
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. 1164

1938 August 11

Athens, GA - Address at University of Georgia

President Caldwells
Chancellor Tombs.
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Aug 22

It is with particular pride in and increased devotion to this State, that I become today an alumnus of the University of Georgia. During many years I have had important contacts with your Trustees and Faculty and I can therefore appreciate the excellent service which you are rendering to the cause of education not only in Georgia but in the Nation.

Many years have gone by since I first came to Warm Springs and got to know and to love the State and its people. I wonder if you, who live here all the time, can realize as well as I, who have been coming here once or twice a year, the amazing progress that has been made here in a short decade and a half -- and especially in the past five years. If you see a person morning, noon and night you do not note the changes of growth or health of that friend as readily as if you see him only at intervals; and that is why I feel that I can speak with perspective.

In my earlier years here I saw a South in the larger sense forgotten in the midst of an unhealthy national speculation -- a boom era which thought in terms of paper profits instead of human lives. And for those days what has the South to show today? A few great fortunes perhaps, but most of the profits went north.

Then came the tragic years of the depression. Closed banks in almost every community, ruinous crop prices, idle mills, no money for schools or roads -- a picture of despair.

Yet, through all those years, the South was building a new school of thought -- a group principally recruited from younger men and women who understood that the economy of the South was vitally and inexorably linked with that of the Nation, and that the national good was dependent equally on the improvement of the welfare of the South.

They began asking searching questions:-- why is our pay -- in other words our earning capacity -- so low; why are our roads so bad; why is our sanitation and medical care so neglected; why are our teachers so inadequately paid; why are our local school buildings and equipment so antiquated?

I do not mince words because, first of all, I have a right -- a nation-wide right, a State right and withal a sympathetic and understanding right to speak them and, secondly, because you as well as I know them to be true.

It may not be politic but it is good American idealism to recognize, to state boldly, that in 1932 the conditions of human life in Georgia and in other states of the lower South were as a whole at the bottom of the national scale. At the same time let us rejoice and take pride in the undoubted fact that in these past six years the South has made greater economic and social progress up the scale than at any other period in her long history. It is my objective and yours to maintain that march and to accelerate its pace.

On the side of education a long experience teaches us that the improvement of educational facilities is inevitably bound up with economic conditions. Years ago I was told by a distinguished citizen of Georgia that public school education was well provided for because there was a law -- or perhaps it was in the State Constitution itself -- providing that every child should have a

full school year and that attendance for each school year through grade school was compulsory. But I soon discovered school after school in the rural districts -- and most of them are rural districts -- where the school was open only four months or five months a year -- or was too small to hold all the children -- or couldn't employ enough teachers -- or where children, whose parents wanted them to work, could stay away from school with complete immunity.

Apparently a law or a clause in the Constitution was not enough.

What is law without enforcement? Apparently the Divine method "Let there be light -- and there was light" did not work as mere man's dictum.

Then I began to analyze: Was it due to lack of interest? No, it was due to lack of money. Every man and woman I talked with deplored the wretched school conditions, wanted better schools, better trained and better paid teachers, wanted more teachers, wanted a full school year. But -- the answer was always the same -- we cannot get more money from taxes.

And why not? The answer is simple: The taxable values were not there. The tax rates were not too low but the actual going values of property were so meagre that when taxes on those values were collected the sum received could not pay for adequate teachers or equipment. Public education was therefore dependent on public wealth. Public wealth was too low to support good schools.

That analysis of mine -- made even before I was elected Governor of New York, led my mind to many other questions: Why were land values and therefore taxable values in Georgia so low? With that question came a study of land use, of worn out land, of cheaper fertilizer, of forestation, of erosion, of crop diversification, of crop prices, of marketing, of freight rates. And all of these things bore directly on the problem of better schools.

Why were people getting such low pay for a day's work? That led to a study of purchasing power, of decent wages, of the cost of living, of taxable income, of sound banking, of small merchants. And these things, too, bore directly on the problem of better schools.

In other words, social conditions -- schools and hospitals and clothing and housing and food -- were intimately dependent on economic conditions -- higher wages, higher farm income and more profits for small business men.

So you will see that my thoughts for the South are no new thing. Long before I had any idea of re-entering public life I was planning for better life for the people of Georgia. In the later years I have had some opportunity to practice what I have long preached.

Obviously the Federal Government cannot carry the load alone. In education, for example, Washington has greatly assisted by using the labor of people who really need help to build school-houses, to give student aid, and to pay many teachers. And Washington will help by giving some grants in aid to those communities which need them the most. But Washington should not and cannot rightly subsidize public education through the United States. Education should be run by the States and their subdivisions.

Therefore, in the long run, the best way for your national government to assist state and local educational objectives is to tackle the national aspects of economic problems -- to eliminate discriminations between one part of the country and another -- to raise purchasing power and thereby create wealth in those sections where it is far too low -- to save the waste and the erosion of our natural resources, to encourage each section to become financially independent, to take the lead in establishing social security -- and at the same time to explain to the people in every part that constant progressive action is better than following either those who want to slow up or those who promise they will hand you the moon on a silver platter a week after they are elected.

At heart Georgia shows devotion to the principles of democracy. It has occasional lapses, but it really does not believe either in demagoguery or feudalism dressed up in democratic clothes. You of the University are greatly responsible for the present and the future. Well are you doing your part. From today onward I share proudly and more fully in that part.

(END) *Franklin D. Roosevelt*
Original reading copy

THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
University of Georgia
Athens, Georgia
August 11, 1938

GOVERNOR RIVERS, CHANCELLOR SANFORD, PRESIDENT CALDWELL, AND YOU,
THE MEMBERS OF THE FACULTY AND FRIENDS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA:

It is with particular pride in and increased devotion to this State, that I (become today) find myself about to become an alumnus of the University (of Georgia). (Applause) During many years I have had important contacts with your (Trustees and Faculty) Board of Regents, with your Faculty and with many of your graduates, and I can therefore appreciate the (excellent) splendid service which you are rendering to the cause of education not only in the State of Georgia but (in) throughout the Nation.

Many years have gone by since I first came to Warm Springs and got to know and to love the State and its people. For years before that I have heard much of Georgia from the lips of that old friend of mine, George Foster Peabody, who, reversing my process, was born in Georgia and became a citizen of the State of New York. Wherever he lived, wherever he went, there was one thing about Mr. Peabody that stood out and that was his love for humanity. And, so, I am proud today to be receiving a degree that was put through by Mr. Peabody some time before his unfortunate death. I wonder if you, who live here in the State all the time, can realize as well as I, who have been coming here once or twice a year, whether you can realize the amazing progress that has been made (here) in this State in a short decade and a half -- and, if I may be permitted to encore the suggestion of the Governor, especially in the past five years. Now,

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.

as part of probable suit (what named) I read , start off
you suit (meaning) . (signed to) whatever off to similar
prosecution (what) may also obligation assumption not even any
extortion not to choose any other way than direct or indirect
solving blame (treacherous) off arbitrary interruption but I had
not at all given order to choose any other way than
arbitrary way . Arbitrary off one method not even or the most of the way
big but no will not change is done by himself I just will
now desire to address you . Goodbye my dear son and to your
grandchildren . Goodbye and to make a good long signal in front
just now . It finds with you are good , true of reference . Until we
leave for you , you return not even the first day for books
selected . It is desirous for you fair among a privilege as as color
will not not the whole I . These instructions are replied with some
even one , I do allow an allowance but not the price of the book
and allowance not paid , they are entitled to some and gains used
from a of eighty and one tenth share used and that amount calculated
and not excess of allowance as you I will . One -- that is one allowance
and allowance not paid at allowance . Retained and to allowance

if you see a person intimately morning, noon and night, you do not note the changes of growth or of health of that friend as readily as if you see him only at intervals; and that is why I feel that I can speak of Georgia with true perspective.

In my earlier years here I saw a South in the larger sense forgotten, forgotten in the midst of an unhealthy national speculation -- a boom (period) era which thought in terms of paper profits instead of human lives. And for those days what has the South to show today? A few great fortunes perhaps, but most of the profits went north.

Then came the tragic years of the depression. Closed banks in almost every community, ruinous crop prices, idle mills, no money for schools or roads -- a picture of despair, and I knew Georgia of those days, too.

Yet, through all those years the South was building a new school of thought -- a group principally recruited from younger men and women who understood that the economy of the South was vitally and inexorably linked with that of the Nation, and that the national good was equally dependent (equally) on the improvement of the welfare of the South. They, those younger men and women, began asking searching questions: -- Why is our pay -- in other words, why is our earning capacity so low? Why are our roads so bad? Why is our sanitation, and our medical care so neglected? Why are our teachers so inadequately paid? Why are our local school buildings and equipment so antiquated?

I do not mince words because, first of all, I have a right -- a nation-wide right, a State right and withal a sympathetic and under-

standing right to speak them and, secondly, because you as well as I know them to be true.

It may not be politic but it is good American idealism to recognize, to state boldly that in 1932, six short years ago, the conditions of human life and human living in Georgia and in other states of the lower South were as a whole at the bottom of the national scale. And, at the same time let us rejoice and take pride in the undoubtedly fact that in these past six years the South has made greater economic and social progress up the scale than at any other period in her long history. (Applause) It is my objective and yours to maintain that march and to accelerate its pace.

On the side of education a long experience teaches us that the improvement of educational facilities is inevitably bound up with economic conditions. Years ago, when I first came to Georgia, I was told by a distinguished citizen of (Georgia) the State that public school education was well provided for because there was a law -- or perhaps it was in the State Constitution itself -- providing that every child should have a full school year -- and that attendance for each school year through all the years of grade school and into the high schools was compulsory. But I soon discovered, as I might have known that I would, discovered that school after school in the rural districts of the State -- and most of (them) the districts are rural districts -- where the school was open only four months or five months a year -- or the school was too small to hold all the children that wanted to go to it, that the school (or) couldn't employ enough teachers -- or where children, whose parents wanted them to work instead of going to school, could stay away from school

with complete immunity. And then I made a discovery: Apparently a law or a clause in the Constitution was not enough. What is law without enforcement? Apparently the Biblical method, the divine method "Let there be light -- and there was light" did not work as mere man's dictum.

And then I began to analyze: Was it due to lack of interest? No, not at all. It was due to lack of money. Every man and woman I talked with deplored the wretched school conditions, wanted better schools, better trained (and), better paid teachers, wanted more teachers, wanted a full school year. But -- the answer was always the same -- we cannot get more money from taxes.

And why not? The answer again is simple: The taxable values were not there. The tax rates were not too low but the actual going values of property were so meagre that when taxes on those values were collected the sum received could not pay for adequate teachers or proper equipment. Public education was therefore dependent on public wealth. And public wealth was too low to support good schools.

That analysis of mine -- made even before I was elected Governor of New York, led my mind to many other questions: Why were land values and therefore taxable values (in Georgia so low?) in this State too low? With that question came a study of land use, of worn-out land, of cheaper fertilizer, of afforestation, of erosion, of crop diversification, of crop prices, of marketing, and of freight rates. And all of (these) those things bore directly on the problem of better schools.

Why were people getting such low pay for a day's work?

That led to a study of purchasing power, of decent wages, of the cost of living, of taxable income, of sound banking, of small merchants. And (these) those things, too, bore directly on the problem of better schools.

In other words, social conditions -- schools and other things that were dependent for support on this same original supply of funds, (and hospitals and clothing and housing and food) hospitals, medical care and better sanitation and those other matters that were dependent in a similar way, clothing and housing and food -- all those other things that we call by the general name of better social conditions -- were intimately dependent on economic conditions -- higher wages, higher farm income and more profits for small business-men.

So you will see that my thoughts for the South are no new thing. Long before I had any idea of re-entering public life I was planning for better life for the people of Georgia. In (the) these later years I have had some opportunity to practice what I have long preached. (Applause)

Obviously the Federal Government cannot carry the load alone. In education, for example, the Government in Washington has greatly assisted by using the labor of people who really need help to build schoolhouses, to give student aid, and to pay at least a part of the salaries to many teachers. And Washington will help in the days to come, I am confident, by giving some grants in aid to those communities which need them the most. But let us remember well that the Government in Washington should not and cannot rightly subsidize public education throughout the United States. That must remain wholly free, wholly independent. Education should be run by

the states and their subdivisions and not by the Federal Government.

Therefore, in the long run, the best way for your National Government to assist state and local educational objectives is to tackle the national aspects of economic problems -- to eliminate discriminations between one part of the country and another -- to raise purchasing power and thereby create wealth in those sections where it is (far) too low -- to save the waste and the erosion of our natural resources, to encourage each section to become financially independent, to take the lead in establishing social security -- and at the same time to explain to the people in every part that constant progressive action is better, a thousand times better, than following the lead of either those who want to slow up or those who promise they will hand you the moon on a silver platter a week after they are elected. (Applause)

At heart Georgia shows devotion to the principles of democracy. (It) Georgia, like other states, has occasional lapses, but it really does not believe either in demagoguery or feudalism, even though they are dressed up in democratic clothes.

And so, my friends, I am very happy to be with you today.
I am happy to have had even a glimpse of this place. For about four-
teen years I have been promising to come over from Warm Springs to
Athens and some time ago, a good many years ago, I said that I would
not come to Athens until I got a good road from Warm Springs to here.
But that was a very rash speech, as it turned out; the road is not
quite through yet but my good friend, the Governor, tells me it is
on its way. That was enough for me, so here I am. (Applause)

To be a part of you is a great honor and a great privilege. You of the University are greatly responsible for the manner of meeting the problems of the present. You will be greatly responsible for the future. Well are you doing your part. From today onward I share proudly, more fully, in that part. {Applause}

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ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA, ATHENS, GEORGIA

AUGUST 11, 1938

- - - - - STATEMENTS FILE

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In my earlier years here I saw a South in the larger sense forgotten in the midst of an unhealthy national speculation -- a boom era which thought in terms of paper profits instead of human lives. And for those days what has the South to show today? A few fortunes perhaps, but most of the profits went north.

Then came the tragic years of the depression. Closed banks in almost every community, ruinous crop prices, idle mills, no money for schools or roads -- a picture of despair.

Yet, through all those years, the South was building a new school of thought -- a group principally recruited from younger men and women who understood that the economy of the South was vitally and inexorably linked with that of the Nation, and that the national good was dependent equally on the improvement of the welfare of the South. They began asking searching questions:-- Why is our pay -- in other words our earning capacity -- so low? Why are our roads so bad? Why is our sanitation and medical care so neglected? Why are our teachers so inadequately paid? Why are our local school buildings and equipment so antiquated?

I do not mince words because, first of all, I have a right -- a nation-wide right, a State right and withal a sympathetic and understanding right to speak them, and, secondly, because you as well as I know them to be true.

It may not be politic but it is good American idealism to recognize, to state boldly, that in 1938 the conditions of human life in Georgia and in other states of the lower South were as a whole at the bottom of the national scale. At the same time let us rejoice and take pride in the undoubted fact that in these past six years the South has made greater economic and social progress up the scale than at any other period in her long history. It is my objective and yours to maintain that march and to accelerate its pace.

On the side of education a long experience teaches us that the improvement of educational facilities is inevitably bound up with economic conditions. Years ago I was told by a distinguished citizen of Georgia that public school education was well provided for because there was a law -- or perhaps it was in the State Constitution itself -- providing that every child should have a full school year -- and that attendance for each school year through grade school was compulsory. But I soon discovered school after school in the rural districts -- and most of them are rural districts -- where the school was open only four months or five months a year -- or was too small to hold all the children -- or couldn't employ enough teachers -- or where children, whose parents wanted them to work, could stay away from school with complete immunity.

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And why not? The answer is simple: The taxable values were not there. The tax rates were not too low but the actual going values of property were so meagre that when taxes on those values were collected the sum received could not pay for adequate teachers or equipment. Public education was therefore dependent on public wealth. Public wealth was too low to support good schools.

That analysis of mine -- made even before I was elected Governor of New York, led my mind to many other questions: Why were land values and therefore taxable values in Georgia so low? With that question came a study of land use, of worn out land, of cheaper fertilizer, of forestation, of erosion, of crop diversification, of crop prices, of marketing, of freight rates. And all of these things bore directly on the problem of better schools.

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Univ. of Georgia

It is with particular prideⁱⁿ and interest I write to you
to this State, that I presume today are the members
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To speak them, and secondly because you as well as I know them to be true.

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 I shall ^{proudly} do my part.

August 11, 1938

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

(SV)

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sympathetic and understanding right to speak them and, secondly,
because you as well as I know them to be true.

It may not be good politics but it is good American idealism
to recognize, to state boldly that in 1932 the conditions of
human life in Georgia and in other states of the lower South
were as a whole at the bottom of the national scale. At the
same time let us rejoice and take pride in the undoubtedly fact
that in these past six years the South has made greater
economic and social progress up the scale than at any other
period in her long history. It is my objective and yours to
maintain that march and to accelerate its pace.

Personal Note

On the side of education a long experience teaches us
~~educational facilities~~
that the improvement of ~~the~~ is inevitably bound up with
economic conditions. Years ago I was told by a distinguished
citizen of Georgia that public school education was well
provided for because there was a law -- or perhaps it was in the
State Constitution itself -- providing that every child should
have a full school year - and that attendance for each school
year through grade school was compulsory. But I soon
discovered school after school in the rural districts -- and
most of them are rural districts -- where the school was open
only four months or five months a year -- or was too small to
hold all the children ~~or~~ couldn't employ enough teachers --
or where children whose parents wanted them to work could stay
away from school with complete immunity. Apparently ~~it~~ was not
enough, to be satisfied with a law or a clause in the Constitution,
What is law without enforcement?
Apparently the Divine method "Let there be light -- and there was
light" did not work as mere man's dictum.

Changed by R.W.

' Then I began to analyze: Was it due to lack of interest?
No, it was due to lack of money. Every man and woman I talked
with deplored the wretched school conditions, wanted better
schools, better ~~qualified~~ ^{trained} better paid teachers, wanted more
teachers, wanted a full school year. But -- the answer was
always the same -- we cannot get more money from taxes.

And why not? The answer is simple: The taxable values
were not there. The tax rates were not too low but the actual
going values of property were so meagre that when taxes on
those values were collected the sum received could not pay for
adequate teachers or equipment. Public education was there-
fore dependent on public wealth. Public wealth was too low
to support good schools.

That analysis of mine -- made even before I was elected
Governor of New York, led my mind to many other questions:
Why were land values and therefore taxable values ^{in Georgia}
~~so low~~ With that question came a study of land use, of worn
out land, of cheaper fertilizer, of forestation, of erosion,

of crop diversification, of crop prices, of marketing, of freight rates. And all of these things bore directly on the problem of better schools.

Why were people getting such low pay for a day's work? That led to a study of purchasing power, of decent wages, of the cost of living, of taxable income, of sound banking, of small merchants. And these things, too, bore directly on the problem of better schools.

In other words, social conditions -- schools and hospitals and clothing and housing and food -- were ~~intimately dependent~~ ^(with) ~~upon~~ economic conditions -- higher wages, higher farm income and more profits for small business men.

So you will see that my thoughts for the South are no new thing. Long before I had any thought of re-entering public life I was planning for better life for the people of Georgia. In the later years I have had some opportunity to practice what I have long preached.

(C) Obviously the Federal Government cannot carry the load alone. In education, for example, Washington has greatly assisted by using the labor of people who really need help to build schoolhouses, to give student aid, and to pay many teachers. And Washington will help by giving some grants in aid to those communities which need them the most. But Washington should not and cannot rightly subsidize public education throughout the United States. Education should be run by the States and their subdivisions.

Therefore, in the long run, the best way for your national government to assist state and local educational objectives is to tackle the national aspects of economic problems -- to eliminate discriminations between one part of the country and another -- to raise purchasing power and thereby create wealth in those sections where it is ~~not~~ too low -- to save the waste and the erosion of our natural resources, to encourage each section to become financially

independent, to take the lead in establishing social security

-- and at the same time to explain to the people in every part

that constant progressive action is better than following either those who want to slow up or those who promise you the

moon on a silver platter a week after they are elected.

At heart Georgia shows devotion to the principles of
democracy. It has occasional lapses, but it really does not

believe either in demagoguery or feudalism dressed up in democratic clothes. You of the University are greatly

responsible for the present and the future. Well are you
doing your part. From today onward I share proudly in that
part.

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