

November 19, 1935

[Nat'l Conf. of Mayors]

FDR Speech File

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Official Memorandum No. 1000

INFORMAL EXTEMPORENEOUS REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
IN GREETING THE MEMBERS OF THE U. S. CONFERENCE  
OF MAYORS AT THE WHITE HOUSE EXECUTIVE OFFICES

November 19, 1935, 4:30 o'clock P.M.

I am very glad to see you down here. Many of you I have known personally for a great many years. With some of you, I have worked on many problems in the past.

I have not prepared any formal speech for your gathering today. I wish, though, that I could have sat in on your meeting to hear what has been said and to learn more about the problems of government.

We have, all of us, I think, learned a great deal about the problems of government, in the broad sense of the word, in the past few years. We have tried experiments -- some of them have been very successful and some of them, like all experiments, have not been quite so successful. Through this process, we are building up, as Mayor Hoan has said, a new relationship -- a perfectly sound relationship between the different branches of government, municipal, state and national.

One of the newspaper men, a few moments ago in the press conference, asked the kind of question you are all asked and I am asked every week, the kind of question

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.

In shall return much later on this point on I  
have before these facts a not encouraging record and I hope  
these acts of authority have no history and I hope to make  
very few decisions between the time when I  
have even these 7 facts, records, data & other authorities  
of this kind and the kind of authority now, we all  
know, which is necessary to consider on? sudden and unan-  
ticipated basis, which I am in the course of  
doing now and as circumstances so demand will take such  
action today against certain and those acts of course and to  
those few circumstances which will now be given -- action  
and as soon as it is given, I suppose it will need to  
be as quickly as we possible can do just what  
action -- circumstances can a man call upon himself  
and he should therefore will receive consideration before  
classified his acts. Inglewood, January  
11, 1941

we get rather tired of being asked. Members of the press are present, I know, but I do not mind them hearing this because such questions as this really are silly. The particular question was this: "Is the Government going to stop giving relief next July?" Now, that is the kind of thing we have got to combat in this country -- spreading the word around that everybody who is now on relief is not going to be taken care of starting with the first of July.

My answer was that the Federal Government, and I am sure your answer will be the same for the city governments, did not propose to let people starve after the first of July any more than we have during the past few years.

We are learning also a greater efficiency. Certainly the new work this year, so far as lasting usefulness is concerned, has been infinitely more successful, better planned and better carried out than it was under the old C. W. A. program of the Autumn of 1933. Think what a gain it has been in two years. Go over the lists of projects, both W. P. A. and public works this year, and the percentage of them which will be of lasting benefit to the communities is very, very high. That is something that I think the average citizen in all of your cities appreci-

ates, in spite of various attacks which have been made on these projects.

Of course, in the last analysis, you people who run governments of the cities in this country -- and in the country districts, the supervisors and county commissioners -- are responsible for these projects. You people suggest them and, on the whole, your suggestions with respect to these projects have been extraordinarily good -- a very high percentage, if I may say so. I am perfectly delighted with the usefulness and permanence of these projects.

Well, all of this has come about in the course of less than three years. All of us have learned a lot but we still have a lot to learn. There are various processes of government that can be simplified and ought to be simplified.

For example, and this is not my fault because Congress put it in the bill, I have to sign all the allotments in person. I have signed hundreds, thousands of allotment papers for various projects. Of course, they ought never to come to my desk but we have to go through all kinds of what they call "red tape" because of the law. When such things come in here from the various localities, they have to go through a certain process. They have to go, in part,

to the Director of the Budget, and then they come to me and then they go to the Comptroller General of the United States. There has been a lot of talk about projects being held up for a long time by the Comptroller General but, after all, he is limited in the staff which he can possibly have to pass on these projects and the way he has done it has been perfectly fine. His people are worn to the bone. They have been working day and night but the projects have been coming through and I think some people are going to find in a few weeks that the program as a whole is going to be carried out before the end of November, just as planned away back last Spring.

I would like to say another word on a subject, an important subject, that you and I have in mind. That subject is taxation. As you know, taxes have grown up like Topsy in this country. Of course, there have been a great many efforts to simplify taxation -- to establish lines of demarcation between the different types of taxation, giving certain types to localities, other types to the States and still other types to the Federal Government. But we are all stepping on each other's toes, especially in these past five, ten or fifteen years -- in fact virtually since the beginning of the World War the general tax situation in the United States

has become not only more complicated but has called for revision. We haven't had a revision and I think the time is coming -- not this coming session of Congress because we hope that it will be a very short session -- but by the following year, when all of us can get together and sit around a table and work out a better system of taxation, State, municipal and Federal. I think you can safely assume that late this Winter we are going to ask you to come down and talk about that subject around the table -- I suppose it will be dignified into having the name of a Tax Conference but I would rather keep it informal and get people's views and have it a continuing study which will bring forth some kind of intelligent report some time before the close of the year 1936.

Of course, we don't want to get it mixed up with -- I believe there is an election next Fall. Mayor Hoan has said that this is a non-partisan gathering and we have to keep it so and, in the approaching conference, we have to think of taxation in a non-partisan spirit.

It has been fine to see you all and I hope to see you again next Spring when we can talk a lot more about some things we ought really to talk about. Many thanks for coming.

EXTemporaneous REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
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CONFERENCE OF MAYORS AT THE WHITE HOUSE  
EXECUTIVE OFFICES, NOVEMBER 19, 1935,  
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FOR THE PRESS

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