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. 739

1934 September 28

Address to the Mobilization for Human Needs Conference

MOBILIZATION FOR HUMAN NEEDS CONFERENCE Friday, Sept. 28, 1934

I am happy that for the second time the Conference on the Mobilization for Human needs comes here to the White House.

In so doing you emphasize with me the national character of our common task, for I like to feel that I share responsibility with all of you who are here representing every part of our country.

Your work in the past has been of such outstanding success that I am confident this year you will achieve an all-time record.

In addressing you last year I emphasized the simple fact that the responsibility of the individual and of the family for the well being of their neighbors must never cease. Beginning with those first winters of suffering in Jamestown and at Plymouth, it has been it has been the American habit to render aid to those who need it. Through the centuries as the first struggling villages developed into communities and cities and counties and states, destitution and want of every description has been cared for

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are part and parcel of our national life of today.

It is right, I think, for us to emphasize that the American family must be the unit which engages our greatest interest and concern. With this we must stress once more the task of each community to assist in maintaining and building up that family unit.

No thinking or experienced person insists today that the responsibility of the community shall be eliminated by passing on this great and humane task to any central body at the seat

of Federal Government. You and I know that it has been with reluctance and only because we have realized the imperative need for additional help that the Federal Government has been compelled to undertake the task of supplementing the more normal methods which have been in use for many generations.

I repeat what I told you last year; that the primary responsibility for community needs rests upon the community itself. That if every effort has been used by any given community and has proven insufficient, then it is the duty of the State to supplement, with the resources of the state, the additional needs up to the limit of its power. That, finally, it is only when both of these efforts, taken together, prove insufficient that the Federal Government has any duty to add its resources to the common cause.

It is inevitable, of course, that in carrying on relief -- whether in the form of work relief or home relief -- in an area

that includes every state, every county and every city in the Union, local inefficiency is bound to exist in some instances. It is very definitely our task, yours and mine, to see to it that during the coming winter there shall be increased vigilance in every locality against the giving of relief except to those who definitely a nd clearly need it and are entitled to it.

In a great emergency system we are establishing with each passing month a greater degree of efficiency, and we are eliminating many of the evils which of necessity attended our first efforts. The trained workers which belong to the many organizations represented in this conference have an opportunity and a duty to see to it, first of all, that destitution is relieved and, secondly, that no individual and no family shall be entitled to public assistance if that individual or that family does not deserve it.

Your work and the work of local, state and Federal

agencies, is so closely associated that your success is vital to the success of Government. I am confident that the people of this country, in each and every community, will understand the true importance of cooperating in this great mobilization for human needs.

I like to emphasize the word "privilege" rather than the word "duty"; for it is clearly the privilege of the individual American to bear his personal share in a work which must be kept personal in so far as it is possible to make it so. It is that personal appeal, that personal service, which has carried us through these trying years. A unity of effort for a little while longer will, I am confident, bring national success to our nationally unified efforts to bring Old Man Depression to the point where we can finally master and destroy him.

The church groups and the social groups organized on private lines, whether they act separately or through Community Chests, are an essential part of the structure of our life. The American

people believe in them and support their fine objectives. That support again this year will attend the excellent enterprise you are launching today.

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ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT 1934 MOBILIZATION FOR HUMAN NEEDS CONFERENCE September 28, 1934

I am happy that for the second time the Conference on the Mobilization for Human Needs comes here to the White House. In doing this you are emphasizing with me the national character of our common task. (for) I like to feel that I share the responsibility with all of you who are here representing every part of (our) the country.

Your work in the past has been of such outstanding success that I am confident that this year you will achieve an all-time record.

(In addressing you) last year, when I had the privilege of speaking to you, I emphasized the simple fact that the responsibility of the individual and of the family for the well-being of their neighbors must never cease. If we go back in our own history to those earliest days of the white man in America, we know with those first Winters of suffering in Jamestown and at Plymouth, it has been, from that time on continuously, the American habit to render aid to those who need it. Through the centuries as the first struggling villages developed into communities and cities and counties and states, destitution and want of every description has been cared for, in the first instance by community help and in the last instance as well.

Franklin D. Roossvelt 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

With the enormous growth of population we have had, with the complexities of the past generation, community efforts have been supplemented by the formation of great national organizations designed to coordinate and stimulate these local groups who are striving not only to take care of those in need but also striving to stimulate better conditions of health, of child welfare, of mental hygiene, of recreation and in all those many other splendid objectives which are part and parcel of our national life today.

The mere reading of the names of the organizations that are working solidly behind this great task is enough to make this country realize the unity of purpose, the solidarity behind what we are doing and it is right, I think, for us to emphasize that the American family must be the unit which engages our greatest interest and concern. With this we must stress once more the task of each community to assist in maintaining and building up that family unit.

No thinking or experienced person insists today that the responsibility of the community shall be eliminated by passing on this great and humane task to any central body at the seat of Federal Government. You and I know that it has been with reluctance and only because we have realized the imperative need for additional help that the Federal Government has been compelled to undertake the task of supplementing the more normal, the more actual methods which have been in use (for many) during all the

preceding generations.

I repeat what I told you last year because it is something that is a fundamental of our present-day civilization: that the primary responsibility for community needs rests upon the community itself. That if every effort has been used by any given community and has proven insufficient, then it is the duty of the State to supplement, with the resources of the state, the additional needs up to the limit of the power of the state. And that, finally, and only finally, it is only when both of these efforts, taken together, have proven insufficient that the Federal Government has any duty to add its resources to the common cause.

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In a great emergency system we are establishing with each passing month a greater degree of efficiency, and we are eliminating many of the evils which of necessity attended our first efforts of over a year ago. The trained workers which

belong to the many organizations represented in this conference have an opportunity and a duty to see to it, first of all, that destitution is relieved and, secondly, that no family and no individual shall be entitled to public assistance if that individual or that family does not deserve it.

Your work and the work of local, state and Federal agencies, is so closely associated that your success is <u>very</u> vital to the success of Government <u>itself</u>. I am confident that the people of this country, in each and every community, will understand the true importance of cooperating in this great mobilization for human needs.

I always like to emphasize the word "privilege" rather than the word "duty"; for it is clearly the privilege of the individual American to bear his personal share in a work which must be kept personal in so far as it is possible to make it so. It is that personal appeal, that personal service, which has carried us through all these trying years. A unity of effort for a little while longer will, I am confident, bring national success to our nationally unified efforts to bring Old Man Depression to the point where we can finally master and destroy him. (Applause)

The church groups and the social groups organized on private lines, whether they act separately or jointly through Community Chests, or in any other way, are an essential part of the structure of our life. The American people believe in

you, believe in the work you are doing -- the American people support your fine objectives. That support again this year will attend the excellent enterprise you are launching today. (Applause)

FOR THE PRESS

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STEPHEN EARLY

Assistant Secretary to the President

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The church groups and the social groups organized on private lines, whether they act separately or through Community Chests, are an essential part of the structure of our life. The American people believe in them and support their fine objectives. That support again this year vill attend the excellent enterprise you are launching today. This address of the Fresident, delivered in behalf of the 1984 mobilization for human Needs, is for publication in all editions of newspapers appearing on the streets NOT EARLIER THAM 10:30 F. M., Eastern Standard Time, today, October 22, 1934.

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STEPHEN EARLY Assistant Secretary to the President

For the second successive year I am making a direct and frank appeal to the country to hive support to worthy local charities of all kinds.

You will recognize the necessity of the general rule which prevents the President of the United States from asking for assistance or contributions on behalf of any specific or individual good cause. If I were to begin doin, that I would be on the air at least two or three times every evening.

In this case, however, there is in existence a central organization called the "1934 NONILIZATION FOR HOMAN PALLS."

The object of this mobilization is to encourage and tie in together the many private organizations which are seeking funds to carry on their very essential and necessary work for the coming year.

In some communities these organizations seek contributions from the public by the means of Community Chests; in other communities they are asking for help separately but simultaneously.

May I very simply explain to you two facts which all of us should bear in mind?

The first is that the Federal overnment, the State governments and local governments are all of them bearing an unusually heavy load of expenditures for relief and cmployment purposes — a load so heavy that every good citizen should seek to lighten tin every way possible. This efforg on the part of governments of all kinds to bear their share of the emergency needs proceeds very clearly on the assumption that the total amount of relief of human needs, heretofore borne by private contributions to private organizations, will outline in the future at least at the same pace and in the same emount as in the past.

I hope that you will well realize that it is contrary to a sound public policy to transfer more burdens to the shoulders of government if it can possibly be avoided and, therefore, that private charity should, as a matter of good citizenship, be maintained at least at current levels.

The other point I would make is that none of us want to eliminate the personal factor in taking care of human needs. Surely none of you want to centralize the care of relief either in Washington or in your State Capitol or in your City Hall. The decentralization of relief -- the keeping of it in the hands of private organizations as much as we possibly can -- means that personal relationships, personal contacts, personal obligations and personal opportunities to do good will be preserved.

It is, therefore, without hesitation and with very deep feeling that I ask you to support your local chariteble and welfare organizations in this 1934 MOBILIZATION FOR HUBLAN NEEDS.

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