
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
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Knoxville, TN - Extemporaneous remarks

INFORMAL EXTEMPORANEOUS REMARKS OF GOVERNOR ROOSEVELT
From the Back Platform of his Special Train
Knoxville, Tennessee, October 22, 1932, 9.00 P.M.

My friends of Tennessee:

I am here in fulfillment of a promise that I made to the citizens of Knoxville nearly a year ago. (Prolonged applause) Since that time much water has passed over the dam.

I want to bear tribute to the organized Democracy of Tennessee, and especially to one man in our organized Democracy. Away back last Spring, when some of my friends were good enough to be going around this country in search of Delegates to the National Convention, the Democrats of Tennessee very properly and very rightfully in convention assembled, presented the name of that great American citizen -- that great citizen of Tennessee, Senator McGullough (?). (Applause) And then there came an act of self-denial and of generosity on his part that has been seldom equalled in history. As you know, he told the convention that he would rather himself forego the honor of having the delegation be instructed for him, and would prefer the delegate instructed for New York. (Applause)

Then came the convention itself. As you know, that convention at all times felt able to count on the loyalty and

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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 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.

I am here in fulfillment of a promise that I made to the citizens of Knoxville nearly a year ago. (Prolonged applause) Since that time much water has passed over the dam. I want to bear tribute to the organized Democracy of Tennessee, and especially to one man in our organized Democracy. Away back last Spring, when some of my friends were good enough to be going around this country in search of delegates to the National Convention, the Democrats of Tennessee very properly and very rightly in convention assembled, presented the name of that great American citizen -- that great citizen of Tennessee, Senator McQuinn (Applause). And then there came an act of self-denial and of generosity on his part that has been seldom equalled in history. As you know, he told the convention that he would not then himself forego the honor of having the delegation be instructed for him, and would prefer the delegate instructed for New York. (Applause)

Then came the convention itself. As you know, that convention at all times felt able to count on the loyalty and

devotion and constant support of the organized Democracy of Tennessee. (Applause)

So, my friends, we have got down to this campaign, and knowing what I know of the spirit of this State, I am very confident that the Democrats of this State, with the aid, incidentally, of thousands upon thousands of our Republican brethren. (At this point, the speaker was drowned out by applause.) You know, as a matter of fact, my appeal in this election has been not only to Democrats, but to Americans -- men and women of all parties. (Applause) I have made it clear that our fight is not with the thousands and even millions of fine men and women who have made up in the past the rank and file of the Republican party. Our contest has been directed against the present leadership of that party, (applause) -- a leadership which has threatened to bankrupt the United States. (Applause)

May I say that in the coming year, with the utmost confidence of a great Democratic victory on November 8th in this State, I am fulfilling only half of the pledge that I gave months ago to Tennessee. (Applause) It isn't enough to pass through Tennessee after dark -- and I am coming back. (Prolonged applause, loud cheering)

You in this State -- and along the course of a great

river -- a part of which runs into our neighborhood of Alabama -- you have here, in this section of the Union, a very great heritage that belongs to the people of the United States. I refer to the water power of the Tennessee River. (Applause)

I have spoken, as you know, on many occasions that as a belief, as a matter of sound national public policy, these great water power rights which are owned by the Nation shall and must be developed by the Nation, and remain forever in the possession of the people of the United States. (Prolonged applause) I have conceived it to be sound public policy that we should take advantage of the gift of nature to us as a people, in each of the four sections of the United States -- there are great water powers! One, in the Northeastern quarter -- the St. Lawrence River; another in the Northwestern quarter -- the Columbia River; another in the Southwestern quarter -- the Colorado River. And finally, and by no means least, this great water power in the Southeastern section -- the Tennessee River! (Prolonged applause) In the protection of the average citizen in his home -- the home owner -- the farmer, and the small business man who uses the growing power of electricity -- for them it is incumbent upon us to develop, as a government, these four great water powers, to act, if you like, as a "yardstick" to determine the proper amount of electric light rates. (Applause)

And so, I am coming back, because I believe that you can find out a lot more by seeing things at first hand than you can by reading a lot of dry reports. (Applause)

I hope sometime between now and the 4th of March, to motor over from Warm Springs -- which is my second home over in the State of Georgia, (prolonged applause) -- to see Muscle Shoals. I want to come up the river, and I want to see Gold Creek, so probably you will see me very soon again. (Prolonged applause)

Also, I am very much interested in a portion of the work -- a special portion of the work -- that is conducted at the University of Tennessee.

In my State, Cornell University corresponds to your University of Tennessee. I want to come here and find out what your College of Agriculture has been doing. I want to find out what your experiment stations have been doing. And I want to find out what the Home Economics work for the girls has been. It is to me of the greatest consequence that we should try throughout these United States to learn the meaning of that word, "interdependence". In other words, that no part of the country can be successful and prosperous unless every other part of the country is prosperous.

And so, in these coming years, my friends, I am

confident that under the leadership of wise Government in Washington and the State Capitals, in the cities and in the counties of the Union, we shall be able to work out a coordinated system by which the farmer on the land and the industrialist in the city will understand better than they do now their interdependence.

We know perfectly well that the factory worker can not continue to hold his job unless the agricultural portion of our population have got the buying power to buy the products of the factory. (Applause)

And so I have spoken of the "Forgotten Man" -- and there are lots of them -- and "forgotten girls" as well. (Applause) I have spoken of the "New Deal" -- the New Deal based on a greater social justice, and at the same time, a New Deal which will be absolutely 100% in accordance with our American Constitutional ideals. Now, my friends, we haven't very much time, so in closing will you let me express to you once more my great satisfaction at your coming out here tonight to say "howdy" to me. (Prolonged applause)

Before we pull out, may I introduce to you my better half, who is beside me on the platform here. (Applause) Also, my "little boy" Jimmie! (Applause) He is taller than his old man, and has less hair on his head. (Applause, laughter)

You all know my very, very old friend, Governor McMillan, who has done so much for me in the past. (Applause)

The evening wouldn't be complete unless I were to introduce to you people a total stranger -- a man that you have never seen before in your life -- our old Uncle Bob Smith. (Laughter, prolonged applause)