

December 11, 1935

[State Superintendents of Education]

FDR Speech Files

INFORMAL EXTEMPORANEOUS REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
ON THE OCCASION OF THE VISIT TO THE
WHITE HOUSE EXECUTIVE OFFICES OF
THIRTY-SIX STATE SUPERINTENDENTS OF EDUCATION
Wednesday, December 11, 1935, 2.15 P.M.

(The Superintendents of Education were accom-
panied by Dr. Studebaker, who introduced them
to the President.)

I am awfully glad you are meeting down here. I am not going to make a speech to you. All I can tell you is that I have been trying to keep in touch with our mutual problems because I got to know the State problems during four years up in Albany. I did think that we had accomplished a great deal, but I know that we have to go a long way. That applies not only to New York but to every other State. We have only scratched the surface.

I had a very nice lunch the other day with the Superintendent of Schools of the State of Iowa and we talked about some of our problems. Of course, one thing that has handicapped us and which has made it difficult to go ahead, as you realize, is that the work has been confined of necessity and by law, both, to relief. It has been, of necessity, on a relief basis. All appropriations which have been made have had that one single objective which was relief.

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.

(The Government of America is a government of laws and not of men. It is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.)

I am certain that you are reading from the
the same copy that I read. All I can say
is that I have been trying to read it with you
and I have found because I got to know the
words that were in it already. I am certain that you
are reading a great deal, but I know that you have
a long way to go. That is why I am here today
every other day. We have this government, the
I had a very nice lunch the other day with
Superintendent of Schools of the State of Iowa and
told about some of our problems. Of course, one thing
that was mentioned was the fact that we are
to go ahead, as you realize, in that we have
continued to progress and to do better. We
and that, of necessity, as a result of this
it is which have been made and which are
relative with you.

Now, however, I have stretched the law tremendously. I knew that the use of relief funds, for instance, for the building of schoolhouses and the repair of schoolhouses, on which we have spent a great many millions of dollars all over the country, would help the physical side. But, I frankly did stretch the law when it came to some other things, such as the employment of teachers who are on the relief rolls, although that was a perfectly obvious thing to do. Helping boys and girls to attend high schools and colleges, that was stretching the law just a little bit; however, we took care of quite a number of them.

I would like to give you some of the figures to show what we have done. There were forty-three thousand teachers given work in the emergency education program. More than five hundred thousand men and women were taught reading and writing. As I said the other day, one of the things that a great Senator from Louisiana actually accomplished in the great State of Louisiana was teaching adults to read and write, and that was one reason for his very great popularity in his own State, which cannot be disputed.

Helping five hundred thousand people to read and write is something but, again, it is only just scratching

the surface. That is why, in planning for the future, I think we have all got to work out a mutual program.

For instance, just a few more figures, in the school year 1933-34, there were fourteen and a half million dollars provided in thirteen states to keep the rural schools open, and in 1934-35, seven million dollars was provided in sixteen states.

And now we are going ahead with certain other things which Dr. Studebaker and I are trying to put in as what might be called "entering wedges" -- I think that is the easiest term to use. They are entering wedges and are comparatively small so far as the total expenditure of money goes. But, looking at the problem as a whole, we are gradually working, I think, toward a greater national interest and an understanding in the great many things that the national Government can properly do. But it takes education before we can get that kind of thing through Congress -- another place we have to start education -- that is off the record, Kannee.

Of course, we are trying to cut down the Budget -- that is another problem; we are trying to keep the relief part of the Budget as low as we possibly can but, in these

entering wedges we have started for the general education program I think we are going to go a long way, and that is why I am asking you to be kind to me and not to expect too much in a year.

I think we are going to get somewhere and I hope very much that this conference you are all having will bring, as far as possible, unanimity of thought and action in all the States looking toward a more permanent ~~and~~ national policy.

We have made great strides in the past two and a half years in raising the prices of crops or in saving people from bankruptcy or in opening the banks, but the biggest stride we have made in the past two and a half years has been in interesting the American people in their own Government. I think we have gone further in the past two and a half years than in the last twenty-five years in getting people to understand their Government problems, their social problems and their educational problems. But we cannot go faster than a certain speed and get away with it, and that is why I am going to ask you people to be kind and cooperate and not push me too fast.

on Wednesday. Do you think you could come over and say a few words and give out the diplomas?"

I said, "Certainly, I will be glad to come."

I said, "Are you the President of the graduating class?"

He said, "No, sir; I am the Principal of the school"

I said, "How old are you?"

"I am nineteen."

I said, "You are nineteen and Principal of the school? How many children are there?"

He said, "About two hundred and forty children."

I said, "Have you been to college?"

He said, "Yes, sir; I finished my freshman year at the University of Georgia."

I said, "How are you getting along?"

He said, "I am taking the year out so that I can get enough to go back next year and I will be a sophomore."

I said, "What pay are you getting?"

"I am getting good pay, four hundred and twenty-five dollars."

That is a pretty pathetic story when you come right down to it. It is a pretty tough game.

It is good to see you all. (Applause)

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

December 13, 1935

MEMORANDUM:

Stenographic notes of the President's remarks on the occasion of the visit to his office of thirty-six State Superintendents of Education, who were accompanied by Dr. Studebaker, on Wednesday, December eleventh, at 2.15 P.M.

H. M. KANNEE

STATEMENTS FILE
Shorthand By Kannee