

September 24, 1937

[Cheyenne, Wyoming]

FDR Speech File

For Immediate Release

September 24, 1937.

M. H. McIntyre  
Secretary to the President.

Informal, extemporaneous remarks of  
the President,  
Cheyenne, Wyoming  
September 24, 1937  
10:00 A. M.

Some people wonder why I am here. Last January a good friend of mine came to me and said, "why, during the next four years, don't you take it easy? Why don't you coast? You climbed up a long, steep grade over the past four years and now, during the next four years you might as well have a good time."

I said to him that I was going to continue during these four years the practice of the last four years and that, incidentally, in so doing I would have a good time.

I don't want to coast and the Nation doesn't want me to coast with my feet up on the front wheels.

I have thought that it was part of the duty of the Presidency to keep in touch, personal touch, with the Nation. And so, this year, since January, I have already made one trip through a number of the Southern states on my way back from catching some fish and now I am going out to the Coast for the third time since I have been President - not counting campaign trips - going out to take a "look-see" - to try to tie together in my mind the problems of the Nation in order that I may, at first hand, know as much about the questions that affect all the forty-eight states as possible.

As you know, the greater part of the emergency is over - not all of it because there are still a great many difficult problems and I want to talk to you, very briefly, about some of the things that the national government has done and is doing.

For example, during the past three or four years we have spent in every part of the country a great deal of Federal money in putting people to work. That was the primary objective, but at the same time we have tried our utmost to accomplish useful things and there is not a State - there are very few communities in the whole nation that have not benefitted by these Federal expenditures, not in a temporary way but in a permanent way.

I was thinking this morning of the question of airports and I don't know whether it is thoroughly realized by you here on one of the stations on one of the main transcontinental air lines that the Federal Government has assisted in the building, not of several dozen new airports in the country, not of several hundred, but of many thousands, with the result today that the United States is checker-boarded with airports in every state. That is an accomplishment of the past three or four years.

In the same way, not dozens or hundreds but thousands of schools have been built or renovated with a combination of State, local and Federal funds.

We have to come, someday, to an end of the greater part of that program and just the other day, in Washington, we allocated the last of the Federal money for Public Works projects. This consisted of more schools, more sewer systems, more waterworks and things of that kind where there was a very clear need for replacement or where the states or the localities had already voted the funds.

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 will tell you one amusing story of the allocation for school projects. Congress told me to confine them to those schools where the schools had been burned down or where a new school had to be built to replace a building that was about to tumble down. There came a project from one of the Southern states for the building of a new school building and a new library. The school building was to replace one that was about to fall down and we granted that project. But, in the case of the library they apparently did not have a library and it was therefore not a replacement project. With great regret we rejected the application.

The head of the school came to Washington to see me. I told him how sorry I was that we could not spend Federal funds for new buildings no matter how much they were needed, unless they were to replace one that had burned or tumbled down. And he said, "But, Mr. President, our library did burn down." I said, "That's funny, because there is nothing said about that in the application. When was it burned down?"

And he replied, "Mr. President, our library was burned in 1864 by General Sherman."

On this trip I am looking at many types of projects. I am always eager, when I come west, to get more people out of the East to come West and see things with their own eyes.

The other day I read in a big newspaper of the Middlewest an editorial which took as its text the fact that one of the WPA dams in Kansas had in part been washed out. It meant undoubtedly the loss of a good deal of money. And the editorial pointed out that this was the way the Federal Government was wasting its funds.

Well, I believe that engineers are human just like I am and that they do not make a home-run every time they come to the bat.

But the editorial went on, taking that dam as a text, and pointed out from their point of view, which I do not believe is the point of view of the nation, that in the construction of great dams by the Federal Government we are creating millions of kilowatts of power which will never be used by the people.

I think that you and I and most people realize that when you do create power the public finds some useful way to use it.

In the same way they went on to say that all of these reclamation projects mean a pure waste of money, that to build a project like Casper-Alcova, or Grand Coulee we would make available unnecessary farm lands, and that there are enough good farms in the United States to take care of all the people who need them for fifty years to come.

You and I know that that is not so. You, here on this great central highway know of the number of people - families - who have had to leave their homes on their farms in the drought area, some of them from the eastern part of this state, from the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, people who could not make a go of it on the poor land - families forced to leave their homes to avoid starvation. Those people have come further west, looking for a chance to earn their livelihood, looking for good land and not being able to find it.

So, in the same way, there are thousands of families in the East who are unable to make good on the land they are tilling now for very obvious reasons. It is land that ought not to be under the plow. So, for all those families, I believe that it is the duty of the Federal Government and the State Governments to provide them with land where it is possible to do it, where they can make a living.

I could go on talking about WPA and PWA and Soil Erosion and the CCC camps. As a matter of fact they have all served a useful purpose. It is a bitter country for having spent, for a few years, more than we were taking in in taxes, but don't let anybody deceive you - the Government of the United States is not going broke.

So here I am, trying in this short trip - for it must be short -- to get a cross-section point of view, the point of view especially of the rank and files of the American people in this western country. Yet, it is part of the duty of the Presidency to represent, moreover as possible, all the people, not just Democrats, but Republicans and others as well, not just rich people, but poor people as well. And I have been trying, very simply, to do the most good for the greatest number.

Out here in the cattle country and the sugar beet country, of course, I am interested in the prosperity of the raising of cattle and the growing of beets.

Perhaps somewhere down in my heart, I am a little bit more interested in the one man who has a hundred head of cattle, than I am in the one man who has a thousand head of cattle. And perhaps I am a little more interested in the two men who have a hundred acres of beets than I am in the one man who has a thousand acres of beets.

It seems to me that is one of the orders -- one of the necessary things that goes with the Presidency.

In these next few years -- four years, eight years, twelve years, twenty years -- I am very firmly convinced that the people of the West will have, more and more, a national point of view.

You people out here realize far better than you did four years ago that your prosperity is tied up very intimately with the prosperity of the cotton growers of the South and with that of the industrial workers of the East. And, in the same way, those people in the great factories of the East and Middle West, and on the cotton farms of the South, in the corn belt and in the wheat belt, know that their prosperity is affected by your prosperity out here.

That, I believe, will be written in history as the great accomplishment of these years that we are living in now, the welding together of the people of the United States.

So, my friends, I am glad to have been able to come out here on this small trip, and I hope and expect to come out again during the next three years.

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Visit Committee  
1984 - 5 - 5

P.W.A.  
Schools  
list points

Relief  
C.C.C.  
Phic Tribes  
Preservation

Power

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Roads - Pub. Works

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no market power  
for generation 10  
comes.  
Stock Board 50 years

Informal extemporaneous remarks of the President  
Cheyenne, Wyoming  
September 24 1937 10 /A. M.

Some people wonder why I am here. Last Jan<sup>uary</sup>, a good friend of mine came to me and said "why, during the next four years, don't you take it easy? Why dont you coast? You climbed up a long, steep grade over the past four years and now, during the next four years you might as well have a good time."

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I said to him that I was going to continue during these four years the practice of the last four years and that, incidentally, in so doing I would have a good time.

I dont want to coast and the Nation doesn't want me to coast with my feet up on the front wheels.

I have thought that it was part of the duty of the Presidency to keep in touch, personal touch, with the Nation. And so, this year, since January, I have already made one trip through a number of the southern states on my way back from catching some fish and now I am going out to the Coast for the third time since I have been President - not counting campaign trips - going out to take a "look-see" - to try to tie together in my own mind the problems of the Nation in order that I <sup>might</sup>, at first hand, know as much about the questions that affect all the forty-eight states as possible.

As you know, the greater part of the emergency is over - not all of it because there are still a great many difficult problems and I want to talk to you, very briefly, about some of the things that the national government has done and is doing.

For example, we, during the past three or four years have spent in ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ every part of the country a great deal of Federal money in putting people to work. That was the primary objective, but at the same time we have tried our utmost to accomplish useful things and there <sup>is no such</sup> ~~is~~ a state - there are very few communities in the

whole nation that have not benefitted by these Federal expenditures, not in a temporary way but in a permanent way.

I was thinking this morning of the question of airports and I don't know whether it is thoroughly realized by you here on one of the stations on one of the main trans-continental air lines that the Federal Government has assisted in the building, not of several dozen new air ports in the country, not ~~is~~ several hundred, but ~~is~~ many thousands, with the result today that the United States is checker-boarded with air ports in every state. That is an accomplishment of the past three or four years.

In the same way, not dozens or hundreds but thousands of schools have been built or renovated with a combination of State, local and Federal funds.

We have to come, someday, to an end of the greater part of that program and just the other day, in Washington, we allocated the last of the Federal money for Public Works projects. This consisted of more schools, more sewer systems, more waterworks and things of that kind where there was a very <sup>great</sup> need for replacement or where the states or the localities had already voted the funds.

I will tell you one amusing story of the allocation for school projects. Congress told me to confine them to those schools where the schools had been burned down or where a new school had to be built to replace a building that was about to tumble down. There came a project from one of the Souths ~~rn~~ states for the building, in ~~a community~~ of a new school building and a new library. The school building was to replace one that was about to <sup>fall</sup> tumble down and we granted that project, ~~but~~, in the case of the library ~~was~~ apparently did not have a library, ~~it was not a replacement~~ <sup>and it</sup> ~~they~~ <sup>had</sup> ~~not~~ <sup>been</sup> ~~bought~~ <sup>with</sup> great regret we rejected the application.

The head of the school came to Washington to see me. I told him how sorry I was that we could not spend Federal funds ~~for~~ for new buildings no matter how much they were needed, unless they were to replace ~~one~~ <sup>A</sup> ~~one~~ <sup>or the best</sup> that had burned down. And he said, "But, Mr. President, our library did burn down." I said, "That's funny, because

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*Answer That*  
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from their point of view, which I do not believe is the point of view  
of the nation, that in the construction of ~~these~~ great dams by the  
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which will never be used by the people.

~~But~~, I think that you and I and ~~most~~ most people realize that  
when you do create power the public finds some useful way to use it.

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You and I know that that is not so. You, here on this great  
central highway know of the number of people, families, who have had  
to leave their homes on their farms in the drought area, some of them  
from the eastern part of this state, from the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas,  
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So, in the same way, there are thousands of families in the East who are unable to make good on the land they are tilling now for very obvious reasons. It is land that ought not to be ~~under~~ under the plow. So, for all those families, I believe that it is the duty of the Federal Government and the State Governments to provide them with land where it is possible to do it, where they can make a living.

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STATEMENTS FILE

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September 24 1937 10 A. M.

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Well, I think that you and I and that most people realize that when you do create power the public finds some useful way to use it.

In the same way they went on to tell the people that all of these reclamation projects meant a pure waste of money, that to build a project like Casper, Alcova, or Grand Coules, why, by doing so, we would put into use unnecessary farm lands, that there were enough good farms in the United States to take care of all the people who needed them for fifty years to come.

You and I know that that is not so. You, here on this great central highway know of the number of people, families, who have had to leave their homes on their farms in the drought area, some of them from the eastern part of this state, from the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, people who could not make a go of it on the poor land,

forced to leave their homes to avoid starvation. Those people have come further west, looking for a chance to earn their livelihood, looking for good land and not being able to find it.

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And so, I could go on talking about WPA and PWA and Soil Erosion and the CCC camps. As a matter of fact, it has all served a pretty useful purpose. It is a better country for having spent, for a few years, more than we were taking in in taxes, and don't let anybody deceive you - the Government of the United States is not going broke.

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INFORMAL EXTEMPORANEOUS REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
MARSHALLTOWN, IOWA  
September 23, 1937

I am glad to come back to Iowa after an absence of nearly a year. As you know, this is not a campaign trip but it is merely doing what I think every President ought to do and that is, once a year, to try to see something of the country at first hand.

I believe that on this trip so far things are a good deal better than they were in 1936.

At this particular moment I have to be very careful of what I say because, up on the front platform of this car, they are making a record on a disc. And, also, the newspapermen in the club car, who are connected with this back platform by this instrument, (indicating microphone) are taking everything down, trying to get a real story that will appear in the headlines. So I have got to disappoint them once more.

As a matter of fact, I know a lot of you good people here are interested in one of the objectives of government -- the stability of crop prices. It is one of the big things that we have let slide this year, and we know what happens to the country when corn and cotton and wheat and other major crops fluctuate up and down the scale and people haven't got any idea, when they plant their crops, what they are going to get for them when they reap them.

That is something, I believe, that modern civilization must solve and can solve -- and I am not speaking in a party spirit, as you know. I think the time has come when the government can devise ways and means which will stabilize prices that farmers get for what they grow. And I believe, too, that that can be done without bankrupting the government.

On this trip I am talking to many people about methods to be used in obtaining those ends. You know, a lot of people mix up objectives with methods and, sometimes, when they don't like the objectives, they say, "Oh, yes, we do like the objectives, but we don't like the methods proposed by this particular fellow." Well, I am not in love with any particular methods but I am in love with the particular objectives which the people are after and I am after.

That is why tomorrow, when I will be in the beet sugar area and cattle area, I will be trying to get at first hand what the people are thinking about; and trying to get at first hand the methods to be used in gaining the objectives, because I am certain that we are together as to what those objectives are.

I said I was not going to make a speech but I seem to have made one.

I suppose that in the last twenty-five years I have seen a good deal more of the United States than almost anybody in public life except Jim Farley. I am keen to see more of it and I propose to keep on traveling.

Many thanks.

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM BY THE PRESIDENT

September 24, 1937.

This was basis of Cheyenne  
speech September 24, 1937.

## TOPHEAVY PUBLIC WORKS.

In Wyandotte county, Kas., an 80-foot section of a new dam collapsed the other night. The dam was about 1,400 feet long. Its cost was \$1,500,000. It was built under WPA auspices. H. L. Rapport, chief engineer for the WPA in Kansas, said the collapse seemed to have resulted from "just too much weight for the base underneath."

The prime object of the government's projects was not to build soundly, but to spend money in the congressional districts as rapidly as it could be siphoned from the treasury. Large-scale engineering works cannot be improvised overnight. In ordinary practice, study of the results of a project, detailed examination of the site, the drawing of plans and the checking and rechecking of plans and estimates require at least as much time as the construction itself. Men can change the face of nature, but only the foolhardy will undertake large works without going through the painstaking preliminaries which experience has proved essential to economy and safety.

Probably there will not be many dramatic failures such as took place in Wyandotte county; the engineering profession as a whole can be counted upon to build safely even under the adverse conditions imposed by the administration. But if Mr. Rapport's words are taken figuratively as well as literally they will apply to other items in the public works program. Most of them will collapse "from just too much weight for the base underneath."

That is notably true of the irrigation and power projects which Mr. Roosevelt intends to visit on his forthcoming western trip. He proposes to inspect the Casper-Alcova, the Owyhee, Bonneville, Grand Coulee, and Fort Peck dams. Adequate information regarding the Owyhee project is not at hand. There can be no slightest doubt that each of the others is costing more than the benefits which may be expected of it can justify. In that sense each of them is destined to collapse "from just too much weight for the base underneath." The taxpayers, needless to say, are at the bottom of the pile.

The government's own engineers had reported adversely on most of the projects which Mr. Roosevelt will visit. Under pressure, the army and reclamation engineers altered their verdicts, but there never was any doubt what they really thought. With the exception of Fort Peck, these projects are intended primarily to provide irrigation water and power. There is no market now for anything like the amount of power to be produced in the regions where it will be produced and little likelihood that there will be such a market for generations to come. Likewise, there is no shortage in this country today of desirable farm lands and no likelihood that a shortage will develop for at least fifty years, if then. Even assuming a continued increase in population, it is doubtful if lands so far from the marketing center will be worth what it will cost to irrigate them. Meanwhile the existence of these projects must be expected to depress the price of farm lands and crops in other sections of the country.

The Fort Peck dam, near Glasgow, Mont., should prove particularly interesting to the President and his party. Here is what is said to be the largest earth dam in the world. It is as high as a seventeen-story building and two miles long. The plan call for the production of only minor amounts of electricity and the uses of the dam for irrigation and flood control are negligible. The grand and, practically speaking, the only use for this gigantic structure is to impound water to render the Missouri river navigable about as far up as Tunkion, S. D.; that is to say, the dam will increase the navigable stretch of the river by a few hundred miles in a sparsely settled agricultural area. To achieve this end a dam which will cost (according to preliminary estimates, no doubt since exceeded) about \$5 million dollars is being built, and even then the expenditure will be of no value unless another \$5 million dollars is spent in dredging the channel. Other millions must be spent each year to keep the channel dredged.

Out in Kansas a million and a half dollars was wasted when the dam gave in. The waste at Fort Peck is at least fifty times as large. The waste on the Columbia river is at least a hundred times as large. In that sense the dams which Mr. Roosevelt will inspect are as topheavy as the Wyandotte dam.

## PRISONS AND POLITICS.

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## **PRISONS AND POLITICS**

The state superintendent of prisons, Joseph D. Ragen, has announced that hereafter the spoil system will not control appointments and promotions at the penal institutions of Illinois. It is to be hoped that this policy will be adhered to. When wardens and guards are chosen for their vote-getting powers, lax discipline, contract graft and other abuses follow. The test will come on the eve of elections when the political machine is under greatest temptation to load the public services with party men. If the temptation can be resisted at that time, Illinois will know that the prisons are no longer in politics.

### *Editorial of the Day*

**\*\* IGNORE HISTORY**

**Florida Statutes, Digest**

The Kansas City Star cites the case of the young French correspondent who, when introduced to a distinguished editor of a London newspaper, sought to make apology for the fact that he was not as well versed in history and international politics as he should be.

It was almost immediately after the world war, and the famous editor saw fit to brush aside the apology with the declaration, "Young man, your ignorance of history is an advantage. The world has entered a new era. The past is no longer a guide. Knowledge of history would only mislead you."

The editor's words were full of folly, as we demonstrated in less than a year, when the nation again were following their old paths and a working knowledge of history and international politics of former years was absolutely essential to any one seeking intelligently to report what was going on in the world.

When the New Deal came into power all the old books on economics went into the discard. If we don't search them out and apply their teachings again we will ride straight to catastrophe.

speaker turned a truism, which is a matter of common knowledge to the better informed, into

For Immediate Release

September 24, 1937.

M. H. McIntyre  
Secretary to the President.

Informal, extemporaneous remarks of  
the President,  
Cheyenne, Wyoming  
September 24, 1937  
10:00 A. M.

Some people wonder why I am here. Last January a good friend of mine came to me and said, "why, during the next four years, don't you take it easy? Why don't you coast? You climbed up a lot, steep grade over the past four years and now, during the next four years you might as well have a good time."

I said to him that I was going to continue during these four years the practice of the last four years and that, incidentally, in so doing I would have a good time.

I don't want to coast and the Nation doesn't want me to coast with my feet up on the front wheels.

I have thought that it was part of the duty of the Presidency to keep in touch, personal touch, with the Nation. And so, this year, since January, I have already made one trip through a number of the Southern states on my way back from catching some fish and now I am going out to the Coast for the third time since I have been President - not counting campaign trips - going out to take a "look-see" - to try to tie together in my own mind the problems of the Nation in order that I may, at first hand, know as much about the questions that affect all the forty-eight states as possible.

As you know, the greater part of the emergency is over - not all of it because there are still a great many difficult problems and I want to talk to you, very briefly, about some of the things that the national government has done and is doing.

For example, during the past three or four years we have spent in every part of the country a great deal of Federal money in putting people to work. That was the primary objective, but at the same time we have tried our utmost to accomplish useful things and there is not a State - there are very few communities in the whole nation that have not benefitted by these Federal expenditures, not in a temporary way but in a permanent way.

I was thinking this morning of the question of airports and I don't know whether it is thoroughly realized by you here on one of the stations on one of the main transcontinental air lines that the Federal Government has assisted in the building, not of several dozen new airports in the country, not of several hundred, but of many thousands, with the result today that the United States is checkerboarded with airports in every state. That is an accomplishment of the past three or four years.

In the same way, not dozens or hundreds but thousands of schools have been built or renovated with a combination of State, local and Federal funds.

We have to come, someday, to an end of the greater part of that program and just the other day, in Washington, we allocated the last of the Federal money for Public Works projects. This consisted of more schools, more sewer systems, more waterworks and things of that kind where there was a very clear need for replacement or where the states or the localities had already voted the funds.

I will tell you one amusing story of the allocation for school projects. Congress told me to confine them to those schools where the schools had been burned down or where a new school had to be built to replace a building that was about to tumble down. There came a project from one of the Southern states for the building of a new school building and a new library. The school building was to replace one that was about to fall down and we granted that project. But, in the case of the library they apparently did not have a library and it was therefore not a replacement project. With great regret we rejected the application.

The head of the school came to Washington to see me. I told him how sorry I was that we could not spend Federal funds for new buildings no matter how much they were needed, unless they were to replace one that had burned or tumbled down. And he said, "But, Mr. President, our library did burn down." I said, "That's funny, because there is nothing said about that in the application. When was it burned down?"

And he replied, "Mr. President, our library was burned in 1864 by General Sherman."

On this trip, I am looking at many types of projects. I am always eager, when I come west, to get more people out of the East to come West and see things with their own eyes.

The other day I read in a big newspaper of the Middlewest an editorial which took as its text the fact that one of the WPA dams in Kansas had in part been washed out. It meant undoubtedly the loss of a good deal of money. And the editorial pointed out that this was the way the Federal Government was wasting its funds.

Well, I believe that engineers are human just like I am and that they do not make a home-run every time they come to the bat.

But the editorial went on, taking that dam as a text, and pointed out from their point of view, which I do not believe is the point of view of the nation, that in the construction of great dams by the Federal Government we are creating millions of kilowatts of power which will never be used by the people.

I think that you and I and most people realize that when you do create power the public finds some useful way to use it.

In the same way they went on to say that all of these reclamation projects mean a pure waste of money, that to build a project like Casper-Alcova, or Grand Coulee we would make available unnecessary farm lands, and that there are enough good farms in the United States to take care of all the people who need them for fifty years to come.

You and I know that that is not so. You, here on this great central highway know of the number of people - families - who have had to leave their homes on their farms in the drought area, some of them from the eastern part of this state, from the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, people who could not make a go of it on the poor land - families forced to leave their homes to avoid starvation. Those people have come further west, looking for a chance to earn their livelihood, looking for good land and not being able to find it.

So, in the same way, there are thousands of families in the East who are unable to make good on the land they are tilling now for very obvious reasons. It is land that ought not to be under the plow. So, for all those families, I believe that it is the duty of the Federal Government and the State Governments to provide them with land where it is possible to do it, where they can make a living.

I could go on talking about WPA and PWA and Soil Erosion and the CCC camps. As a matter of fact they have all served a useful purpose. It is a better country for having spent, for a few years, more than we were taking in in taxes, but don't let anybody deceive you - the Government of the United States is not going broke.

So here I am, trying in this short trip - for it must be short -- to get a cross-section point of view, the point of view especially of the rank and file of the American people in this western country. Yes, it is part of the duty of the Presidency to represent, insofar as possible, all the people, not just Democrats, but Republicans and others as well, not just rich people, but poor people as well. And I have been trying, very simply, to do the most good for the greatest number.

Out here in the cattle country and the sugar beet country, of course, I am interested in the prosperity of the raisers of cattle and the growers of beets.

Perhaps somewhere down in my heart, I am a little bit more interested in the ten men who have a hundred head of cattle apiece, than I am in the one man who has a thousand head of cattle. And perhaps I am a little more interested in the ten men who have a hundred acres of beets than I am in the one man who has a thousand acres of beets.

It seems to me that is one of the orders -- one of the necessary things that goes with the Presidency.

In these next few years -- four years, eight years, twelve years, twenty years -- I am very firmly convinced that the people of the Nation will have, more and more, a national point of view.

You people out here realize far better than you did four years ago that your prosperity is tied up very intimately with the prosperity of the cotton growers of the South and with that of the industrial workers of the East. And, in the same way, those people in the great factories of the East and Middle West, and on the cotton farms of the South, in the corn belt and in the wheat belt, know that their prosperity is affected by your prosperity out here.

That, I believe, will be written in history as the great accomplishment of these years that we are living in now, the welding together of the people of the United States.

So, my friends, I am glad to have been able to come out here on this annual trip, and I hope and expect to come out again during the next three years.

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