
**Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945**

**Series 2: “ You have nothing to fear but fear itself:” FDR
and the New Deal**

File No. 686

1934 March 2

**Message to Congress Requesting Authority to
Consummate Commercial Agreements with
Foreign Nations**

Message

F. B. Sayre

[March 2, 1934]

~~DRAMA~~

To the Congress:

I am requesting the Congress of ~~the United States~~ to authorize the Executive to enter into executive commercial agreements with foreign nations; and in pursuance thereof within carefully guarded limits to modify existing duties and import restrictions in such a way as will benefit American agriculture and industry.

This action seems opportune and necessary at this time for several reasons.

First, world trade has declined with startling rapidity. Measured in terms of the volume of goods in 1933, it has been reduced to approximately 70 per cent of its 1929 volume; measured in terms of dollars, it has fallen to 35 per cent. The drop in the foreign trade of the United States has been even sharper, ~~the~~ ^{our} exports ~~being~~ in 1933 ^{value} but 52 per cent of the 1929 volume, and 32 per cent of the 1929 value. This has meant idle hands, still machines, ships tied to their docks, despairing farm households, ^{and} hungry industrial families. ^{It has made infinitely more} ~~the necessity for difficult~~ ^{difficult} ~~the~~ planning

(INSERT A)

II You and I know that the world does not stand still; that trade movements and relations once interrupted can with the utmost difficulty be restored; that even in tranquil and prosperous times there is a constant shifting of trade channels.

II How much greater, how much more violent is the shifting in these times of change and of stress is clear from the record of current history. Every Nation must at all times be in a position quickly to adjust its taxes and tariffs to meet sudden changes and avoid severe fluctuations in both its exports and its imports.

~~It is a fact that it~~
~~is a fact that it~~

o. b. 7.
o. u. 7.

~~planning~~ for economic readjustment in which the Govern-
ment is now engaged.

~~I know the world does not stand still. I know that
trade movements and trade relationships once interrupted
can never be fully restored. I know that even in tranquil
and prosperous times there is a constant shifting of trade~~

Insert
A

~~channels. I know, too, that it is important that the~~
If you and I know, too,
country possess within its borders a necessary diversity
and balance to maintain a rounded national life, that it
must sustain activities vital to national defense and
that such interests can not be sacrificed for passing
advantage. ~~But~~ Equally clear is the fact that a full and
permanent domestic recovery depends in part upon a revived
and strengthened international trade and that American
exports can not be permanently increased without a corre-
sponding increase in imports.

Second, other governments are to an ever-increasing
extent winning their share of international trade by
negotiated reciprocal trade agreements. If American

~~agricultural~~

agricultural and industrial interests are to retain their deserved place in this trade, the American Government must be in a position to bargain for that place with other governments by rapid and decisive negotiation based upon a carefully considered program, and to grant with discernment corresponding opportunities in the American market for foreign products supplementary to our own.

If the American Government is not in a position to make fair offers for fair opportunities, its trade will be superseded. ~~and~~ ^{ATA given measure} If it is not in a position rapidly to [^] ~~modify~~ ^{alter} the terms on which it is willing to deal with other countries, it can not adequately protect its trade against discriminations and against bargains injurious to its interests. Furthermore a promise to which prompt effect can not be given is not an inducement which can pass current at par in commercial negotiations. ^{to} For this reason, any smaller degree of authority in the hands of the Executive would be ineffective. The executive branches of virtually all other important trading countries already

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possess some such power.

I would emphasize that quick results are not to be expected. The successful building up of trade without injury to American producers depends upon a cautious and gradual evolution of plans.

The disposition of other countries to grant an improved place to American products should be carefully sounded and considered; upon the attitude of each must somewhat depend our future course of action. With countries which are unwilling to abandon purely restrictive national programs, or to make concessions towards the reestablishment of international trade, no headway will be possible.

The exercise of the authority ^{which I propose} ~~contained in this Bill~~ must be carefully weighed ^{considered} in the light of the latest information so as to ~~assure~~ ^{give assurance} that no sound and important American interest will be injuriously disturbed. ~~The~~ ^{FAST on the premise of} adjustment of our foreign trade relations must be ~~premised upon the~~ undertaking to benefit and not to injure such interests. In a time of difficulty and unemployment such as this, the ^{highest} ~~most careful~~ ^{consideration of}

~~the~~

the position of the different branches of American production is required.

From the policy of reciprocal negotiation which is in prospect, I hope in time that definite gains will result to American agriculture and industry.

~~B~~ Important branches of ^{our} ~~American~~ agriculture, such as ~~the~~ cotton, tobacco, hog products, rice, cereal and fruit-raising ~~industries~~, and those branches of American industry whose mass production methods have led the world, will find expanded opportunities and productive capacity in foreign markets, and will thereby be spared in part, at least, the heartbreaking readjustments that ~~will~~ ^{must} be necessary if the shrinkage of American foreign commerce remains permanent.

~~A~~ A resumption of international trade can not but improve the general situation of other countries, and thus increase their purchasing power, ^{Let us well remember that this} ~~which~~ in turn spells increased opportunity for American sales.

Legislation such as this is an essential step in the

~~Program~~

program of national economic recovery which ^{the} Congress has
elaborated during the past year. It is part of an emergency
program necessitated by the economic crisis through which
we are passing. It should provide that the trade agreements
shall be terminable within a period not to exceed three
years; a shorter period probably would not suffice for
putting the program into effect. In its execution, the
Executive must, of course, pay due heed to the requirements
of other branches of our recovery program, such as the
National Industrial Recovery Act.

I hope for ~~the~~ early ^{action.} ~~passage so that~~ the many im-
mediate situations in the field of international trade
^{to day} that await our attention can ^{this} be met effectively and with
the least possible delay.

JAR