtered and their owners indemnified. The great bulk of the cost of this project is to pay these indemnities to the owners.

The objective in this work is the accrediting of herds as a whole; that is, the certification that the herd has been tested a sufficient number of times to demonstrate that no tuberculous animals remain. Ten years ago the number of accredited herds was 685. At the end of 1931 the number had increased to 75,500. The work of eradicating tuberculosis is about two-thirds done.

I shall now consider for a moment, the

DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL SERVICE

Although the work of this department is of the greatest importance, it is the least expensive branch of the State government. Thus far, it has never spent in one year more than \$203,000. As compared with 1922, its cost has more than doubled. The increase, however, is due entirely to an increase in the volume of work to be performed. The commission holds examinations. In 1931, nearly four times as many people tried Civil Service examinations as competed in 1922. Each paper had to be examined and read. Obviously, examination costs increased. The efficiency of the commission is manifest when I tell you that the cost per applicant has been reduced by more than one-third.

In addition to holding examinations, the commission administers the Civil Service Law. The cost of doing that just naturally increases as the number of Civil Service employees multiplies. In this period, that number increased 70 per cent, and a slight increase in cost resulted.

We have now examined the cost of three departments of the State government. I think you must see, as I do, the very definite problems confronting us—problems with respect to which you taxpayers must reach decisions. Do you wish less government? Are these departments rendering services which you do not wish to buy, or more services than you wish to pay for? If your answer is "yes," which services do you wish curtailed and which do you wish to have abolished? That is the type of question to be answered.

Next week we will examine another department. In the meantime, all of the facts relating to the departments of Agriculture and Markets and Civil Service can be obtained from the station to which you are listening, or by writing me. I do hope that you will obtain this material and that you will discuss it with your friends and in the organizations to which you belong.
