

March 7, 1939

[AFL-CIO]

1207

FDR Speech File

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I am extremely glad that this Committee, representing both sides of the controversy between the two branches of the labor movement, is at last assembled for the purpose of beginning negotiations for the settlement of these differences in good faith, and with honor, and for the best interests of labor and the country generally.

This is one of the most important domestic problems in American life today and I feel sure that all of you will enter into this service with a patriotic sense that you are serving the welfare of your country, as well as the welfare of your organizations by laying aside prejudices and bitterness, and by finding the solution which will bring a permanent and acceptable peace and unity in the labor movement. I have faith in your capacity as individuals and the organizations that you represent to make a practical adjustment both of the theory and the realities of a conflict which has already lasted too long and which is weakening the public standing of organized labor in this country.

It is important that you enter these negotiations with open minds and with a determination to explore every aspect of the problem together. The fact that there have been disagreements on particular points in the past should merely mean that all points must be studied and explored. It is desirable that this should be a negotiated peace made by this Committee, using your own ingenuity and resourcefulness to find various ways of settling knotty problems.

While there has been extreme bitterness and conflict in certain localities, there are many cities and towns now where the local CIO and AFL are working together in closest harmony. I am told that there are some places where the CIO and the AFL use the same union hall. The two factions, as they are called, are really not factions. They realize that their interests are the same.

I accept the premise that both sides want peace. That means, of course, that both sides go into conference with the idea of giving as well as getting.

You are all experienced negotiators. You have been doing that all your lives. From that standpoint, this job ought to be easy for you. You can think up proposals and counterproposals to meet in this situation, and nobody can do it as well as you can because nobody knows the issues as you do.

Of course, there are many who want peace who do not fully realize the difficulties facing this Committee. I am advised, on the basis of reports coming from the rank and file of organized labor, that at least 70% of the actual membership of both factions desire peace.

Telegrams and letters and resolutions speaking for at least a million workers reached me before we proposed that you appoint your committee. These messages came from labor groups in each faction and from every part of the country.

Since your appointment, like messages are pouring in from all sections and from many unions in each faction. Already hundreds of thousands of workers, through their representatives, have informed me, and I know many of them have informed you, that their greatest desire is that you may succeed in finding a solution.

This is your negotiation. Direct negotiations without outside interposition is always best if possible. I believe no other method of settlement will ever become necessary in this case because I believe that you are today beginning a proper step for a permanent, stable and acceptable solution. I am counting on you to succeed and shall look forward to the final report on your negotiations.

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[3/7/37]

F.P.

DIGEST FOR THE PRESIDENT

I. Importance of Negotiation

1. Settlement of differences in good faith and on permanent basis.
2. Interest of the country and interest of labor involved.
3. My confidence in your capacity to lay aside prejudices and bitterness.
4. Your capacity to make practical adjustment of both the theoretical and realistic aspects of the conflict which has lasted too long.
5. Keep open minds and explore all points.

II. Desire of rank and file of labor for peace

1. Indicated by incidents of working together in many cities and towns; same union halls; joint relations with local officials. Many letters & telegrams from no.

III. Desire of the public for peace

1. Expressed by somewhat improved attitude of employers toward labor relations.
2. Constant letters and telegrams from civic leaders and State officials.
3. Danger of labor's losing ground gained due to public reaction to factional strife
 - a. Labor law by State legislatures is lagging behind record of recent years, although volume of bills introduced is greater.
 - b. In 19 states no favorable action taken this year.
 - c. In 17 States adverse legislation has been introduced restricting employee organization and made some progress. Oregon measure has been made a model in a number of States.

- d. Wage-hour bills have been introduced in 24 States. In only one has there been favorable action - Utah.

IV. Suggestions in regard to negotiations

- 1. You are all experienced negotiators - therefore be resourceful.
- 2. Under no circumstances break off negotiations. If you must adjourn, adjourn with the date of next meeting fixed. ✓
- 3. Hope you will keep the Secretary of Labor informed of general progress - not details, of course, but give warning if you are near the breaking point. And don't break off. ✓
- 4. Suggest that you try to classify the problems which are before you as
 - a. Those in which the manner and method of reunion are not troublesome.
 - b. Those in which there is considerable doubt as to a proper method of effecting peace.
 - c. Those about which there are probably serious disagreements.
- 5. Get to work on the doubtful class at once and reduce it by settling as many points as possible, laying aside those which offer peculiar difficulties and taking up something else.
- 6. We in the Government stand ready to help wherever needed. Use our facilities to make task easy as possible.
 - a. Facts and figures can be provided if asked. ✓

- b. Surveys of legislative programs in the States.
- c. Surveys of various industries.
- d. Government will set aside conference room and office in the Department of Labor if you desire and necessary services.

V. This should be your direct negotiation.

- 1. Many proposals have been made that the Government should settle this difficulty, either by fact-finding, arbitration or legislation. Many labor people have assured me of their approval of such a plan. I prefer that you make the peace yourself. I do not desire arbitration or even a pressure type of settlement and would recommend it only as a last resort for the purpose of saving the country from a critical situation.
- 2. Direct negotiations without intervention is best. I believe no other method will be necessary because you are taking proper steps today for permanent and suitable solution.

[3/7/39]

REMARKS TO THE COMMITTEE

I am extremely glad that this Committee, representing both sides of the controversy between the two now separate branches of the labor movement, are at last assembled for the purpose of beginning negotiations for the settlement of these differences in good faith, and with honor, and for the best interests of labor and the country generally.

This is one of the most important domestic problems in American life today and I feel sure that all of you will enter into this service with a patriotic sense that you are serving the welfare of your country, as well as the welfare of your organizations by laying aside prejudices, bitterness, old scores, and finding the solution which will bring a permanent and suitable peace and unity in the labor movement. I have faith in your capacity as individuals and the organizations that you represent to make a practical adjustment of a conflict which has already lasted too long and which is weakening the standing of organized labor in this country continuously.

It seems to me important that you should enter these negotiations with open minds and with a determination to explore every aspect of the problem together. The fact that there have been disagreements on particular points in the past should merely mean that these points must be studied and explored anew. Peace between you is of extreme importance. Moreover, it is important that it should be a negotiated peace made by your Committee, using its own ingenuity and resourcefulness to find various ways of settling knotty problems.

While there has been extreme bitterness and conflict in certain localities, there are many cities and towns now where the local CIO and AF of L are working together in closest harmony. I am told that there are some places where the CIO and the AF of L use the same union hall and the AF of L and CIO charters are hanging side by side on the wall. The two factions, as they are called, are really not factions. They realize that their interests are the same. I have been informed that some of these local officials says, "We'll be all together again, as soon as the big fellows at the top quit fighting."

I accept the premise that both sides want peace, and I believe you want it bad enough to take the steps to get peace. That means, of course, that both sides go into conference with the idea of giving as well as getting.

You are all experienced negotiators. You have been doing that all your lives. From that standpoint, this job ought to be easy for you. You can think up proposals and counterproposals to meet in this situation, and nobody can do it as well as you can because nobody knows the issues as you do.

I understand that in the preliminary conversations a good many things have been discussed in a tentative way and that at least one or two people have come to some better understanding of what's in the minds of the others. There is a better understanding today of what is meant of industrial organization and of the type of enterprises which are adapted to that kind of organization.

Both groups have accepted the principle and it is in practice in both groups. The practice of organization of certain types of organizations has also been wholesomely recognized as adapted to some situations. It has been recognized also in these conversations that whereas in some fields there is very little, if any, dual organization and in other fields there is an extreme form of such organization, it is pretty generally understood that it is desirable that any necessary negotiations between particular unions should, of course, be instituted but that their negotiations should be supervised by the general negotiation committee. The necessity for this is particularly true with less experienced and very bitter organizations.

There seems to be a general understanding by those taking part in the conversations that most of the points can be cleared up by negotiation, but that if there is illusive and disputed point that the views of persons or others, either in one of the great organizations or outside of it could be invited. There seems also to have been a general understanding that any agreements reached had best be reviewed by a specially called convention.

Those who have taken parts in these conversations

have informed us of their intention to be as helpful as possible during the period of this negotiation, the purpose of which is to make a lasting peace.

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III

You doubtless are as fully aware as I of the public demand and necessity for peace within the ranks of labor. Of course, there are many who want peace who do not fully realize the difficulties facing this committee. I am advised, on the basis of reports coming from the rank and file of organized labor, that at least 90% of the members of both factions desire peace. Only a fringe here and there, where one or the other organization has the entire advantage, wants to abandon hope of peace and continue the fight.

Telegrams and letters and resolutions speaking for at least a million workers reached me before we proposed that you appoint your committees. These messages came from every labor group in each faction and from every part of the country.

Since your appointment, like messages are pouring in from all sections and from many unions in each faction. Already hundreds of thousands of workers, through their representatives, have informed me, and I know many of them have informed you, that their greatest desire is that you may succeed in finding a solution.

I am ^{fully} ~~conscious~~ also of the almost universal reaction of civic organizations including all classes of our population throughout the land who are anxious for peace.

The very necessity for peace among American workers has been brought forcibly to us through another channel, so that the trend of public opinion is unmistakable. Unless factional strife can be stopped soon, all labor is certain to lose ground which has been gained

during recent years. Labor is in great danger of facing not only legislation designed to correct what the public considers excesses, but also the danger of legislation depriving labor of rights and privileges to which it has just claim. This is not confined to Federal legislation but, perhaps, an even greater danger comes from our state legislatures. Labor law enactments by the state legislatures are lagging considerably behind the record of one and two years ago, although the volume of labor bills introduced is greater than two years ago.

In 19 states, no favorable action whatever has been taken this year on any of the progressive legislation introduced, while in 1937, by March 1st, ten states had taken such favorable action. No significant piece of labor legislation in any field has been passed so far this year.

In contrast with the negligible accomplishments in regard to progressive legislation, bills restricting employees' organization efforts and the activities of unions have been introduced in 17 states. In some states, bills prohibiting, or placing very severe restrictions on picketing have already passed one house. The Oregon measure, that was adopted by initiative vote at the polls in November, has become the model for quite a number of bills. Bills to regulate the manner of holding union elections, bills to investigate financial statements of unions and even bills to set up governmental machinery to supervise strike votes are receiving serious consideration. A number of proposals to alter the definition of a labor dispute have been made. All sorts of proposals to hinder and cripple labor organization and other concerted

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action on the part of employees are being advocated and seriously considered.

Out of 24 states where wage and hour bills have been introduced, in only one (that of Utah) has there been even a favorable

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Since all of us realize a solution must be found, we will succeed. My advice to you is that under no circumstances do you break off negotiations. There will be difficult moments during the days to come; there will be trying moments; there may even be shaking nerves and loss of temper. But the goal for which you search is, I believe, one of the most important ever faced a like number of men in our country. I do no need to tell you this because you realize it, perhaps, even better than I. Do not adjourn without agreeing to meet again. I hope you will keep the Secretary of Labor informed of the general progress of your negotiations - not the details, of course - but give warning if you are near the breaking point and dont break off.

We stand ready to help you on every point. I want you to make full use of every facility which can be furnished in order to make your task as easy as possible. There may be facts and figures that you will need from time to time. There may be legislation in the States which you may want for consideration. The Government will set aside a conference room and office in the Labor Department and any necessary services. Whatever you need, if it can be furnished by the Government, you need only to make your requirements known.

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I suggest that you begin at once as soon as you can assemble in the other building to discuss the matters before you. You know in your own minds that there are certain points connected with the reunion which are not troublesome at all; that there are others about which there is considerable doubt as to the method affecting peace or a reunion, and that there is a third class about which there are probably serious ~~dis~~^a agreements. I should suggest that you get to work at once on the doubtful class and reach as many agreements as possible on the doubtful points, putting them either into class one, or matters where there is understanding between you and where agreement can easily be reached or into the difficult class. Then take up the difficult class where you have to press for concessions, of course, and there will have to be give and take on both sides. And here, of course, the utmost self-restraint will have to be used and a program of laying aside a subject when it gets to tense ^{ing} and taking up another one will have to be followed. When you have sifted all the possibilities down to the last remaining unreconciled items, I am sure that your experience as negotiators will indicate what you should do - but never break off.

I count on you for this kind of patriotic intention to work together in the settlement of this conflict for the good of your country. While you are in session certain points of conflict may arise anew outside your immediate committee and I count on you to counsel patience and

restraint on those points. ~~There should not be merely extraneous causes of fight during the period of negotiations.~~ Let's have an understanding not to make a problem out of anything which is not now a problem, and to try to give way on the demands of any activities which are carried on merely for prestige and not for principle.

This is your negotiation. While the Government stands ready to help, I am very anxious that we do no more. You may be aware many proposals have been made that the Government should step into this difficulty with some definite arbitration or legislative proposal. Many of the rank and file of labor itself have assured me their personal backing to this plan.

Just prior to and during the time we have been considering the appointment of this negotiating committee, ~~the President has~~ received 99 resolutions from organizations appealing for the appointment of a fact-finding committee to submit a report to an arbitration board, which would be authorized to make a final settlement. Each of these particular resolutions appealed for the appointment of an equal number of public representatives and representatives from the two factions directly involved.

I prefer that you should make the peace yourself. You know that I do not desire any arbitration, or even pressure type of settlement, and I would recommend such a settlement only as a very last resort and for the purpose of saving us from an even more critical situation.

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I believe the way we have decided upon - direct negotiations without outside authority or interference - is best. I believe no other method of settlement will ever become necessary because I believe that at last you are today beginning the proper step for a permanent, stable and acceptable solution. I am counting on you to succeed and shall look forward to the final report on your negotiations.