
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. 779

1935 May 14

**Address to Farmers Meeting in Washington Who
Support AAA**

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT, DELIVERED FROM THE SOUTH
PORTICO OF THE WHITE HOUSE, TO FARMERS WHO HAVE CON-
VENED IN WASHINGTON FOR THE PURPOSE OF SUPPORTING
THE ADMINISTRATION'S AGRICULTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAM.

May 14, 1935, 5 o'clock P.M.

I am glad to welcome you to (the Nation's Capital) Washington. We can think of this occasion as a kind of surprise birthday party (for) because it was exactly (just) two years and two days ago that the Agricultural Adjustment Act became a law. (Applause) I pretty well remember the occasion over there (indicating) in the Executive Offices and the fine group of representatives of farmers from every part of the (Union) country who stood around me on that occasion when I signed the Act.

After that took place and in record time you and thousands of other farmers took hold. You set up the machinery to control your affairs and you put the new law to work.

I remember, too, the many -- what shall I call them -- the high and mighty people (applause) the high and mighty people who said you could not do it -- who said it was no use for you to try -- intimating clearly that their only remedy to improve your situation was to let the sheriffs' sales go on. (Applause) That was the old (and very) familiar way -- the high and mighty (balanced) way of balancing farm production

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 VISITING, TREACHERY and GERMANY extemporaneously added to the previously prepared reading copy text. Words in (SHT HSE KONTINENTAL AI GERMANY) parentheses are words that were omitted HOUDINA'S MOLTAICIGIMIA SHT when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared SHT HSE reading copy text.

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with demand. Those people, my friends, did not understand and many of them do not understand today that, if the farm population of the United States suffers and loses its purchasing power, the people in the cities, in every part of the country suffer of necessity with them. One of the greatest lessons that the city dwellers have come to understand in these past two years is this: Empty pocketbooks on the farm don't turn factory wheels in the city. (Applause)

Let us go back for a minute to (the) that Spring of 1933 -- when there was a huge carry-over of almost -- let us take some examples -- thirteen million bales of cotton and a price, because of that carry-over, of six cents a pound. Henry Wallace insists it was six and a-half cents a pound but I know I got four and a-half cents for my cotton. You and I know what six-cent cotton means to the purchasing power of the Cotton Belt.

And you and I remember that there was a huge carry-over of tobacco and the price of tobacco during the preceding six months was the lowest on record for a great many years. Wheat, with a carry-over of nearly four hundred million bushels, and a price of thirty-five cents on the farm or less; corn, with a price of fifteen cents a bushel on many farms -- and I knew some farmers who sold it at nine cents; hogs, selling at three cents a pound.

You and I know what (that) those figures meant in the way of purchasing power for forty million (people) Americans.

When we came down here to Washington that Spring we were faced with three possible ways of meeting the situation (programs). The first method that was suggested involved price fixing by Federal (Government) decree. We (this was) discarded that because the problem of over-production was not solved thereby.

The second (was a) plan was to let farmers grow as much as they wanted to, everything, and to have the Federal Government then step in, take from them that portion of their crop which represented what we called the exportable surplus and, in their name, on their behalf, dump this surplus on the other nations of the world. We discarded that plan (was discarded) for a good many reasons and one was because the other nations of the world had already (begun) taken steps to stop dumping. From that time on, with increasing frequency they were raising their tariffs, establishing quotas and clamping on embargoes against just that kind of proposition. And that is why we discarded that.

Therefore, we came to the third plan -- a plan for the adjustment of totals in our major crops so that from year to year production and consumption would be kept in reasonable balance with each other to the end that reasonable prices would be paid to farmers for their crops and to the end that

unwieldy surpluses would not depress our markets and upset the balance.

We are now at the beginning of the third year of carrying out this policy. You know the results thus far attained. You know the present price of cotton, of wheat, of tobacco, of corn, of hogs and of other farm products today. Further comment on the successful partial attainment of our objective up to this time is unnecessary on my part. You know. (Applause)

I want, for a moment, to emphasize that word "adjustment". It is almost a forgotten word just as some of you, once upon a time, were forgotten men. (Applause) As you know, a great many of the high and mighty -- with special axes to grind -- have been deliberately trying to mislead people who know nothing of farming by misrepresenting -- no -- why use a pussyfoot word -- by lying about the kind of a farm program under which this Nation is operating today.

A few leading citizens have gone astray from (ignorance) other causes. Well, let us take the cause of ignorance. I must admit (it) that. For example, a few years ago in the countryside where I live, I was driving with a (the) prominent city banker (who was driving through up-State New York with me four or five years ago in the late Fall). Everything was brown. The leaves were off the trees. And all of a sudden we passed a beautiful green field. He asked me what it was.

I told him it was winter wheat. He turned to me and said, "That is very interesting. I have always wondered about winter wheat. What I don't understand is how they are able to cut it when it gets all covered up with snow." (Laughter)

The other example was down in Georgia: An (the) editor of a great metropolitan paper (visited) was visiting me (down in Georgia) in the summertime when I showed him my farm with 40 or 50 acres of cotton, when the cotton was nearly grown but before the bolls had formed. Looking out over the cotton fields he said to me:

"What a (great) large number of raspberries they grow down here." (Laughter)

Well, raspberries was right. Because, at four and a-half cents a pound for cotton his mistake was, perhaps, a natural one. (Laughter)

I was speaking (of) to you about that word adjustment. I think it is your duty and mine to continue to educate the people of this country to the fact that adjustment means not only adjustment downward but adjustment upward. If you and I agree on a correct figure for a normal carry-over in a basic crop it means that if we have a bumper crop one year we will, by mutual consent, reduce the next year's crop in order to even up that carry-over. At the same time, if we get a short crop in a given year, you and I agree to increase the next year's crop to make up the shortage. (Applause)

That is exactly what we are doing (today) in the case of wheat this year.

Yes, it is high time for you and for me to carry, by education, knowledge of the fact that not a single program of the A.A.A. contemplated the destruction of an acre of food crops in the United States, in spite of what you may read or (be) what you may have been told by people who have special axes to grind. (Applause)

It is high time for you and for me to make clear that we are not plowing under cotton this year -- that we did not plow it under in 1934 and that we only plowed some of it under in 1933 because the Agricultural Adjustment Act was passed by that Congress at that famous Special Session after a huge crop of cotton was already in the ground.

It is high time for us to repeat on every occasion that we have not wastefully destroyed food in any form. It is true that the Relief Administrator has purchased hundreds of thousands of tons of foodstuffs, purchased them in order to feed the needy and hungry and (are) have been on the relief rolls in every part of the United States.

The crocodile tears shed by the professional mourners of (an) the old and obsolete order over the slaughter of little pigs (laughter) and over other measures to reduce surplus agricultural inventories deceive very few thinking people in this country and least of all the farmers themselves.

in your minds to let you be led astray by the solemn admonitions and specious lies of those who in the past profited most when your distress was greatest. (Applause)

You remember and I remember that not so long ago the poor had less food to eat, and less clothes to wear, when you had to practically give away your products, and the surpluses were greater and they were poorer than they are today when you farmers are getting a reasonable although still an insufficient price. (Applause)

I have not the time to talk with you about many other policies of your Government which affect the farm population of the country. I have not the time, although I would like to do it, to go into the practical work of the Farm Credit Administration which in all of its ramifications has saved a million farms from foreclosure and has accomplished the first great reduction in exorbitant interest rates that this country has ever known. (Applause)

It is because what you stand for is so just and so wholly reasonable (your cause is so just) that no one today has had the temerity to question the motives of this grand (your) "march on Washington." It is a good omen for Government, for business, for bankers and for the city dwellers that the nation's farmers are becoming articulate and that they know whereof they speak. (Applause)

I hope you have enjoyed your stay in Washington.

STATEMENTS FILE

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CAUTION: This address of the President is for publication in newspapers appearing on the street not EARLIER than 5:00 o'clock P.M., EASTERN STANDARD TIME, today, May 14, 1935.

NOTE: Please safeguard against premature release.

STEPHEN EARLY
Assistant Secretary to the
President

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ADMINISTRATION'S AGRICULTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAM.

I am glad to welcome you to the National Capital. We can think of this occasion as a kind of surprise birthday party -- it was just two years and two days ago that the Agricultural Adjustment Act became a law. And I well remember the fine group of representatives of farmers from every part of the United States who stood around me on that occasion when I signed the Act.

In record time you and thousands of other farmers took hold ~~and~~ set up the machinery to control your own affairs and put the new law to work.

I remember, too, the many high and mighty people who said you could not do it -- that it was no use for you to try -- intimating clearly that their only remedy to improve your situation was to let the sheriffs' sales go on. That was the old ~~and~~ way familiar way -- the high and mighty balanced farm production with demand. Those people did not understand and many of them do not understand today that, if the farm population of the United States suffers and loses its purchasing power, the people in the cities, of necessity, suffer with them. One of the greatest lessons that the city dwellers have come to understand in this past two years is this: Empty pocketbooks on the farm don't turn factory wheels in the city.

Go back for a minute to the Spring of 1933 -- when there was a huge carry-over of almost thirteen million bales and a price, because of that carry-over, of six cents a pound. You and I know what six cent cotton means to the purchasing power of the Cotton Belt.

There was a huge carry-over of tobacco and the price of tobacco during the preceding six months was the lowest on record for many years. Wheat, with a carry-over of nearly four hundred million bushels, and a price of thirty-five cents on the farm; corn, with a price of fifteen cents a bushel on many farms; hogs, selling at three cents a pound.

You and I know what that meant in the way of purchasing power for forty million people.

When we came to Washington we were faced with three possible ~~program~~. The first involved price fixing by Government decree. This was discarded because the problem of over production was not solved thereby.

The second was a plan to let farmers grow as much as they wanted to and to have the Federal Government then step in, take from them that portion of their crop which represented the exportable surplus and, in their name, on their behalf, dump this surplus on the other nations of the world. ~~that plan was discarded~~ because the other nations of the world had already begun to stay dumping. With increasing frequency they were raising their tariffs, establishing quotas and clamping on embargoes against just that kind of proposition.

Therefore, we came to the third plan -- a plan for the adjustment of totals in our major crops so that from year to year production and consumption would be kept in reasonable balance with each other to the end that reasonable prices would be paid to farmers for their crops and to the end that unwieldy surpluses would not depress our markets and upset the balance.

We are now at the beginning of the third year of carrying out this policy. You know the results thus far attained. You know the price of cotton, of wheat, of tobacco, of corn, of hogs and of other farm products today. Further comment on the successful partial attainment of our objective up to this time is unnecessary on my part. You know.

I want to emphasize that word "adjustment". As you know, a great many of the high and mighty -- with special axes to grind -- have been deliberately trying to mislead people who know nothing of farming by misrepresenting -- no -- why use a pussyfoot word -- by lying about the kind of a farm program under which this Nation is operating today.

A few leading citizens have gone astray from ~~ignorance~~. I must admit it. For example, the prominent city banker who was driving through up-State New York with me four or five years ago in the late Fall. EVERYTHING was brown. The leaves were off the trees. In passed a beautiful green field. He asked me what it was. I told him it was winter wheat. He turned to me and said, "That is very interesting. I have always wondered about winter wheat." What I don't understand is how they are able to cut it when it gets all covered up with snow.

The other was the editor of a great metropolitan paper. He visited me down in Georgia when the cotton was nearly grown but before the bolls had formed. Looking out over the cotton fields he said to me:

"What a ~~small~~ number of raspberries they grow down here."

Raspberries was right. At four and one-half cents a pound for cotton his mistake was, perhaps, a natural one.

I was speaking of adjustment. It is your duty and mine to continue to educate the people of this country to the fact that adjustment means not only adjustment downward but adjustment upward. If you and I agree on a correct figure for a normal carry-over it means that if we have a bumper crop one year we will, by mutual consent, reduce the next year's crop in order to even up that carry-over. At the same time, if we get a short crop in a given year, you and I agree to increase the next year's crop to make up the shortage. That is exactly what we are doing today in the case of wheat.

It is high time for you and for me to carry, by education, knowledge of the fact that not a single program of the A.A.A. contemplated the destruction of an acre of food crops in the United States, in spite of what you may read or be told by people who have special axes to grind.

It is high time for you and for me to make clear that we are not plowing under cotton this year -- that we did not plow it under in 1933 and that we only plowed some of it under in 1933 because the Agricultural Adjustment Act was passed after a huge crop of cotton was already in the ground.

It is high time for us to repeat on every occasion that we have not wastefully destroyed food in any form. It is true that the Relief Administrator has purchased hundreds of thousands of tons of foodstuffs to feed the needy and hungry who are on the relief rolls in every part of the United States.

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The acknowledged destiny of a pig is sausage, or ham, or bacon or pork. In these forms millions of pigs were consumed by vast numbers of needy people who otherwise would have had to do without.

Let me make one other point clear for the benefit of the millions in cities who have to buy meat. Last year the Nation suffered a drought of unparalleled intensity. If there had been no Government program - if the old order had obtained in 1935 and 1934 that drought on the cattle ranges of America and in the corn belt would have resulted in the marketing of thin cattle, immature hogs and the death of those animals on the range and on the farm, we would have had a vastly greater shortage than we face today.

Our program saved the lives of millions of head of live stock. They are still on the range. Other millions are today earned and ready for this country to eat.

I think that you and I are agreed in seeking a continuance of a national policy which on the whole is proving successful. The memory of old conditions under which the product of a whole years work often would not bring you the cost of transporting it to market is too fresh in your minds to let you be led astray by the solemn admonitions and specious lies of those who in the past profited most when your distress was greatest.

You remember that not so long ago the poor had less food to eat, and less clothes to wear, when you had to practically give away your products and the surpluses were greatest than they are today when you farmers are getting a reasonable although still an insufficient price.

I have not the time to talk with you about many other policies of your Government which affect the farm population of the country. I have not the time to go into the practical work of the Farm Credit Administration which in all of its ramifications has saved a million farms from Foreclosure and has accomplished the first great reduction in exorbitant interest rates that this country has ever known.

Because your cause is so just no one has had the temerity to question the motives of our "march on Washington." It is a good omen for Government, for business, for bankers and for the city dwellers that the nation's farmers are becoming articulate and that they know whereto speak.

I hope you have enjoyed your stay in Washington. Seeing your Government at first hand, you may have a better idea why its efforts sometimes seem lumbering and slow and complicated. On the other hand, you may have seen that we are moving faster and accomplishing more practical results than you have been led to believe by the high and mighty gentlemen I have spoken of. I want to thank you for your patience with us. I want to pledge our wholehearted cooperation as you go forward.

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I am glad to welcome you to the national capital. We can think of this occasion as a kind of surprise birthday party for it was just two years and two days ago that the Agricultural Adjustment Act became a law. And I well remember the fine group of representatives of farmers from every part of the Union who stood around me on that occasion when I signed the Act.

In record time you and thousands of other farmers took hold and set up the machinery to control your own affairs and put the new law to work.

I remember, too, the many high and mighty people who said you could not do it -- that it was no use for you to try -- intimating clearly that their only remedy to improve your situation was to let the sheriffs' sales go on. That

was the old and very familiar way, the high and mighty balanced farm production with demand. Those people did not understand and many of them do not understand today that, if the farm population of the United States suffers and loses its purchasing power, the people in the cities, of necessity, suffer with them. One of the greatest lessons that the city dwellers have come to understand in this past two years is this: Empty pocketbooks on the farm don't turn factory wheels in the city.

Go back for a minute to the Spring of 1933 -- when there was a huge carry-over of almost thirteen million bales and a price, because of that carry-over, of six cents a pound. You and I know what six cent cotton means to the purchasing power of the Cotton Belt.

There was a huge carry-over of tobacco and the

price of tobacco during the preceding six months was the lowest on record for many years. Wheat, with a carry-over of nearly four hundred million bushels, and a price of thirty-five cents on the farm; corn, with a price of fifteen cents a bushel on many farms; hogs, selling at three cents a pound.

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The second was a plan to let farmers grow as much as they wanted to and to have the Federal Government then step in, take from them that portion of their crop which represented

the exportable surplus and, in their name, on their behalf, dump this surplus on the other nations of the world. That plan was discarded because the other nations of the world had already begun to stop dumping. With increasing frequency they were raising their tariffs, establishing quotas and clamping on embargoes against just that kind of proposition.

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I want to emphasize that word "adjustment". As you know, a great many of the high and mighty -- with special axes to grind, have been deliberately trying to mislead people who know nothing of farming by misrepresenting - no -- why use a pussyfoot word -- by lying about the kind of farm program under which this Nation is operating today.

A few leading citizens have gone astray from ignorance. I must admit it. For example, the prominent city banker who was driving through up-State New York with

me four or five years ago in the late Fall. Everything was brown. The leaves were off the trees. We passed a beautiful green field. He asked me what it was. I told him it was winter wheat. He turned to me and said, "That is very interesting. I have always wondered about winter wheat. What I don't understand is how they are able to cut it when it gets all covered up with snow."

The other was the editor of a great metropolitan paper. He visited me down in Georgia when the cotton was nearly grown but before the bolls had formed. Looking out over the cotton fields he said to me:

"What a great number of raspberries they grow down here."

Raspberries was right. At four and one-half cents a pound for cotton his mistake was, perhaps, a natural one.

I was speaking of adjustment. It is your duty and mine to continue to educate the people of this country to the fact that adjustment means not only adjustment downward but adjustment upward. If you and I agree on a correct figure for a normal carry-over it means that if we have a bumper crop one year we will, by mutual consent, reduce the next year's crop in order to even up that carry-over. At the same time, if we get a short crop in a given year, you and I agree to increase the to increase the next year's crop to make up the shortage.

That is exactly what we are doing today in the case of wheat.

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ADMINISTRATION'S AGRICULTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAM, TUESDAY
AFTERNOON, MAY 14, 1935.

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I was speaking of adjustment. It is your duty and mine to continue to educate the people of this country to the fact that adjustment means not only adjustment downward but adjustment upward. If you and I agree on a correct figure for a normal carry-over it means that if we have a bumper crop one year we will, by mutual consent, reduce the next year's crop in order to even up that carry-over. At the same time, if we get a short crop in a given year, you and I agree to increase the next year's crop to make up the shortage. That is exactly what we are doing today in the case of wheat.

It is high time for you and for me to carry, by education, knowledge of the fact that not a single program of the A.R.A. contemplated the destruction of an acre of food crops in the United States, in spite of what you may read or be told by people who have special axes to grind.

It is high time for you and for me to make clear that we are not placing under cotton this year -- wait we did not place it under in 1934 and that we only placed some of it under in 1933 because the Agricultural Adjustment Act was passed after a huge crop of cotton was already in the ground.

It is high time for us to repeat on every occasion that we have not wantonly destroyed food in any form. It is true that the Relief Administrator has purchased hundreds of thousands of tons of foodstuffs to feed the needy and hungry who are on the relief rolls in every part of the United States.

The crocodile tears shed by the professional mourners of an old and obsolete order over the slaughter of little pigs and other measures to reduce surplus agricultural inventories deceive very few thinking people and least of all the farmers themselves.

The acknowledged destiny of a pig is sausage, or ham, or bacon or pork. In those forms millions of pigs were consumed by vast numbers of needy people who otherwise would have had to do without.

Let me make one other point clear for the benefit of the millions in cities who have to buy meat. Last year the Nation suffered a drought of unparalleled intensity. If there had been no Government program -- if the old order had obtained in 1933 and 1934, what drought on the cattle ranges of America and in the corn belt would have resulted in the marketing of thin cattle, immature hogs and in the death of these animals on the range and on the farm. Then we would have had a vastly greater shortage than we face today.

Our program saved the lives of millions of head of live stock. They are still on the range. Other millions are today canned and ready for this country to eat.

I think that you and I are agreed in seeking a continuance of a national policy which on the whole is proving successful. The memory of old conditions under which the product of a whole year's work often could not bring you the cost of transporting it to market is too fresh in your minds to let you be led astray by the solemn admonitions and specious lies of those who in the past profited most when your distress was greatest.

You remember, and I remember, that not so long ago the poor had less food to eat and less clothes to wear and that was at a time when you had practically to give away your products. Then the surpluses were greater and yet the poor were poorer than they are today when you farmers are getting a reasonable although still an insufficient price.

I have not the time to talk with you about many other policies of your Government which affect the farm population of the country. I have not the time to go into the practical work of the Farm Credit Administration which in all of its ramifications has saved a million farms from foreclosure and has accomplished the first great reduction in exorbitant interest rates that this country has ever known.

Because your cause is so just no one has had the temerity to question the motives of your "March on Washington". It is a good man for Government, for business, for bankers and for the city dwellers that the Nation's Farmers are becoming articulate and that they know whereof they speak.

I hope you have enjoyed your stay in Washington. Seeing your Government at first hand, you may have a better idea why its efforts at times seem lumbering and slow and complicated. On the other hand, you may have seen that we are moving faster and accomplishing more practical results than you have been led to believe by the high and mighty gentlemen I have spoken of. I want to thank you for your patience with us. I want to pledge our wholehearted cooperation as you go forward.

material for speech by
F.D.R. to

A.A.A. farmers meeting

5/15/35

The President's folder

the professional

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The President's file

The crocodile tears shed by the professional mourners of an old and obsolescent order over the slaughter of little pigs and other measures to reduce surplus agricultural inventories adopted by the farmers of this country under Government auspices, deceive very few thinking people, and least of all the farmers themselves.

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