

October 26, 1935

[Rewards to Master Farmers]

FDR Speech File

- 0812

FEDERAL FARM BOARD - WASHINGTON

INFORMAL EXTEMPORANEOUS REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
ON THE OCCASION OF THE VISIT TO THE WHITE HOUSE
OF THE MASTER FARMERS GROUP

October 25, 1935 - 3.30 o'clock P.M.

It is grand to see you all. I recall way back in 1928, when I was Governor of the State of New York, making the first awards to Master Farmers. Since then I have attended several of the Master Farmers' banquets, both in New York City and at Cornell University.

The Master Farmers movement is well worth while. Down here I come in contact with it in other states of the Union and while we have in New York perhaps been more successful in this movement than in any other state, the idea has taken hold practically all over the United States. Even down in Georgia where a Dutchess County farmer tries to raise a little cotton, we have Master Farmers.

We are making, I think, some real progress. Certainly, conditions in general are better than they were although we still have, of course, a good way to go.

But the one interesting thing to me is that the country as a whole is becoming more and more understanding of our general farm problems. They have come to realize that the industrial people in the cities cannot be prosperous

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

... as in figure 1. The total area of Shasta at 12

unless the farm people of the United States have purchasing power, and that is one of the things we have been trying to get across to people in cities all over the United States for the last two or three years.

One of our problems is to increase the purchasing power of a good many sections of the country where the purchasing power was extremely low in the old days. We people who come from upstate New York perhaps have very little real realization of what farming means in the agricultural states of the South -- that is, the conditions of farm life down there. But we are beginning to understand that in the North in the same way that the farm population of the South is beginning to better their conditions so as to bring themselves up more approximately to our conditions in the North, which, even today, are infinitely better than they are in the South.

Another thing we are trying to get away from -- in part by experimentation, because we can't always hit it right the first time -- we are trying to get away from the tremendous fluctuations in crop values that the country has gone through over the last 150 years. I always use an example: if a piece of real estate or a farm or a piece

of city property were to fluctuate in value 50% one way or 50% another way, we regard that as a very extreme fluctuation. If the clothes that we wear or the shoes we buy were to fluctuate in price 50% up or 50% down, we would think that was a pretty serious thing, and yet nobody has ever really given much thought to the fact that farm prices do not hesitate to fluctuate 300% and 400% and 500% in a very short period of time. You take on the basic crops in this country from 1921 to 1933, in the Spring, the price of, let us say, cotton fluctuated from 28¢ a pound down to 4½¢ a pound to the farmer. The price of wheat fluctuated from between \$1.30 and \$1.40 down to as low as 25¢ or 30¢ a bushel on the farm. Well, 30¢ up to \$1.20 is a fluctuation of 400%. And so it goes.

That is true of dairy products and it is true with respect to almost everything that the farm population has produced in our past history, and what we are seeking is greater uniformity of price and the avoidance of some of these terrific fluctuations that have made the farm business in this country such a very highly speculative business. The more we can stabilize that business the better it is for the half of the United States which

is either directly engaged in agriculture or directly dependent on agriculture.

That is one reason why I am so tremendously keen about the Master Farmers' Organization. You, as Master Farmers, can explain these things and because you are Master Farmers you will be listened to far more readily than a mere politician like me, or professors of economics like Ed (Eastman), for instance. Are you a professor of economics?

MR. EASTMAN: No sir, I am not.

THE PRESIDENT: Then, like temporary bankers, like Henry Morgenthau, for, I suppose while he is running the Treasury of the United States he might be called a temporary banker.

It is fine to see you all. I am here for a few days and am going home to Hyde Park next week, using as an excuse the fact that there are only three rooms at the White House that are in good repair. I am awfully sorry that Mrs. Roosevelt isn't here but she had to go to New York and she has asked Mrs. Helm and her aunt, Mrs. Gray, to give you tea at the White House. Also these grounds, I think they call them the South Grounds of the White House, are open to you and I hope you will go through

them and have a very, very good time. I wish I could go out with you myself but I have two or three appointments before I start on the day's mail.

These South Grounds -- that is the official name, but we call it the back yard -- there are about 14 or 15 acres and they are in substantially the same condition today as they were back in the Civil War days. Before Lincoln's time, the back yard of the White House was not even fenced in except for a rough, wooden fence. Andrew Jackson used to keep his cows and sheep on the lawn. This winter, when we were doing over the White House kitchens which needed to be brought up to modern standards, we excavated under the front porch of the White House and in doing that we went through a brick wall and there we found two stone horse-stalls that were put there during the administration of Andrew Jackson, just a little over a hundred years ago. There was a big stone watering trough with the date on and the initials "A. J."; that is going to be preserved and taken over to the National Museum as an historic memento of Andrew Jackson. So you see in the old days, the White House was not only a White House but also a farm. I wish it could continue to be a farm today.

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STATEMENTS FILE

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