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**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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**1932 October 27**

**Albany, NY - Radio Greeting to the Greek  
Democratic Association of New York**

Tribute to Americans of Greek origin, radio greeting to the  
American-Greek Democratic Association of New York, Albany,  
October 27, 1932

I am glad to greet my friends of the American-Greek Democratic Association and I wish much that I could be with you tonight. As you probably know, I have been in conference in Albany all day in regard to the serious problem of providing relief for the unemployed during the coming winter. It is because I have had so many close connections with the Greek Nation that I am particularly sorry I cannot meet you Americans who are of Greek origin.

A century ago when the Greek people were waging their successful struggle for independence, my grandfather and my great-great-uncle were instrumental in causing the building of a frigate, presented to Greece by the friends of Greek independence in America. I was brought up on the family tradition of that gesture of friendship.

Eighteen years ago it was my privilege when I was in the Navy Department to take part in the negotiations which resulted in the purchase by Greece of two American battleships—an historic incident which was brought about by the need of Greece to protect the independence which she had so long enjoyed.

My felicitations to you. I am happy that so many Americans of Greek origin are showing so clearly their definite determination to work for the success of the Democratic ticket on November 8.

It ceases to be an effective instrument of government. It is not better for such a political party—and certainly better for the State—that it should be relegated to the role of the critic and that the opposing political party should assume the reins of government. This condition appears to have arrived in America.

That, my friends, is the sober conclusion of a cautious public man, not long ago President of the United States, Calvin Coolidge. With every word of it I heartily agree.

There are more reasons than that for a change this year. There are ten million or more reasons embodied in the blighted hopes of the ten million or more of the unemployed. No doubt seeking to extend the campaign of fear so foolishly and so wickedly put in motion, the present Republican leader, the President, the other night referred to the fact that if the policies he had so valiantly developed be not continued "the grass would grow on the streets of the cities." Well, the grass has little chance to grow in the streets of our cities now. It would be trampled into the ground by the men who wander these streets in search of employment.

You have heard in this very city the President's exhortation that to abandon or to change one letter or one word of his policies would mean the destruction of this great Republic. But what do those policies boil down to when analyzed by the average citizen?

First, the President takes enormous credit for huge Federal loans to prevent the industrial and banking situation from getting worse. Well and good. But that is a negative credit and does nothing positive to make things better.

Then, he would exhort employers who have no markets for their wares to start their factories, to employ more labor, and thereby to increase production. I ask the simple questions, What good is that if the purchasing power of the people to buy these products is not increased? And, especially I point to the fact that his program in no shape, manner or form calls for a restoration of the prices of farm products in order that the half of our population which lives directly or indirectly by farming may save the wherewithal to buy the factory products.

Next he brings out a brand new suggestion. He would have us sit like Micawber and wait for something to turn up. He hints that some great invention, hidden away as he puts it in the "lockers of science" may appear overnight and put ten million people to work.

This is no new fantasy. Many people have been saying this for a long time. They hope for some new equivalent of the automobile or electric power to pop out around the corner like magic.

American system of government,—need of a new interpretation by a change in political parties, before the Republican-for-Roosevelt League, New York City, Metropolitan Opera House, November 3, 1932

I am here tonight at the invitation of a group of public-minded citizens, who have placed principle above party. These citizens whose party affiliation has been Republican have publicly declared that they consider that a change in the administration of this government is necessary—that it is, in fact, indispensable to a restoration to normal conditions. On such an occasion it is fitting to speak as a citizen rather than as a partisan.

In this campaign, indeed, the personal view I have had of the conditions of need and distress in every part of the Union has brought home to me the deep conviction that in this crisis the national and not the partisan objective must prevail.

To begin with, let me propose a text which, in my opinion, expresses a sentiment that is widely held this year. It is presented so clearly, so distinctly and so admirably that I would not change a word of it even though it was spoken 12 years ago. Coming from a great figure in our national life it deserves serious consideration, and coming from a great Republican it deserves particular consideration from Republicans:

For one reason or another even a wisely led political party, given a long enough tenure of office, finally fails to express any longer the will of the people, and when it does so fail to express the will of the people it ceases to be an effective instrument of government. It is far better for such a political party—and certainly better for the State—that it should be relegated to the role of the critic and that the opposing political party should assume the reins of government. This condition appears to have arrived in America.

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The President asks that "the American government continue to be conducted in this faith and in this hope." I assert that the American government cannot be conducted on the speculation of some new invention which has not yet been made.

Faith and hope are splendid things but the hunger and suffering of millions of unemployed men are too insistent to justify a governmental policy that pins its faith on such a mere remote possibility. This expression is another example of the old gambling spirit of the speculative boom that has so sorely mismanaged the country for the past few years. It is the attitude of mind that guessed in 1929 that we might escape the consequences of over-speculation. It is the gamble with fate that led to the foreign loans abroad. It is the gamble with fate that led the administration to guess in one budget after another that business would suddenly improve, and provide by that gamble the taxable means to meet an extravagant outlay of expenditure. It is this kind of government by guess and by gamble that the people of this country have resolved to put out of power. I rejoice that Republicans everywhere have decided to lay aside party, to put their shoulders to the wheel to achieve recovery, not by magic or gambling, but by hard common sense and above all by serious and resolute action.

To condense the sum of all of the arguments of the President for his re-election into two sentences is not hard.

He asks a vote of confidence because he says that but for him the situation would have been worse. He asks the Nation to wait and hope for some miracle of invention to make things better.

As you who have followed the nation-wide campaign which I have conducted for the past three months will fully appreciate, both my political philosophy and my chart of action for the country's future differ widely from those of President Hoover.

Throughout this campaign in every State—and I have been in 37 of them—I have insisted upon the theme that there is a definite and distinct difference between his policies and mine. I have repeated that this program entrusted to me is essentially a national program. Its watchword is interdependence of all groups, of all sections, of all economic interests. Such a program permits of no yielding to sectional or immediate selfish special interests such as those represented by the clients and backers of Mr. Grundy. It represents a recognition of the fact that a neglected group, a submerged group, be it agriculture, labor, or finance or industry, will prevent the recovery of the entire Nation. It is not in ignoring the fact that there are different interests and different parts of the country, and different people with different needs that we build a nation, it is in recognizing them, looking at them, seeing them, consulting them, helping them, always with a view to the larger interests—the interest of the Nation.

Now the President took occasion in this city to speak of the American system and then proceeded to demonstrate that he does not know what the American system really means.

The American system is not the special, exclusive, vested, patented possession of the Republican Party or, for that matter, of the Democratic Party. The rank and file of both great parties have deep-seated devotion to the essentials of that system. The rank and file of Democrats believe in patriotism and loyalty to that system which exists among the rank and file of the Republican Party. And the rank and file of the Republican Party feel the same way about the rank and file of the Democratic Party. In our century and a half of national life we have been ruled by Democrats and Republicans. We have had our ups and downs under both parties.

Therefore, the rank and file of the voters of both parties agree with me today that the most extraordinary, the most amazing, and I believe the most un-American episode of this entire campaign of 1932 is the eleventh hour effort of the President to arrogate to himself and his handful of associates in Washington the right to claim an exclusive interpretation of and ownership in the American system of government. The American system is the common heritage and common possession of all Americans. Five days from today these Americans by overwhelming vote intend to deny and reject the exclusive patent sought by the President and his friends.

The interpretation which you give and I give to the American system of government certainly does not mean the combination of foreign and domestic gambling that the present leadership of the Republican Party has sponsored. It does not mean inviting on one hand the trade of other countries and on the other declaring economic war against them. This is not an American system, as I understand the American system. You do not spell out America by combining the economics of John Law and his Mississippi Bubble with those of Mr. Grundy and his campaign contributors.

The American system, the American government itself, was founded on the principle that many men from many states with many economic views and many economic interests might, through the medium of a national government, build for national harmony, national unity and interdependent well-being. This is the American system. And if the President will turn from his made-to-order statistics, which he so sadly misrepresents and misinterprets, if he will turn his eyes from his so-called "backward and crippled countries" and turn to the great and stricken markets of Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois and the other agricultural states, if he will cease his Utopian dreaming of inventions hidden in the "locker of science" that are going to make us rich, and turn to the true lessons of American history and the real words of the founders of this Republic, he will know what the American system really is.

I offer as a witness, a man who sat and labored with incredible zeal for the making of the Federal Constitution, who participated in the deliberations of the convention that made it, who expended his inexhaustible labors in the writing of the record of this convention, and who in his defense of this Constitution set forth in *The Federalist* the most authentic and imperishable interpretation of the American system that the world has ever seen. Here is his interpretation:

A landed interest, a manufacturing interest, a mercantile interest, a moneyed interest, with many lesser interests, grow up of necessity in civilized nations and divide them into different classes, actuated by different sentiments and views. The regulation of these various and interfering interest forms the principal task of modern legislation.

This means that government is intended to be the means by which all these interests and policies are brought into equilibrium and harmony within a single Republic. This, my friends, is an expression of the American system at its best and I leave it to you to decide whether the most authentic, the most unselfish, the most unvarnished and dignified and true exponent of the American system is James Madison or Herbert Hoover.

I have sought during these months to emphasize a broad policy of construction, of national planning and of national building, constructed in harmony with the best traditions of the American system. I have concentrated of necessity upon the broad and immediately insistent problems of national scope.

At Topeka I outlined a complete national plan for the restoration of agriculture to its proper relationship to the Nation.

At Salt Lake City I outlined a definite program to give us a national transportation policy, including the rehabilitation of the railroads of the Nation.

At Portland I set forth in definite terms a national policy for the conduct of utilities and especially those engaged in manufacturing and distributing electric power.

At Sioux City I proposed a tariff policy aimed to restore international trade and commerce not only with this Nation but between all nations.

At Boston I championed the principle that the national government has a positive duty to see that no citizen shall starve.

At Columbus I proposed the protection of the investing public against the evils and the fraud perpetrated against them during the past 10 years.

At Pittsburgh I proposed an honest, national budget system. And now as to the actual conduct of government itself—what a business man would call the executive and operating task of the corporation.

It is necessary first of all to recognize the simple fact that, apart from the occasional judicial interpretations relating to government, we have in

Washington as in all the states two constant factors which are working year in and year out, side by side and in constant contact with each other—in the case of states the Governor and the Legislature, and in Washington the President and the Congress.

Unthinking people have inveighed against the Congress in every generation of our Republic—little realizing that they are striking at the very fabric of our Constitution. If we were to eliminate the Congress of the United States, we would automatically cease to be a Republic.

The real purpose of the Constitution was based on the rightful assumption that the President and the Congress would be sufficiently right-minded, sufficiently practical and sufficiently patriotic to make every effort to co-operate the one with the other. It is not an overstatement either of the fact, or of the opinion of the American public to say that the present Chief Executive of our Nation has shown a singular lack of ability to co-operate with the Congress. I am speaking only of the past 11 months since the House of Representatives became Democratic by the margin of a handful of votes. I am speaking also of the previous two and one-half years, during which time the Congress in both of its branches was controlled by the same party to which the President himself belongs. From the earliest days of the special session which he summoned in the spring of 1929, the relations between the Capitol and the White House have, to say the least, lacked cordiality, understanding and common national purpose.

Let me make it clear that I do not assert that a President and the Congress must on all points agree with each other. Many times in history there has been complete disagreement between the two branches of the government, and in these disagreements sometimes the Congress has won and sometimes the President has won. But during the administration of the present President, we have had neither agreement nor a clear-cut battle. Either would have cleared the atmosphere and would have been far preferable to the smouldering ill-feeling that has seemed to prevail.

I have the right to point out my own conception of the relationship between an executive and a legislative body. I have served as a legislator and as a Chief Executive. I believe that from the point of view of a Governor or a President his relations with the legislative body can be based on co-operation. The fact is that with the great majority of problems mere partisanship should, insofar as possible, be kept in the background. In meeting this great majority of problems they can and should be treated primarily from the point of view of national good rather than of party good. And let me add that in the case of most reconstruction legislation there ought to be no great difference in the policy of the two great political parties.

We are all influenced by our personal experiences. For four long years, as Governor of New York, I have been faced by a Legislature, Republican in both of its branches. From the beginning I have worked on the assumption that the members of this Legislature were human beings, that they were patriotic, and that most of our State problems could best be solved by co-operation between them and myself. We have differed on certain matters of fundamental policy. In those cases, I have given them battle: sometimes they have won—sometimes, and I think in the majority of cases I have won; but in all these cases we have had good, clean, open fights.

However, when the problem has been one affecting human welfare, the Legislature and I have always ended by sitting around a table and getting something practical done. That was the history of the labor legislation in this State during the past four years—of the legislation for the improvement of our hospitals, and our prison system, of the legislation that enacted that Old Age Security Law—of the legislation that made this State the leader among all the states in providing unemployment relief. In the latter case, I called a special session, I proposed a bill, the Republican leaders proposed another bill, we had our fight, we sat around a table, I met them 20 per cent of the way, they met me 80 per cent of the way, they passed the bill, I signed the bill, the relief work was started—and all of this in the space of six weeks, while it took the Congress six months to get the President to see that such measures were necessary in the Nation as well.

**Gifts of food for needy children of Porto Rico, radio greeting to Porto Rico Christmas Ship at Pier 15, New York City, December 21, 1932**

At this hour a unique ceremony is taking place on board the S. S. *Cosmo* at her pier in the East River, New York City. Members of the Porto Rico Child Feeding Committee, representatives of our churches and Governor Beverley with a group of friends from Porto Rico, are assembled on this ship to bless its cargo and to bid the ship "God Speed" on her errand of mercy.

This is the Christmas Ship for Porto Rico. It will not carry toys and games or Christmas trees; its cargo consists of food for the desperately needy children of our own American island, which in these recent years has been visited time and again with disasters so severe that a less courageous people might have given up in despair.

On this occasion, our Nation again witnesses a practical demonstration of the true spirit of Christmas. When we know of the hunger of thousands of children, our hearts are touched and we are moved to do something to share a little that these boys and girls, who are not unlike those of our own besides, may have something to eat.

I am deeply impressed with the work of the Porto Rico Child Feeding Committee. It is good to know that there is no additional cost to this committee for the preparation and distribution of the food. Not only has the island government wholeheartedly co-operated, but the people of Porto Rico themselves have been very generous especially the local Parent-Teacher Associations, which have contributed so much in time and money. I admire the splendid courage of these loyal American citizens.

For the past two years over 40,000 boys and girls have been receiving one meal a day in 900 emergency feeding stations on the island. Not less than 65,000 different children have received help through the work of this committee.

As chairman of the New York State Porto Rico Child Feeding Committee, I am glad to know that so much has been accomplished. There could be no more substantial testimony of the sincere interest and friendship which our people here on the mainland have for their fellow-citizens in Porto Rico than is shown in our willingness, even in these difficult times, to sacrifice and share something for the people of Porto Rico, who have suffered so much.

The poverty in Porto Rico, caused in part by the hurricane of 1928 and aggravated by the financial depression of the past three years, has been made extremely serious by another very recent great storm, which swept across the island. Forty-four complete municipalities, comprising a population of over 800,000 people, lay in the path of this terrific hurricane. Losses suffered by agriculture are estimated at over \$20,000,000. Total property destruction is fixed at at least \$40,000,000. Naturally the children are the first and greatest sufferers at a time like this. They should be the first to receive our help. I am told that at least 125,000 boys and girls in this ravaged area alone are in urgent need of food.

We must look to a constructive vigorous program for the welfare and rehabilitation of the entire island. I am familiar with its many problems and am confident that any philanthropic investment made in Porto Rico will bring good and lasting returns.

The heart of America has been repeatedly touched by the suffering of those far removed from us, but let us remember that Porto Rico is in no sense foreign—the port to which this Christmas Food Ship will sail is within the boundaries of our own Nation. It is true that at this hour we are compelled to meet more obligations of one kind and another than have been known for generations, and we must meet them with greatly curtailed resources. At a time like this, however, we cannot fail to realize more fully the deep significance of the Biblical admonition: "Bear ye one another's burdens."

This is the spirit in which the Christmas Ship sails. May I send with it my own sincere Christmas greetings and the good wishes of all our people.