

August 7, 1934

[Devil's Lake, ND]

FDR Speech File

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INFORMAL REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT

DEVILS LAKE, NORTH DAKOTA

August 7, 1934

Senator Nye, my friends of North Dakota: I cannot honestly say that my heart is happy today, because I have **seen** with my own eyes some of the things that I have been reading and hearing about, for a year and more. The reason I came here was that I wanted to see something at first hand of a problem that has perplexed me and perplexed many other people ever since I have been in office. It is a problem. I would not try to fool you by saying we know the solution of it. We don't.

I believe in being frank, and what I can tell you from the bottom of my heart, truthfully, is this: If it is possible for us to solve the problem, we are going to do it.

I saw some signs along the road that said: "You gave us beer, now give us water."

Well, the beer part was easy.

That was something that could be controlled very definitely by human agency. It was a question of what the people of this country wanted and when they made it clear they wanted beer back again, they got it. But, when you come to this water problem through here, you are up against two things. In the first place you are up against the forces of nature and, secondly, you are up against the fact

that man, in his present stage of development cannot definitely control those forces.

I think it was more than a year ago that the delegation of this State, in the Senate and the House, first talked to me about the problem of this watershed in northern North Dakota. I have been studying it ever since.

It is all very well to say, "Let's have a dam across the Missouri River." I would love to do it, but when a great many engineers tell me they haven't found a safe place for that dam, there isn't a man or woman in the Devils Lake area that would ask me to build a dam that might go out and drown many thousand people.

In other words, I have a responsibility. I cannot build a dam unless I have the best engineering assurance that it is not only the right thing to do, but the safe thing to do.

And, the result is, my friends, that today there is more of what you might call government talent -- experts from different departments in the Government service -- fine people with good knowledge and training -- and they are getting the views of civilians and State employees and trying to find a solution of this problem.

Soon after I get back to Washington many of the studies being made this summer by engineering and agricultural officials will be completed. I expect to confer

within the next few weeks with all of the experts. I will give an opportunity to people who don't agree with their conclusions to come and be heard. As you know, I believe in action.

On the 4th of March, 1933, we had a parallel. It was not just one section of one state or a few sections in a few states. It was the whole of the United States. The United States was up against it. I asked the people of the United States at that time to have courage and faith. They did.

Today, out here, I do not ask you to have courage and faith. You have it. You have demonstrated that through a good many years. I am asking, however, that you keep up that courage and, especially, keep up the faith.

If it is possible for Government to improve conditions in this State, Government will do it.

I assure you the interests of these communities are very close to my heart. I am not going to forget the day I have spent with you.

We hope that Nature is going to open the Heavens. When I came out on the platform this morning and saw a rather dark cloud, I said to myself, "Maybe it is going to rain." Well, it didn't. All I can say is, I hope to goodness it is going to rain, good and plenty.

My friends, I want to tell you that I am glad I came here. I want to tell you that I am not going to let up until I can give my best service to solving the problems of North Dakota.

August 7, 1934. 764

Following is the stenographic report of informal remarks of the President at Devils Lake, North Dakota, August 7, 1934.

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