

September 3, 1935

[Woman's Democratic Club]

FDR Speech File

INFORMAL EXTEMPORANEOUS REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB
MOSES SMITH'S FARM, HYDE PARK, NEW YORK
September 3, 1935, 7.15 P.M.

(It was raining and Moses Smith said to the President, "It was a mistake to hold this meeting tonight, I will admit." To which the President replied, "You do not call this stormy weather, do you?"

Moses Smith introduced Mrs. Marshall, who, in turn, introduced the President. Mrs. Marshall referred to the fact that she had anticipated the honor of introducing the First Lady as the principal speaker, and explained that Mrs. Roosevelt was absent attending the funeral of Mrs. Ickes, and that the President was speaking in her stead.)

I think that Mrs. Marshall might have described me as a pinch hitter. (Laughter) I think it is only fair because my better half has pinch hit for me so often in various parts of the country that it is only right that once, at least, I should pinch hit for her.

I am awfully sorry that she cannot be here tonight. You know the reason why. She will be back again very soon.

We have come back from Washington, as you know, at the close of a very interesting and very useful session of the Congress, probably one of the most important sessions

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. Words in parentheses are words that were omitted when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

TO THE WOMEN'S BIRTHDAY
MORNING
SEPTEMBER 3, 1933

(It was raining and Moses-Baird said to the President, "It was a mistake to hold this meeting tonight. I will advise" to which the President replied, "You do not call this stormy weather, do you?"

Moses Baird introduced Mrs. Marshall, who in turn introduced the President. Mrs. Marshall referred to the fact that she had anticipated the honor of introducing the first lady as the principal speaker, and explained that Mrs. Roosevelt was absent attending the funeral of Mrs. Lister, and that the President was speaking in her stead.)

I think that Mrs. Marshall might have described me as a pinch hitter. (laughter) I think it is only fair because my better half has pinch hit for me so often in various parts of the country that it is only right that once, at least, I should pinch hit for her.

I am awfully sorry that she cannot be here tonight. You know the reason why. She will be back again very soon.

We have come from New Washington, as you know, at the close of a very interesting and very useful session of the Congress, probably one of the most important sessions

that the Congress of the United States has ever had.

I am not going to talk about politics or about world affairs or about national affairs. I am somewhat busy still in vetoing bills. That is sort of a specialty of mine. I got the habit up in Albany. After the first session in 1929 of the State Legislature, I had vetoed a great many bills and at the end of what we called "the thirty-day period", I said to the Counsel to the Governor, "How many bills did I veto?" "Well," he said, "you vetoed twenty-four per cent of all the bills that were passed." Then it occurred to me to look up the record of a former Governor of the State who was known for his vetoing habits. His name was Grover Cleveland and, by Jove, I found he had only vetoed twenty-two per cent. So I am still passing on some of the legislation that was passed in the last week of the Congress, and for the next two or three days I will be engaged in that and, after that, I hope to have somewhat of a quiet time up here and look over a few places and plant a few trees.

After that, towards the end of the month, I hope to carry out a long cherished program of going out to the West Coast, on a fairly short trip, to dedicate one of the

wonders of the world, the famous Boulder Dam, right across the Canyon of the Colorado River, which will impound a great lake where before there was only a canyon and a rushing torrent. That lake will supply electricity and water for irrigation ditches to a great many communities and counties in the Southwest.

From there I hope to go on to see the Exposition at San Diego. I pressed the button to open it several months ago and I want to see more of it than you get from the mere pressing of a button. And then, a little later on, after that trip, I expect to be back here at Hyde Park.

The one reason that I am going on this trip and the one reason I cannot go back to Washington is the fact that the White House is uninhabitable. Every once in a while, and perhaps you can take this as a parable on life and on government -- every once in a while, in every structure, whether it be the human structure or things made with the hands or things created, like government -- every once in a while you have to repair things. Back in the days of President Coolidge, the roof of the White House leaked. In fact, it was quite dangerous, because some of the beams up under the roof had sagged. As I remember it,

the White House was built starting in 1796, and it was first occupied by President John Adams. George Washington used to come up from Mount Vernon and stay with John Adams in the White House. From that time on it has been occupied by every President of the United States. The White House, of course, is one of our most historic buildings in this country, and I think it will always remain and continue to be the same beautiful structure, and have the same dignity, the same simplicity it has always had. But every once in a while you have to make repairs. In President Coolidge's day it was the roof and they had to completely rebuild the roof and put in new rafters.

This year we found that over a period of thirty years they had not re-wired the White House, and the wires that were put in for the electric lights away back in 1905, in T. R.'s day, were not very safe. Some of them were the wires and the materials used in the processes of 1905 and they were not as permanent or as safe as the materials or processes of 1935. So, this Summer, we are re-wiring the White House with, I think, a better type of wiring and in a way which will make it more safe. There will be less chance of that historic building burning up because we are

doing this much needed repair job. We are putting in some new materials, better materials, and we know more about electric wiring than we did in 1905.

So, while I have to be out of the White House during that period, when I go back it will be a safer place to live in, yet it will be the same old White House that the American people have owned for nearly a hundred and forty years.

Now, I think that is a very useful parable for people to think of in these days. We are not changing the White House, we are just making it a better place and a safer place to live in, but it is the same old White House we have always had and always will have, no matter who the President of the United States may be in the next four years or the next eight years or the next one hundred years.

So it goes with a great many things that we do. We are constantly repairing and I think we are constantly bettering the White Houses that exist in every home, in every farm, in every city and in every community -- that is why I am not very much worried about the future of the United States.

I hope I will see you all very soon again. I

hope, now that the Congress has gone home and the bills are nearly all signed or vetoed, that I shall have a chance to drive around a bit and see some of you and have a delightfully quiet holiday two or three weeks before I start off again. Then I will be able to come back later on in the Autumn -- I certainly will be back here in time to vote.

(Applause)

It is good to see you and I wish I could stay for the rest of the party, but I have to go back. I have various things to do before I go to bed. Many thanks.

(Prolonged applause)