

July 11, 1936

[Roosevelt Home Club Celebration]

FOR Speech File

INFORMAL EXTEMPORANEOUS REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AT THE ROOSEVELT HOME CLUB CELEBRATION  
MOSES SMITH'S HOME, HYDE PARK, N. Y.  
July 11, 1936, 4 P.M.

(Moses Smith presided as Chairman. He introduced Judge John E. Mack, who spoke. He was followed by a soloist, who sang "My Own United States". Mr. Smith then introduced Representative Caroline O'Day, who was followed by Rev. Phillip O'Mahoney. The United States Military Band played "Home On The Range". Mrs. Smith then presented flowers to Mrs. Roosevelt. Moses Smith then made a short speech, at the end of which he introduced the President.)

Friends and neighbors:

Verily, my holiday has begun. It has begun with this nice homecoming meeting here in Hyde Park and with another nice family party which is to take place at five o'clock. (Laughter and applause)

I can look forward now to two or three weeks of freedom from official cares except, possibly, for the reading and acting on some forty or fifty dispatches a day; (Laughter) the signing of a bag full of mail once every four or five days unless, of course, I get caught in a fog down the coast of Maine, and I am rather praying for fog. (Laughter) Most people pray for light. We are told in church to pray for light. I don't, I pray for fog.

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.

I have been hearing some wonderful things this afternoon. You know, I have been hearing Judge Mack on the air. I have heard his speeches in Convention and I have always wondered what he looked like when he was making a speech. (Laughter) Now I know.

And I have also discovered something else: When Mrs. Moses Smith gave the flowers to my wife somebody said, "Speech, speech," and my wife said, "I never make a speech." (Laughter)

Live and learn! (Laughter)

But I suppose today, up to the time my holiday began at three o'clock, was a fairly typical one of my life in the last three or three and a half years. I started off this morning, when I got off the train in New York and the first person I conferred with was the Mayor of the City of New York. We talked about new projects, useful projects to put unemployed people to work on, such as new schoolhouses and bridges, waterworks, and so forth. And then I talked with the Governor of the State of New York in regard to floods, for a large portion of our State, as you know, the southern tier, has been visited twice in the last two years with very serious floods on a number of rivers. After that

I conferred with the Administrator of Relief, Harry Hopkins, and his Assistant in New York, in regard to this very serious situation that has occurred for the second time in the Northwest. I can only give you a picture of it by telling you that two hundred and seventy-five counties are affected, seriously, by this drought. We have in this State, as you know, sixty-two counties, and out there the average size of a county is about twice the size of one of our counties. So you can see and get an idea of the land area that is affected.

There are some, as I remember it, two hundred and four thousand families -- and that is a lot of families -- and there are a great many more people when you come down to the individuals, probably over a million, possibly a million and a half people, who probably have no idea, no clear idea, as to what the future holds in store for them.

They are brave people, just as the people of this whole country have been brave during the serious days of the depression. They have kept up their heads and they have kept up their hopes that they have a right to expect that they will have every reasonable help not only in keeping alive but in having some future, some worth while future

made possible for them.

And so all the agencies, not only of the Federal Government but of the state governments and the local county governments are joining in this great task of relieving and of solving the problems which the drought has brought upon them. Their crops are burning up; their cattle have nothing to eat, and they themselves have very little either to eat or drink because most of the wells have dried up.

That is an illustration, however, of the next thing I had to do, which was the opening of the Triborough Bridge. We are very apt to think in terms of the spectacular and the obvious -- things like the Triborough Bridge that cost sixty million dollars, that unites three great boroughs, each of them with a population of more than a million souls. That is the spectacular side of what we have been doing. Of course, that Bridge put a great many people to work who needed work, not only on the Bridge, but back in the factories and in the forests and in the mines. I suppose, first and last, there were fifteen or twenty thousand people who were engaged at work in constructing that Bridge, either at the site or away from the site.

We are apt to think of the help that each of our

three forms of government, local, state and Federal, has given; we are apt to think of all that just in terms of this enormous structure. Yet, if we analyze it, we find that it depends very much on the size of the community.

I will give you an example: A little while ago I received in Washington a letter from a small town in the Middle West. It was signed -- there were four hundred voters in the town -- it was signed by three hundred and ninety of them. I don't know what Party the other ten belonged to. (Laughter) But the three hundred and ninety signatures expressed the idea to me that the finest thing that has happened to their town was the building of a new schoolhouse. To them that schoolhouse had been the great need of that town and it was the one thing that they and their wives and children wanted. They had not been able to raise the money to build it out there. Nobody would take their bond -- no bank would lend it to them except, perhaps, at a very high rate of interest. It was an honest, God-fearing community. They believed that over a period of ten or twelve or fifteen years they could pay back the loan, if they could get it on reasonable terms. The result was that the Federal Government made them the loan and gave them

a portion of the cost of the building in what we call "work relief". The building was built and the town feels just as proud of that little schoolhouse as the seven million people who live in New York City feel about their Triborough Bridge.

All over the country, in the thirty-one hundred counties, some useful work has been done. Speaking of schools, there have been built in the last three years over thirty thousand new schools in the United States. They have been built with Federal aid. There are more than a million desks -- additional desks for pupils. In other words, we can educate a million more children than we could three years ago.

We have built, I cannot tell you how many, but we have built not hundreds, but thousands of bridges. And we have built I don't know how many thousands of miles, not only of fine hard concrete roads, but also the farm-to-market roads that have been so much needed in every state.

To me, the interesting thing is that the usefulness of all of these thousands and tens of thousands of projects has depended in large part on the interest of the individual community. Of course, as you know, the origin of these projects is, in almost every case, in the community. The

community knows that it has a certain number of people to take care of, and they have been told that those people should, if possible, be given useful work. Therefore, it has been the community which has suggested what that work should be.

Where the community takes the greatest interest, in those places the work itself is the most valuable, the most permanent and the most satisfactory. On the other side of the picture, in those communities where there is very little interest in the needs of the community, that is where we have the occasional cases of projects that do not seem to anybody to be especially useful from the permanent point of view. So, the ultimate responsibility comes back to just what it was in the days of the New England Town Meetings in the year 1650. In other words, it is local interest in government and local understanding of government problems.

We have very little to fear in this country if we can increase in the next few years the understanding of and interest in government such as we have seen in this country in the past three years. That has been the greatest contribution of the four years of the depression followed by the

three years of the revival. (Applause)

And so, as Mr. Wilson has so well put it in the prayer, I cannot help feeling that the undertaking heart goes with equal strength, equal importance, with the understanding of the problem itself. I think we have increased the functioning of our understanding heart in this country. There are more and more people who are looking at the social needs of our land. There are more and more people who are coming to realize that in many other nations they have gone farther in the past towards the meeting of social needs than we have, and that we can go a good long way in catching up with them, to bring ourselves up to what might be called the modern conception or ideal of what may be best described as personal security for the men, women and children who make up the great mass of our population.

That has been our ideal during these years, and I believe that it is going to be the ideal of the country during the next few years. I believe that the country is going to insist on the maintenance of that ideal and insist on action looking toward its accomplishment. (Applause)

I can amend the old saying by telling you that time, tide and brides wait for no man. (Laughter) (Referring

to his attendance at the wedding of Minister Ruth Bryan Owen which was to take place at Hyde Park at five o'clock.)

It is awfully good to see you and I hope to come back to another meeting of our Home Club very soon. In the meantime, may we have a little clear weather here and a little fog off the coast of Maine. (Applause)