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. 1140

1938 June 30

New York City, NY - Start of Construction of U.S. Building at the New York World's Fair
SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT
NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR
THURSDAY, JUNE 30, 1938

On this occasion we formally commence the construction of the Building of the Government of the United States. I gladly express the appreciation of that Government to the representatives of so many other nations who have graciously decided to take part in the New York World's Fair of 1939.

Already the plans for their participation are drawn and to them I want to stress my hope that many of their countrymen will visit the Fair next year. To them also a hearty welcome will be given. I emphasize this on the ground of reciprocity, because for many years the visiting balance has been somewhat uneven. Far more Americans have been traveling to the shores of other Continents, especially Europe, than visitors from the other nations to our shores. I encourage all of my compatriots to learn all they can at first hand about other nations and to make friends there, but I wish that more of the citizens of other nations could visit us and make friends here.
All of us realize, of course, that the affairs of many parts of the world are, to put it politely, somewhat distraught. Such a condition necessarily accompanies wars and rumors of wars.

We in this Hemisphere are happily removed, in large measure, both from fear and from the controversies which breed it. In a larger sense, however, we cannot remain unconcerned, especially because it is our fortune to enjoy friendship and good relations with all nations.

You who represent the other nations here today have heard of what is known as the policy of the Good Neighbor. To that policy we have steadily adhered, and it may well be said that it is the definite policy of all the American Republics.

It is a policy which can never be merely unilateral. In stressing it the American Republics appreciate, I am confident, that it is bilateral and multilateral and that the fair dealing which it implies must be reciprocated.
It is a policy, however, which was not in its inception, or subsequently, limited to one Hemisphere. It has proven so successful in the Western Hemisphere that the American Republics believe that it could succeed in the rest of the world if the spirit which lies behind it were better understood and more actively striven for in the other parts of the world.

Furthermore, the policy of the Good Neighbor is, as we know, not limited to those problems of international relations which may result in war. We are against war and have agreed among ourselves quietly to discuss difficulties in such a way that the possibility of war has become remote. But the policy involves also matters of trade and matters affecting the interchange of culture.

In these modern days when so many new economic and social problems call for the revision of many old economic and social tenets, closer personal contacts are an essential to the well-being of nations.
That is why the New York World's Fair and the San Francisco Fair are well-timed for 1939. They will encourage that interchange of thought, of culture, and of trade which are so vital today. They will give to the opposite ends of our country an opportunity to see the exhibits and visitors from the rest of the world -- they will give to those visitors a splendid chance to see something of the length and breadth of the United States.

All of us who are here today look forward to April, 1939, when this great Exposition will be formally opened. It has been well said that you cannot hate a man you know. Therefore, this Exposition will stand as a symbol of world peace for, without doubt, it is a useful advance on the patient road to peace.

[Signature]

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Original typing copy
ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
On the Occasion of the Laying of the Cornerstone
Of the Federal Building, New York World's Fair Grounds
New York City, June 30, 1938, 2:00 P.M.

GOVERNOR LEHMAN, MAYOR LA GUARDIA, COMMISSIONER FLYNN, COMMISSIONER
WHALEN, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS:

The master mason certifies that the cornerstone is well and truly laid and, in turn, I have assured him that I hold a union card. (Laughter)
I am glad that Mr. Whalen has spoken of his visits to Washington. He has never left Washington empty-handed. He is the most persuasive salesman in all the world. (Laughter)

On this occasion we formally commence the construction of the Building of the Government of the United States at the New York World's Fair of 1939. I gladly express the appreciation of that Government to the representatives of (so many) sixty-two other nations who have graciously decided to take part in the (New York World's) Fair (of 1939).

Already the plans for their participation are drawn and to them I want to stress my hope that many of their countrymen will (visit) come to the Fair next year. To (them also) those countrymen of theirs a hearty welcome will be given. I emphasize this on the ground of reciprocity, because for many years the visiting balance has been somewhat uneven. Far more Americans have been traveling to the shores of other continents, especially Europe, than visitors from the other nations to our shores. I encourage all of my compatriots to learn all that they can at first hand about other nations and to make friends there, but I wish that more of the
citizens of other nations (could) would visit us and make friends here. (Applause)

All of us realize, of course, that the affairs of many parts of the world are, to put it politely, somewhat distraught at this time. Such a condition necessarily accompanies wars and rumors of wars.

We in this Hemisphere are happily removed, in large measure, both from fear and from the controversies which breed it. In a larger sense, however, we cannot remain unconcerned, especially because it is our fortune to enjoy friendship and good relations with all nations.

You who represent the other nations here today have heard of what is known as the policy of the Good Neighbor. To that policy we have steadily adhered, and it may well be said that it is the definite policy of all the American Republics. (Applause)

It is a policy which can never be merely unilateral. In stressing it the American Republics appreciate, I am confident, that it is a bilateral, (and) a multilateral policy and that the fair dealing which it implies must be reciprocated.

It is a policy which was not in its inception, or subsequently, limited to one hemisphere. It has proven so successful in the Western Hemisphere that the American Republics believe that it could succeed in all the rest of the world if the spirit which lies behind it were better understood and more actively striven for in the other parts of the world. (Applause)

Furthermore, the policy of the Good Neighbor is, as we know, not limited to those problems of international relations which may result in war. We are against war and have agreed among
ourselves quietly to discuss difficulties in such a way that the possibility of war has become remote. But the policy involves also matters of trade and matters affecting the interchange of culture between nations.

In these modern days when so many new economic and social problems call for the revision of many old economic and social tenets, closer personal contacts are an essential, an absolute essential, to the well-being of nations of the world.

That is why the New York World's Fair and the San Francisco Fair are well-timed for 1939. They will encourage that interchange of thought, of culture, and of trade which (are) is so vital today. They will give to the opposite ends of our country an opportunity to see the exhibits and the visitors from all the rest of the world -- and they will give to those visitors a splendid chance to see something of the length and breadth of the United States.

All of us who are here today are looking forward to April 1939, when this great Exposition will be formally opened, and although the plans were made some time ago, I do not think that it has yet been announced that the United States Fleet this coming winter will come to the Atlantic Ocean and will be present at the opening of the World's Fair. Yes, we are looking forward to that day, a day of meeting and of greeting. It has been well said that you cannot hate a man you know. Therefore, this Exposition will stand as a symbol of world peace for, without doubt, it is a useful advance on the patient road to peace that America treads. (Applause)
On this occasion we formally commence the construction of the Building of the Government of the United States. I gladly express the appreciation of that Government to the representatives of so many other nations who have graciously decided to take part in the New York World's Fair of 1933.

Already the plans for their participation are drawn and to them I want to stress my hope that many of their countrymen will visit the Fair next year. To them also a hearty welcome will be given. I emphasize this on the ground of reciprocity, because for many years the visiting balance has been somewhat uneven. Far more Americans have been traveling to the shores of other Continents, especially Europe, than visitors from the other nations to our shores. I encourage all of my compatriots to learn all they can at first hand about other nations and to make friends there, but I wish that more of the citizens of other nations could visit us and make friends here.

All of us realize, of course, that the affairs of many parts of the world are, to put it politely, somewhat distraught. Such a condition necessarily accompanies war and rumors of war.

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All of us who are here today look forward to April, 1939, when this great Exposition will be formally opened. It has been well said that you cannot hate a man you know. Therefore, this Exposition will stand as a symbol of world peace for without doubt, it is a useful advance on the patient road to peace.

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NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR
THURSDAY, JUNE 30, 1938

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All of us realize, of course, that the affairs of many
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Such a condition necessarily accompanies wars and rumors of wars.
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