

June 14, 1933

[Statement to Conf. of Railroad Administration]

FDR Speech File

INFORMAL EXTEMPOREANEOUS REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO THE CONFERENCE OF RELIEF ADMINISTRATORS
EXECUTIVE OFFICES OF THE WHITE HOUSE

June 14, 1933, 2.30 P.M.

(Mr. Hopkins: "Mr. President, these are the Administrators of Relief in the 48 States of the Union, Puerto Rico and Alaska, also the Governors of several States who have been good enough to come to our meetings. I shall appreciate it very much if you will say a word to us.")

THE PRESIDENT: This is a very large and happy family party.

I think we are going to get on top of this problem very soon with your help.

As you probably know, I go back quite a long way in this relief work. It was three years ago, very nearly, when I was Governor of New York, that we passed a perfectly unheard of relief bill -- 25 million dollars for one year's expenditures -- and Harry Hopkins took charge of it. We did a great deal and I learned a lot about relief work from him in his work. That is the reason I brought him down here to Washington when we started this work.

All the time during the campaign I think both parties made it fairly clear, especially, I might add, the democratic party, that there was a certain principal involved and that holds just as good today as it did last year. It is this: That the first responsibility of taking care of people out of work who are lacking housing or clothing

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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THE PRESIDENT: This is a very large and happy family party.

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soon with your help.

As you probably know, I go back quite a long way in
this relief work. It was three years ago, very nearly,
when I was Governor of New York, that we passed a terrific
unemployment relief bill -- 50 million dollars for one year's
expansion -- and Henry Hopkins took charge of it. We
did a great deal and I learned a lot about relief work from
him in his work. That is the reason I thought it was
here to Washington when we started this work.

All the time during the campaign I think both parties
made is fairly clear, especially, I might add, the more
active party, that there was a certain practical involvement
and that both had as good today as it did last year.
It is clear that the first responsibility of taking care
of people out of work who are looking for something

or food -- that the first charge is against the locality and then, if the locality had done everything that it possibly could do, then it was the duty of the State to step in and do all the State could possibly do and, when the State could do no more, then it was the obligation of the Federal Government. That is why we have the present relief bill.

Now of course we are tackling this thing, as you know, on a great many fronts at the same time. We have got not only this actual relief fund of the Federal Government, which is to supplement the work of the localities and of the States, but we are helping to improve things through three or four other measures that are going to count very greatly in giving people work.

You all know about the first one passed in March -- that was the CCC camps. We actually have 235,000 men enrolled in those camps at the present time. More are in the preliminary camps -- not all out in the woods but they will be very shortly. By the fifteenth of July we will have 275,000 people all actually at work in the woods. It is a pretty good record which I think can be compared with the mobilization carried on in 1917.

Then there is this bill which was passed yesterday and which gives us two very large measures of work relief. The first is the section of the bill relating to industrial control. We are going to get that started just

as fast as we humanly can. Just to give you an illustration, it has been estimated by the cotton industry alone that the code which they are going to propose to us for the cotton industry, through the shortening of hours alone, will put to work about 130,000 more people than are working at the present time. Now, that is just one industry and that will be a big help. If all the major industries within the next month or two do the same thing, it means we will be able to put several millions more people back to work.

Then the other part of the bill is the public works end of the bill, which carries with it the largest peacetime appropriation that has been passed in the history of any country in the world -- \$3,300,000,000 for public works of various kinds. Our object will be to spread those public works relatively in proportion to the need in the various parts of the country. We will start on projects that will give the largest percentage of actual labor expenditures and the smallest percentage of expenditures that do not go into labor. That will get started in the next few months.

The result of these things is that on your relief problem you are going to find, because of these other measures, that your task will get easier and easier as time goes on.

Now then, as to this relief money that the Federal Government is putting up, I think it should be made perfectly clear that it is only to be used where the localities have done everything that they can possibly be asked to do, both through private charity and public appropriation, and that the State Governments have done everything that they could possibly do within reason. If that is not sufficient and the Federal funds are needed, that is where these funds come in.

I prepared a little statement here for the Press which I will read to you more as a matter of record than anything else. It is very short.

The Emergency Relief Act is an expression of the Federal Government's determination to co-operate with the States and local communities with regard to financing emergency relief work. It means just that. It is essential that the States and local units of government do their fair share. They must not expect the Federal Government to finance more than a reasonable proportion of the total. It should be borne in mind by the State authorities and by the five thousand local relief committees, now functioning throughout the land, that there are four million families in need of the necessities of life.

Obviously the Federal Relief Administrator should put as much responsibility as possible on the State Administration. This means a competent set-up in each state, preferably a commission of five or six well known citizens, who will not only administer the relief in a business-like way but entirely apart from partisan politics. The only way relief officials can be assured that people are getting relief who need relief is to have competent administration.

We are not passing the buck to you but we are asking you to pull your own weight in the boat. As to politics, I don't know how we are going to get away from politics, Democratic politics, in the South. (Laughter) Judging by the vote in South Carolina last year, it went 50 to 1, one way.

It is essential that there be effective coordination of relief and public works in all communities. While an important factor in setting up a public works program is speed, there is no intention of using the public works funds simply to build a lot of useless projects disguised as relief. It is the purpose to encourage real public works. One function of public works in an emergency is to provide a bridge by which people can pass from relief status over to normal self-support. Partisan politics must play no part in the carrying out of this work. The use of public works as a means of rational redistribution of population from congested centers to more wholesome surroundings where people can have a chance to lead normal life will be encouraged.

That is one of my pet children and has been for a great many years, and applies where we have the kind of congestion in industrial communities that will remain congestion and bring unemployment even in times of prosperity. We have to do something to get that particular burden out of the community and spread them around where they will have more elbow room and raise a large part of their own food supply.

It is a primary purpose of my administration to cooperate with the States and with industry to secure work opportunities for as many of the unemployed as possible, by which they will find employment through normal channels. But until those jobs are available the Federal Government, States and every local community must provide relief for every genuinely needy unemployed person in America.

I know that I can count on your full and complete cooperation with the Federal Emergency Relief Administrator and I can assure you on his behalf of a sympathetic understanding of your problems and of decisive action when that is necessary.

And so all I can tell you now is, "Go to it and God bless you." We will help you all we can. Goodbye.

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STATEMENTS FILE

June 14, 1933.

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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT TO THE CONFERENCE
OF RELIEF ADMINISTRATORS AT THE WHITE HOUSE.

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2:30 pm

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June 12, 1933

SUGGESTED OUTLINE FOR PRESIDENT'S SPEECH

RELIEF MEETING JUNE 14, 1933

1. The Emergency Relief Act is an expression of the Federal Government's determination to cooperate with the States and local communities with regard to financing emergency relief work. It means just that. A fair distribution of the relief burden might be one-third Federal, one-third by the States, and one-third from local units. It is essential that the states and local units of government do their fair share. They must not expect the Federal Government to finance more than a reasonable proportion of the total. It should be borne in mind by the state authorities and by the five thousand local relief committees, now functioning throughout the land, that there are four million families in need of the necessities of life.

2. ADMINISTRATION. Obviously the Federal Relief Administrator should put as much responsibility as possible on the State Administration. This means a competent set-up in each state, preferably a commission of five or six well known citizens, who will not only administer the relief in a business-like way but entirely apart from partisan politics. The only way relief officials can be assured that people are getting relief who need relief is to have competent administration.

3. COOPERATION IN PUBLIC WORKS. It is essential that there be effective coordination of relief and public works in all communities. While an important factor in setting up a public works program is speed, there is no intention of using the public works funds simply to build a lot of useless projects disguised as relief. It is the purpose to encourage real public works. One function of public works in an emergency is to provide a bridge by which people can pass from relief status over to normal self support. Partisan politics must play no part in the carrying out of this work. The use of public works as a means of rational redistribution of population from congested centers to more wholesome surroundings where people can have a chance to lead normal life will be encouraged.

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