

November 18, 1934

[Birmingham, Alabama]

FDR Speech File

INFORMAL EXTEMPORANEOUS REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
ON THE OCCASION OF HIS VISIT TO BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA,
EN ROUTE TO WARM SPRINGS, GEORGIA

November 18, 1934 - 2.00 P.M.

My visit through the Tennessee Valley region would be incomplete without a stop here, brief as the visit must be on this trip. I remember with greatest pleasure the last time I was here, nearly four years ago, when as President-elect I had acquired some first-hand information of the problems of Tennessee and of northern Alabama.

I speak of Birmingham as being in the Tennessee region because, while I appreciate that you are located south of the Tennessee watershed, still there are a great many economic and social relationships between this City and the great territory which lies north of you.

I know something of the many difficulties under which you have been laboring in recent years. I well understand the problem, for example, of the heavy industries, such as iron, steel and coal -- industries on which you so largely depend. I can assure you that they are matters of the keenest concern to the whole Administration.

The great program of Public Works, which you know something about, which is in full swing, calls for vast quantities of the iron and steel and other capital goods this area produces. That program is going to help Birmingham and the surrounding territory.

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, although they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

November 12, 1934 - 2

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Definite improvement has made its appearance, as you know, in the coal industry. The success of the N.R.A. coal code appears not only in the more orderly mining of coal but also in something that lies very close to my heart, steady employment and bigger pay envelopes for the thousands of miners who were in sore straits before the Government acted.

But, of course, for you who live in the economic area of which this is the southern end, the Tennessee Valley Authority must continue to receive your growing interest as it receives the growing interest and approval of so many other communities. The whole project can succeed fully only if it has the whole-hearted support and cooperation of the people here, and it is getting that support. I particularly bespeak of the people of Birmingham an active cooperation with the Tennessee Valley Authority and I know that you will give it.

You know, I am always frank, and I am aware, of course, that a few, just a few, of your citizenry are leaving no stone unturned to block, to harass and to delay this great national program. I am confident, however, that these obstructionists, few in number as I have said, few in comparison with the whole population, do not reflect the views of the overwhelming majority of the people of Birmingham or the neighboring cities. I know, too, that the overwhelming majority of your businessmen, big and little are in hearty accord with the great undertaking of

regional planning now being carried forward. They stand and you stand shoulder to shoulder with T.V.A. -- you stand eager to carry forward the development of this region in which Birmingham plays so important a part.

It is good to be with you again, I am glad to have this splendid reception and I am looking forward to coming back here at a time when I hope I can spend the whole day.

STENOGRAPHIC REPORT OF THE
EXTEMPORANEOUS ADDRESS OF
THE PRESIDENT, TUPELO, MISS.,
NOVEMBER 18, 1934.

Senator Harrison, Governor Connor, Mr. Mayor, my friends:

I would not make a speech to you today because we are assembled on this glorious Sunday morning more as neighbors than as anything else.

I have had a very wonderful three days and everywhere that I have gone, the good people have come as neighbors to talk with me, and they have not come by the thousands -- they have come literally by the acres.

This is the first time in my life that I have had the privilege of seeing this section of the State of Mississippi. Many, many years ago, when Pat Harrison and I were almost boys, I got acquainted with his stamping ground down on the Gulf. Today I am especially glad to come into the northern part of the State.

Two years ago, in 1932, during the campaign, and again in January, 1933, I came through Kentucky -- through the Tennessee Valley -- and what I saw on those trips -- what I saw of human beings, made the tears come to my eyes. The great outstanding thing to me for these past three days has been the change in the looks on people's faces. It has not been only a physical thing. It has not been the contrast between what was actually a scarcity of raiment two years ago or a lack of food two years ago -- the contrast between that and better clothing and more food today -- but it is a something in people's faces and I think you understand what I mean. There wasn't much hope in those days. People were wondering what was going to come to this country. And yet today I see not only hope but I see determination -- knowledge that all is well with the country and that we are coming back.

I suppose that you good people know a great deal more of the efforts that we have been making in regard to the work of the Tennessee Valley Authority than I do because you have seen its application in your own counties and your own towns and your own homes and, therefore, it will be like carrying coals to Newcastle for me to tell you about what has been done.

But perhaps in referring to it I can use you as a text -- a text that may be useful to many other parts of the Nation, because people's eyes are upon you and because what you are doing here is going to be copied in every state of the Union before we get through.

We recognize that there will be a certain amount of -- what shall I say? -- rugged opposition to this development, but I think we recognize also that the opposition is fading as the weeks and the months go by, fading in the light of practical experience.

I cite certain figures for the benefit of the gentlemen of the press, who have come hither from many climes. I am told that from March of this year, when you started using TVA power, the consumption of power for residential purposes has risen from 41,000 kilowatts to 89,000 kilowatts -- an increase of 126%. I understand that from the financial point of view, in spite of various fairy tales that have been spread in other parts of the country, your power system is still paying taxes to the municipality. That is worth remembering. Furthermore, that as a whole it is a remarkable business success.

I talk about those figures first because it has been so often wrongly alleged that this yardstick which we are using could not be applied to private businesses because a government yardstick receives so many favors; that it is let off from paying this and paying that and prying the other thing. Well, we are proving in this Tennessee Valley that by using good business methods we can instruct a good many business men in the country.

And there is another side of it. I have forgotten the exact figures and I can't find them in this voluminous report at this moment, but the number of new refrigerators that have been put in -- that means something besides just plain dollars and cents. That means a greater human happiness. Electric cookstoves and all the other dozens of things which, when I was in the Navy, we used to call "gadgets" -- we are making it possible, all of us working together, to improve human life through the introduction of things that aren't especially new so far as invention is concerned, but things which are becoming more and more necessities in our American life in every part of the country.

And I have been interested this morning in seeing those new home-steads -- not just the buildings, not just the land that they are on, not just the excellent landscaping of the trees among which those homes have been set, but especially the opportunities that those homes are giving to families to improve the standard of living.

And finally, my friends, there is one thing about all that you are doing here in Tupelo, that they are doing in Corinth, that they are doing in Athens and Norris and the various other places where accomplishment can be seen today -- aye, the most important thing of all I think is that it is being done by the communities themselves. This is not coming from Washington -- it is coming from you. You are not being Federalized. We still believe in the community; and things are going to advance in this country exactly in proportion to the community effort. This is not regimentation -- it is community rugged individualism. It means no longer the kind of rugged individualism that allows an individual to do this, that or the other thing that will hurt his neighbors. He is forbidden to do that from now on -- and it is a mighty good thing. But he is going to be encouraged in every known way from the National Capitol and the state capitol and the county seat to use his individualism in cooperation with his neighbor's individualism so that he and his neighbors may improve their lot in life.

Yes, I have been thrilled by these three days -- thrilled in the knowledge not only of practical accomplishment but thrilled also in the belief -- the deep-seated belief on my part that the people of this Nation understand what we are trying to do, are cooperating with what we are trying to do and have made up their minds that we are going to do it.

And so, in saying "Goodbye" to you for a short time -- because I am coming back -- I ask all of you, throughout the length and breadth of the Tennessee Valley and those areas which form an economic portion of that Valley -- I ask you all to remember that the responsibility for success lies very largely with you -- that the eyes of the nation are upon you and that I, for one, am confident that you are going to give to the Nation an example which will be a benefit not only to yourselves but to the whole one hundred and thirty millions of Americans in every part of the land.

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ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA,
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My visit through the Tennessee Valley region would be incomplete without a stop in Birmingham, brief as that visit must be at this time. I remember with great pleasure another visit, necessarily brief, in January, 1933, when as President-elect I had acquired some first-hand knowledge of the problems of Tennessee and of northern Alabama.

I speak of Birmingham as being in the Tennessee region because, while I appreciate that you are located south of the Tennessee watershed, there are many economic and social relationships between this City and the great territory which lies north of you.

I know something also of the many difficulties under which you have been laboring in recent years. I well understand the problem of the heavy industries, such as iron, steel and coal -- industries upon which you so largely depend. They are matters of the keenest concern to the whole Administration.

The great program of Public Works now in full swing calls for vast quantities of the iron and steel and other capital goods which this area produces.

Definite improvement has already made its appearance as it has in the coal industry. The success of the N.R.A. coal code appears not only in the more orderly mining of coal but also in the more steady employment and the bigger pay envelopes of the thousands of miners who were in sore straights before the government acted.

But, of course, for you who live in the economic area of the Tennessee Valley, the Tennessee Valley Authority must continue to receive your growing interest as it receives the growing interest and approval of so many other communities. The whole project can succeed fully only if it has the wholehearted support and cooperation of the people of the area. I particularly bespeak of the people of Birmingham an active cooperation with the Tennessee Valley Authority.

I am aware, of course, that a few of your citizenry are leaving no stone unturned to block and harass and to delay this great national program. I am confident, however, that these obstructionists, few in number in comparison with the whole population, do not reflect the views of the overwhelming majority of the people of Birmingham or the other cities where they reside. I know, too, that the overwhelming majority of your businessmen, big and little, are in hearty accord with the great undertaking of regional planning now being carried forward. They and you stand shoulder to shoulder with T.V.A. - eager to carry forward the development of this region in which Birmingham plays so important a part.

It is good to be with you again and I am looking forward to a happy few weeks in my other home in the Southland.

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FOR RELEASE ON DELIVERY - M. H. McIntyre
Assistant Secretary to the President.

TEXT OF THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS
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STATEMENTS . FILE
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N. C.
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