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**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**

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**File No. 1176**

**1938 October 25**

**Press Release re Dies Committee  
vs. Governor Frank Murphy**

## STATEMENTS FILE

FOR THE PRESS

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 25, 1936.

At his press conference this afternoon, one of the newspapermen present asked the President the following question:

"Mr. President: Are you concerned with the testimony that has been given before the Dies Committee, particularly in the case of Governor Murphy, of Michigan? Testimony last week charged him with treasonable activities in the settlement of the sit-down strikes in Michigan two years ago."

THE PRESIDENT:

"Yes, I certainly am concerned with that kind of testimony. I would like to say something about it, but I think it probably would be better if I wrote something out instead of trying to talk extemporaneously."

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Later, the President dictated the following statement for the press:

"I was very much disturbed. I was disturbed not because of the absurdly false charges made by a coterie of disgruntled Republican officeholders against a profoundly religious, able and law-abiding Governor; but because a Congressional Committee charged with the responsibility of investigating un-American activities should have permitted itself to be used in a flagrantly unfair and un-American attempt to influence an election.

"At this hearing the Dies Committee made no effort to get at the truth, either by calling for facts to support mere personal opinion or by allowing facts and personal opinion on the other side. On the threshold of a vitally important gubernatorial election, they permitted a disgruntled Republican judge, a discharged Republican City Manager and a couple of officious police officers to make lurid charges against Governor Frank Murphy, without attempting to elicit from them facts as to their undeniable bias and their charges and without attempting to obtain from the Governor or, for that matter, from any responsible motor manufacturer, their version of the events.

"Governor Murphy's painstaking and statesmanlike efforts to bring about a settlement of the sit-down strikes and to avert bloodshed and riot were not shrouded in secrecy. Every important move he made was communicated to the motor manufacturers and the union leaders affected, and was reported fully in the daily press. I received almost daily reports on the situation from the Governor.

"Governor Murphy never said a word in condemnation of the sit-down strike or any illegal practice. But the Governor was informed by responsible officials of the National Guard that any attempt on the part of the National Guard forcibly to eject the sit-down strikers at Flint would result in bloodshed and riot. Knowing these facts the Governor labored in the open, in the American way, to bring about a prompt settlement of the labor trouble without resort to force.

"Governor Murphy always insisted that the lawful order of the court must be obeyed. But knowing that negotiations for settlement were proceeding and that precipitous efforts to enforce the court order would result in violence which would disrupt peaceful negotiations, he requested the sheriff to postpone the enforcement of the court order over the weekend. For that act a few petty politicians accuse him of treason; for that act every peace-loving American should praise him.

"By Wednesday of the week following Governor Murphy's request for a temporary postponement of the enforcement of the court order, the strike -- which was probably the most alarming strike which ever occurred in this country -- was brought to an end without the loss of a single human life. That was a great achievement of a Great American. Governor Frank Murphy's great accomplishment elicited the commendation of all the important motor manufacturers involved, of Mr. Sloan and Mr. Knudsen of General Motors, of Mr. Chrysler of Chrysler Motors, and of the Fisher Brothers of the Fisher Body Corporation, of Mr. Barrett of Hudson Motors and of Mr. Graham of Graham Motors.

"In handling the dangerous labor situation in Michigan in the dark days of 1937, Governor Murphy, as a true American, was concerned not only with the letter but the spirit of the law. Governor Murphy accordingly strove, and strove successfully, to effectuate a settlement not by force but by reason -- a settlement which would satisfy not merely the letter of the law, but the community's sense of right and of justice.

"Most fair-minded Americans hope that the committee will abandon the practice of merely providing a forum to those who for political purposes, or otherwise, seek headlines which they could not otherwise obtain. More opinion evidence has been barred in court since the American system of legislative and judicial procedure was started.

"Three weeks ago, the civilized world was threatened by the immediate outbreak of a world war. Cool heads pleaded for the continuance of negotiations. People may properly differ as to the result of such negotiations but the fact remains that bloodshed was averted.

"In the Winter of 1937, Governor Murphy was confronted with the same kind of situation on a smaller scale. He knew that if negotiations were broken off bloodshed was inevitable. He worked successfully for the continuation of the negotiations. As a result of his fine leadership, there is no doubt that hundreds and even thousands of human lives were saved. That is the American way of doing things."

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*File*

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OCTOBER 25, 1938

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"Mr. President: Are you concerned with the testimony that has been given before the Dies Committee, particularly in the case of Governor Murphy, of Michigan? Testimony last week charged him with treasonable activities in the settlement of the sit-down strikes in Michigan two years ago."

THE PRESIDENT:

"Yes, I certainly am concerned with that kind of testimony. I would like to say something about it, but I think it probably would be better if I wrote something out instead of trying to talk extemporaneously."

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Later, the President dictated the following statement for the press:

(Quote statement)

INSERT A

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by allowing facts and personal opinion on the other side.

INSERT B

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*Written*  
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kind of situation on a smaller scale. He knew that if negotiations were broken off bloodshed was inevitable. He worked successfully for the continuation of the negotiations. As a result of his fine leadership, hundreds and even thousands of human lives were saved. That is the American way of doing things.

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proceeding and that precipitous efforts to enforce the court order would result in violence which would disrupt peaceful negotiations, he requested the sheriff to postpone the enforcement of the court order over the weekend. For that act a few petty politicians accuse him of treason; for that act every peace-loving American should praise him.

By Wednesday of the week following Governor Murphy's request for a temporary postponement of the enforcement of the court order, the strike -- which was probably the most alarming strike which ever occurred in this country -- was brought to an end without the loss of a single human life ~~or without the suppression of liberty~~. That was a great achievement of a great American. Governor Frank Murphy's great ~~achievement~~ *Accomplishment* ~~event~~ elicited the commendation of all the important motor manufacturers involved, of Mr. Sloan and Mr. Knutsen<sup>d</sup> of General Motors, of Mr. Chrysler of Chrysler Motors, and of the Fisher Brothers of the Fisher Body Corporation, of Mr. Barrett of Hudson Motors and of Mr. Graham of Graham Motors. Then even the vigilantes who have no regard for American life or American liberty held their peace.

In handling the dangerous labor situation in Michigan in the dark days of 193<sup>7</sup>, Governor Murphy, as a true American, was concerned not only with the letter but the spirit of the law. Governor Murphy accordingly strove, and strove successfully, to effectuate a settlement not by force but by reason, ~~and~~ <sup>—A</sup> settlement which would satisfy not merely the letter of the law, but the community's sense of right and of justice.

A committee which desires to expose un-American activities which threaten our democracy, ought not to waste their time giving a forum not otherwise obtainable to nondescript vigilantes who are trying to defeat truly American efforts to preserve our democracy.

B.



*Excerpt (Kramer)*

Question:

~~Were you disturbed by the testimony before the Dies Committee accusing Governor Frank Murphy of so-called "treasonable" activities in connection with the settlement of the sit-down strikes in Michigan two years ago?~~

Answer:

I was very much disturbed. I was disturbed not because of the absurdly false charges made by a coterie of disgruntled Republican office-holders against a profoundly religious, able and law-abiding Governor; but because a Congressional Committee charged with the responsibility of investigating un-American activities should have permitted itself to be used in a ~~very~~ flagrantly unfair and un-American attempt to influence an election.

*At this hearing the*

*A*  
The Dies Committee made no effort to get at the truth. On the threshold of a vitally important gubernatorial election, they permitted a disgruntled Republican judge, a discharged Republican City Manager and a couple of officious police officers to make lurid charges against Governor Frank Murphy, without attempting to elicit from them <sup>facts</sup> ~~a statement~~ as to <sup>and their charges were</sup> their undeniable bias, without attempting to obtain from the Governor or,

for that matter, from any responsible motor manufacturer, their version of the events.

Governor Murphy's painstaking and statesmanlike efforts to bring about a settlement of the sit-down strikes and to avert bloodshed and riot were not shrouded in secrecy. Every important move he made was communicated to the motor manufacturers and the union leaders affected, and was reported fully in the daily press. I received almost daily reports on the situation from the Governor.

Governor Murphy never said a word in condonation of the sit-down strike or any illegal practice. But the Governor was informed by responsible officials of the National Guard that any attempt on the part of the National Guard forcibly to eject the sit-down strikers at Flint would result in bloodshed and riot. Knowing these facts the Governor labored in the open, in the American way, to bring about a prompt settlement of the labor trouble without resort to force.

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

~~Excerpt - PC, 10/25/38~~

6 // Mr. President: Are you concerned with the testimony that has been given before the Dies Committee, particularly in the case of Governor Murphy, of Michigan? Testimony last week charged him with treasonable activities in the settlement of the sit-down strikes in Michigan two years ago. " ~~Because he didn't call out the National Guard they claimed the~~  
~~lives of thousands of persons were~~  
~~endangered.~~

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I certainly am concerned with that kind of testimony. ~~I~~ I would like to say something about it, but I think it probably would be better if I wrote something out instead of trying to talk extemporaneously. ~~Because my~~  
~~language might not be polite enough~~

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