

April 16 1936

[New Standard Bldg, Washington, DC]

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FDR Speech File

READING COPY

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT AT THE LAYING OF THE
CORNERSTONE OF THE NEW INTERIOR BUILDING, WASHINGTON, D.C.
April 16, 1936.

Every American who loves his country should take to heart the earnest plea of the Secretary of the Interior for a vigorous, continuing national policy of conservation. As for myself I am dedicated in this cause. And the Department of Interior, as now constituted, is fully alive to the imperative necessity of protecting and preserving our natural resources.

A Nation less bountifully endowed than ours without a national policy of conservation would have ceased to exist long ago. The remarkable thing was that the people of the United States were so complacent for so long in the face of exploitation, waste and mismanagement, yes, even larceny of the natural wealth that belonged to all the people.

Not all of the people remained insensible to what was happening. On occasion there came as cries from the wilderness warnings against the ravaging of our forests, the waste of our top soil and water supplies and the dissipation

of our oil reserves and mineral deposits. Theodore Roosevelt, for one, rose up and battled against this squandering of our patrimony. He, for the first time, made the people conscious that the vast national domain and the natural resources of the country were the property of the nation itself and not that of any class, regardless of its privileged status.

Supported by an awakened country which by now is beginning to realize the truth of the old warnings we of this administration have devoted our thoughts and energies to the conservation of our God-given wealth. Employing every agency of Government at hand to protect our birthright we have in the past several years made advances far beyond the hopes of earlier day conservationists. But the battle goes on and must be carried forward with renewed vigor if future generations are to receive the full benefits that are their due.

The Department of the Interior, first known as the Home Department, was established four score and seven years

ago, and since that time its activities have been intertwined with the internal development of the nation itself. The report of the Committee of the House of Representatives which favored creation of the department gives us an interesting picture of the times. This report said:

"The general fact remains unaffected that war and preparations for war have been practically regarded as the chief duty and end of this Government, while the arts of peace and production, whereby nations are subsisted, civilization advanced, and happiness secured have been esteemed unworthy the attention, or foreign to the objects of this Government. It seems to us that this should not always continue, but that we should, as a wise people, reorganize the Government so far as to fulfill these duties also, which are suggested by the nature, aspirations and wants of our race as physical, moral and intellectual beings; that it should do something toward protecting the people against those internal enemies -- ignorance, destitution and vice, as well as against those foreign foes who may

invade or who it is apprehended may assail us."

And so, the Department of the Interior came into being with a Secretary in the President's cabinet with jurisdiction over the Commissioner of the General Land Office, the Commissioner of Patents, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and the Commissioner of Pensions.

Only one clerk was provided for, a chief clerk at \$2,000.

Mr. Secretary, we have grown up since 1849.

As the country expanded and the needs of the people grew the activities of the Interior Department broadened to new fields of endeavor.

In the design for this new Interior Building, the cornerstone of which we are laying today, architects have been guided by sound principles of utility and economy. Without sacrificing any of the dignity deserving of a great department of the Federal Government they have conceived a useful building of austere simplicity. They have been sparing in the application of rich ornament, but convenience,

comfort, and sunlight have not been sacrificed.

We have acted wisely, I believe, in erecting this new building at this time. We have incorporated it in our public works program which was established as a means of providing sorely needed employment in the building trades and the industries supplying them and which has already been successful in aiding the return of the nation to better times. This building rising above us, is but a unit of our great public works program which is erecting thousands of school houses, hospitals and other public buildings throughout the land.

Other factors in addition to the problem of relieving unemployment influenced our decision to erect this building without further delay. The great Federal family in Washington, like other large families, has its own serious housing problem. We have grown over a long period of years until governmental buildings have been taxed to capacity, and every available square foot of space put to necessary use.

Government departments have been forced to seek

space in buildings other than those owned by the Federal government. We are now leasing several million square feet of office space in over one hundred privately owned office buildings and have been obliged, in a few cases, to find quarters in residences and apartment buildings. We are eager to complete this building in order to reduce the rent bill. When this building is in use many government workers will be gathered back under a roof owned by the government.

As I view this serviceable new structure I like to think of it as symbolical of the nation's vast resources that we are sworn to protect and this stone that I am about to lay, as the cornerstone of a conservation policy that will guarantee to future Americans the richness of their heritage.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

(My reading copy)

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE LAYING OF THE CORNERSTONE
OF THE NEW DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D. C.
April 16, 1936, 11 o'clock A.M.

(Honorable Frederic A. Delano spoke first,
being followed by Secretary Ickes, who
introduced the President.)

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Secretary and all of you who
are gathered here today at this dedication of the first
large, monumental building that was started in Washington
in this Administration and is being completed in this Ad-
ministration: (Applause)

On behalf of the Government I want to extend my
thanks and my appreciation to those who have taken part
in the actual construction of the new Interior Department
Building, to my old friend, Waddy Wood, the Architect, to
my old friend, Admiral Peoples, the head of the Procure-
ment Division, and also to those who have been in charge
of procuring the materials, of undertaking the contract
and especially to the workmen who have done the job.

(The foregoing was extemporaneous.)

I think that every American who loves his coun-
try should take to heart the earnest and sensible plea of

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.

(This speech should have been addressed to the people of the United States)

one day to file our uniformed self, according to
text set to publication and compare our prepared and delivered ver-
sion with before we can publish it ourselves, and
the date of publication of the authorized text of
(original) (unpublished)

signature of FDR is required and he stated "I
will never sign one word of what I say, so the whole
transcribed material can not be published." But he did
say, "I think it's good which might be one of the best
speeches ever made out, selected for me. Don't tell the
people at once when you get word of this has been signed
because we'll have to withdraw all publishing rights
and not much good will remain out of millions of

(unpublished and unprinted out)

"now and so far as anybody wants to publish
to make address and promises out front or other things you

the Secretary of the Interior for a vigorous, continuing national policy of conservation. As for myself, I am dedicated in this cause. And the Department of Interior, as now constituted, is fully alive to the imperative necessity of protecting and preserving all of our natural resources.

A Nation less bountifully endowed than ours without a national policy of conservation would have ceased to exist long ago. The remarkable thing was that the people of the United States were so complacent for so long in the face of exploitation, waste and mismanagement, yes, and even larceny of the (natural) national wealth that (belonged) belongs to all the people.

(Not all of the people) But not everybody remained insensible to what was happening. On occasion there came as cries from the wilderness warnings against the ravaging of our forests, the waste of our top soil and our water supplies and the dissipation of our oil reserves and mineral deposits. Theodore Roosevelt, when I was a very young man, (for one) rose up and battled against this squandering of our patrimony. He, for the first time, made the people as a whole conscious that the (vast) great national domain and the natural resources of the country were

the property of the Nation itself and not (that) the prop-
erty of any class, regardless of its privileged status.

Supported by an awakened country which by now is beginning to realize the truth of the old warnings we (of this Administration) in these later days have devoted our thoughts and energies to the conservation of (our) that God-given wealth. Employing every agency of Government (at hand) to protect our birthright we have in the past several years made advances far beyond the hopes of earlier day conservationists. But the battle goes on and, as in the case of other battles, it is a battle because there is still a lot of opposition. That battle must be carried forward with renewed vigor if future generations are to receive the full benefits that are their due.

(The) This Department, the Department of the Interior, was first known as the Home Department, and it was a pretty good name. It was established four score and seven years ago, and since that time its activities have been intertwined with the internal development of the Nation itself. I found a few days ago the report of the Committee of the House of Representatives which favored creation of (the) this Department over a century ago and it gives us an interesting picture of the times. This report said:

"The general fact remains unaffected that war and preparations for war have been practically regarded as the chief duty and end of this Government, while the arts of peace and production, whereby nations are subsisted, civilization advanced, and happiness secured have been esteemed unworthy the attention, or foreign to the objects of this Government. It seems to us that this should not always continue, but that we should, as a wise people, reorganize the Government so far as to fulfill these duties also, which are suggested by the nature, aspirations and wants of our race as physical, moral and intellectual beings; that it should do something toward protecting the people against those internal enemies -- ignorance, destitution and vice, as well as against those foreign foes who may invade or who it is apprehended may assail us."

Think of the time when that was written, nearly a hundred years ago, and think of the progress that has occurred since those days.

And so, the Department of the Interior came into being with a Secretary in the President's Cabinet, (with) a Secretary who had jurisdiction over four people, the Commissioner of the General Land Office, the Commissioner of Patents, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and the Commissioner of Pensions.

(Only one clerk was provided for) I am wrong, he had jurisdiction over one more person, the only employee, a chief clerk at \$2,000 a year.

Mr. Secretary, (we have grown up since 1849) you have more than five people under you today.

As the country expanded and the needs of the people grew, the activities of the Interior Department broadened to new fields of endeavor. I like to think that this building speaks for the progress we are making every year.

In the design for the (this new Interior) building, (the cornerstone of which we are laying today) architects have been guided by sound principles of utility and economy. Without sacrificing any of the dignity deserving of a great department of the Federal Government they have conceived a useful building, (of austere) a building of practical simplicity. They have been sparing in the application of rich ornament, but convenience, comfort, and sunlight have not been sacrificed.

I think that we have acted wisely (I believe) in erecting this new building at this time. We have incorporated it in our public works program which was established

as a means of providing sorely needed employment in the building trades and the industries supplying them, and which has already been successful in aiding the return of the Nation to better times. This building rising above us, is but a unit of our great public works program which is erecting thousands of school houses, hospitals and other public buildings (throughout the land) in every State of the Union.

Other factors in addition to the problem of relieving unemployment influenced our decision to erect this building without further delay. The great Federal family in Washington, like other large families, has its own serious housing problem. We have grown over a long period of years until governmental buildings have been taxed to capacity, and every available square foot of space put to necessary use.

Government departments have been forced to seek space in buildings other than those owned by the Federal Government, as you know. We are now leasing several million square feet of office space in over (one) a hundred privately owned office buildings and have been obliged, in a few cases, even to find quarters in residences and

apartment (buildings) houses. So we are eager to complete this building for the practical purpose of reducing (in order to reduce) the rent bill of the family. When this building is in use many government workers will be gathered back under a roof owned by the Government of the United States.

As I view this serviceable new structure I like to think of it as symbolical of the Nation's vast resources that we are sworn to protect and this stone that I am about to lay, as the cornerstone of a conservation policy that will guarantee to future Americans the richness of their heritage. (Prolonged applause).

(The President, in laying the cornerstone, said, "I think it will be interesting to you to know that the trowel which I am about to use is the same trowel that was used by the first President of the United States in 1793 in laying the Capitol cornerstone itself. I think it is a good augury.")

April 15, 1936

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT AT THE LAYING OF
THE CORNERSTONE OF THE NEW INTERIOR BUILDING, WASHINGTON, D. C.
APRIL 16, 1936

CONFIDENTIAL UNTIL RELEASED

CAUTION: The following address of the President must be held in confidence until released. Release only when delivery has actually commenced which probably will be about 11:30 A.M.

M. M. LaHEYDE
Assistant Secretary to the President

Every American who loves his country should take to heart the earnest plea of the Secretary of the Interior for a vigorous, continuing national policy of conservation. As for myself I am dedicated in this cause. And the Department of Interior, as now constituted, is fully alive to the imperative necessity of protecting and preserving our natural resources.

A Nation less bountifully endowed than ours without a national policy of conservation would have ceased to exist long ago. The remarkable thing was that the people of the United States were so complacent for so long in the face of exploitation, waste and mismanagement, yes, even larceny of the natural wealth that belonged to all the people.

Not all of the people remained insensible to what was happening. On occasion there came as cries from the wilderness warnings against the ravaging of our forests, the waste of our top soil and water supplies and the dissipation of our oil reserves and mineral deposits. Theodore Roosevelt, for one, rose up and battled against this squandering of our patrimony. He, for the first time, made the people conscious that the vast national domain and the natural resources of the country were the property of the nation itself and not that of any class, regardless of its privileged status.

Supported by an awakened country which by now is beginning to realize the truth of the old warnings we of this administration have devoted our thoughts and energies to the conservation of our God-given wealth. Employing every agency of Government at hand to protect our birthright we have in the past several years made advances far beyond the hopes of earlier day conservationists. But the battle goes on and must be carried forward with renewed vigor if future generations are to receive the full benefits that are their due.

The Department of the Interior, first known as the Home Department, was established four score and seven years ago, and since that time its activities have been intertwined with the internal development of the nation itself. The report of the Committee of the House of Representatives which favored creation of the department gives us an interesting picture of the times. This report said:

"The general fact remains unaffected that war and preparations for war have been practically regarded as the chief duty and end of this Government, while the arts of peace and production, whereby nations are subsisted, civilization advanced, and happiness secured have been esteemed unworthy the attention, or foreign to the objects

of this Government. It seems to us that this should not always continue, but that we should, as a wise people, reorganize the Government so far as to fulfill these duties also, which are suggested by the nature, aspirations and wants of our race as physical, moral and intellectual beings; that it should do something toward protecting the people against those internal enemies -- ignorance, destitution and vice, as well as against those foreign foes who may invade or who it is apprehended may assail us."

And so, the Department of the Interior came into being with a Secretary in the President's cabinet with jurisdiction over the Commissioner of the General Land Office, the Commissioner of Patents, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and the Commissioner of Pensions.

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Mr. Secretary, we have grown up since 1849.

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Mr. Chairman, Mr. Secretary and all of you who are gathered here today at this dedication of the first large, monumental building that was started ^{in Washington} in this Administration and is being completed in this Administration. (Applause)

On behalf of the Government I want to extend my thanks and my appreciation to those who have taken part in the actual construction of the new Interior Department Building, to my old friend, Waddy Wood, the Architect, to my old friend, Admiral Peoples, the head of the Procurement Division, and also to those who have been in charge of procuring the materials, of undertaking the contract and especially to the workmen who have done the job.

I think that - etc.

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Supported by an awakened country which by now is beginning to realize the truth of the old warnings we ~~of this administration~~ have devoted our thoughts and energies to the conservation of ~~our~~ God-given wealth. Employing every agency of Government ~~at hand~~ to protect our birthright we have in the past several years made advances far beyond the hopes of earlier day conservationists. But the battle goes on and must be carried forward with renewed vigor if future generations are to receive the full benefit that are their due.

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Only one clerk was provided for, a chief clerk at \$2,000.

Mr. Secretary, we have grown up since 1940.

As the country expanded and the needs of the people grew the activities of the Interior Department broadened to new fields of endeavor.

In the design for this new Interior Building, the stones of which we are laying today, architects have been guided by sound principles of utility and economy. Without sacrificing any of the dignity deserving of a great department of the Federal Government they have conceived a useful building of extreme simplicity. They have been sparing in the application of rich ornament, but convenience, comfort, and sunlight have not been sacrificed.

Government departments have been forced to seek space in buildings other than those owned by the Federal Government. We are now leasing several million square feet of office space in over ~~one~~ hundred privately owned office buildings and have been obliged, in a few cases, to find quarters in residences and apartment buildings. We are eager to complete this building in order to reduce the rent bill. When this building is in use many government workers will be gathered back under a roof owned by the government.

As I view this serviceable new structure I like to think of it as symbolic of the nation's vast resources that we are sworn to protect and this stone that I am about to lay, as the cornerstone of a conservation policy that will guarantee to future Americans the richness of their heritage.

As G. - C. - M. S., May 21, 1940
F. C. C. & S. P. B. & C. - 1792
- 100 years of progress

of this Government. It seems to us that this should not always continue, but that we should, as a wise people, reorganize the Government so far as to fulfill these duties also, which are suggested by the nature, aspirations and wants of our race as physical, moral and intellectual beings; that it should do something toward protecting the people against these internal enemies -- ignorance, destitution and vice, as well as against those foreign foes who may invade or who it is apprehended may assail us."

And so, the Department of the Interior came into being with a Secretary in the President's cabinet with jurisdiction over the Commissioner of the General Land Office, the Commissioner of Patents, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and the Commissioner of Pensions.

Only one clerk was provided for, a chief clerk at \$2,000.

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In the design for this new Interior Building, the corner-stone of which we are laying today, architects have been guided by sound principles of utility and economy. Without sacrificing any of the dignity deserving of a great department of the Federal Government they have conceived a useful building of austere simplicity. They have been sparing in the application of rich ornament, but convenience, comfort, and sunlight have not been sacrificed.

We have acted wisely, I believe, in erecting this new building at this time. We have incorporated it in our public works program which was established as a means of providing sorely needed employment in the building trades and the industries supplying them and which has already been successful in aiding the return of the nation to better times. This building rising above us, is but a unit of our great public works program which is erecting thousands of school houses, hospitals and other public buildings throughout the land.

Other factors in addition to the problem of relieving unemployment influenced our decision to erect this building without further delay. The great Federal family in Washington, like other large families, has its own serious housing problem. We have grown over a long period of years until governmental buildings have been taxed to capacity, and every available square foot of space put to necessary use.

Government departments have been forced to seek space in buildings other than those owned by the Federal Government. We are now leasing several million square feet of office space in over one hundred privately owned office buildings and have been obliged, in a few cases, to find quarters in residences and apartment buildings. We are eager to complete this building in order to reduce the rent bill. When this building is in use many government workers will be gathered back under a roof owned by the government.

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1790-1800

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