
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”

The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

**Series 2: “ You have nothing to fear but fear itself:” FDR
and the New Deal**

File No. 1087

1937 October 4

Grand Forks, ND - Address re Agriculture

SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT
GRAND FORKS, N. D.
OCTOBER 4, 1937.

I regret that the necessities of the schedule brought me through the greater part of North Dakota by dark. Last night, however, I saw a portion of the drought area of eastern Montana -- a situation which is akin to yours in the western part of this State. We can at least be thankful that the rains and the crops in this valley, and, indeed, in the eastern part of both Dakotas and most of Minnesota have been far more plentiful than last year.

On this intensely interesting trip I have had another view of that northern and western part of the United States which is so greatly dependent for its prosperity on agriculture and its sister -- forestry. I am more than ever convinced of the importance of continuing our national policy of working towards a better economy by stabilizing

and improving the life of the average family.

I received the other day a letter from one of the only two living former members of the Supreme Court of the United States.

I have not asked his permission but I am certain that he will not mind my reading to you three sentences from his letter because they express so beautifully the thoughts of so many of us. He says:

"In this season of grave reflection it gives me greatest comfort and happiness to realize that politically and socially through all my long life, my earnest sympathies have gone out and my earnest efforts have been exercised for the great numbers of my neighbors who ~~xxx~~ ^{were} living in intolerable conditions while a few of us under discriminating laws of our own making were enjoying much more than a fair share of the bounties of nature and governments.

The confidence that this has been and is unnecessary and socially unwise, and can and should be corrected in large measure by rational and social legislation, is at bottom the reason, my dear Mr. President, why I see eye to eye with you in your effort to accomplish in eight years what should have been in process of accomplishment through the last forty or fifty years.

My conviction is definite that the most difficult charges for our political adversaries ^{to} answer at the bar of history will be their opposition to the adoption of civilization's only process for peaceably settling disputes between nations, and their callous indifference and opposition to civilization's other demand that our neighbors be given at least a modest share in the comforts of life."

And he goes on to speak of what we are doing by introducing into our national life and legislation something at least of the influence of the Golden Rule --

the inauguration of a trend toward better things which very certainly can never be halted or turned back. And finally he pays me the finest compliment any man could have in his life time. He says "Of course you have fallen into some errors -- that is human, but you have put a new face upon the social and political life of our country."

If ever I get to be eighty years old, like Mr. Justice John H. Clarky I hope that I will have the same spirit that still seeks better things for my neighbors.

In seeking the betterment of our farm population, no matter what part of the country they live in, no matter whether they raise cotton or corn or wheat or beets or potatoes or rice, the experience we have today teaches us that if we would avoid the poverty of the past, we must strive today -- not tomorrow -- toward two objectives.

Any one crop, wheat or cotton or corn, for example, is like any widely used manufactured commodity like bricks or automobiles or shoes. If, for instance, every shoe factory in the United States were to run on a three-shift basis, turning out shoes day and night for two or three years, we would have such a surplus of shoes in the United States that that surplus would have to be sold to the public, in order to get rid of it, at far less than the actual cost of manufacturing the shoes.

The same thing holds good of wheat or cotton or corn. We should remember, incidentally, that the prosperity of the wheat growers helps the prosperity of the cotton growers, because you in the Northwest have more money to buy more articles made out of cotton, and the prosperity of the cotton growers helps the growers of wheat, for the cotton belt is enabled to buy and eat more bread.

If an enormous surplus of wheat piles up in the hands of buyers and speculators, you know from past experience how the price of wheat will drop almost out of sight the following year. Neither you nor I want to repeat the experiences of 1932.

Therefore, I believe that it is essential to our national economy that we have something to say about the control of the major crop surpluses. The Supreme Court has ruled, in a divided opinion, that the Government cannot make a contract with a farmer by which acreage is fixed either downward or upward. I have never subscribed to the constitutional theory that agriculture is a purely local matter and that it has, therefore, no national scope.

Perhaps it will be held constitutional for the Government to say to a farmer "If you do thus and so the Government will do thus and so." As a matter of common sense I cannot see very much practical difference

between the two methods. In the one case the farmer voluntarily enters into a contract; in the other case he voluntarily does something with the knowledge that the Government on its part will do something. *One is a
Contract; the other is a promise. The result in the second.*
I feel certain that a majority in both Houses of the Congress will heed the wish of most of the farmers of the Nation in enacting crop surplus control legislation. And it is my thought that legislation toward that end ought to be passed at the earliest possible moment.

Because this legislation was not passed at the last session, it is too late for it to have any bearing on the winter wheat which is now in the ground. Many farmers do fall *plowing* ~~plowing~~ against next spring's seeding, and in some parts of the Nation crops, such as cotton, are actually planted in late February and early March.

Even after a bill is passed and becomes law on the signature of the President, it takes a month or two before it is humanly possible to set up the machinery in all parts of the country to carry out the provisions of the new law. If, therefore, new legislation is to affect the 1938 crops, haste seems to be important from every angle.

I am happy to come back to North Dakota, and I hope that the coming year will bring you still further along the road to prosperity.

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
Grand Forks, North Dakota
October 4, 1937, 11:15 A.M., C.T.

GOVERNOR LANGER, MY FRIENDS OF NORTH DAKOTA AND OF THE NEARBY
STATE OF MINNESOTA AS WELL:

I very much regret that the necessities of the railroad schedule brought me through the greater part of North Dakota by dark. Last night, however, I saw a portion of the drought area of eastern Montana where they have a situation that is akin to your(s) situation in the western part of this State. We can at least be thankful (that) for the rains and the crops in this valley and, indeed, in the eastern part of both Dakotas and most of Minnesota have been far more plentiful this year than last (year).

And I know something of this valley even though this is the first time that I have been in Grand Forks in the daytime. I have known a great deal about it because of a young man who gave me a great disappointment this morning. I had always thought that "Jefty" O'Connor was born in Grand Forks, but he told me that he didn't get here until he was twelve days old.

He has left North Dakota for a while and is now a citizen of California although, ever since I have been in Washington he has been there, doing his part -- and it is a very good one -- in keeping the banks of the United States solvent and your money safe.

I am glad to have had a chance to see your great University, to see the work that is being done with the assistance given by the Federal Government toward the erection of buildings -- to see what I believe is the first mistake of the WPA, this grandstand, it is

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.

of attack struck to bring memory off moment we signed agreement
to this speech and to writing a new I present single shall each
island of this archipelago a small rock made available
and time to day of visit will be long enough and at earliest
the gallant men of our side has easier and more (read) I think
opportunity to face has national flag to sing because and in what
(read) real and true will fully realize who we are and
at this point have gallant men to address and I hope
I will not let you down if said over I fear make both and
all men now and among us to stand by freedom facing a world and
that should come and I believe this hemisphere is now
and that we stand by each other hand in hand and forward
the great vision we all live in not afraid about that and all
and no one else in need and I would very sincerely appreciate it
and all -- one body just a bit to do -- free and noble, equal and
when you say has never made up to stand up and
achieve this you can't spend a bit even of safety and I
and we never ourselves and this camp made at first now and all of
you all of -- enabling to witness and know yourself honest
and in this business and this not to interfere with and if anything I

only half as big as it ought to be.

On this intensely interesting trip I have had another view of the northern and western part of the United States which is so greatly dependent for its prosperity on agriculture and its sister occupation -- forestry. And I am more than ever convinced of the importance of continuing our national policy of working towards a better economy by stabilizing and improving the life of the average family.

{I received} The other day I got a letter from one of the only two living former members of the Supreme Court of the United States.

I have not asked his permission but I am certain that he will not mind my reading to you three sentences from his letter because they express so beautifully the thoughts {of so many of us} that many of us have. He says in his letter:

"In this season of grave reflection it gives me greatest comfort and happiness to realize that politically and socially through all my long life, my earnest sympathies have gone out and my earnest efforts have been exercised for the great numbers of my neighbors who were living in intolerable conditions while a few of us under discriminating laws of our own making were enjoying much more than a fair share of the bounties of nature and governments. (Applause)

"The confidence that this has been and is unnecessary and socially unwise, and can and should be corrected in large measure by rational and social legislation, is

at bottom the reason, my dear Mr. President, why I see eye to eye with you in your effort to accomplish in eight years what should have been in process of accomplishment through the last forty or fifty years.

(Applause)

"My conviction is definite that the most difficult charges for our political adversaries to answer at the bar of history will be their opposition to the adoption of civilization's only process for peaceably settling disputes between nations, and their callous indifference and opposition to civilization's other demand that our neighbors be given at least a modest share in the comforts of life." (Applause)

And he goes on to speak of what we are doing by introducing into our national life and legislation something at least of the influence of the Golden Rule -- the inauguration of a trend toward better things which very certainly can never be halted or turned back. And finally he pays me the finest compliment that any man could have in his lifetime. He says,

"Of course you have fallen into some errors -- that is human, but you have put a new face upon the social and political life of our country." (Applause)

And, my friends, if ever I get to be eighty years old, like Mr. Justice John H. Clarke, I hope that I will have the same spirit that at that age still seeks better things for my neighbors. (Applause)

In seeking the betterment of our farm population, no matter what part of the country they live in, no matter whether they raise

shoes. And the same thing goes for wheat. Yes, the principle is the same whether it is shoes or wheat or cotton or corn or hogs.

(The same thing holds good of wheat or cotton or corn.) We should remember, incidentally, that the prosperity of the wheat growers helps the prosperity of the cotton growers, because you in the Northwest, when wheat is bringing a reasonable and fair price, you have more money to buy more articles made out of cotton, and, in the same way, the prosperity of the cotton growers helps you, the growers of wheat, for the cotton belt, if the price of cotton is reasonable and brings a fair price, is enabled to buy and eat more bread.

And I think we have come to a realization all over the country that if an enormous surplus of (wheat) any one crop, whether it be cotton or wheat or any other thing, piles up in the hands of buyers and speculators, (you know from past experience how the price of wheat will drop almost) the price will drop out of sight the following year. Neither you nor I want to repeat the experiences of 1932.

Therefore, I believe that it is essential to our national economy that we have something to say about the control of (the) major crop surpluses. The Supreme Court has ruled, in a divided opinion, that the Government cannot make a contract with a farmer by which acreage is fixed either (downward or) upward or downward. I, personally, have never subscribed to the constitutional theory that agriculture is a purely local matter and (that it) has (therefore) no national (scope) interest.

Perhaps it will be -- when we pass the new crop bill,

perhaps it will be held constitutional for the Government to say to a farmer, "If you do thus and so, the Government will do thus and so." Now, as a matter of common sense, from your point of view and mine, (I) we cannot see very much practical difference between the two methods. In the one case the farmer voluntarily enters into a contract; in the other case he voluntarily does something with the certain knowledge that, having done it, the Government on its part will do something. One is a contract; the other is a promise. And the result is the same. (Applause)

I feel certain that a majority in both Houses of the Congress will heed the wish of (most) the majority of the farmers of the Nation in enacting crop surplus control legislation. And it is my thought that legislation toward that end ought to be passed at the earliest possible moment.

Because this legislation -- because it was not passed at the last session, it is too late for it to have any bearing on the winter wheat (which) that is now in the ground. Many farmers, in addition to that, do fall plowing against next spring's seeding, and in some parts of the Nation crops, such as cotton, are actually (planted) put in the ground in late February and early March.

And remember another thing, that even after a bill is passed and becomes law on the signature of the President, it takes a month or two before it is humanly possible to set up the machinery in all parts of the country to carry out the provisions of the new law. If, therefore, new legislation is to affect the 1938 crops, haste seems to be important from every angle.

And so, my friends, I come to a great agricultural section

with the message that your interest is exactly the same as every
other agricultural section of the Nation, even the same interest
as it is in the town of Hyde Park, County of Dutchess, State of
New York. (Applause) I am happy to come back to North Dakota, and
I hope that the coming year will bring you still further along the
road to prosperity. And I am confident that we are going to con-
tinue on that road if our purpose is firm, if we go along the road
we are going now. (Applause)

STATEMENTS FILE
Shorthand By Kanner

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Extemporaneous interpolations by the President
in his address, Grand Forks, No. Dak.,
October 4, 1937.

Governor Langer, my friends of North Dakota
and of the nearby State of Minnesota as well:

I very much regret that the necessities of
the railroad schedule brought me through the
greater part of North Dakota by dark. Last night,
however, I saw a portion of the drought area of
eastern Montana where they have a situation that
is akin to your situation in the western part of
this State. We can at least be thankful for the
rains and the crops in this valley and, indeed,
in the eastern part of both Dakotas and most of
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year than last.

And I know something of this valley even
though this is the first time that I have been in
Grand Forks in the daytime. I have known a
great deal about it because of a young man who
gave me a great disappointment this morning. I
had always thought that "Jeffy" O'Connor was born
in Grand Forks, but he told me that he didn't get
here until he was twelve days old.

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He has left North Dakota for a while and is
now a citizen of California although, ever since I
have been in Washington he has been there, doing
his part — and it is a very good one — in keeping
the cans of the United States solvent and your
money safe.

I am glad to have had a chance to see your
great University, to see the work that is being
done with the assistance given by the Federal
Government toward the erection of buildings — to
see what I believe is the first mistake of the WPA,
this grand stand, it is only half as big as it ought
to be.

On this --- (follow release)

6-8
HOLD FOR RELEASE

CAUTION: This address of the President, to be made at
Grand Forks, North Dakota, October 4, 1937,
is to be held for release upon delivery,
expected about 11:15 A.M., Central Time.
PLEASE GUARD AGAINST PREMATURE RELEASE.

M. E. MONTRE
Secretary to the President.

STATE 445 445 NOT RELEASE FILE

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6-24-1960 J. R. 611 - 143
25, 1960 from WPA 6-8-60
111

In seeking the betterment of our farm population, no matter what part of the country they live in, no matter whether they raise cotton or corn or wheat or oats or potatoes or rye, the experience we have today teaches us that if we would avoid the poverty of the past, we must strive today -- not tomorrow -- toward two objectives.

The first is called "better land use" -- using the land in such a way that we do not destroy it or harm it for future generations, and in such a way that it will bring to us the best year-in and year-out return as a reward for our labors. This we are doing at least in part today by reducing the uses of land, by putting back into grass or trees land which should not be under the plow, by bringing water to dry soil which has immense possibilities for profitable use, and by helping farm families to resettle on good land. The money we are spending on these objectives is already coming back as increased national income and will be repaid, in the long run, many times over.

The other objective is the control, with the approval of what I believe is the overwhelming sentiment of the farmers themselves, of what is known as crop surplus.

Any one crop, wheat or cotton or corn, for example, is like any widely used manufactured commodity, like bricks or automobiles or shoes. If, for instance, every shoe factory in the United States were to run on a three-shift basis, turning out shoes day and night for two or three years, we would have such a surplus of shoes in the United States that that surplus would have to be sold to the public, in order to get rid of it, at far less than the actual cost of manufacturing the shoes.

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I am happy to come back to North Dakota, and I hope that the coming year will bring you still further along the road to prosperity.

Very truly yours,
Franklin D. Roosevelt

Franklin D. Roosevelt
Vice President

6. 10. 1900. 1000 feet above sea level. A small stream flows down from the plateau, through a narrow valley, into the river. The water is clear and cold. The banks of the stream are rocky and the water flows rapidly. The water is clear and cold.

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