

October 21, 1933

[Washington College, Chestertown, Md.]

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FDR Speech File

SERGE IN ACCORDANCE OF HEGEL

October 21, 1932.

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Chairman Brown, President Head, Friends of Washington College:

I do not think either that it would be appropriate or that I could say anything that would be adequate after the very splendid words that you have heard from the new President of Washington College. He has spoken as the new head of a living college, to living men and women. He has spoken of today, and he has spoken of tomorrow; yet in coming here, I can not help but feel the past. I can not help but feel the close relationship with the early days of the republic, as I stand here, the second President of the United States to come to Washington College after a lapse of nearly a century and a half.

President Head has spoken to you of the spirit of the pioneers. It is true that the pioneer was an individualist; but, at the same time, there was a spirit of cooperation and understanding, of the need of building up, not a class, but a whole community. It was that spirit that made possible those United States themselves, and it is the understanding of that spirit which made our first President's name revered above that of any other American in all our history. You young men and young women who are attending this College, like the young men and young women who are attending all the colleges throughout the land, have a duty to your community.

I often think of the words of a very elderly gentleman, President Eliot of Harvard, who, in many ways, was a revolutionist in educational circles. We were talking about the value of the educated people of the country to the country, and he made this remark, which I have always remembered. "If the ballot of the United States were limited to the holders of college degrees, the country would probably last about ten years." And then he went on making the obvious point that if the people of the United States were confined to one particular class of the community, whether they have the privilege of wealth or of education, something would be bound to go wrong, because of the very simple fact that there would be representation of only a minority of the people.

The wider we can have a distribution of wealth in the proper sense of that term, the more we can make it possible to every man, woman, and child throughout the land to have the necessities; and when they find themselves in such shape that they do not have to lie awake nights wondering where the food for the morrow is coming from, then we will have the kind of security which means so much to the progress and the spirit of the country.

In the same way, if we could provide in the nation for an adequate education for everybody, the spirit of the country would be vastly strengthened. It is in this spirit that we encourage and foster the institutions of this nation and throughout the land, it is in this spirit that we are seeking, in times of depression, to prevent further attack on our educational system, which is building up the possibilities of

this education to every boy and girl. In the last analysis we need people who have had a chance to look not just at the history of things in the past, but to look also into the application of that history to the problems of the present and future. It is that thought which leads us to an ideal of education.

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I remember that when I was a boy in school in Massachusetts, Bishop Phillips Brooks made to my class a remark I shall never forget. He said: "You boys will be good citizens just as long as you remember your boyhood ideals." Those young ideals are just as true today as they were then. The ideals of young people are, on the whole, pretty fine and sound from the point of view of principle. Today they are making many changes in the methods, and many changes in the machinery of life, not just of government but of all human relationships, and just as they will continue to make them; for a great many changes of government and human relationships are perfectly proper. But at the same time, the old-fashioned boyhood ideals, the old-fashioned principles, are going to keep the country going. There is a tendency, of course, to lose sight of the forest for the trees.

Every man and woman with an education has a two-fold duty to perform. The first is to apply that education intelligently to problems of the moment; and the second is to obtain and maintain contact with and understanding of the average citizens of their own country. We have accomplished much, my friends, I think a great deal, in the last few months. Some countries who have dictators have laid down four, five and ten-year programs. I believe that in this country, which has not a dictatorship, we can move further toward our goal in a shorter space of time without giving it a definite number of years.

And so, in the years to come, not just through the life of this immediate program, but all my life, I shall continue to watch Washington College, the President, the faculty, its students, its graduates, with a feeling that I am one of them; that I have been very greatly honored in being made an alumnus of the College; and I breathe the same prayer that George Washington made to the College nearly a century and a half ago, that the Creator of the Universe will look down on the College and give it his benediction.

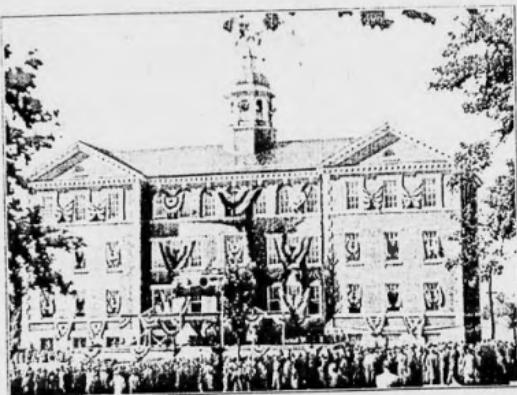
Let me tell you simply and from the bottom of my heart that I am proud to have come, proud of the honor; and I wish you God speed in the years to come.

FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT

As our academic forebears in this place failed not to express by their lives their allegiance to the world without the lecture halls, so today holding her place in the congress of colleges not by age alone, but by the severest measure of her demonstrated success, Washington College steps blithely upon the highroad to an even more glorious consummation, renewing her pledge, reappraising her heritage, revitalizing her body and her spirit, girding her loins to run yet more swiftly the race which is set before her.

I assume the Presidency of this College in the full certainty of her brilliant future and her glorious destiny. I join gladly the company of those whose energies and lives have been invested in her past, as mine is invested in her future.

Mr. Chairman, gentlemen of the Board of Visitors and Governors, I accept the charge which you have laid upon me. Pray God I may be worthy of the trust you impose.



William Smith Hall Before The Ceremony



CONFERRING THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF LAWS UPON PRESIDENT FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT

HIRAM S. BROWN, Chairman, Board of Visitors and Governors

As most of you already know, Washington College and this community have been honored only once before in the history of the United States by a visit from the President of the Republic.

On the first occasion, the honor was bestowed upon us by the first President of the United States. Today we are similarly honored by a visit of his illustrious successor, the 32nd President of the United States, who occupies a chair on this platform which belonged to George Washington and stood in Mount Vernon.

Just as today many of our roads and buildings in this community are marked with signs recording the travels and visits of George Washington—so in future years will similar markings record this present visit of our distinguished guest of honor.

In 1789 Washington College conferred upon George Washington the degree of Doctor of Laws and the diploma conferring that honor is now on exhibition in the Congressional Library at Washington. Today we will confer a similar degree upon our guest and the diploma conferring that honor will be accompanied by a fac-simile of George Washington's diploma.

On occasions such as this it is customary to recite the record of accomplishment of the recipient of the honorary degree. The record of our distinguished guest is too well known to necessitate such a recital.

It is sufficient to state that Washington College desires not only to make public recognition in permanent fashion of the outstanding services already rendered our nation by our guest, but also to evidence to him at this time our sincere appreciation of the honor he has bestowed upon us by his visit. We also desire him to know that to the extent of our limited ability and in our modest way he has our support and our most heartfelt wishes for the complete success of his leadership during this very difficult period in the history of our Republic.

Now, therefore, by virtue of the authority vested by the State of Maryland in the Board of Visitors and Governors of Washington College and with them delegated to me, I hereby confer upon you, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa, with all the rights and privileges thereto appertaining.



**SPEECH IN ACCEPTANCE  
OF DEGREE**

**PRESIDENT**

**FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT**

Chairman Brown, President Mead, Friends of Washington College: I do not think either that would be appropriate or that I could say anything that would be adequate after the very splendid words that you have heard from the new President of Washington College. He has spoken as the new head of a living college, to living men and women. He has spoken of today, and he has spoken of tomorrow; yet in coming here, I can not help but feel the past. I can not help but feel the close relationship with the early days of the republic, as I stand here, the second President of the United States to come to Washington College after a lapse of nearly a century and a half.

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