
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”

The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

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1932 October 19

Wheeling, WV - Campaign Address

ADDRESS OF GOVERNOR FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
Wheeling, West Virginia
October 19, 1932

We are now in the closing stages of no ordinary campaign. And I come to the great State of West Virginia to speak to you who have reason to know the conditions which face our citizens and to speak to you frankly and in a straightforward manner concerning the reasons which have brought these conditions about, and the steps that we must take to effect their cure. We are not faced merely with a choice of a change of administration. We have now to make a choice between a nation with hope for economic order and individual prosperity on the one hand, or a country allowed to drift under the present temporizing type of administrative leadership.

You have had placed before you the spectre of fear by the Republican candidate, and the Republican speakers. You have been told that things might have been worse, and will be worse if I am elected to office. But I say to you, "Yes, things might have been worse; indeed we might all of us have been destroyed. But on the other hand remember that things might have been better, should have been better, and will begin to get better with a change of administration on the Fourth of March."

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the time the speech was made. Underlining indicates words extemporaneously added to the previously prepared reading copy text. Words in parentheses are words that were omitted when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

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You have had placed before you the specter of fear by the Republican candidate, and the Republican speakers. You have been told that things might have been worse, and will be worse if I am elected to office. But I say to you, "Yes, things might have been worse; indeed we might all of us have been destroyed. But on the other hand remember that things might have been better, should have been better, and will begin to get better with a change of administration on the Fourth of March."

To attempt to instill panic into the electorate at a time when we must all have courage and a firm belief that the American characteristic of finding answers to problems will bring us back on the upward trail, is a method of campaigning which does little credit to leaders still at this time entrusted with the welfare of the United States.

We may well ask the question: "Are you afraid of a change?" Certainly in the light of three years of almost complete inaction by Republican leadership -- three years in which little constructive action of any kind was taken -- would almost be sufficient to have us give the answer, "No, we are not afraid of a change."

But further than that, I would remind you of two very interesting facts. First, things might have been worse if it had not been for the establishment in the Wilson Administration of what we call the Federal Reserve System. Had there been no Federal Reserve System, the collapse would have indeed been complete. And that system was the product of a Democrat -- Carter Glass -- and that system became law only after the most bitter opposition from the Republican leaders -- now Mr. Hoover's associates.

How wise were those Democrats who fought for that measure! To them today should go most of the credit when we

say that things might have been worse. And, may I add, how much better off would our nation be today if the original purposes and principles of that System had been followed by Republican Presidents.

And secondly, it has been said that the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, which, by the way, is as much a Democratic measure as a Republican measure -- for it was passed in the spirit of bi-partisan cooperation in the Congress of the United States -- is another thing which has saved the financial structure of the country. But again, this measure was not due to the creative genius of Republican leadership, for it was during the period of the Democratic administration that there was established the War Finance Corporation, and it is essentially the principles of that War Finance Corporation which have been reestablished at this new period of crisis.

Thus we may fairly say that the two things which have saved things from being worse -- the Federal Reserve System and the Reconstruction Finance Corporation -- are both the result of the constructive foresight of the Democratic Party and its leaders.

And just for the sake of the record -- to get it straight for future historials -- let me make this clear: I have not at its inception or at any time since, criticized

or objected to the establishment of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation any more than I have the Federal Reserve System. The point is that it is not that the Republican Administration established that agency -- it is how it used that agency. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation has performed many excellent services in extending credit to banks and other institutions, but it is the fact, which I established last Spring, and which the record of the subsequent months has disclosed, that I was right in saying that only a small portion of the actual credits advanced by the Reconstruction Finance Corporation has trickled down -- seeped through -- to the individual, to the worker and the farmer and the man without a job -- or, for that matter, to the small business man himself.

As in the case of the Federal Reserve System, the fundamental purposes and principles of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation have not been carried out by the present administration in Washington.

I believe that we are ready for a change -- a change which will put into practice the lessons which we have had to learn through our trials and troubles. The lesson of interdependence -- the simple fact that no part of the country is safe while any part is in want, that the worker is less likely to have a job whenever the farmer cannot get a decent price

for his crop, that the bank is not safe whenever irresponsible financiers sell pyramided or watered securities. These are a few of the lessons that call for new leadership. As I have said before, this nation cannot endure "half boom and half broke". The Hoover Administration forgot these facts; encouraged speculators; strangled foreign markets by indefensible tariffs, and accomplished nothing for agricultural communities, depressed already to the lowest point in modern history.

I have studied these problems. I have made a trip through every section of the United States in order to familiarize myself by a face to face and intimate contact with the varying problems of each community and section.

I have proposed a series of plans dealing with this tremendous group of problems. I have suggested a program for the rehabilitation of agriculture -- a program for placing the great transportation system of railroads on their feet and operating them so as to assure the financial obligations of the greater number of these carriers whose holders represent every group in the community.

I have outlined my purpose to curb the financial excesses and exploitations which in the last twelve years have thrown to waste so much of the hard-earned savings of

our citizens. I have advanced a definite program for the fair control of public utility and power service. I have advocated a lowering of tariffs by negotiation with foreign countries. But I have not advocated, and I will never advocate a tariff policy which will withdraw protection from American workers against those countries which employ cheap labor or who operate under a standard of living which is lower than that of our own great laboring groups. You have been told by my opponent that the Democratic tariff policy will result in the further loss of American trade with foreign countries. But I call to your attention that we now have a strangulation of that very trade under the tariff system of unsystematic and unscientific tariff walls set up by the log-rolling that created the Grundy tariff.

The Democratic program is practical and I pledge to you that it will be carried out with speed and dispatch.

Tonight in Pittsburgh I shall outline another cause which under Republican leadership has had a major effect upon our present condition and I shall once more explain a workable program to remedy that situation. I shall continue in this campaign to be constructive and to state my position on the great issues which face our government. My first thought is that government exists for individual men and women, and that

its first objective is to promote their happiness and well-being. It must carry out economic reforms, not solely for the sake of the railroads or for agriculture, or for banks or for industry, but for the people who work and use those railroads, for the farmers, and their families, for the bank depositors, for consumers and for workers. Unless they prosper the nation falters. I seek a sound administration but I seek a humane administration. To me government is not a machine driven by technicians, but a human, sympathetic and responsive institution. I refuse to believe that the people of the nation can be made to fear false bogies. The choice is deeper than that. It is indeed one between restored order and dangerous drift, between constructive planning and the forces of mismanagement.

If this nation wants to know what is wrong with its national government, I will give them the answer in one word: That word is "mismanagement".

I am on the side of courage, with a united and a liberal purpose, with a program worthy of the task before us. I ask your support that America may have a chance to go forward. Of the result I have no fear.

FOR RELEASE WHEN DELIVERED - M. H. McIntyre,
Press Representative.

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SPEECH OF HONORABLE FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
WHEELING, WEST VIRGINIA
October 19th, 1932.

We are now in the closing stages of no ordinary campaign. And I come to the great State of West Virginia to speak to you who have reason to know the conditions which face our citizens and to speak to you frankly and in a straight forward manner concerning the reasons which have brought these conditions about, and the steps that we must take to effect their cure. We are not faced merely with a choice of a change of administration. We have now to make a choice between a nation with hope for economic order and individual prosperity on the one hand, or a country allowed to drift under the present temporizing type of administrative leadership.

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We may well ask the question: "Are you afraid of a change?" Certainly in the light of three years of almost complete inaction by Republican leadership -- three years in which little constructive action of any kind was taken, - would almost be sufficient to have us give the answer "No, we are not afraid of a change."

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How wise were those Democrats who fought for that measure! To them today should go most of the credit when we say that things might have been worse.

And, may I add, how much better off would our nation be today if the original purposes and principles of that System had been followed by Republican Presidents.

And secondly, it has been said that the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, which, by the way, is as much a Democratic measure as a Republican measure -- for it was passed in the spirit of bi-partisan co-operation in the Congress of the United States -- is another thing which has saved the financial structure of the country. But again, this measure was not due to the creative genius of Republican leadership, for it was during the period of the Democratic administration that there was established the War Finance Corporation, and it is essentially the principles of that War Finance Corporation which have been reestablished at this new period of crisis.

Thus we may fairly say that the two things which have saved things from being worse -- the Federal Reserve System and the Reconstruction Finance Corporation -- are both the result of the constructive foresight of the Democratic Party and its leaders.

And just for the sake of the record -- to get it straight for future historians, let me make this clear: I have not at its inception or at any time since, criticized or objected to the establishment of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation any more than I have the Federal Reserve System. The point is that it is not that the Republican

Administration established that agency -- it is how it used that agency. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation has performed many excellent services in extending credit to banks and other institutions, but it is the fact, which I established last Spring, and which the record of the subsequent months has disclosed that I was right in saying that only a small portion of the actual credits advanced by the Reconstruction Finance Corporation has trickled down -- seeped through -- to the individual, to the worker and the farmer and the man without a job -- or, for that matter, to the small business man himself.

As in the case of the Federal Reserve System, the fundamental purposes and principles of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation have not been carried out by the present administration in Washington.

I believe that we are ready for a change -- a change which will put into practice the lessons which we have had to learn through our trials and troubles. The lesson of inter-dependence -- the simple fact that no part of the country is safe while any part is in want, that the worker is less likely to have a job whenever the farmer cannot get a decent price for his crop, that the bank is not safe whenever irresponsible financiers sell pyramided or watered securities. These are a few of the lessons that call for new leadership.

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I have outlined my purpose to curb the financial excesses and exploitations which in the last twelve years have thrown to waste so much of the hard earned savings of our citizens. I have advanced a definite program for the fair control of public utility and power service. I have advocated a lowering of tariffs by negotiation with foreign countries. But I have not advocated, and I will

never advocate a tariff policy which will withdraw ~~the~~ protection from American workers against those countries which employ cheap labor or who operate under a standard of living which is lower than that of our own great laboring groups. You have been told by my opponent that the Democratic tariff policy will result in the further loss of American trade with foreign countries. But I call to your attention that we now have a strangulation of that very trade under the tariff system of unsystematic and unscientific tariff walls set up by the log rolling that created the Grundy tariff .

The Democratic program is practical and I pledge to you that it will be carried out with speed and dispatch.

Tonight in Pittsburgh I shall outline another cause which under Republican leadership has had a major effect upon our present condition and I shall once more explain a workable program to remedy that situation. I shall continue in this campaign to be constructive and to state my position on the great issues which face our government. My first thought is that government exists for individual men and women, and that its first objective is to promote their happiness and well being. It must carry out economic reforms, not solely for the sake of the railroads or for agriculture, or for banks or for industry, but for the people who work and use those railroads, for

the farmers, and their families, for the bank depositors, for consumers and for workers. Unless they prosper the nation falters. I seek a sound administration but I seek a humane administration. To me government is not a machine driven by technicians, but a human, sympathetic and responsive institution. I refuse to believe that the people of the Nation can be made to fear false bogies. The choice is deeper than that. It is indeed one between restored order and dangerous drift, between constructive planning and the forces of mismanagement.

If this nation wants to know what is wrong with its national government, I will give them the answer in one word: That word is "mismanagement".

I am on the side of courage, with a united and a liberal purpose, with a program worthy of the task before us. I ask your support that America may have a chance to go forward. Of the result I have no fear.

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Speech. Wheeling, W.Va. Oct.19,1932

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Thus we may fairly say that the two things which have saved things from being worse--the Federal Reserve System and the R.F.C.--are both the result of the constructive foresight of the Democratic party and its leaders!

And just for the sake of the record--to get it straight for future historians, let me make this clear: I have not at its inception or at any time since, criticized or objected to the establishment of the RFC any more than I have the Federal Reserve System. The point is that it is not that the Republican Administration established that agency--it is how it used that agency. The RFC has performed many excellent services in extending credit to banks and other institutions, but it is the fact, which I established last Spring, and which the record of the subsequent months has disclosed that I was right in saying that only a small portion of the actual credits advanced by the RFC has trickled down--seeped through--to the individual, to the worker and the farmer and the man without a job--or, for that matter, to the small business man himself.

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