

October 7, 1933

[Compens Memorial Monument Dedication]

FDR Speech File

Reading Copy

President's speech at Dedication
Gompers Memorial--Washington, D.C.

Oct. 7, 1933

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I knew him first when as a very young man I came to New York City and received his fine support in the establishment of pure milk stations for the feeding of undernourished babies. From then on, we had many mutual tasks. It is, I think, a commentary on the progress toward social justice which we have accomplished in a short space of time, when I tell you that in the year 1911 - only twenty-two years ago - Samuel Gompers, Robert F. Wagner, Alfred E. Smith

and I were labeled as radicals when we fought for and finally succeeded in passing a bill through the New York State Legislature, limiting the work of women in industry to fifty-four hours a week. These early struggles for social betterment -- struggles which in large part were initiated by him -- have met with growing success with every passing year. I like to think that Samuel Gompers is today, and at this moment, aware of the fact that through the quick and practical action of the National Recovery Act, child labor in the United States has at last come to an end.

During the years of the Wilson Administration, the friendship between us grew and strengthened. I need not speak of his great service to organized labor in their relations with private employers; but I can speak rightfully of the splendid cooperation which at all times he gave to the sympathetic adjustment of problems relating to workers for the Government itself. He understood well the fact that those who serve the Government

serve the people as a whole. It was in the fulfilment of this principle that he approached the whole subject of the relationship of labor to the Government at the outbreak of the World War. As a member of the advisory committee of the Council of National Defense, he was a part of the great organization which met the crisis of war. But more than that, it was his patriotic leadership ^{for the} / unanimous mobilization of the workers in every part of the Union, which supplemented the mobilization of the men who went to the front.

The keen analysis of President Wilson made this reference to Mr. Gompers, in November 1917:

"If I may be permitted to do so I want to express my admiration of his patriotic courage, his large vision and his statesmanlike sense of what has to be done. I like to lay my mind alongside of a mind that knows how to pull in harness. The horses that kick over the

traces will have to be put in a corral."

In those few words President Wilson summed up the splendid national services of Samuel Gompers, and at the same time preached a sermon that applied to capital and labor alike.

That sermon is just as good today as it was in 1917. We are engaged in another war, and I believe from the bottom of my heart that organized labor is doing its share to win this war. The whole of the Country has a common enemy; industry, agriculture, capital, labor are all engaged in fighting it. Just as in 1917 we are seeking to pull in harness; just as in 1917, horses that kick over the traces will have to be put in a corral.

Mr. Gompers understood and went along with that thought during the years of the War, and we have many evidences of his acceptance of the fact that horses pulling in harness were the horses of the employees and of the employers as well. In those years a few -- happily a very few -- horses had to be lassoed -- both kinds

of horses; and today the conditions are very similar.

In the field of organized labor there are problems just as there were in the spring of 1917 -- questions of jurisdiction which have to be settled quickly and effectively in order to prevent the slowing-up of the general program. There are the perfectly natural problems of selfish individuals who seek personal gain by running counter to the calm judgment of sound leadership. There are hot-heads who think that results can be obtained by noise or violence; there are insidious voices seeking to instill methods or principles which are wholly foreign to the American form of democratic government.

On the part of employers there are some who shudder at anything new. There are some who think in terms of dollars and cents instead of in terms of human lives; there are

some who themselves would prefer government by a privileged class instead of by majority rule.

But it is clear that the sum of the recalcitrants on both sides cuts a very small figure in the total of employers and employees alike, who are going along wholeheartedly in the war against depression.

You of the Federation of Labor and its affiliations are in the broad sense giving the same kind of fine cooperation to your Government which Samuel Gompers and his associates gave to that same Government in the old days.

Even as in the old days when I was in the Navy Department, Mr. Gompers and the Federation were at all times on a footing of friendship and cooperation with me, -- even so today President Greene and his associates are working with my Administration toward the attainment of our National purposes. The overwhelming majority of the workers understand, as do the overwhelming majority of the employers of the Country, that

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Franklin D. Roosevelt
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ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT AT THE DEDICATION
OF THE SAMUEL GOMPERS MEMORIAL MONUMENT

Washington, D. C., October 7, 1933.

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I knew him first when as a very young man I came to New York City and received his fine support in the establishment of pure milk stations for the feeding of undernourished babies. From then on, we had many mutual tasks. It is, I think, a commentary on the progress toward social justice which we have accomplished in a short space of time, when I tell you that in the year 1911 -- only twenty-two years ago -- Samuel Gompers, Robert F. Wagner, Alfred E. Smith and I were labeled as radicals when we fought for and finally succeeded in passing a bill through the New York State Legislature, limiting the work of women in industry to fifty-four hours a week. These early struggles for social betterment -- struggles which in

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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During the years of the Wilson Administration, the friendship between us grew and strengthened. I need not speak of his great service to organized labor in their relations with private employers; but I can speak rightly of the splendid cooperation which at all times he gave to the sympathetic adjustment of problems relating to workers for the Government itself. He understood well the fact that these who serve the Government serve the people as a whole. It was in the fulfillment of this principle that he approached the whole subject of the relationship of labor to the Government at the outbreak of the World War. As a member of the advisory committee of the Council of National Defense, he was a part of the great organization which met the crisis of war. But more than that, it was his patriotic leadership for the unanimous mobilization of the workers in every part of the Union, which supplemented the mobilization of the men who went to the front.

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October 6, 1933

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MONUMENT, WASHINGTON, D. C., OCTOBER 7, 1933.

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