
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
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Terre Haute, IN –
Informal Extemporaneous remarks

INFORMAL EXTEMPORANEOUS REMARKS OF GOVERNOR ROOSEVELT
From the Back Platform of his Special Train
Terre Haute, Indiana, October 20, 1932

Mr. Mayor, and my friends of Terre Haute:

I am very glad to come back here, and I am very much touched by this splendid reception that you are giving me to-night. I came through here only a few weeks ago, and I am sorry to say that at that time it was also after dark. The reason I say that is because on these trips through the United States clear out to the Pacific Coast and back again, I have been doing them not so much with the idea of making political speeches, as I have with the idea of trying to learn at first hand the conditions and the needs of every part of the United States. (Applause)

And I am particularly sorry that I cannot renew my acquaintance with this part of Indiana. Here on the platform with me are two good people who way back in 1920 campaigned through this part of the State with me over what was then very dusty roads, but I will say this: that in 1920 at the close of the Wilson Administration most of the coal mines in this part of the State were in operation; most of the farmers in this part of the State were able to pay their taxes and keep their farms, and I am afraid if I came back now in the daytime and traveled through this part of the State I would see a different story.

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This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the time the speech was made. Underlining indicates speech was 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.

I am very glad to come back here, and I am very much touched by this splendid reception that you are giving me to-night. I come through here only a few weeks ago, and I am sorry to say that at that time it was also after dark. The reason I say that is because on these trips through the United States I clear out to the Pacific Coast and back again, I have been doing them not so much with the idea of making political speeches as I have with the idea of trying to learn at first hand the conditions and the needs of every part of the United States.

(Applause)

And I am particularly sorry that I cannot renew my acquaintance with this part of Indiana. Here on the platform with me are two good people who went back in 1920 campaigning through this part of the State with me over what was then very dusty roads, but I will say this: that in 1920 at the close of the Wilson Administration most of the coal mines in this part of the State were in operation; most of the farmers in this part of the State were able to pay their taxes and keep their farms, and I am afraid if I come back now in the daytime and traveled through this part of the State I would see a different story.

Yesterday I had a very wonderful reception going down the Ohio River south of Pittsburgh, partly in Pennsylvania, partly in West Virginia and partly in Eastern Ohio, and it made my heart sad to see the factory chimneys that were idle with no smoke coming out of them; to see the miners that were dependent in large part on charity; to see the farmers of that part of the Nation who are getting as low as nine, ten and eleven cents a bushel for their corn. And I am afraid that this part of the country isn't very much better off than that. Now, my friends, that is the dark side of the picture.

We hear a good deal of talk in these days about panics in case the Democratic candidates are elected next November. We are told that things might have been worse. Well, I suppose they might have been worse, but, on the other hand, my friends, they might have been a whole lot better. (Applause)

And more than that, I believe that by restoring old-fashioned common sense economics in our national government, things are going to get better after the fourth of March next. (Applause)

I feel very confident that a new administration can do much to bring back the level of farm prices. I believe that a new administration can do much, for example, for the coal industry, and I am reminded that way back in the year 1914 I

took part, in the Summer of that year, in a conference in the White House called by Woodrow Wilson -- a conference that sought to stabilize the coal industry, the bituminous coal industry in every part of the United States.

That was a Democratic proposal, and it was only cut short by the outbreak of the World War a month later. And so, my friends, I believe that the national government using common sense can do much to stabilize the coal industry. I am not going to appoint commissions and commissions and commissions (laughter), after I go to Washington, but I am going to try to get the coal industry together, and with their help get it stabilized, or at least make a definite effort to do that; in other words, I am for action, and not just plain talk.

(Applause)

Some voice down here thinks that there is one other subject just as important as coal and agriculture, and that's beer. (Applause) Well, if you people were listening in last night when I was talking in the ball park in Pittsburgh, you would have heard me say this: The Democratic platform definitely and concretely proposes the immediate -- get the word -- the immediate modification of the present Volstead law. (Applause)

Now, that means this, in words of one syllable: When the Congress does that -- and I hope it will as quickly as

possible -- when the Congress does that, then every State in the Union will have restored to it the right to authorize beer within the legal percentage of alcohol. That is clear.

Now, here is the other side of it. It is believed that when the Congress does legalize beer, and many States allow the sale of beer without a return of the saloon -- that when that time comes the Federal government, from those sales, will be able to collect revenue running into several hundred million dollars a year, and thus go a long way towards balancing the budget and preventing an increase in your taxes and mine. (Applause)

Well, there it is. And I believe that the people this Fall have made up their minds not merely to change administrations, but to put into the control of government liberal-minded people, progressive people, who are not willing to go along with economy promises, but who will seek honestly to restore the government of the United States to the people to whom it belongs. That being so, my friends, I want to say just a word for two old friends of mine in this State. I have known Paul McNutt for a great many years (applause). And I want to tell you that believing as I do that there should be a much closer cooperation between Washington and the various State capitals, I hope after the 4th of March that I will be

able to call up Indianapolis on the telephone and say, "Hello, Paul; how are things going on?" (Applause)

And then, another old friend of mine, Fred Van ---- (inaudible) (applause). I want him down in Washington on the 4th of March next, because I want Indiana represented by at least one Democratic Senator. (Applause)

One of my old friends in this district, the future Congresswoman, Mrs. ---- (inaudible). (Applause) And I hope that she too will be down there in the next Congress to help me with the running of the government of this country.

I do hope the next time, not only that I will be able to come through in daylight, but that the conditions of agriculture and of mining and of manufacturing will be a lot better than they are today. I pledge you my help towards that end. Many thanks. (Applause)